



RESEARCH PAPER

Comparing Cultural Shifts and Universal Human Experience in
Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead by Tom Stoppard and *Haider*
by Vishal Bhardwaj

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates Shakespeare's universal human experience in *Hamlet* by comparing cultural shifts in two adaptations, what components of Shakespeare's original are retained or changed, and how speech and story advance. Meiliana believes that comparative literature explores connections between literary works, examining sources, topics, mythologies, genres, creative techniques, social movements, and trends, breaking traditional national and international boundaries, and determining universal human interactions. Shakespeare is one of the most significant writers in the history of literature, thus there is not much point in contesting that. His writings have been essential to any study of literature for centuries and have inspired innumerable popular and non-popular adaptations and imitators of his style. The research is a critique of the two Shakespearean play adaptations, *Haider* (2014) by Vishal Bhardwaj and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1990), by Tom Stoppard based on rigorous and in-depth research into the scholarly debate around them.

KEYWORDS Adaptation, Bhardwaj, Film, *Hamlet*, Shakespeare, Stoppard

Introduction

The film *Haider* (2014), by Vishal Bhardwaj begins with Doctor Hilaal Meer treating an ailing militant, who is later arrested by the Indian Army. His son Haider, pursuing research on Contemporary Modern Revolutionary Poets at Aligarh Muslim University, returns home to find his father missing and without any home. He searches for his father in police stations and imprisonment camps, with Arshia, a journalist, helping him. Haider receives a message from an unknown person named Roohdaar, who informs him about his father's death. He learns that they were imprisoned together and that his father wanted Haider to take revenge on Khuram by shooting in his eyes but should leave his mother to God's justice. Ghazala, Haider's mother, is unmoved by her husband's disappearance and starts living with his uncle, Khuram. They get married after hearing about her husband's death. Roohdaar tells Haider about Khuram's betrayal, and Haider becomes devastated by the conflicting statements about Hilaal's death. He passes on this dilemma to Arshia, who discloses the facts to her father, Pervez, who then passes the facts to Khuram. The following morning, Haider prepares to kill Khuram but morally abstains from killing as he sees Khuram praying. He is caught by Pervez, who orders his execution. Haider flees and brutally murders the Salmans, his former friends who turned into informers for Pervez. He contacts Roohdaar, who advises him to travel to Pakistan and get military training. Ghazala meets Haider before his departure at the ruins of their former family home, admitting to informing Khuram of the presence of extremists but asserting that she was unaware that Khuram was Pervez's informer. Pervez arrives at the house to assassinate him, but Haider manages to kill him first and

escapes. Arshia is emotionally distressed upon learning about her father's murder at the hands of Hamlet and commits suicide. Meanwhile, Ghazala finds Roohdaar's phone number in Arshia's diary and calls him. Haider goes to the graveyard where his father, Hilaal, is buried and witnesses a funeral with Liaqat crying. He resists the advice of his trainers and interrupts the funeral, leading to a shootout with Khuram and his armed men. Ghazala is dropped at the graveyard and begs Khuram for Haider's life. Haider remains persistent on vengeance, but Ghazala cautions him that revenge begets revenge and offers him farewell. Ghazala explodes a suicide vest given by Roohdaar, resulting in Khuram being seriously injured and all his men killed (Bhardwaj & Peer, 2022).

The movie *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* by Tom Stoppard (Stoppard, 1990) begins with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern betting on a coin flip, winning ninety-two flips in a row. Guildenstern proposes that they are placed amid unnatural, subconscious, or supernatural forces. They travel to court with the King's orders, and their theory about reality becomes increasingly real as more people witness them. The Tragedians troupe offers two men for a duel show, and they meet Prince Hamlet, who tells them not to question their existence. The Players prepare for producing *The Murder of Gonzago*, which is set to be performed in front of the King and Queen. In the play, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead at the hands of English courtiers, foreboding their true fate. Guildenstern worries about a verbal attack on the Tragedians' incapability to comprehend the real essence of death. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern find themselves on a ship, unaware of how they got there and uncertain whether they are dead or not. They find a letter from Claudius ordering them to kill Hamlet, but Rosencrantz hesitates to obey. As they flee towards Denmark, pirates attack, and all hide in separate barrels. Hamlet vanishes, but in Hamlet, he is kidnapped by pirates. The Tragedians act out the scene of death from the ending scene of *Hamlet*, leaving Rosencrantz and Guildenstern alone. Rosencrantz is unable to understand why they should die, but resigns himself to destiny and vanishes. Guildenstern investigates when he crosses the point to stop the series of actions that have brought him to this day and disappears (Stoppard, 1990).

Literature Review

Director Vishal Bhardwaj adapts *Hamlet* in an entirely different cultural setting, taking it from Denmark to Kashmir and from the 16th century to the mid-1990s. *Haider* overlaps *Hamlet's* revenge plot with references to Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Night*. Jan Kott views *Hamlet* as a sponge that absorbs many problems of our time immediately. What shapes Bhardwaj's film and sets it apart from all other Indian or Shakespeare films is the practice of including a second intertext, the Peer's *Curfewed Night*. This equally affects the style, story, and characterization (Hoydis, 2020, 2). As far as the reception of *Haider* is concerned, the film dealt with the arguments about the politics and ethics of adaptation. *Haider* won the People's Choice award and the songs of the film quickly became hits within a few days of its release. The audience has a mixed response to the film, some viewers rate it as a "true cinema," and perceive the movie as an egalitarian step for India to recognize Kashmir in films. Some people started a boycott *Haider* campaign raging against the film's offense of the Indian military and its sympathy for terrorists. In India, the film underwent forty-one cuts, in Pakistan, it was released after censors for being in contradiction to 'the ideology of Pakistan.' In Kashmir, most sections were not publicized and people complained about the lack of ample criticism of the Indian military. The film was also considered to be too political and by a few critics it was not political enough (Chakravarti, 2016, p. 130). Bhardwaj has integrated 16th-century characters with the existing scenario of Kashmir. Kashmir is also a significant and central character around whom all the characters revolve (Ayaz et. al., 2015, pp. 117-118).

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, by Tom Stoppard is an “existential catastrophic comedy by Tom Stoppard” (Michael, 2006). Its comparisons have also been made with “Beckett's play, *Waiting for Godot*” (Jim, 2000). The first performance was staged as a part of the Edinburgh Festival in 1966. For Allen Wright, it was not a clever sketch, and the theatrical play was also not praised in Sunday Times (Nadel, 2002, pp. 172-73). Tynan scheduled the production of *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* in 1967 at the National Theatre's stage. The play underwent rehearsal and changes and the cast size was expanded from eleven to twenty-seven for the performance on the London stage and the play opened in London in 1967. Critical response to the professional production was more positive than the Scotland ones. Harold Hobson writes in the Sunday Times that “If the history of drama is chiefly the history of dramatists and it is then the National Theatre's production of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* by Tom Stoppard is the most important event in the British professional theatre of the last nine years.” Stoppard's adaptation became an overnight success and at twenty-nine, he was regarded as “the youngest playwright ever to be staged at the National Theatre.” After many successful theatrical performances, Tom Stoppard produced it in the form of a film in 1990. There was a significant change in the opinions of the reviewers. The performance had emphasized the play's linguistic pyrotechnics and unabashedly intellectual wit, but the force of creativity underlying it blossomed, according to Hobson, who now referred to it as an especially significant moment in the English commercial heater. The triumph of the play was highlighted by praise for its humor, brilliance, and terrifying qualities. However, the margins of the fantasy is understandable here (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, Edinburgh 1966, 2003).

Material and Methods

The research uses seminal text by Meiliana, “*The Study of Comparative Literary Model*,” as a research theoretical framework to compare two adaptations. In addition to technical writing and social ties in many countries, literary comparison examines the overlap of various studies, their roots, creative resources, philosophical waves, issues, mindsets, and communities. Comparative literature investigates the connections between two or more significant literary works by considering sources, topics, mythologies, genres, creative techniques, social and religious movements, and trends. It is a broad term that helps to break down traditional national and international boundaries and encompasses all human experiences. Comparative literature compares and contrasts regional, national, and international literature to determine the universality of human interactions (Meiliana, 2018, p. 3).

Results and Discussion

In *Hamlet*, all the main characters die. But in the movie, Roohdaar, Khuram, and Haider are alive in the end. Claudius is killed at the end of *Hamlet*, but Haider allows his uncle to live and breaks the cycle of revenge. Bhardwaj drags the start of the story limiting the later part of the Shakespearean play and many parts of the story are left untouched. The question arises as to whether Bhardwaj has commercialized the plot or wanted to present a simplified version by skipping the scenes. Shakespeare's plays were performed in England when he was writing. On the contrary, in the contemporary times in which Bhardwaj adapted the story, he knew the film would grasp the global audience, he made sure to make the viewers familiar with the new place, politics, and culture in detail so that they could comprehend the film concerning the context it was written. The indigenous plot and setting, therefore, take the liberty to snatch the standardized form and appropriate it according to their convenience. Moreover, understanding the history

and culture of a place is very significant to translating an indigenous land. Well, *Haider* fails to be a play centered on the psychology and emotions of Hamlet. Instead, politics and violence become the central issue. Though it fails to entice the audience with the sentiments of the original play, the emotions arise on two levels, from his relation to the place, Kashmir, and his revenge on his uncle. Therefore there are two plots in the play and the conflict in *Haider* is also twofold.

Love is considered a key to the dark plot of killing Hamlet as Ophelia acts as a messenger of Hamlet. The same plot goes into *Haider* too where Arshia, a journalist is in love with Haider, but her love becomes a tragedy when her father Parvez uses her to keep track of the whereabouts of Haider when he is trying to find his father's murderer. Arshia is a stern woman who takes a stand despite the boundaries of being a female in a patriarchal society, whereas Ophelia is an extremely sensitive girl suppressed by patriarchy. She is unable to decide for herself and acts as per her father's instructions. Though, in the end, due to their father's death and love, both die out of the madness. Dey notes, Bhardwaj has revived Shakespeare's Gertrude. Gertrude exists in a subaltern position as her voice remains mummified underneath the black tar of masculinity. No magical divine intervention or any sudden Promethean supremacy blazes the Ghazala's soul. She uses patriarchal weapons like deputation and diplomacy to crack the heavy shackles of masculinity. With time, she understands that she has been political bait and an object for sexual pleasure by Khuram (Dey, 2014, p. 278). The relationship of Gertrude with Hamlet is not as affectionate as that of Haider and Ghazala. The love between Claudius and Gertrude may be true, but it is apparent that he married her for the throne, in *Haider*, Khuram loves Ghazala without special motives. Gertrude and Ghazala, the protagonists' mothers are in love with their late husbands' brothers unaware of what has happened to their dead husbands. Both love their sons and this love hinders in preventing them from achieving their goals. They are weak and are not willing to search for the truth and depend on their beauty and men to achieve their goals. In *Haider*, the wives of the missing husband are named *aadhi aurat*, the half-widows, as they are deprived of their status as a wife. Like Gertrude, Ghazala is not gloomed at her husband's loss, however, she acts stronger than Gertrude in the later part of the film when she decides according to her own will. In *Haider*, Ghazala sacrificed her life for her son by killing herself and his rivals in a bomb explosion. Ghazala has more psychological depths and mystery than Haider, which is found in Hamlet's Character in Shakespeare's play and this makes her share the position of the protagonist with Haider. More than Haider's psychology, it's her internal conflict that draws the viewer. The actions of Ghazala and Gertrude annoy their sons, but still, they do not ignore their mothers. The concealed hints of slight sexual connotations are evident in the mother-son relationships of both plays or one can interpret it in this way, they do not love their husbands, so they are in love with their sons instead. This is evident in Haider and Ghazala's relationship, as she kisses Haider like a lover. For Gertrude and Ghazala their strong will is shown to be the only option to become independent, whereas, for Ophelia and Arshia (Foakes, 1993, pp. 159-160) it seems that madness is the final solution to claim independence and repressed desires in a patriarchal society. Hamlet's dear friend Horatio is missing in *Haider* and Arshia acts as both as a lover and a friend she helps Haider like Ophelia and Horatio. Like Ophelia, Arshia was also bound with filial duties but despite all boundaries, she never deceived Haider and continued fighting alongside him till her death.

Roohdaar, played by Irfan Khan, is a good friend of Dr. Hilal (King Hamlet) and no character resembles Roohdaar in *Hamlet*. He is an ISI agent and can be considered to be King Hamlet's ghost in the play because King Hamlet's ghost tells Hamlet about his ruthless murder and in *Haider*, Roohdaar tells Haider about the murder of his father. He conveys his message to Haider, stimulating hatred in Haider towards his uncle,

Khuram. The name Roohdaar has symbolical connotations, Rooh means soul and he is the soul of Dr. Hilaal Meer as he says that he is a "Doctor's soul". This also has political connotations as Roohdaar is an ISI agent and Hilal Meer is Kashmiri. It curves the play towards the notion that Kashmir is the body and the soul is Pakistan, and both cannot lead a soulful life without each other. When both, Roohdar and Dr. Hilal are thrown into the Jhelum river, their soul and bodies come together to bring a ray of light and hope. Moreover, Roohdar's character is an embodiment of resistance that both Pakistanis and Kashmiris share against the hierarchy and power structures of India. Their ambition, direction, and enemy are the same, they are a part of the same body. Their unity is shown as integral to independence through the character of Roohdar. Moreover, this is also significant that the instigation of revenge is made by the character of Roohdaar as he tells Haider, "To take revenge for foul, unnatural murder by a serpent, a murderer."

Khuram, played by Kay Menon, "with his caracal hat and white sherwani, tapered beard and venomous eyes", resembles a merciless leader (Alter, 2014, p. xvii). He has a fake smile that misguides innocent people visiting him for help. He informed the Indian Military about the suspect in Hilaal's home and fulfilled his wish to marry Ghazala. Both Claudius and Khuram Meer are ambitious politicians with lust for sex desires and power, however, they seem affectionate in their love for their beloveds. Claudius married Gertrude for the throne but in Haider, Khuram loved Ghazala more sincerely. As the film progresses, both fear the protagonists' craziness leading them to even worse. Both encourage Laertes to avenge his father's death. Their lust for power and ambition leads to a great disaster and they lose their beloveds (Taebi, Ghandeharion, and Badrlou, 2016, 5). Claudius as an embodiment of evil dies at the end of *Hamlet*, whereas in the *Haider* he lives, as he changes his ideology to accepting his mother's advice he got in his teens, "Intekam se intekam paeda hota hai!" In *Hamlet* and *Haider*, Claudius and Khuram wanted to kill their Nephew and to have full control of Gertrude and Ghazala, respectively. Claudius dies in the end but Khuram lives and repents when he is on the verge of dying. Haider and Hamlet forgive the lives of their uncle in the middle of the play upon seeing their uncle praying. They are students who come home after the calamity of their father. Hamlet is a prince and Haider is a common man. Hamlet is idealistic, gloomy, and cynical and Haider is aggressive, passionate, and rational. As far as insanity is concerned, Hamlet confuses the audience as they are not able to distinguish whether he is insane or he is pretending insanity throughout the play. Whereas, for Haider, it is evident that he pretends insanity as he uses his rational self when required along with his psychological drama. Haider and Hamlet differ due to their situations concerning the political context they are placed in. Of course, there are notable differences between the two stories. Hamlet is an indecisive character whereas Haider is quicker to take action. Unlike Hamlet, Haider is a simple fellow and he identifies that he aims to avenge his father and goes after it. Pervez Lone is Polonius, Liaqat is Laertes and the roles of Salman and Salman, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are caricatures and less of characters. Salams represent Indian actor, Salman Khan. Both Salman and Salman are hairdressers and are seen busy listening to, singing, and dancing to Salman Khan movie songs. Fortinbras is not seen in the movie. Parvez is a police inspector who helps Khuram with his daughter Arshia.

One of the most conspicuous soliloquies is the "to be or not to be" scene in *Hamlet*. In *Haider*, the "to be or not to be" scene is turned from a soliloquy to a confessional and motivational oratory presented in front of a Kashmiri crowd in the market square. The speech is public, emotional, psychological drama, political, social, and personal. Haider ties a hangman's rope around his throat and considers it as an imaginary microphone. He also holds a boom box and a cassette player. Much like Hamlet, Haider wanted to be heard. As *Haider* presents political and revolutionary connotations, the soliloquy is

converted into a public speech. Moreover, as Khuram is not only guilty of snatching Haider's parents from him, but the life of thousands of Kashmiris is ruined by him, therefore "to be or not to be" is not just Haider's conflict but the nation shares it. The phrase is also appropriated by Salman and Salman, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern in *Haider* when Haider heads towards Roohdaar, Salman and Salman follow him as agents of Indian forces. They are unable to decide which path they have to choose as they pronounce, "to go or not to go... to go or not to go." The speech is a type of skit that mixes satire, burlesque, and highly serious and political content. As an indigenous writing, the scene takes the liberty to appropriate it in its language. Haider tells the people that "Chutzpah" is the one whose mother deceives his father and builds an intimate relationship with his uncle. He gives a foreboding to the public to recognize the person who has deceived them and those who have strong ties with their enemies. He proclaims to the audience and the public that "humara masla hai Chutzpah", and "Chutzpah is our problem." The director has tried to make the movie more likable for indigenous and sub-continental audiences. For this reason, it was essential to relate to their context. Apart from appropriations of the standard dialogues, the horizon has been widened by presenting the dialogues with a mixture of Hindi, Urdu, and English dialects (lines of *Hamlet*), however, *Hamlet* is written in pure old English. Haider uses, "To be or not to be," and the lines, "Frailty, thy name is woman," originally spoken by Hamlet. But whichever language is used, it suits the context of the film, the characters, the situations, and their own emotions in the film.

The film has many hit songs and their lyrics reflect the conflict and tragedy of Haider and Kashmir. "khuul kabhi to," features Haider and Arshia pictured in snow-laden trees and rivers. Haider praises Arshia comparing her beauty with Kashmir. "Bismill" is a very dark political proclamation about the extra-judicial killings serving the purpose of "Play within a play." It is an appropriation of the "mouse trap" scene, where Haider tells the story of a king who murdered his elder brother and married the Queen. In *Hamlet*, the song was meant to observe the guilty faces of Khuram and Ghazala. "Jhelum," tells the tragic story of Kashmir's traumatic life, and with "Aaoo na," the movie reaches its climax in the gravedigger scene. The song is recorded in a graveyard, where the grave diggers lament the mortality of human life. Haider's house destroys which symbolizes Kashmir's destruction. In flashbacks, his happy childhood appears before him when he returns to Kashmir, in the ruined house, and walks through it. Another flashback appears when Bhardwaj describes the brutalities of the detention center. Hilaal and Roohdaar were tortured in the detention center by the security forces. Roohdaar's voice-over highlights the trauma and informs Haider of his mother's relationship with his uncle. Bhardwaj saves time by adjusting the events in two and a half hours through small visual clips and flashbacks.

After analyzing Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Vishal Bhardwaj's adaptation named *Haider*, it becomes evident that the film is not true to *Hamlet*, but it is true to the context it is placed. Though Bhardwaj tremendously draws several parallels with *Hamlet* the deviations are much stronger, for the context is much different and the political deviations are spread on a broader horizon as it involves the politics of Kashmir, India, and Pakistan. Moreover, there is an indigenous identity continuously resisting and juggling between the national identities which adds to the conflict in *Haider*. However, despite the alterations in the settings, dialects, locations, music, events, character, and end, the film does retain the notion of Shakespeare's tragedy. Bhardwaj's film is a bold attempt to depict the torture of Kashmiris people and life through Shakespeare's play amongst extremely Hindu fanatics. In my opinion, Bhardwaj and Roohdaar are much alike in the sense that Roohdaar instigates and validates revenge and Bhardwaj too instigates and validates revenge throughout the play but in the end, Bhardwaj deviates

the plot through a feminine mouthpiece advocating forgiveness. The unification of revenge tragedy with the calamity and tragedy of Kashmir is a wonderful idea for which Bhardwaj is acclaimed worldwide. In the words of Dey:

“The dance drama enacted by actor Shahid Kapoor was embellished with every theatrical technicality. The open-air platform of the Martand Sun Temple, hundred-foot-tall puppets, and infusion of Dumbhal folk dance which originally belongs to the Wittal tribes of Kashmir enriches the viewers with a cine-theatrical wonder. All these techniques not only uphold the priceless Kashmiri traditions but also fulfill their original purpose of evoking guilt conscience in the newly married couple. Thus Vishal Bhardwaj wonderfully transcends the play within a play into an extravagant cine-theatrical version.” (Dey, 2014, pp. 278)

Alfred does not appear in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. He is a small boy and a tragedian who is forced to act in feminine roles and he finds his dressing very humiliating. An ambassador from England is seen in both plays. Fortinbras marches his troops across Denmark and Poland. The tragedians are more childlike and playful in Stoppard’s comedy and they mime their part in *The Murder of Gonzago*. Shakespeare Claudius, Hamlet’s uncle murders King Hamlet by marrying Hamlet’s mother, he sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to investigate Hamlet’s behavior. After Hamlet murders Polonius, Claudius sends Hamlet to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The Players’ counterpart in Shakespeare’s play is the actor who delivers the Pyrrhus speech for Hamlet. In Stoppard’s film, this character leads the actors’ wandering troupe. He is a major character because he speaks clearly about truth and theatrical delusion. He is proud of his acting but is frustrated due to his poor financial condition and his dependence on the audience. Like Guildenstern, he is very philosophical but he is also practical and resilient. In *Hamlet* and Stoppard’s version, Polonius is killed by Hamlet as he mistakes him for Polonius and he is the father of Ophelia. Polonius is garrulous, old, and foolish in both plays. In both versions, Gertrude is Hamlet’s mother and wife of King Claudius. As the central character is not Hamlet in Tom Stoppard’s film, much importance is not given to Gertrude, Ophelia, or Claudius. The main plot revolves around Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. In Stoppard’s film, Hamlet is depicted more playfully. In Stoppard’s version, Horatio is Hamlet’s finest friend in Shakespeare’s play and he occurs only to utter the last speech in the film. Ophelia is Polonius’ daughter and Hamlet’s girlfriend in both versions. Stoppard omits almost all her Shakespearean lines in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and she mimes her scenes in most instances. In Stoppard’s play, Guildenstern is philosophical and rational and wishes for order in the universe. He has a dry and sarcastic sense of humor and is resilient, quick to anger, and panics when he feels overwhelmed. He is a chatterbox who rambles at length, usually without making any sense. Guildenstern uses parables and analogies to resolve the mysteries. In Stoppard’s version, Rosencrantz is timid, naive, simple, and less thoughtful than Guildenstern. He dislikes Guildenstern philosophical conversation but he is very concerned about his unhappiness. The two central characters Rosencrantz and Guildenstern appear to be a single character. Barnes says many of their features are similar as they pass their time by playing questioning games with each other, mimicking other characters, interrupting each other, and at times remaining silent for long periods.

In Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Hamlet requests the players to perform the play within a play to find out whether Claudius has killed Hamlet’s father. In Stoppard’s adaptation, he preserves this action, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not aware of Hamlet’s motives. Stoppard’s audience is aware of Hamlet’s reasons for performing and the outcomes of its performance, whereas Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are ignorant of these details. Moreover, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern watch the making of *The Murder*

of *Gonzago* and witness the prediction of their deaths but they are not able to recognize this intricate foreboding and eventually, they are confused to see the same clothes worn by the actors of *Gonzago* as themselves. The audience watches a play in which characters watch a play and the audience is twice removed from the action. The play uses the audience's knowledge of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to anticipate the upcoming action of the plot. The audience recognizes the conversations about death before the death scene of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and the audience is expected to be aware of what happens to them in advance. The title, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* instigates the audience to foresee what otherwise they would not see since it clues the audience about the ultimate conclusion of the play (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*).

In Tom Stoppard's film (1990), there is little and a lot to say at once, evident in the fact that there is neither any purpose nor any proper beginning. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not even aware of their reasons for being there and they are pictured as two men killing the time in an area without having any visible character. The play looks absurd from the beginning. The fate and the purpose of these men seem concealed and sealed in the form of words in the letter and this concealed fact is evident in other adaptations of *Hamlet* and the Shakespearean play as well. For this reason, death becomes the only option as it was the only option for these men and Ophelia in *Hamlet*. The film not only shows Guildenstern and Rosencrantz as the central characters putting Shakespeare's *Hamlet* aside, but it also displays the play within the play as the central scene pushing other Shakespearean scenes aside. This is a rare play in which the performing world becomes a substantial, suggestive, and conclusive metaphor for the presence of a man in the universe. Usually, Shakespearean plays are performed on a bare stage for theatrical performances but the films are commercialized and they utilize extravagant settings, techniques, and machinery. Whereas Tom Stoppard's film is made by using a minimalistic setting, meaningless dialogues with dark comic and at times sarcastic tones, lack of character motivations, and condemned characters throughout the film. The strategies and the structure are adopted opposite of *Hamlet*, which has a beginning, aim, and structure.

Both plays strive for the theme of individuality but in different styles. *Hamlet* questions in *Hamlet*, 'What piece of work is a man...' (Shakespeare, 269). Guildenstern asks the same question when Rosencrantz asks, 'Who do you think you are?' (Stoppard, 1990). Much has transformed in the centuries between 1600 and 1990, but the attitudes to gender have not much changed. Most obvious is the lifting of the prohibition for women performing on the stage. Staging all the male version plays today would have been impossible in these times. Yet if no role for women is seen in Shakespeare's time, then in Stoppard's film there are no parts for women seen in Stoppard's version. Gender seems irrelevant in it. The homosexual possibilities are explored by the critics as their crossdressing is explicitly canvassed and one can say that concern with the human conditions seems gender-neutral (Mitchell, 2006, p. 53). The female characters are seen in the play within the play in the film but Stoppard gives very few scenes to the female actors in the main plot of the film.

Identities appear to be more complex in Tom Stoppard's version, but *Hamlet*'s character is given only a few entrances (merely six and a few lines). The complexity of his character is also erased for this reason. Most of Stoppard's viewers visualize *Hamlet* through secondary sources, through the discussion of Claudius and Polonius or Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's narrative is seen in the same manner in *Hamlet*. If one were to see only Stoppard's play, *Hamlet*'s character would be very elusive compared to his presence in Shakespeare's tragedy. *Hamlet* shows up at the end of Act I. In Stoppard's film, *Hamlet*'s motives are not clear and he is more

mysterious and elusive. The starting scene of Hamlet's interaction with King's ghost is not mentioned in Stoppard's play. Stoppard, rather considers the ghost as really an apparition or a hallucination. Eventually, with the absence of the Ghost, Hamlet loses his hesitance, contemplation, and conflict which is evident in *Hamlet*. None of his soliloquies are performed in Stoppard's play (Gaines, 2013, p. 25).

Tom Stoppard raises those contextual issues that Shakespeare was not able to raise to maintain the moral framework in his times, including the absurdist view of life and the convention of absurd theatre. The sixteenth-century theatre is compared to the Absurd drama and the tragedy of a prince is compared to the tragi-comedy of a common man. Texts are altered and adapted for different purposes, contexts, and distinct audiences. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* falls into the category of a tragi-comedy. The film turns Shakespeare's play from a psychological drama into an absurd drama. This strikes the viewer as mingling two elements, absurd and tragedy. The language of both versions is very different. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is written in the typical old English style and is loaded with rhetoric and lofty dialogues but in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, the language is improper and informal and the viewer takes pleasure in listening to the language. Moreover, in *Hamlet*, the language is poetic, meaningful, and straightforward. Tom Stoppard's film is written for not only just contemporary but also more intelligent audiences as he uses word games, wit, and ambiguous expressions related to truth and reality. Satire is apparent in the film as Tom Stoppard raises the question through Rosencrantz and Guildenstern of how important is a man in the universe and leaves it to the spectators to decide whether the characters have significance or not. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern play a question game and do not give away any truths, the same is the case with *Hamlet*, as Hamlet is constantly juggling between the truths in the whole play and when he finds the truth, he juggles for the resolution. Stoppard draws two minor characters from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, making them the protagonists and giving them a separate and new identity. The character of Hamlet is reduced to a minor character in Tom Stoppard's production. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* stand opposite Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, yet it has few similarities well. Both are historical, social, and dramatic and also have a few common themes and characters. In both versions, the lives of Guildenstern and Rosencrantz end tragically and the tragedy befalls them due to their connection with Hamlet. Their deaths arouse grief and sympathy, and the audience grieves for them. What happens offstage in *Hamlet* is performed onstage in the film, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*.

Conclusion

Haider, a film adaptation of *Hamlet*, is set in the 16th century Kashmir and follows the story of a Kashmiri named Haider who seeks revenge after his father's disappearance and his mother's betrayal. The film has received mixed reviews, with some viewing it as a "true cinema" and others as an egalitarian step for India to recognize Kashmir in films. Haider's journey is marked by conflicting statements about his father's death and his relationship with his mother, Ghazala. Despite these challenges, Haider's determination ultimately leads to the death of Khuram, who is injured and killed by his own men. Critics argue that the film is too political and not political enough, with the central issue being politics and violence rather than the psychology and emotions of *Hamlet*. On the other hand, Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is a 1990 film adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, blending absurdity and tragedy. The play follows the story of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who discover themselves on a ship unsure of their fate. They are ordered to kill Hamlet by Claudius but refuse to obey. The film lacks purpose and structure, with minimalistic settings, meaningless dialogues, and condemned characters. Both versions aim for individuality but in different styles,

with Stoppard's version focusing on gender and homosexual possibilities. Both versions end tragically, causing grief and sympathy for the audience.

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