

**THE RISE OF TRAGICOMEDY AND
ITS AVATARS IN THE 20TH CENTURY
EUROPEAN DRAMA: CHEKHOV,
PIRANDELLO AND STOPPARD**

(Master's Thesis)

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DUMLUPINAR UNIVERSITY
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Master's Thesis

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STOPPARD**

Thesis Advisor:
Asst. Prof. Dr. Tatiana GOLBAN

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Kabul ve Onay

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ÖZGEÇMİŞ

1981 yılında Kütahya'da doğdu. İlk, orta ve lise eğitimini Kütahya'da tamamladıktan sonra 2000 yılında lisans eğitimine Ankara'da Atılım Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı bölümünde burslu olarak başladı ve 2005 yılında mezun oldu. 2006 yılında Dumlupınar Üniversitesi Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatı bölümünde Yüksek Lisans programına katıldı. 2005 yılından itibaren Kütahya'da özel eğitim kurumunda İngilizce öğretmeni olarak çalışmaktadır.

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ÖZET

TRAJİKOMEDİNİN BİR TÜR OLARAK ORTAYA ÇIKIŞI VE 20. YÜZYIL AVRUPA TİYATROSU'NDAKİ YANSIMALARI: CHEKHOV, PIRANDELLO VE STOPPARD

KARATAŞ, Sevda

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Bu tez, trajikomedinin ayrı bir tür olarak ortaya çıkışı ve Chekhov'un *Martı*, Pirandello'nun *Altı Karakter Yazarını Arıyor* ve Stoppard'ın *Rosencrantz ve Guildenstern Öldüler* adlı eserlerinde olduğu gibi trajikomedinin 20. yüzyılda Avrupa Tiyatrosu'ndaki modern yansımaları üzerine yoğunlaşmıştır.

Bu çalışma trajikomedinin çeşitli tanımlarını verdikten sonra bahsi geçen oyunların modern trajikomedinin metinsel ve teorik analizinin verildiği iki ana bölüme ayrılmıştır. Birinci Bölüm, çeşitli eserlerde örneklendirildiği gibi trajikomedinin başlangıcı ve ortaya çıkmasındaki etkilerine değinerek ve terimin çeşitli tanımlarını sağlayarak trajikomedinin edebi bir tür olarak gelişimini içerir. Birinci bölümün ikinci kısmında ise, bahsedilen yazarların trajikomedinin gelişimine olan katkılarıyla ilgili temel bilgi oyunlardan örneklerle sağlanmıştır.

İkinci bölümdeki ana konu teorik, tiyatral ve karşılaştırmalı metotlar uygulayarak oyunların karşılaştırmalı bir analizini aktarmaktır. Bu açıdan, bu bölümün ilk kısmında, "meta tiyatro" teriminin yaratıcısı Abel, ve tiyatro eleştirmenleri Calderwood, Pavis ve Hornby tarafından yapılan tanımlarına değindikten sonra oyunların meta tiyatroya ait özellikleri incelenmiştir. Meta tiyatronun tanımlarının ışığında, bahsi geçen oyunlar terimin izleyicideki trajikomik etkisine olan katkısını göz önünde bulundurularak incelenmiştir. Bu bölümün ikinci kısmında, dramatik diyaloglardaki dil, sahne düzeni, dekor ve kostümler gibi izleyicinin üzerindeki trajikomik etkiyi zenginleştiren tiyatral yöntemler karşılaştırmalı teorik teknikler uygulayarak incelenmiştir.

Sonuç bölümünde, esas incelemelerde elde edilen bulgular ışığında ve bu bulguları karşılaştırmak vasıtasıyla, bahsedilen oyunlar Chekhov, Pirandello ve Stoppard tarafından uygulanan benzer ve farklı teknikleri belirterek modern trajikomedinin örnekleri olarak karşılaştırılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Trajikomedinin, Chekhov, Pirandello ve Stoppard, meta tiyatro

ABSTRACT

**THE RISE OF TRAGICOMEDY AND ITS AVATARS IN THE 20TH CENTURY
EUROPEAN DRAMA: CHEKHOV, PIRANDELLO AND STOPPARD**

KARATAŞ, Sevda

MA Thesis, Division of Western Languages and Literature

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The present thesis focuses on the rise of tragicomedy as a separate genre and its avatars in the 20th century European Drama namely in Chekhov's *The Seagull*, Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*.

The study consists of two main chapters in which the textual and theoretical analysis of the plays under consideration as modern tragicomedies are rendered after conveying various definitions of the genre. The first part of Chapter I includes the development of tragicomedy as a genre by pointing out the very essence of the genre and the influences on its emergence illustrated in various examples in European Drama and by providing diverse definitions of the term. In the second part of the Chapter, the basic information concerning the contribution of the aforementioned playwrights to the development of modern tragicomedy is pointed out with the illustrations from the plays.

The core concern in Chapter II is to convey a comparative analysis of the plays applying theoretical, theatrical and comparative methods. In this respect, in the first phase of the chapter, the metatheatrical characteristics of the plays in question are examined after providing various definitions of the term "metatheatre" by its inventor Abel and the drama critics namely Calderwood, Pavis and Hornby. In the lights of the definitions of metatheatre, the mentioned plays are examined considering the contribution of the term to the tragicomic response. In the second part of Chapter II, the theatrical devices in the plays such as language, stage directions, scenery and the costumes which reinforce the tragicomic effect on the audience are discussed in compare and contrast analyses applying theoretical techniques.

In the conclusion part, in the light of the findings in the main body, and by comparing and contrasting these findings, the plays are compared as the examples of modern tragicomedy indicating the common and different techniques employed by Chekhov, Pirandello and Stoppard.

Keywords: Tragicomedy, Chekhov, Pirandello and Stoppard, metatheatre

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INTRODUCTION

Aristotle, in *Poetics*, characterizes tragedy as “mimesis of an action which is elevated, complete, and of magnitude; in language embellished by distinct forms in its sections; employing the mode of enactment, not narrative; and through pity and fear accomplishing the catharsis of such emotions” (48-9); as opposed to its sister tragedy, comedy as “mimesis of baser but not wholly vicious characters” (45).

However, as a slippery term, it is difficult to define the genre tragicomedy as the name has appeared in various works for diverse purposes since Plautus coined the term in *Amphitryon* to reflect his violation of decorum; in addition, the genre can include the characteristics of different modes such as pastoral, melodramatic, romantic and particularly tragic and comic. Therefore, to elucidate the term and its characteristics and to provide a better understanding of what the genre is, it is necessary to construe the tragicomic theory by touching upon those who are its theorists, opponents, proponents, practitioners providing definitions and examples of the genre throughout the history from its inception to the modern period.

However, it is not the primary aim of this study to present a historical and generic development of tragicomedy as a response to the critical judgements among the critics. Rather, by defining the inherent features determined throughout the development history of the genre, to reflect the characteristics of modern tragicomedy more vividly analyzing Chekhov’s *The Seagull*, Pirandello’s *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*.

Though tragicomedy loses ground in the eighteenth century and it is replaced by diverse forms such as romantic drama, the drame and melodrama in the nineteenth century, Chekhov and Pirandello, like many dramatists, prefer tragicomedy since they both consider that tragicomedy is the convenient and comprehensive form portraying the ups and downs of life and both the tragic and comic responses of the people to human existence.

After the Second World War, the dramatists of the period such as Dürrenmatt and Ionesco and so on see the embodiment of tragic elements in a tragedy impossible regarding the comic and the tragic as the same, indiscernible; thereby the presentation of the tragicomedy on the stage is unavoidable. As a result, the influence of these notions on Stoppard’s dramatic representations, particularly in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*

are Dead, can be traced.

In his preference of tragicomedy as the genre of his play, a playwright can apply distinctive methods as Hirst posits in his book entitled *Tragicomedy: the Critical Idiom*: “he can either employ a process of selection which leads to a careful synthesis of elements from the contrasted genres, or – conversely – he can create a volatile mix of tragedy and comedy so that different effects are contrasted (xi). As a result, the chosen plays by the aforementioned playwrights share familiar central examples of modern tragicomedy as well as distinctive qualities taking into account of their techniques in their plays.

In choosing the plays under consideration, the common and differing points in terms of defining the characteristics of modern tragicomedy are taken into consideration; particularly and obviously, Pirandello’s *Six Characters in Search of an Author* can be regarded as a source of influence on Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* taking into account of the handling of the theme of reality versus illusion. Besides, the use of play within a play is also employed in the three mentioned plays so as to debate over the nature of art and artist, the theatrical world and the actor and in Pirandello as a means of tragicomic effect.

The present study consists of a theoretical approach to tragicomedy and at the same time a practical level by making a comparison and contrast of the plays under consideration focusing on their theatrical qualities.

The structure of the thesis comprises of an introductory part explaining the aim of and methods applied in the study, followed by two chapters, each of them including a number of subchapters: the first part of Chapter I entitled *A Survey of the Rise of Tragicomedy as a Separate Genre* recounts the origins and influences providing the coming into existence of the form with various definitions of the genre, the final development of the kind as a separate genre in Renaissance and the re-emergence of tragicomedy in modern drama with the pens of Chekhov, Pirandello and Stoppard; the second part of the chapter deals with the analysis of the mentioned plays as the representations of tragicomedy in order to exemplify the methods applied by the playwrights. The next chapter named *The Comparative Analysis of the Plays under Consideration* provides an analysis of the metatheatrical qualities of the plays in relation to the tragicomic features of the plays in the first part of the chapter, the next

part provides a comparative analysis of the mentioned plays by taking into consideration of their theatrical features such as language, scenery, stage directions and costumes contributing the tragicomic presentations of the plays. These two chapters are followed by a conclusion part in which a comparative analysis of the mentioned play as the representatives of modern tragicomedy is provided by putting the affinities and differences between the applied methods by the playwrights. In this respect, the contribution of Chekhov, Pirandello and Stoppard as dramatists to the flourish of tragicomedy will be investigated.

The applied methods in the research are a combination of methods preferred by taking into account of the purpose of the study: biographical, comparative and as well as a number of methods and principles related to theatre and drama criticism, text analysis.

The content of the present thesis is reinforced by the theories and criticism of the worldwide accepted critics and theoreticians among whom stands James L. Calderwood, Marvin T. Herrick, Eric Bentley, David L. Hirst, Patrice Pavis, Manfred Pfister.

CHAPTER I
THE RISE AND CONSOLIDATION OF TRAGICOMEDY AS A SEPARATE
GENRE

1.1 The Rise of Tragicomedy as a Separate Genre

A third variety of drama ... begins as tragedy with scraps of fun in it ... and ends in comedy without mirth in it, the place of mirth being taken by a more or less bitter and critical irony.

Shaw, George Bernard

Tragedy and comedy, since the ancient times, have been approached as the two prominent forms of drama - to Aristotle, tragedy as an imitation of a serious action rousing pity and fear in the spectator and purging them of these emotions with the effect of catharsis; and comedy, in contrast to its companion, as the drama of delight with its lower personas. However, there has been always an intermediate realm apart from the two opposing points, tragicomedy.

The commencement of tragicomedy dates back to the very beginning of the drama although it is called “a third variety of drama” separating it from its ancient roots. Though first realized as a separate genre in the Renaissance, the very essence of the form and the influences on its emergence can be traced back to the classical times. It owes its name to the classical dramatists such as Aristotle and Plautus; from the morality and mystery plays of the Middle Ages, it obtains its traditions and distinctive characteristics; with the help of the humanists in the Renaissance as the faithful imitators of the classical models, it reaches its final development as a distinct form of drama; and eventually in the late nineteenth and twentieth century, tragicomedy reemerges with the pens of modern dramatists such as Ibsen, Dürrenmatt, Ionesco, Chekhov, Pirandello, Beckett, Stoppard, Pinter and Shaw.

1.1.1. The Connection between the Classical Drama and Tragicomedy

The connection between tragicomedy and the parent drama depends on the rigid distinction between tragedy and comedy since the drama of the classical period was a time of pure tragedy and pure comedy. By determining strict rules, the two outstanding forms of the ancient drama theoretically differentiated from one another. At this point, these formulas of decorum, to hinder any violation from the determined rules, contributed to the creation of an intermediate type, which is impossible to name it either tragedy or comedy. In other words, while trying to

distinguish tragedy and comedy from each other, and thus to create pure forms of drama, the classical writers unintentionally gave birth to a form whose structure they did not approve. Aristotle takes the first step in his *Poetics* in order to present his objection of the mingling of the distinctive characteristics of tragedy and comedy in one dramatic form. In this sense, the first phase of the three-fold heritage of tragicomedy in the history of drama was initiated. Despite the fact that Aristotle did not call tragicomedy by name, he renders the features of the form as following:

Second-best is the structure held the best by some people: the kind with a double structure like the *Odyssey* and with opposite outcomes for the good and bad characters. It is thought to be best because of the weakness of the audience: the poets follow and pander to the taste of, the spectators. Yet this is not the pleasure to expect from tragedy, but is more appropriate to comedy where those who are deadliest enemies in the plot, such as Orestes and Aegisthus, exit at the end as new friends, and no one dies at anyone's hand. (*Poetics* 14, 73)

As concluded from the passage, Aristotle's aim is obviously to denote his objection to the "second" type of tragedy with a double plot and happy ending. Nevertheless, the advocates of the kind use Aristotle's approach to this kind of tragedy, as Ristine touches upon the subject in his *English Tragicomedy: Its Origin and History*, in support of tragicomedy:

It is to be noticed in this passage that Aristotle, while expressly stating his disapprobation of this kind of tragedy, observes that it usually passes for the best, and excuses its popularity on the grounds of the weakness of the spectators for a play of happy ending, happy at least for the virtuous. Popular taste in the drama apparently has remained the same since the time of Aristotle. It became a commonplace in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to apologize for tragicomedy, or indeed any mixture of gravity and mirth...." (Ristine, 1910:3)

In addition to the Aristotle's contribution to the inception of the genre, tragicomedy is indebted its name to another classical influence, Plautus. He is regarded as the inventor of the term. Plautus remarks the genre of his play from the mouth of his character Mercury in his prologue to *Amphitryon*:

Why have you contracted your brows? Is it because I said this would be a Tragedy? I am a God, and I'll change it. This same, if you wish it, from a Tragedy I'll make it a Comedy, with all the lines the same. Whether ye it were so, or not? But I am too foolish, as though I didn't know, who am a God, that you wish it; upon this subject I understand what your feelings

are. I will make this to be a mixture – a Tragi-comedy. For me to make it entirely to be a Comedy, where Kings and Gods appear, I do not deem right. What then? Since here the servant has a part as well, just as I said, I'll make it to be a Tragi-comedy. (Amphitryon, 5)

Apparently, Plautus' goal was not to give existence to a new genre, yet to reflect his violation of decorum in a ridiculous way. Furthermore, Plautus, in determining the genre of his play, takes his protagonist's status as a criterion on the grounds that he peoples his play with the divine characters of tragedy and low personas of comedy together creating a new combination.

It is obvious that the ancient drama is a starting point for tragicomedy in its coming into existence as a separated genre and in its challenge against the opponents of the free drama. Moreover, the discussion of the amalgamation of tragedy and comedy in one dramatic work by the ancient authors functions not only as a justification of pure drama by those who are against free drama but also as a defence for Renaissance tragicomedies.

1.1.2. Medieval Drama as the Ancestor of Tragicomedy

After evaluating the classical drama as a grandparent in the development of tragicomedy throughout history, the second significant, and at the same time, interesting step is to make up a connection between our concern, tragicomedy and the medieval drama. It is worth to pay attention as it is easier to construct a bridge between the ancient and Renaissance drama than medieval drama regarding the fact that the defenders of tragicomedy were closely adherent to the classical rules. However, Ristine, in his book related to the development of the form, reversed the assumption that the blending of tragic and the comic in the same work by them is not an imitation of the classical norms, instead, the medieval dramatic traditions:

(...) for all their claim that they were imitating the practise of the ancients in blending the tragic and the comic, were in reality only continuing the dramatic tradition of the middle ages, which knew no connexion with the drama of Greece and Rome....In almost every feature the latter-day drama, in spite of the efforts of humanists to conform it to the classical models and ideals, betrays the dominant characteristics of its medieval ancestry. The discursiveness of the subject matter, the blending of tragic and the comic, the love of poetic justice, the disregard for humanistic notions of decorum, and the other departures from classical ideas of dramatic form

and content, which are so typical of the Elizabethan stage.”(Ristine, 1910:11).

In this sense, Miracle or Mystery and Morality plays are the keywords depicting not only the features of medieval drama but also tragicomedy. Firstly, tragicomedy's consisting of a serious subject matter with a happy ending links it to miracle and morality plays. The miracle plays or the mystery plays- miracle is the medieval word used in England and mystery is the French word meaning “craft”- are the dramatization of the incidents taken from Bible to transmit the moral lesson to those who need. The subject matter being derived from the biblical narratives is inevitably serious creating tragic conditions and the moral purpose of the plays requires a happy ending. The story of the Abraham sacrificing his son, Isaac on Mount Moriah and God's replacing him with a lamb is a striking model for the “averted” tragedy as, Foster affirms in the book named *The Name and Nature of Tragicomedy*, a parallel can be drawn between the story and Guarini's definition of tragicomedy, particularly “the danger not the death”. For instance, *The Second Shepherd's Play* includes two stories one of which is the Nativity and the other is the non-biblical story of a thief called Mak. The play opens with the complaint of the three shepherds about daily life as an example of the anachronism. They are guarding their sheep when Mak joins them. Mak steals a sheep while the shepherds are sleeping and take it home to his wife. When the shepherds arrive at Mak's house to see if he has stolen the sheep they are fooled into believing that the sheep is a newborn baby that Mak's wife has just delivered. Yet, Mak and his wife's lie does not last long and Mak's punishment is that the shepherds simply place Mak inside a blanket and toss him up and down a few times. Suddenly, the story switches from the comic plot to the serious story of the Nativity when the shepherds are informed about the birth of Christ in Bethlehem by an angel. The play ends with the shepherds greeting Baby Jesus in the manger and singing their song.

Besides, the juxtaposition of tragic and comic elements and characters with the gradual secularization of the religious drama can be counted as the later influences of the Medieval drama as mentioned in many essays on the subject:

Comedy gradually became more and more a part of these plays as the

various guilds sought larger audiences.... The comic elements of these plays are worth noting, especially since many of them passed down into Elizabethan and Shakespearean drama...A higher form of comedy appears when the playwright's art enables him to present amusing and laughable characters. Here we have the beginning of the clownish comic character, perhaps best typified by Mak from *The Second Shepherd's play*. (<http://www.montreat.edu/dking/MiddleEnglishLit/NotesonMedievalDrama.html>)

In these plays, the two opposing characteristics are successfully intermingled completing each other and creating a natural and spontaneous effect. The scene of Mak's stealing the sheep and the scene in which he is trying to deceive the three shepherds pretending that the sheep is their baby, shepherds' punishment of Mak is the most vivid example portraying the comic elements in a tragic story. Further, the transition from the comic to the serious with the coming of the angel announcing the birth of Christ is not reflected as separated events in the work.

The morality play is another form exemplifying the same situations with miracle plays, which reached their peak in the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries and gave way to the morality plays. They are the reflections of the battle between the good and the evil with abstract qualities such as the Seven Deadly Sins and Seven Morals in the form of moral allegory as reflected best in *Everyman*. These qualities are suitable for both the tragic mood and the victorious end with a moral point. At the commencement of the play, the messenger utters a speech to the audience concerning that man is becoming sinful, the typical theme for the Medieval stage. God commands his messenger, Death to go to Everyman and inform him about his judgement. Everyman, hearing this, strives to bribe Death-personification like the other characters except for Everyman. Death rejects his offer, yet advises him to search someone as a companion in his journey and to speak for his virtues. At the end of the play, in spite of the temptations and the obstacles, Everyman completes his symbolical journey with the help of the Knowledge and Good Deeds.

The influential mark of the religious drama on the development of tragicomedy can be summed up in two ways. Firstly, the didactic purpose of both the morality and the miracle plays needs a serious subject with a happy

denouement, which is the quality tragicomedy shares. The play does not end in the same manner; instead, what is tragic is resolved with the happy ending. The second trait which functions as a linkage between the tragicomedy and the drama in Middle Ages is the blending of mirth and sorrow in the same work. The literary critic Fletcher shares the same notion saying that:

they exerted a permanent influence in that they formed certain stage traditions which were to modify or largely control the great drama of the Elizabethan period and to some extent of later times. Among these traditions were the disregard for unity, partly of action, but especially of time and place; the mingling of comedy with even the intensest scenes of tragedy; the nearly complete lack of stage scenery, with a resultant willingness in the audience to make the largest possible imaginative assumptions; the presence of certain stock figures, such as the clown; and the presentation of women's parts by men and boys. The plays, therefore, must be reckoned with in dramatic history. (Fletcher, 1916: 90)

Aristotle and Plautus in classical period, miracle and morality plays in Medieval drama played their role as a contributor to the manifestation of tragicomedy from different perspectives such as to bring in a name and distinct characteristics. Apart from what mentioned before, our next concern in the evolution of tragicomedy is the movement of *humanism*, which gave way not only to the revival of the classical norms but also of the defence of the legitimacy of tragicomedy as a genre. Before declaring tragicomedy as an independent form from its rivals, tragedy and comedy, and in order to avoid a gap between the stages in its development throughout history, it is necessary to survey the neo-Latin dramatic representations of the humanists since they model the tragicomic synthesis of the influence of the ancient and medieval stage.

1.1.3. Neo-Latin Tragicomedy

The stage revival of the ancient drama was initiated by the Italian humanist Pomponius Laetus in the late fifteenth century and continued with Verardi's attempts on Plautine and Senecan drama. Yet, it is impossible not to notice that his works are not absolute imitations of the ancients. With the Stuart's emphasis on the subject: "*The* influence of the simultaneous setting and the loose construction of medieval mysteries was still strong enough when Verardi was composing his

Historia Baetica and his *Fernandus Servatus* to cause these plays to be a combination of medieval and Senecan technique....” (Stuart, 1928:254) Verardi's *Fernandus Servatus* (1494) is considered as the first tragicomedy in Latin recounting the story of the assassination of the king of Spain, Ferdinand by a lunatic. Tisiphone persuades Ruffus to kill the king. Yet, he only wounds the king. The play ends happily with the recovery of the king by Saint James. In the play, the historical plot is used for a religious purpose with a happy denouement; additionally, the unity of place is disregarded.

In addition, Verardi, in the prologue to his *Historia Baetica*, boldly proclaimed that he disregarded the classical principles though he knew well, so tend to create neither tragedy nor comedy, instead tragicomedy, by quoting the Plautine term tragicomedy in his *Amphitryon*. That is to say, after centuries, the name tragicomedy was echoed in a Latin work by one of the humanists. These examples of the revival of tragicomedy in the humanist circle played a significant role in the expansion of the effect of tragicomedy in drama to different countries.

Nicholas Grimald's *Christus Redivivus* (1543) is another concern to expose the early heritage of tragicomedy. Though a devotee of the humanities, Grimald, in his dedicatory epistle, asserts that his play is a tragicomedy saying that:

great things ... interwoven with the small, joyous with sad, obscure with manifest, incredible with probable. Moreover, just as the first act yields to tragic sorrow (...) so the fifth and last adapts itself to delight and joy; likewise, in order that variety may be opposed to satiety, in all the other intermediate acts sad and cheerful incidents are inserted in turn.(quoted in Cartwright,1999:127)

In other words, Grimald disagrees with the Plautine approach to tragicomedy with the mixture of high and low characters, on the contrary, is close to the Aristotelian definition of the term, tragedy with a happy ending. Yet, unlike Aristotle, he favours tragicomedy instead of tragedy. Furthermore, in contrast to Plautus, as Merrill, in his *The Life and Poems of Nicolas Grimald*, stated he “seeks to justify his departure from the classic type, not only by giving his own views upon the subject, but by quoting those of his tutor, John Aerius. He defends the interspersing of tragic and comic scenes by saying that Aerius had found no breach

of good taste in this, and that he had cited the *Captivi* of Plautus as a precedent.”(Merrill, 1925:59)

Shortly, the neo-Latin dramatic examples of tragicomedy in the light of humanism function as a medium causing the reappearance of the term by quoting the classical productions and creating a fusion of the medieval and classical drama.

1.1.4. Renaissance and Later Developments

In Renaissance, by the pervasive influence of Humanism, the motto of the rebirth of the ancient models with mere imitations spread on the continent. The debate of the classical principles quickens the controversial rise and the development of tragicomedy especially in Italy, Spain and France.

In the discussion of the development of tragicomedy in Italy, two names are worthy to be mentioned. The first one is Giraldi Cinthio, whose ideas on tragedy and comedy were influenced by the Aristotelian theories as reflected on the prologue to his play, *Altile*:

If in some respect the author has wished to depart from the ancient usage...he has considered that this age requires it, in addition to the novelty of the tragedy just new born. But it seems to me that many of you have frowned at the mere name of tragedy, as if you had nothing to see but tears. But be content, for that which is to take place here today will have a happy ending: since tragedy does not carry with it so sad an augury that the outcome may not yet be fortunate. Such is the *Ion* of Euripides, and the *Orestes*, *Helen*, *Alcestis*, together with the *Iphigenia* and many others which I pass by silence. But if you are displeased that this has the name tragedy, if you like you may call tragicomedy (since our language uses such a term), from the ending in which it has conformed to comedy—after sorrows, full of joy. (Ristine, 1920:29)

Giraldi shares the same notion with Aristotle in that both dealt with the spectators' favour of the happy ending. However, Aristotle regarded it as the “weakness of the spectators” whereas Giraldi prefers the opposite pointing out the importance of the spectators' choice. Instead of tragedy, he offers the name tragicomedy by calling it as a term already existent in the vernacular. Giraldi supports the poet's departing from the classical norms according to the demands of

his audience and to the necessities of his time as many critics such as Maria illustrate using the simile of “tragedy dressed in new clothes”:

Indeed, once Italian Renaissance authors discovered classical drama and felt its appeal, they proceeded to make it appealing to their contemporaries by imbuing it with their own living traditions. They expressly sought to present Tragedy “dressed in new clothes,” namely, a new form, language, and situations reflecting their own realities. Trissino, in particular, spoke of the need to *Italianize* theater in order to make it intelligible and relevant to spectators. Anton Francesco Grazzini, among others, called for theatrical representations to reflect existing customs and institutions, noting that theater should mirror the culture in which it is produced. He reminded diehard imitators of the ancients that modern times, notably customs, religion, and way of life, were different from those of Aristotle and Horace.² And Giraldi, in the prologue to his *Altile*, insisted that classical rules were not so rigid that a poet could not depart from them in order to reflect the times and the taste of modern audiences. After all, he noted, the Romans departed from Greek dramatic traditions in order to represent their own living reality. (Maria, 2002:35)

In his work, *Discorsi* (1554), Giraldi goes on to discuss his ideas about tragedy and comedy:

Comedy deals with actions that occur in the ordinary life of citizens while tragedy deals with famous and regal deeds, for comedy presents private men and tragedy is concerned with kings and great persons; hence it would not be true to life, since great men are in the eyes of the world, that any strange deed could be done by them which would not, as soon as it is performed, come to the ears of everyone. Therefore, since tragedy deals with illustrious acts, by treating of persons who perform them, it does not appear that such acts can be brought on the stage without their having been known before. But private actions can properly be feigned because for the most part they do not get beyond private houses and in a short time are forgotten. Hence the poet has a large field for feigning what he wishes in order to bring new comic plots on the stage. (*Discorsi* (Venice, 1554) quoted in Herrick, 1964:82)

Giraldi distinguishes tragedy from comedy in that tragedy deals with famous deeds from history with kings and great persons, whereas comedy is concerned with ordinary life of citizens. Yet, Giraldi claims that the plot of the tragedy can also be fictitious as long as it is still true to life by quoting Aristotle's *Poetics*:

I hold nonetheless that the tragic plot can be feigned by the poet as well as the comic. Aristotle, judicious here as everywhere, conceded it in more than one passage of his *Poetics*, . . . though saying that comedy

feigns its fables and tragedy usually takes them from history, shows that it is not always necessary to take them from history. It appears to me also that reason is able to present the same truth to us with sufficient probability, because the power of moving tragic feelings depends only on imitation which does not depart from probability, and facts do not move the feelings without words fitly and poetically joined together. Therefore it seems to me that it is in the power of the poet to move at his wish the tragic feelings by means of a tragedy of which he feigns the plot, if that plot is in conformity with natural habits and not remote from what can happen and often does happen. And perhaps the feelings are moved to the adoption of good morals the more in proportion as by coming anew into the minds of the listeners the feigned plot gains for itself the greater attention.(Fletcher, 1964:82)

Like many of the critics, Fletcher also emphasizes Giraldi's tendency to tragicomic plot with his theory of "feigned plot" in a tragedy and calls Giraldi's *Orbecche* not a proper tragedy but "a feigned plot".

Giraldi defends his theory making a parallel between "tragedia di lieto fin" and "the second rank" named by Aristotle in his *Poetics* and he agrees with Aristotle in that it is the most preferred among the spectators. At this point, it is apparent that he attempts to justify his theory. He lists the characteristics of the "tragedy of happy ending": romantic plot embellished with surprise and suspense, happy ending in which the justice is restored and the mischievous deserves death.

Chorus: All is not joy
That tickles us; nor is all that annoy
That goes down bitter. True joy is a thing
That springs from virtue after suffering. (Guarini, 236)

The other important character after Giraldi in the history of tragicomedy is Battista Guarini with his famous work, *Il Pastor Fido* (The Faithful Shepherd) causing controversies among his contemporaries. He names his play firstly as a tragicomedy and secondarily pastoral. In this sense, *Il Pastor Fido* is a medium in which Guarini characterizes his innovation, pastoral tragicomedy. In the last part of his essay *Compendio* (1601), he illustrates in detail his formula while forming a tragicomedy with vivid examples from his play, *Il Pastor Fido*. In the first act, we are informed that Arcadia can only be released from its yearly sacrifice of a young woman when the children of the two divinities, Silvio and Amarilli, get married though they do not love each other. Amarilli loves Mirtillo whose parents are

unknown, he returns her love, but Amarilli must be faithful to Silvio as they are engaged, Corisca, a nymph is in love with Mirtillo, so rejects Satiro. Upon this situation, Satiro plans to avenge. In the first act, the audience is firstly introduced “*urgente cagione*”, in other words the crucial issue, to make them understand the plot and the other parts related to it. According to Guarini, the genre of the play must be clear from the start, the mingling of tragic and the comic. Guarini asserts that this act comprising of five scenes is alternately pleasant, serious, comic, tragic and wholly comic. In Act II, as a part of her plan, Corisca pretends to be a friend of Amarilli offering her to get rid of marrying Silvio. Apart from them, Dorinda, who falls in love with Silvio, and her comic servant, Lupino enter the stage. In the second act, Guarini strives to demonstrate that there is a direct proportion between the complexity of the plot and the interest of the audience. That is to say, the intricacy of the plot provides to keep alive the interest and the delight of the audience by functioning as a “*nuovo cibo*” which is a sort of fresh food for the spectator to chew. Guarini deals with four conditions restricting “*nuovo cibo*”: firstly, it must comprise of a combination of words and deeds; it must follow the unity of action; it must support the development of the intrigue; and finally, it must not let the revelation of the final. The loose woman in the play charged by Guarini functions as a medium to present the “*nuovo cibo*” to the spectator. In the third act, Corisca's plan is explained in detail. She sends Amirilli to the cave where she expects to catch Silvio with his lover, Lisetta after Corisca hears Amirilli's confession of her love for Mirtillo. On the other hand, she persuades Mirtillo that Amirilli and her lover meet in the cave secretly. Mirtillo sees Amirilli entering to the cave and decides to kill both and then himself. Satiro, who witnesses Mirtillo's entering to the cave misinterprets that he is the lover of Corisca. Upon this, he closes the mouth of the cave with a rock to trap Corisca and then goes off to inform the priest about the situation. Guarini employs “*ordine comico*”, comic plotting, and differentiating comedy from tragedy with the abrupt and unexpected twists of plot, cunning, lying, and deception. Act IV is the climax in the play in that Amarilli is condemned to death for lechery; thus, Corisca is victorious. Yet, Mirtillo wants to die instead of his lover, Amirilli. Guarini regards this act as “*tutto nodo*”, the climax of the scheming, by creating a contrast to the comic plotting of the previous act. The

audience intensely feels the threat of death with the reflections of suffering. The final act deals with Silvio's wounding of Dorinda resulting with his love for Dorinda. The tragedy turns into comedy with a happy denouement with the discovery of Mirtillo's being the lost son of Montano and Amirilli's innocence. Therefore, with their marriage, the ancient oracle can be fulfilled. Guarini defines the happy denouement with its three characteristics: "fondamento", the groundwork which must be handled in the previous act; the discovery of the truth which must be credible; the joy and delight of the discovery with the happy ending.

The plague cursed on the land, the oracle, the sacrifice are the elements belonging to tragedy. On the other hand, the use of the love chain resulting mistakes requires explanation through monologues and dialogues about love, its pain and joy between the lovers. These are the characteristics of Latin comedy. At the end of the story, the scene in which Mirtillo and Amarilli are discovered and condemned to death characterizes the Aristotelian tragedy. However, the fact that Mirtillo is the lost son of Montano, so of divine descent, is discovered. Thus, the tragedy turns into comedy with a happy denouement. Even so, Guarini does not end his play turning back to tragedy with Montano's persistent decision of the sacrifice of Mirtillo. Guarini, as a playwright of tragicomedy, introduces Tirenio, a blind soothsayer, to end his play with a happy ending with Tirenio's explanation that as Mirtillo is the son of Montano, their marriage is suitable. The complicated plot with the shifts from tragedy to comedy, and tragedy to comedy creates a synthesis of tragic and comic. David Hirst describes so:

He also points out the importance of Corisca's scheming: if she were left unhappy, a mixed tragedy ('di doppia costituzione') would result; nor should she be allowed, as a wicked character, to succeed. The mixture of tragedy and comedy is also successfully effected, notably in Corisca's scheming in Act III in which her object (the threatened death of Amirilli) is tragic, but her way of going about it is entirely within the conventions of comedy. The threatened deaths of Amirilli in Act IV and of Mirtillo in Act V culminate in Montano's horror that he must kill his own son. Finally, the situation is resolved by a blind old seer, Tirenio. Thus the tragic emotional appeal is first heightened and then tempered by the change of events. (Hirst, 1984:21)

The significance of *Il Pastor Fido* for the subject of the present thesis also lies on the ground that the work brought attacks along with itself causing

controversies about the criticism of the legitimacy of tragicomedy. Giasone Denores is one of the owners of the assault against Guarini's innovation. Denores, in his *Discorso* (1586), without displaying direct reference to Guarini's play, defines tragicomedy as a “monstrous and disproportionate composition” mingling the elements of both tragedy and comedy, practised by neither Aristotle nor any other classical writers; besides, not supportable by the example of Plautus who coined the term. To Denores, only tragedy, comedy and epic were praised by the ancients. He continues his criticism of the genre by questioning: “How can you keep decorum if the characters are of different rank? What level of language are you going to use, the grand or humble? Are the stage settings going to be palaces or humble cottages?”(Hall, 1963:40)

Guarini answered his questions, taking on the pseudonym of Verato, a famous contemporary actor, claiming that “a pastoral tragicomedy like his *Il Pastor Fido* was an acceptable genre because some of the shepherds were noble and others were not. The first made for the tragedy, the second for the comedy. They together made tragicomedy.” (Hall, 1963:40) Furthermore, Guarini compares the proliferation of genres occurring in the sixteenth century to the generation of the new biological species in Africa, where different animals are presumably driven thirst to encounter each other at an oasis. To Guarini, tragicomedy is the “child” of tragedy and comedy whose production resembles the generation of hybrid biological species.

Guarini's defence of tragicomedy against its attacks, notably Denores', can be regarded as a critical contribution to the history of tragicomedy. In his argument, he challenges Denores' accusations asserting that Aristotle did not speak of tragicomedy by name, yet, he also did not mention Dante or Aristo. Other ancient writers did not deal with the genre, but they did not disparage the form owing to its synthesis of tragic and comic. Furthermore, the genre was carried out by both Greeks and Latins not under the name of tragicomedy, but different forms such as “di lieto fin” by Euripides and Sophocles, and Hilaro-tragoedia of Rhinthon, the satyric drama which were handled by Aristotle and Horace. Without expecting a reply, he asks whether they were not the combination of tragedy and comedy, and

practised by the classical authors, why others do not have the right to use the name tragicomedy as Plautus invented it. He cynically offers him to use other names such as “Tragedia lieta”, “Commedia grave”. The point that Guarini and Denore disagree is that Guarini puts forward the idea that the changing tastes, perspectives of the audience must shed light on the creation of the new forms stating “And this is the true reason for the differences and the degrees of more and less tragic plays, because the poets, seeing the various tastes of their audience, sometimes wrote plays with a happy ending in order to make them less harsh”(I Verato, 2:260 quoted in Henke, 1997:75) whereas to Denore, genres are fixed, ideal, historically unalterable types.

Guarini advances his defence of tragicomedy in his *The Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry* (1601) which also serves as a justification of its existence as a separate genre from tragedy and comedy. Against the debate of tragicomedy as a “double favole” mingling distinctive characteristics of tragedy and comedy, Guarini displays his own theory for the harmonious composition of tragicomedy:

takes from tragedy its great persons but not its great actions, its verisimilar plot but not its true one, its movements of the feelings but not its disturbance of them, its pleasure but not its sadness, its danger but not its death; from comedy it takes laughter that is not excessive, modest amusement, feigned difficulty, happy reversal, and above all the comic order... (Foster, 2004, 35)

Verna Foster, from Loyola University Chicago, asserts that for Guarini, tragicomedy is a kind of comedy for the comic elements are dominant whereas the tragic ones are peripheral, the characters in a tragicomedy are not of high rank as in tragedy but public ones; the plot differs from the one in tragedy as it is fictitious, but not true one. Moreover, as Hirst argued in his book titled *Tragicomedy* that Guarini's aim is to provide not heightened emotions, instead tempered, the spectator is moved by the danger but not by the death of the characters. Hirst illustrates Guarini's formula for composing tragicomedies as followed:

He defends the mixed form, making analogies the hermaphrodite and with the alloy, bronze, before employing the example of the doctor who employs a substance extracted from the venom of the snake itself as an antidote for snake bite. The point is that this substance has been tempered: only what is beneficial has been utilized. (Hirst, 1984:4)

The reply given by Denores in *Apologia* (1590) is controversial in that he claims that tragicomedy is not an ancient form as Guarini asserts it by quoting from Plautus' *Amphitryon*, Euripides' *Cyclops*, Hilaroc of Rhinton and Pratinas' satyric tragedies. Denores' focus is on refuting Guarini's theory of "tempered" emotions by the danger not by the death of the characters claiming that there cannot be danger without horror, in addition, he disregards the examples of tragicomedies given by Guarini as the productions of art. He, in return of Guarini's examples of classical dramatists, displays his being like-minded with Cicero saying in his *Apologia* "for a mixed form would either have to have two actions, in which case it would sin against unity, or it would have to combine opposite things in one action, in which case it would sin against nature" (McCanles,1989:145). The ancient authority is referred as a means of defence both by followers of the classical such as Denores to hinder innovation and moderns like Guarini to support their practice.

Robert Henke, in his book *Pastoral Transformations* evaluates the dispute between Guarini and Denores so:

Guarini does three important things: he addresses the historical belatedness of tragicomedy and argues for the historicity of the genres; he provides a detailed and sophisticated account of audience-based tragicomedic practice; and he explains the peculiar connection between the tragicomedic genre and pastoral mode...Guarini contests Denores' Platonic belief that genres are ahistorical essences determined by unchanging philosophical principles. For Guarini, tragicomedy is a form that responds to the particular historical moment of late-sixteenth-century Italian theater,... A form for its time, tragicomedy emerges for specific historical reasons in response to the attitudes and sensibilities of new audiences... (Henke, 1997: 22-3)

After Denores' death, Faustio Summo, in two of his twelve *Discorsi Poetici* (1600) took the place of him to refute Guarini's theory of tragicomedy. He, as a follower of Aristotle, denounces the tragicomedy and pastoral as "mixed genres violat[ing] decorum" (Hall, 1963:40) supporting Denores.

The defences of and attacks against Guarini's justification and formula of tragicomedy as well as the play itself are significant in the spread and the approval of the genre. The dispute over the play and the genre by many critics of the time play an important role in increasing the popularity of the play, so it was translated

into many languages such as French, Spanish, English, German, Greek, Polish, Swedish, Dutch, Indian and Persian.

Considering Spain, the earliest example of tragicomedy is *Celestina*, though a novel in dialogue and never intended to be performed on the stage, it was acted in numerous adaptations. The work was firstly entitled *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea* by an anonymous writer, then changed as *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* by giving the author's name as Fernando de Rojas in the 1502 edition. The play is a prose dialogue in twenty one acts recounting the love story of the noble man Calisto for a high rank girl Melibea, starting in comedy and ending in tragedy with the death of the Calisto and Melibea. Celestina, a bawd, persuades Melibea to meet Calisto in the garden of her house. Yet, Calisto, in a hurry to descend the ladder, falls and dies. Upon this, Melibea in despair throws herself and passes away. The play differs in terms of being a comedy with a catastrophic ending, not a happy ending, from the other plays discussed as tragicomedy. Yet, the play is considered a tragicomedy denoted in the prologue of the 1514 edition in the following explanation:

Others have argued about the title, saying that it should not be called comedy, since it ended in sadness, but rather it should be called tragedy. The first author wanted to give it its name from the beginning, which was happiness, and called it comedy. I, upon seeing these disagreements, split the problem in the middle of these two extremes and called it tragicomedy. (<http://links.jstor.org>.)

The second name, which is connected to tragicomedy in Spain, is Gil Vicente, the Portuguese goldsmith, poet, actor and the unofficial dramatist of the court in the Iberian Renaissance. His plays vary in form. In 1562, his son Luis published his father's works classifying them into five groups: religious allegories, comedies, tragicomedies, episodic farces and non-dramatic works including the features of classical mythology and medieval allegory, realistic and local elements belonging to his time. His ten plays such as *Tragicomedia de Don Daurduas* and *Tragicomedia de Amadis Gaula* dating from 1513 to 1533 are entitled tragicomedy.

However, with Lope de Vega, who was dubbed a “monstruo de la naturaleza” by his contemporary Cervantes, the name tragicomedy was echoed in Spain. He

produced countless plays as well as poems and prose works. To Ezra Pound, “an attempt to enclose him in any formula is like trying to make one pair boots fit a centipede.” (<http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=4531>). Edwards depicts Lope's style so:

More than any other dramatists, Lope gave the theatre of the Golden Age its definitive form, paving the way for younger dramatists such as Tirso de Molina and Calderon. Its principal characteristics, demonstrated in the plays and set out in his poetic essay, *The New Art of Writing Plays* (Arte nuevo de hacer comedias), consisted of: mixing the comic and the serious; breaking the classical unities of time, action and place; making the characters speak in an appropriate style; and combining entertainment with a moral purpose... Many of his plays belong to the tradition of the comedia de capa y espada (cloak and dagger plays); light comedies of love and jealousy... (Vega, 1999: x- xi)

Lope's invention of the Cloak and Sword (or the Cloak and Dagger) drama is the vivid representative of his style with the hero and heroine of high rank, the plot dealing with a love intrigue. The duty of the author is to produce obstacles and misunderstandings which seem irretrievable until the end of the play with a happy ending. The form usually contains an under-plot carried on by servants and other minor characters. A second class, similar to the first, is occupied with historical or semi-historical figures of high rank than those of the first group. The plays are full of intrigues and adventures, quarrels, misunderstandings with under-plots, which parody the principal one. Considering the qualities of the form, it can be put in neither the group of tragedy nor comedy; yet tragicomedy. As Matthews adduced in his book titled *The Chief European Dramatists*, Lope's *The Star of Seville* is the appropriate play to model the type.

No play of Lope's is more characteristic of his method than the *Star of Seville*. It is a typical example of the comedy-of-cloak-and-sword, with its high-strung hero, its high-strung heroine, its traditional comic servant, allowed to comment at will on the story as it unrolls itself. There is a swift succession of situations, always effective, in spite of the occasional artificiality by which they are brought about--situations effective because they have been artfully prepared for, skilfully led up to, and powerfully handled when at last they are presented. (Matthews, 1916:780)

However, out of the rigidity of the Renaissance, Lope's characterising the Cloak and Sword drama was entitled comedy as a result of the happy ending, instead of tragicomedy.

Lope was aware of the fact that he was breaking the classical norms in a period known as the rebirth of the classical norms as he strives to prove in his *The New Art of Writing* by mentioning the theories of comedy and tragedy by the ancient authorities such as Aristotle, Plautus. Moreover, Like Guarini, Lope defends his invention of the new form of drama against the classical advocates of the ancient norms saying “Tragedy mixed with comedy and Terence with Seneca, though it be like another minotaur of Pasiphae, will render one part grave, the other ridiculous; for this variety causes much delight. Nature gives us good example, for through such variety it is beautiful” (Barrett, 1918: 91).

Lope's justification of his mixed genre of drama is the reminiscent of Aristotle's nomenclature of the mixed genre as the “best” in spite of the fact that Aristotle disparages the kind. Lope also based his defence on the example of nature. Like in the case of Guarini, Lope was exposed of assaults by the classicists. *Tablas Poeticas* (1616) by Francisco Cascales is one of the typical examples of the detestation of the type. In his work, Cascales names the contemporary Spanish plays “hermaphroditos” and “mostruos de la poesia” since they fit neither tragedy nor comedy in form in terms of the Aristotelian sense. To Cascales, the would-be comedies of the time are not pure comedies since they include tragic elements of tragedy though they end happily; in addition, the mixed genre must be banished from the minds of the writers of the period for its existence is against the nature of art. On the other hand, the defenders of the form such as the poet under the pseudonym of Ricardo del Turia, Alonso Sanchez, Francisco de la Barreda and Tirso de Molina defend the tragicomic nature of the Spanish drama by making a parallel to Guarini in that the form is neither tragedy nor a comedy but a tragicomedy in that it takes the noble characters, grand action, pity and horror from tragedy and the comic and pleasant from comedy. Like Lope, they also depends their defence on the idea that the blending of the comic and tragic is not against the law of art and nature.

After Italy and Spain, the next country we deal with in the evolution of tragicomedy is France. Until the middle of the sixteenth century, the name tragicomedy cannot be traced in French drama. To Lancaster, as he discussed in his

book *The French Tragicomedy: Its Origin and Development from 1552 to 1628*, the beginning of the French tragicomedy is in between 1552-1628 in which the genre gains its dramatic qualities, and in the years between 1628-1672, tragicomedy reaches its peak in France. Furthermore, in defining the tragicomedy, Lancaster makes a distinction between the early sixteenth century conception of the genre which can be applied to any play in medieval origin with a happy denouement and partly classic in terms of form, and the “romanesque tragicomedy” in the seventeenth century France sharing the qualities of “drama libre”: it is a combination of the characteristics of both drama and romance, the leading personages are of high rank but the lower class is introduced in subordinate roles, the play ends happily despite the scenes of violence, quarrel, bloodshed and occasionally deaths, the freedom of structure is apparent disregarding the classical unities of time, place and action. At this point, Hirst states that these plays are the reminiscent of “tragedies of happy ending” which are the invention of Giraldi and of the “Cloak and Sword drama” of Lope.

The first production of tragicomedy in the second half of the sixteenth century France is Henry Barran's *The Tragique Comedie Françoise de l'homme iustificié par Foy* (1552). The play is the typical morality with a didactic aim which is explained in the prologue, the abstract or type personages such as La Loy, L'esprit de Crainte, Satan, Concupiscence representing the struggle between the forces of good and evil. The play ends happily with the victory of truth and as a result of L'homme's ultimate salvation. Many of the examples of tragicomedy in the sixteenth century France do not differ from each other in terms of depicting the medieval spirit.

However, *Bradamante* (1582) by a classical playwright Robert Garnier whose inspiration for the complicated plot of the play is Aristo's romantic epic *Orlando Furioso* is considered to be a model for the “romanesque tragicomedy” in the seventeenth century French drama. The plot concerns the love of knight Roger and Bradamante who will marry a man who can defeat her in a single combat. Roger achieves this condition but under the name of Leon. The happy ending is obtained by the arrival of the ambassadors from Bulgaria offering Roger the crown

of their country and with the marriage of Bradamante and Roger. The arrival of the ambassadors also makes the play far away from the unity of action. Yet, the duel between Roger and Bradamante which is the romanesque element of the play does not take place on stage according to the classical rules, in addition, it is against the concept of later tragicomedy. The comic elements are introduced through the character of Aymon. The play is divided into acts and scenes. These features characterize the play as a medium between the sixteenth century tragicomedy in France before Hardy and the seventeenth century tragicomedy. Until Alexandre Hardy and his contemporaries such as Du Ryer, Mairet, Schelandre, Pichou, the name tragicomedy, as Lancaster and Hirst point out, considered a vague concept seen as a means of free drama and some kind of irregular form. With the success of Hardy's and his contemporaries' tragicomedies, the genre accomplishes the title of a separated genre and gains popularity in France.

After dealing with the various influences on and contributors to the realization of a dramaturgical form in Spain, Italy and France; subsequently, it is suitable to touch upon the beginning of English tragicomedy with early examples and critical controversies since the vernacular drama in England was influenced by the new practices come into being with Renaissance after these countries. It is unavoidable to make a parallel between the stages of development abroad and in England in that the early history of tragicomedy is not so dazzling and productive as the examples of English tragicomedies are inadequate and infrequent. Moreover, while discussing the custom of blending of tragic and comic elements in a dramatic work in the national drama in England, the continuance of the medieval tradition and the use of the classical name tragicomedy to denominate the new dramaturgical kind can be counted as the two outstanding influences. By limiting the concern in this thesis only to the plays with the nomenclature of tragicomedy, the examples of English tragicomedy consist of three plays: *Damon and Pythias*, *Apius and Virginia*, *Glass of Government*.

Richard Edwards' only extant play, *Damon and Pythias* was acted before the Queen at the revels of Christmas by the Chapel Children in 1564. For such an occasion, comedy is a convenient choice. However, Edwards' last comedy, as Cook

pointed out in his book titled *The Life and Poems of Richard Edwards* and in the prologue by Edwards, had offended someone, presumably the Queen, he resolved to try a new form but neither tragedy nor comedy since tragedy would not be a suitable form for such a season of mirth and gaiety. Thus, having remembered his Christ Church colleague Grimald who is the writer of a tragicomedy entitled *Christus Redivivus*, he resolved to denominate his play as “tragical comedy” in the prologue to his play:

Which hath our author taught at school, from whom he doth not swerve
 In all such kind of exercise decorum to observe...
 Here Dionysius palace, within whose court this thing most strange was
 done.
 Which matter, mix'd with mirth and care, a just name to apply
 As seems most fit, we have it termed a "tragical comedy."
 Wherein, talking of courtly toys, we do protest this flat: --
 (Adams, 1924: 572)

The prologue functions both as an explanation of the dramatic creed of the author and of his choice of the title for his play. On the one hand, he persists on the Horatian theory of decorum; on the other hand, he explains why he used the term “tragical comedy” for his play which is contrary to decorum. As its author described, the play is a “tragical comedy” recounting the self-sacrificing friendship of Damon and Pythias since the story in the play is a “matter mix'd with mirth and care”. The literary critic, Baugh shares the same notion that “Damon and Pythias is in fact the interesting result of a blend of elements from classic comedy and tragedy with certain conventions of English farce” (Baugh, 1948: 451). Through the story of the devoted friendship of Damon and Pythias- in which Pythias is condemned to death, Damon agreed to stay and die in stead of his friend until he returns after he puts his affairs in order, Damon is rescued by the timely arrival of his friend, as a result Dionysus is so impressed by the scene that he forgives both- the serious theme is reflected with the intrusion of farce and comic plot dealing with the duel of wits between Aristippus and Carisophusa and with a happy ending.

In another court play, the *Tragical Comedy of Apius and Virginia*, R.B, presumably Richard Bower, who was the master of the Chapel before Edwards, introduced the traditional morality story of Apius and Virginia presenting the

manifestation of the conflict between good and evil. Judge Apius, like the later Angelo in *Measure for Measure* of Shakespeare, is on the one side urged to do evil by the Vice Haphazard and on the other side urged to resist temptation by the virtues, Conscience and Justice. Yet, he finally resolves to choose evil succumbing his lust for Virginia; Therefore, causing her father to decapitate his daughter on the stage by her own wish to save her chastity and his own suicide in the prison. When compared with *Damon and Pythias*, the play is closer to the Medieval dramatic tradition on the ground that it demonstrates the struggle between the good and evil, is peopled by the personified characters such as Conscience, Justice, and finally in spite of the tragic denouement, ends triumphantly as the mischievous is punished while the good is rewarded. The two farcical scenes are short and separated from the main plot which is tragic.

George Gascoigne's *Glass of Government* (1575) is considered to be another early example of English tragicomedy as the author entitled "A Tragicall Comedie so entituled, by cause therein are handled aswell the rewardes for Vertues, as also the punishment for Vices". The play recounts the contrasted stories of the two pairs of young men; two of them become honourable positions following their moral teachings whereas the other pair ends their career in shame as a result of their evil doings. In this sense, Gascoigne's aim is didactic. The play is tragical comedy as stated at the end of the play: "I thank you Sir. My Masters, the common saying is clap your handes, but the circumstance of this wofull tragicall comedie considered, I may say justly vnto you wring your handes, neuerthelesse I leaue it to your discretion" (Gascoigne, 1575: 211-12)

It is obvious that Gascoigne considers his play a "tragicall comedie" in the sense that it is "the rewardes for Vertues" and "the punishment for Vices". At this point, Gascoigne and Bower share the same sense of "tragical comedie" while Edwards' differs from both in that his play is a tragical comedy since it is "mix'd with mirth and care".

The three early English "tragical comedy" playwrights, Edwards, Bower and Gascoigne, are scholars acquainted with the humanist circle. For instance, Edwards

and Grimald are colleagues at Christ Church and Gascoigne studied at Cambridge. Thus, they had the chance to be familiar with the term “tragical comedy”. However, as Ristine asserts, they conceived the form as a sort of comedy which is “mix'd with mirth and care” or in which the evil is punished whereas the virtue is rewarded. For example, in the earliest edition of *Damon and Pythias*, the play is described as an “excellent Comedie”; in addition, Edwards, starts the prologue to his play with a discussion of comedy as a kind of advice for the writers; Gascoigne denominates his *Glass of Government*, in the prologue, comedy in spite of the title “tragicall comedie”. Moreover, they all possess the medieval concept of dramatic tradition with the blending of mirth with care as reflected in Edwards' and with the moral purpose denoted both in *Apius and Virginia* and *Glass of Government*.

Like in the other countries such as Italy, Spain and France, tragicomedy faces its opponent also in England with Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* (1581). Sidney's work is the most significant sixteenth century criticism of the condition of the drama of the period and of the form calling it “mongrel”:

Now ,of time they are much more liberal: for ordinary it is that two young princes fall in love; after many traverses, she is got with child, delivered of a fair boy; he is lost, groweth a man, falls in love, and is ready get another child; and all this in two hours' space...

But besides these gross absurdities, how all their plays be neither right tragedies nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns, not because the matter so carrieth it, but thrust in the clown by head and shoulders to play a part in majestical matters with neither decency nor discretion, so as neither admiration and commiseration, nor the right sportfulness, is by their mongrel tragicomedy obtained. (The Norton Anthology, 2000: 496)

According to Sidney, the distinction of the genres is of utmost importance. Sidney, like Horace, asserts that a classical poet never gives place to comic laughter in a tragedy in which the aim is the purgation of pity and fear, to arouse admiration for the hero in the soul of the audience, then tragedy should be composed of tragic elements of experience while comedy of comic. Sidney's words proves his acquaintance with Whetstone's preface to his play *The Promos and Cassandra* (1578) through which Whetstone recounts his dramatic creed and deplores the condition of the popular drama of the period :

The Englishman in this quallitie, is
 most vaine, indiscreete, and out of
 order: he fryst groundes
 his worke, on / impossibilities: then in three howers
 ronnes he throwe the worlde: marryes,
 gets Children, makes Children men,..
 And(that which is worst) their ground
 is not so vnperfect, as their workinge
 indiscreete...Manye tymes (to make
 mirthe) they make a Clowne
 companion with a Kinge: in theyr
 graue Counsels, they allow the aduise
 of fooles...(Gebert, 1933: 43)

However, unlike the other countries mentioned before, in England, no advocate of the form comes forth and defends the form against its attackers.

Another source constituting the very essence of tragicomedy is romance. The intrusion of the romantic elements- heroism, adventure, threatening danger, portraying the idealized woman, the use of the foreign scenes, love filled with obstacles- is as a result of the influence of the romantic tales of the Italian novellier during the last quarter of the sixteenth century. The Elizabethan playwrights take the advantage of using these tales as the material for their writings. The influence of the romantic elements on the drama of England prevailed by 1580 with the works of Lyly, Greene and Shakespeare.

To satisfy the Elizabethan audience, as he himself stated in the prologue to *Midas* (1589) Cambridge and Oxford graduated Lyly mingles all the elements of drama such as tragedy, comedy, pastoral, history claiming the right for it: "At our exercises Souldiers call for Tragedies, their object is bloud; Courtiers for Commedies, their subject is loue; Countriemen for Pastoralles, Shepherds are their Saintes...If wee now present a mingle mangle, our fault is to be excused, because the whole worlde is become a Hodge-podge" (Bond,1902:248). Moreover, Lyly, in the prologue to the *Black Friar of Alexander and Campaspe* (1580) which firstly printed as a "Comedie" in 1584, yet entitled "tragical Comedie" in 1591, defends the mingling of comedy with tragedy: "we haue mixed mirth counsell, and discipline with delight, thinking it not amisse in the same garden to sowe pot-hearbes, that we set flowers" (Bond, 1902: 248). Moore, in his book *The Complete*

Works of John Lyly, calls Lyly's dramatic creed “mutual relief” blending comic plot with the serious and failing of being thoroughly comic and thoroughly tragic. In this sense, it is impossible to put Lyly in the same category with Sidney who argues the rigid observance of decorum.

The reason that Robert Greene, a versatile writer attempting so many different kinds such as poetry, framework tales, romances, pamphlets, is included in the discussion of the evolution of tragicomedy is his averting of the tragic plot with happy ending illustrated in his plays particularly, *The Scottish Historie of James the fourth* (1598). The story is taken from Giraldi's novel, *Hecatommithi*, who himself dramatized the tale in *Arrenopia* (1553), which is one of his tragedies di lieto fin. The king of Scotland, James IV (Giraldi's Astatio, the king of Ireland) is married to Dorothea (Arrenopia in Giraldi's). Yet, he falls in love with the Countess Ida, whose name Greene retains. His love confession is overheard by Ateukin. James hires an assassin, Jacques to kill his own wife. It is supposed that he accomplished the duty. Dorothea is informed about her husband's faithlessness and resolves to disguise herself. Upon the declaration of war on James by the king of England, the tragic end is avoided by the timely appearance of the supposedly murdered Queen admitting her husband's repentance. However, Greene avoids naming his plays as tragicomedies, in stead prefers histories. Yet, this does not mean that Greene is not acquainted with the term tragicomedy. The passage taken from the *Card of Fancy* (1587) demonstrates this claim:

Melytta, seeing that Cupid began to favour the cause of his clients in giving them such fit opportunity to discover their cares, went their way, leaving Gwydonius the first man to play his part in this tragical comedy, who seeing his goddess thus surprised with sickness... ([http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/new_files_jan_07/Gwydonius%20\(1584\).pdf](http://www.oxford-shakespeare.com/new_files_jan_07/Gwydonius%20(1584).pdf))

As Hirst and Ristine pointed out, Shakespeare's early comedies deserve mention as to be a version of the beginning of English tragicomedy. Shakespeare gradually develops a sort of drama juxtaposing contrasted materials of tragedy, comedy, history to go beyond the bounds of the conventional drama insisting on the pure dramatic genres. Ristine touches upon the relationship between tragicomedy and romance as both uses the same materials. To him, the romantic comedy serves

as a means to balance the darker mood created by the threatening disaster of romantic love story as exemplified in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Much Ado about Nothing*. Both plays are about the stories of romantic love employing a sinister subplot intermingled with the main; in addition, in both plays, the happy ending effaces the mood resulted by the danger.

However, Hirst claims that none of these plays including also *Twelfth Night* is considered to be tragicomedies according to the Guarinian formula of tragicomedy. “What makes them quite unlike his model is the care Shakespeare takes not to graft the plots on one another, not to provide a denouement which brings happiness to all. Shakespeare in these plays prefers juxtaposition to the fusion of the opposites” (Hirst, 1984: 27). For instance, *Much Ado* recounts the two independent stories of lovers; one of the pairs is reconciled by a plot whereas the other is destroyed by a plot. The two themes are brought together with a tragic turn in the church scene.

Hirst continues his discussion of tragicomedy drawing a parallel between the plotting of *Measure for Measure* and Guarinian formula of tragicomedy. In Act I, the audience is informed about the Duke's appointment of Angelo as a temporary leader Vienna, disguising himself as a friar so as to observe the goings-on in his absence; Angelo's decision concerning the execution of Claudio as a result of his impregnating Juliet before marriage. Act II the details of the intrigues, planned by the disguised Duke, to save Isabella from Angelo's demand and Claudio from being executed are presented. Act IV is the tragic climax of the play in which Claudio's execution is prevented with the achievement of Duke's plan presenting Angelo the head of a pirate instead of Claudio's. The play ends happily with the marriages. Yet, Hirst declares that Shakespeare's aim differs from Guarinian theory of “tempered feeling” in that Shakespeare's “mixture of tragedy and comedy serve(s) to disturb his audience by highlighting the sordid pragmatic realities consequent on the operation of justice”, instead of the movements of the feelings.

The acquaintance of the drama in England with the Italian theory of tragicomedy is fulfilled with Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess*. Particularly,

considering his addressing *To the Reader*, it is impossible to notice that Fletcher follows Guarini's theory to compose a tragicomedy:

A tragicomedy is not so called in respect of mirth and killing, but in respect it wants deaths, which is enough to make it no tragedy, yet brings it some near to it, which is enough to make it no comedy: which must be a representation of familiar people, with such kind of trouble as no life be questioned: so that a God is lawful in this as in a tragedy, and mean people in a comedy. (Leech, 1962: 77)

As Robert Henke points out in his *Pastoral Transformations: Italian Tragicomedy and Shakespeare's Late Plays* like Guarini, Fletcher opposes the mere juxtaposition of tragedy and comedy..., but seeks a calibrated negotiation of death superior to that of earlier 'mungrell tragicomedy'".(Henke,1997: 52).

With his collaboration with Beaumont, Fletcher ably addresses to the tastes of both public and private theatre audience at the same time with Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. To Waith, except for the other tragicomedies written in collaboration with Beaumont, in *A King and No King*, the pattern of tragicomedy is completed. Waith, in his book entitled *The Pattern of Tragicomedy in Beaumont and Fletcher*, lists eight characteristics of tragicomedy determining the distinctive nature of the latter plays: the imitation of the manners of the familiar world which is the impression of verisimilitude achieved by the language used by Beaumont and Fletcher; remoteness from the familiar world defining the theatrical world imitating life to some extent, "neither so immediate as the world in which we live nor so remote as the world of romance"(Waith,1969:37); intricacy of plot which is the capacity of the plot to surprise; the improbable hypothesis making the plot unusual and make the audience witness or experience conflicting emotions; the atmosphere of evil vanishing at the end of the play with no trace; protean characters "subordinate to the situation and often changes radically to suit the requirements of the intricate plot"(Waith, 1969:39); lively touches of passion stressing the emotions of the characters; the language of emotion which cannot be separated from the first two characteristics of the pattern, serving as a means of link to the familiar world and also creating a sense of remoteness.

Fletcher serves as an intermediary providing the acquaintance of Shakespeare, who collaborated with Fletcher in *Two Noble Kinsmen*, with Guarinian tragicomedy. *Philaster* (1608), which is a production of a collaboration of Fletcher and Beaumont, plays a significant role both in making a parallel among Guarini, Fletcher and Shakespeare; in other words, between the Italian and English tragicomedy. Many literary critics, such as Hirst and Leech, assert that Fletcher is in debt for the plotting of his *Philaster* to Guarini's formula for tragicomedy. The other and more controversial statement among the critics concerns the parallel drawn between the plots of Fletcher's *Philaster* and Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. Thorndike, in his *The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakespeare*, claims that Shakespeare followed the fashion set by Beaumont and Fletcher in *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. At this point, Hirst's contention that both plays have several common features particularly concerning the plot deserves mention. However, Wilson opposes the notion put forward by Thorndike drawing disparities from the plays against the analogies of Thorndike. But, Henke's assertion is the most controversial statement:

Because of, inter alia, the virtual absence of pastoral, the realistic action, the undiminished vitality of satire, and the use of a simple rather than Italian complex plot, the prominent tragicomedies of Beaumont and Fletcher such as *Philaster* and *A King and No King* do not look backward to Guarini and the Italians but create something new and more properly English. Paradoxically, Fletcher's *To the Reader* is in fact a better gloss on Shakespeare's late plays than on the tragicomedies of Beaumont and Fletcher themselves. (Henke, 1997: 28)

The tragicomic passion survived and cultivated with the pens of Fletcher's contemporaries and followers ranging from Massinger, Shirley to Heywood, Middleton, Massinger, Cartwright, Davenant, Thomas Killgrew.

After the interregnum in dramatic activities as a result of the closing of the theatres in 1642, the accession of the Stuarts in 1660 is the inception of the theatrical innovations such as the use of front curtain, movable scenery and the woman actors. The opening of the theatres serves as a revival of the earlier tragicomedies of Shakespeare and Fletcher supporting the perpetuation of the kind in Restoration. However, by 1660, the popularity of the form in England is under

the effect of a constant decline and by 1700, the pervading influence of the French ideas such as the rebirth of the classical rules affects tragicomedy.

Except for Sidney denominating the form “mongrel” and Fletcher formulating a definition of the kind adopting from Guarini, until Dryden's *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668) tragicomedy carries on its existence as an independent form in the prefaces, prologues and titles of the plays owing to the lack of interest in critical theory. In his essay, in which Dryden aims to “vindicate the honour of English writers, from the censure of those who unjustly prefer the French before them” (*An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*), sets the argument among the four characters, Neander, Lisideues, Crites and Eugenius. Lisideues argues in favour of French dramatists mainly on grounds that they followed classical rules more closely than English; additionally, in his words:

The unity of Action in all their Plays is yet more conspicuous, for they do not burden them with under-plots, as the English do; which is the reason why many Scenes of our Tragi-comedies carry on a design that is nothing of kinne to the main Plot...There is no Theatre in the world has any thing so absurd as the English Tragi-comedie, 'tis a *Drama* of our own invention, and the fashion of it is enough to proclaim it so; here a course of mirth, there another of sadness and passion; a third of honour, and fourth a Duel: Thus in two hours and a half we run through all the fits of *Bedlam*. (Dryden, 65)

Lisideues reminds Sidney's condemnation of tragicomedy as “mongrel” since it lacks the unities. As opposed to Lisideues, Neander the voice of Dryden in the essay is in favour of tragicomedies unless a tragedy is deprived of its tragic effects on the audience. To Dryden, it is natural to have tragic and comic elements blended in a work of art as life is so, full of multiplicity reflected in Neander's words:

As for their new way of mingling mirth with serious Plot I do not with *Lysideius* condemn the thing He tells us we cannot so speedily recollect our selves after a Scene of great passion and concernment as to pass to another of mirth and humour, and to enjoy it with any relish: but why should he imagine the soul of man more heavy than his Sences? Does not the eye pass from an unpleasant object to a pleasant in a much shorter time than is requir'd to this?...to the honour of our Nation, that we have invented, increas'd and perfected a more pleasant way of writing for the Stage than was ever known to the Ancients or Moderns of any Nation, which is Tragicomedie.” (Dryden, 74)

Dryden's essay on tragicomedy sheds light on the consideration of and the oppositions towards the form in his period. Aristotle bases on the popularity of the mingling of tragic and comic elements in a work of art on the weakness of the audience in his *Poetics* and the advocates of the kind take the advantage of his notion so as to justify their preference of tragicomedy to its rivals, comedy and tragedy whereas Dryden attempts to “vindicate” the form by his reference to “nature”; in other words, verisimilitude to the life; in addition, the debate over tragicomedy is handled only from the standpoint of its mingling of serious and comic elements rather than the happy ending.

I will allege Corneille's words, as I find them in the end of his Discourse of the Three Unities;...they would perhaps give more latitude to the rules than I have done, when by experience they had known how much we are limited and constrained by them, and how many beauties of the Stage they banished from it. (Dryden, 78)

As reflected through Lisideius' words, the influence of French classicism on the English stage is obvious. For the French, the seventeenth century is the grand era in which the classical rules and precepts_in drama, the rigid observance of decorum and adherence to the purity of forms_ are esteemed. The critical debate over tragicomedy arises also in France when Corneille presents his *Le Cid* in 1636 calling it a tragicomedy. The well-known *Le Cid* controversy which was initialized by Scudéry's attack in his *Observations sur Le Cid* in 1637 emerged by the success of the play. Corneille writes *Lettre apologétique* as a defence against the charges.

Hirst dictates that Corneille's approach to tragicomedy is closer to Guarinian formula which was also echoed in Corneille's words: “the first act should set underway an intrigue which maintains the suspense throughout and which is not unravelled until the end of the work” (*Le Cid* quoted in *Tragicomedy*, Hirst, 1984: 114) in that Corneille's aim in writing a tragicomedy is to present the “tempered feelings” by “want death”. On the contrary, Foster alleges that *Le Cid* can be considered as a tragedy with a happy ending rather than a tragicomedy owing to the fact that *Le Cid* contains no elements of comedy except for its happy ending; in addition, Foster defines tragicomedy: “A tragicomedy is a play in which the tragic and comic both exist but are formally and emotionally dependent on one another,

each modifying and determining the nature of other so as to produce a mixed, tragic response in the audience.” (Foster, 2004: 11)

After Sidney's condemnation of the term in his *Apology for Poetry* (1581), Joseph Addison reiterates Sidney's words in *Spectator* (1711) denouncing tragicomedy as “one of the most monstrous inventions that ever entered into a poet's thoughts. An author might as well think of weaving the adventures of Aeneas and Hudibras into one poem, as of writing such a motley piece of mirth and sorrow” (Nicoll, 1962:139)

On the one side, the adherence to the classicism and on the other side, the abhorrence of the extreme classicism, almost all critics have something to put forth about the subject, some condemn it while others try to find a means to justify its altitude and popularity. Dr. Johnson takes Neander's; in other words, Dryden's place as the advocate of the form proclaiming, “for what is there in the mingled drama which impartial reason can condemn? The connexion of important with trivial incidents, since it is not only common but perpetual in the world, may surely be allowed upon the stage, which pretends only to be the mirror of life” (Nicoll, 1962:140). Dr. Johnson agrees with Dryden grounding his justification of the kind in nature. However, Nicoll, in his *The Theatre and Dramatic Theory*, harshly criticizes both Dryden and Dr. Johnson in that any justification of the kind grounding its verisimilitude to the nature is misleading claiming that “the drama may always use material from life, but an attempt to justify and to praise any particular play because of its truth to life has no validity; total dramatic effect determines the worth of such a play...” (Nicoll, 1962: 141)

Although the debate over tragicomedy diminishes in the nineteenth century as the neoclassical precepts lose ground, Romantic critics such as Coleridge and Hugo put forth their critical notions concerning the justification of blending tragic and comic, and stand by the side of tragicomedy as opposed to neoclassical precepts. Romantic critic Victor Hugo's *Preface to Cromwell* (1827) is one of the examples of these critical manifestations. Taking Shakespeare as their model, they adopt the combination of tragedy and comedy in a dramatic kind as Hugo

mentioned: “Shakespeare is the drama; and the drama...moulds the grotesque and the sublime, the terrible and the absurd, tragedy and comedy.” (Gassner and Quinn, 2002: 860)

Almost all the critics of tragicomedy define the genre determining three fundamental criteria, as also Pavis touches upon:

the characters belong to both the popular and the aristocratic classes, eliminating the boundary between comedy and tragedy; the action, though serious and even dramatic, does not lead up to a catastrophe, and the hero does not perish; and the style has “ups and downs”, combining the elevated and emphatic language of tragedy with the everyday language of comedy. (Pavis, 1998: 418)

Not only the precursors and exponents but also its opponents of tragicomedy contribute to the development of the kind by either condemning or attempting to justify its existence.

1.2 Modern Tragicomedy: The Contribution of Chekhov, Pirandello and Stoppard

After the disappearance of tragicomedy in the eighteenth century and replacement of the kind by various cognate forms such as the romantic drama, the drame and melodrama in the nineteenth century, tragicomedy re-emerges in the late nineteenth century with the pens of playwrights such as Ibsen, Chekhov, Synge and O’Casey. Foster points out the affinities between melodrama and Renaissance tragicomedy on the grounds that both make use of the “danger not the death”, hidden identities, reunion and revelation, blending of comic and serious characters and episodes. Furthermore, both Foster and Hirst draw attention to the influence of melodrama on the development of modern tragicomedy, especially Chekhov and Ibsen’s use of melodramatic conventions for tragicomic purposes. However, as dramatists of the period, they preferred tragicomedy, rather than melodrama, to depict a more vivid picture of human existence since melodrama fails to reflect the ups and downs of life. Moreover, tragedy, which is peopled by high rank characters using an exalted language, falls from favour and has found its place in tragicomedy by being presented in relation with the comic owing to its difficulty in writing under the influence of realism rendering the personas from middle or lower class.

1.2.1. Chekhov's Techniques to Produce Tragicomic Effect and Response

Medicine is my lawful wife and literature is my mistress. When I get tired of one I spend the night with the other. Though it's disorderly, it's not so dull, and besides neither of them loses anything from my infidelity. If I did not have my medical work I doubt if I could have given my leisure and my spare thoughts to literature. (quoted in Garnett, 2004: 69)

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860-1904) was primarily a physician graduating from medical school in Moscow; a short story writer having received the Pushkin Prize in 1887; and a dramatist producing classics such as *Uncle Vanya* (performed in 1899), *The Three Sisters* (written in 1899-90) and *The Cherry Orchard* (1903). His modest background and upbringing as the son of grocer is crucial to his development as a writer. His father escaped with the family to Moscow due to bankruptcy leaving Chekhov alone in Taganrog in which he is born. He supported his living and education by tutoring.

Chekhov joined his family in Moscow to study medicine at Moscow University. While at his first year at university, to provide income for the family and his education, he began to write sketches and humorous stories for comic magazines, many under the pen name of "Antosha Chekhonte". As Ried, the biographer of Chekhov, states "Like Goethe, he would become a writer whose love of science and nature was inseparably linked to his love of art and literature." He graduated and carried his duty as a doctor seeing his job as a vehicle to help people, instead of a source of income; yet, he continued writing sketches, stories and a newspaper column. His meeting with the well-known newspaper proprietor, Suvorin was the turning point in Chekhov's writing career as Suvorin published Chekhov's story collection *At Dusk* through which Chekhov wins the Pushkin Prize in 1887.

I don't know how to write a play... If on paper my characters have not come out alive and clear, the fault is not in them but in my ability to express my thoughts. It means that it is still too early for me to start writing plays. (quoted in Garnett, 2004: 52)

Chekhov was ambivalent about producing dramatic works of art. By the time he felt himself ready to write for the theatre, his fame as a short story writer

had already blossomed with the Pushkin Prize. His first attempt as a dramatist was *Ivanov* (1887) which was a hope for Chekhov marking his debut as a serious playwright after as an eminent short story writer. However, *Ivanov*'s premier was a failure for Chekhov having caused frustration and a great change as a playwright as he himself reflected in his words:

One wants be mature – that is one thing; and for another the feeling of personal freedom is essential, and that feeling has recently begun to develop in me. I used not to have it before; its place was successfully filled by my frivolity, carelessness, and lack of respect for my work. (quoted in Garnett, 2004: 82)

Shakespeare is a prominent influence on Chekhov before 1890s that he wrote an article on Hamlet praising Shakespeare's plays; additionally, *The Seagull*, Chekhov's play as a mature dramatist, bears the traces of *Hamlet*. However, after 1890s, Chekhov got acquainted with the writings of Ibsen, especially *The Wild Duck*, Strindberg's *Miss Julie*. The urge to create new forms in drama prevents Chekhov not to give up producing plays in spite of his frustrations about drama. "I wrote my stories, mechanically, unconsciously, caring nothing either about the reader or myself" (Ramsey, 2003; 9), this lacking of "unconsciousness" in drama was the primary reason of his ambivalence towards drama apart from his worsening tuberculosis causing his death at the age of 44.

It was not until the Moscow Art Theatre production of *The Seagull* (1897) by Stanislavsky that Chekhov enjoyed his first overwhelming success. The play was considered unsuccessful at its first debut at St. Petersburg because the audience was not ready to receive "new forms of art" like the play disregarding the conventions of the stage as the playwright declared in his own words:

Can you imagine it-I am writing a play which I shall probably not finish before the end of November. I am writing it not without pleasure, though I abuse the conventions of the stage terribly. It's a comedy, there are three women's part, six men's part, four acts, landscapes (view over a lake); a great deal of conversation about literature, very little action, lots of love. (quoted in Garnett, 2004: 230)

Chekhov insists on denominating his play, *The Seagull*, a "comedy" in four acts despite the young artist Trepliov's suicide at the end of the play. At this

point, Chekhov attempts to make us aware of his critical judgement or the classification of the play not as a conventional comedy with a happy ending. As opposed to the demands of the spectator from a comedy, Chekhov presents a play including the contradictory components of both tragedy and comedy employing his methods varying from indirect action, the juxtaposition of tragic and comic or the serious and humorous, to the interruption of the serious by the comic, transforming the tragic into comic. W.H. Auden exemplifies Chekhov's perspective of the juxtaposition of the comic and the tragic in *The Seagull* by making a parallel to a painting in which Icarus' end is depicted at the background as legs sinking into the sea whereas the background focuses on a ploughman and his horse indifferent to Icarus' fate. Likewise, in order to avoid melodramatic effect on the audience or the reader, Chekhov employs the technique of "indirect or inner action" in which significant events occur off stage and the on stage action produces a contrast to what is taking place out of the stage.

The contrast between what is taking place before the audience and behind the curtains is obviously sharp in Trepliov's suicide scene at the end of the play. Son to Arkadina, Treplev remains a melancholic character in that careless as a mother Arkadina, the middle-aged actress, mocks his artistic creations; Nina, the young actress, with whom Trepliov is deeply in love, turns away from him attracted by the writer Trigorin. Trepliov finally becomes depressed by his despair and alienation as a result of the fact that he loses the meaning and purpose in his life as a writer, as a lover and as a son. Eventually, he manages to fulfil what he fails in his first attempt. The members of the estate and the spectator as well are frightened by the gun shot of Trepliov while they are sitting at the card table:

[There is a sound of a shot off-stage on right. Everyone starts.]
 DORN. That's nothing. It must be something in my medicine chest that's gone of. Don't worry. [Goes out through door at right, returns in half a minute.] Just as I thought. A bottle of ether has burst [Hums.] 'Again I stand before you, enchanted.' ...
 ARKADINA [sitting down to the table]. Ough, how it frightened me! It reminded me of how. ... [Covers her face with her hands.] Everything went dark for a moment. (183)

To prevent the melodramatic impact on the spectator, Trepliov's tragic suicide scene occurs off stage while on stage, the members of the estate continue playing cards ignoring the noise of the shot with the comic explanation of Dorn about the explosion of one of his medicine bottles. They go on their routine lives playing cards, drinking and Dorn singing as usual as though nothing of significance has happened.

Hirst asserts that Chekhov develops his blending of dramatic contrasts on the grounds that his early tragicomedies *Ivanov*, *The Wood Demon* and *The Seagull* end with the suicide of the central characters whereas in his later plays, Chekhov employs Guarini's technique of "the danger, not the death". Therefore, in *Uncle Vanya*, the protagonist attempts to shoot someone else, yet, his attempt is unsuccessful. In this sense, Vanya's ineptitude is both painfully tragic and comic.

The scene in which Irina Arkadina and the other dwellers of the estate are playing cards on the stage when Constantine Trepliov is behind the stage playing "the notes of a melancholy waltz" illustrates the contrast between the two scenes in mood:

ARKADINA. What a reception I had in Harkov! My goodness! It makes my head go round even now!

MASHA. Thirty-four!

[A waltz with a melancholy tune is being played off-stage.]

ARKADINA. The students gave me a regular ovation. . . . Three baskets of flowers, two garlands, and this as well [Unfastens a brooch on her throat and tosses it on to the table.] (175)

Trepliov is again detached from everybody with his loneliness and despair while Arkadina is carelessly proud of her reception in Kharkoff playing cards with the others in the estate. Ironically, it is Paulina, the wife of the manager of the estate who seems caring about Trepliov. Chekhov puts the two scenes together on the stage still in comparison; Trepliov is isolated looking out of the window influenced by the darkness of the night at the background and Arkadina and the rest are indifferent to his pessimism on the foreground. Chekhov shifts the off and on stage action leaving Trepliov alone before the audience and the young actress, Nina – with whom Trepliov is in love-, appears on the stage. While they regret about past- Nina leaves Trepliov following her

passion to become a famous actress and for Trigorin-Nina hears, in contrast, Arkadina and Trigorin laughing off stage. In this sense, Chekhov's technique of using both the off and on stage provides to maintain a balance in audience response avoiding the dominance of one on the other; in other words, of tragic over the comic or the reverse; additionally, to produce ironic situations.

Another technique which Chekhov employs in the play is transforming what is tragic into comic creating a shift in the response of the audience to the event. The spectator is informed about the off stage suicide attempt of Trepliov by Trigorin's narration of the event and by the scene in which Trepliov is on stage with the bandage on his head:

ARKADINA. Sit down. [*Takes the bandage off his head.*] You look as if you're wearing a turban. Yesterday there was some stranger in the kitchen asking what nationality you were. But your wound is almost healed. There's only a tiny bit still open. [*Kisses him on the head.*] You won't play about with a gun again when I'm away, will you? (157)

Chekhov transforms the tragic suicide scene into a comedy in which Trepliov is presented in a comic way with the "turban" sized bandage on his head. On the other hand, this is, in fact, Chekhov who strives to emphasize Trepliov's inability to commit suicide tragically; yet, not in a conventional or melodramatic manner.

The juxtaposition of comic and tragic scenes creating a shift in the mood of the play is present from the commencement of the play. The play opens with the scene in which Medviedenko asking Masha: "Why do you always wear black?" Her answer to the question that "I am in mourning for my life" is firstly supposed to be as an introduction to and her black dress as a symbol for a tragic theme the play deals with. Nevertheless, as the conversation between them goes on, they start to argue about which one is leading a more miserable life. On the one hand, the subject they discuss is serious that the existentialist theme of questioning the meaning of and purpose in life; on the other hand, it is not presented as seriously as the subject itself. However, their inability to explain and perceive their unhappiness produces a tragic influence on the audience. The shift of mood in the same scene is common in Chekhov's style and throughout the play. Another scene exemplifying the abrupt

shift in the mood is the row between the mother, Arkadina and the son, Trepliov revealing their tragic selves in a comic manner after the performance of his play:

TREPLIOV. Take yourself off to your lovely theatre and go on acting in your futile, miserable plays!
 ARKADINA. I've never acted in futile, miserable plays! Let me alone! You're incapable of writing even a couple of miserable scenes! You're just a little upstart from Kiev! A cadger!
 TREPLIOV. You miser!
 ARKADINA. You beggar!
 [TREPLIOV *sits down and weeps quietly.*]
 ARKADINA. Nonentity! [*Walks up and down in agitation, then stops.*] Don't cry. . . . You mustn't cry! . . . [*Weeps.*] You mustn't. . . . [*Kisses his forehead, then his cheeks and his head.*] My darling child, forgive me. . . . Forgive your wicked mother. Forgive an unhappy woman. (159)

The beginning of the scene demonstrates the cruelty between the mother and the son insulting one another in a comic way. Immediately, the scene turns out to be an opposite one in which the mother is treating her child affectionately as opposed to her insults. The scene exposes Chekhov's ability to illustrate both extremes. Chekhov ironically displays both the tragic and comic side of the row in one scene. The row is comically held. However, the moment that they realize and stop offending each other regardless of their relationship as mother and son is tragic.

DORN. Fancy expressing dissatisfaction with life at the age of sixty-two! It's a little indecent, you must admit.
 SORIN. What a persistent fellow he is! Can't you understand anyone wanting to five?
 DORN. That's just foolish Every life must have an end -- it's the law of nature. (169)

Irony in Chekhov's play serves as vehicle to pinpoint the juxtaposition of the comic and tragic. Sorin, the owner of the estate and the brother of Arkadina, expresses his regret for his youth since he never realizes any of his dreams including becoming a writer and getting married. It is ironically comic that it is the doctor, Dorn who highlights the inevitable end of life without prescribing a remedy for the patient. On the other hand, Chekhov echoes the universal theme that nothing can prevent death, it is useless to postpone or ignore it.

In the play, the serious is interrupted by the comic, often by an intervention of a comic character unrelated to the context of the subject. For instance, the discussion among Nina, Arkadina and Trigorin concerning Trigorin's aptitude of creation in his works comes to an end with Shamrayev's comic but irrelevant story to the serious subject:

SHAMRAYEV. I remember hearing the great Silva sing lower C one night at the Moscow Opera. As it happened, a bass from our parish church choir was sitting in the gallery. Suddenly -- imagine our utter amazement -- we heard, 'Bravo, Silva!' from the gallery . . . but a whole octave lower. . . . Like this. [*In a deep bass.*] Bravo, Silva! And after that -- dead silence. You could hear a pin drop.
[*Pause.*] (134)

Chekhov constantly deviates from the serious to the comic causing swift change in the emotional responses so as not to diminish the gravity of the play; yet, to avoid predominance of the one another producing a single response or effect on the audience. Chekhov develops his technique of creating shifts in audience response which is the device of interrupting of the speech by the farcical accidents as in the case of the clerk Yepikhodov and the student Trofimov in *The Cherry Orchard*. For instance, when Yepikhodov complains saying: "Every day something awful happens to me." (242), he bumps into a chair and knocks it over. Likewise, the stage direction informs the reader about Trofimov's falling down the stairs rushing off stage in resentment and distress: "There is a sound of rapid footsteps on the staircase in the hall and then of someone suddenly falling downstairs with a crash" (277). It is the comic; in other words, the farcical events which ends the serious moment. Another device which creates a tragicomic effect on the spectator Chekhov develops is the use of subtext in dramatic dialogue between the fictional figures as realized in Act IV, in the scene between Varya, Arkadina's adopted daughter and Lopakhin, the businessman:

LOPAKHIN. This time last year we have already had snow, remember? But now it's calm and sunny. It's a bit cold though. Three degrees of frost, I should say.
VARYA. I haven't looked. [*Pause.*] Besides, our thermometer's broken.
Pause.] (291)

Lopakhin and Varya's dialogue functions as an example of "cross-talk"

which is irrelevant to their speeches. Varya waits for the first move from him to propose; additionally, not the pauses but this irrelevancy suggests the lack of communication between them which produces laughter while the subtext is not.

The devastating face of time passing is tragic for the actors in *The Seagull* as in Shakespeare's sonnets. The two years time elapse between Act III and Act VI displays some turning points, taking place off stage, such as the marriage between the daughter of the manager of the estate, Masha and Medvedenko and the ruin in Nina's career as an actress and in her love affair with Trigorin. Their lives becoming more tragic in that nothing goes better in time. Sorin's health worsens, Treplev's despair increases and he longs for Nina, Masha's passion for Treplev intensifies though she bears a child. Nevertheless, they farcically pass time with their routines, Sorin snores, Trigorin goes fishing, all play cards and drink together. Moreover, it is apparent that Arkadina is obsessed with the idea that she is becoming too old for an actress reflected in the scene which she wants the doctor, Dorn to tell which one, Masha or she seems more younger; additionally, she strives to prove this by putting her arms akimbo and walks up and down on the lawn and saying "See me tripping on tiptoe like a fifteen-year-old girl" (Act II). But, Dorn's reaction is the same as usual, singing softly: "Telling, oh flowers".

Chekhov's characters perceive themselves as tragic in their own ways; nevertheless, they are drawn with their comic selves as well. For instance, Medvedenko, the teacher, from the very beginning of the play, portrays himself as a poor and unhappy man who is unable to make a living for his family. He is incapable of reflecting his misery as a school teacher to Masha with whom he is in love and to the others in the play as it is understood by his words to Trigorin: "Some day you should write a play, and put on the stage the life of a schoolmaster. It is hard, hard life." (Act I). However, he is not a tragic character in the way he perceives himself; on the contrary, Chekhov depicts Medvedenko as one of the tragicomic characters of his plays measuring happiness of the people with their income, in addition, being unable to understand the reason why Masha does not love him and her family, particularly his mother-in-law, Polina despises of him. Upon Shamraev's story about the famous singer, Silvia at Opera House at Moscow,

which is unrelated to the subject about Nina's performance and Trigorin's talent of creation, Medvedenko question is that: "What salary does the church pay its singers?" (Act II). At this point, the audience feels pity for him.

Shamrayev is one of the characters through whom Chekhov introduces the comic elements in the play. The only thing he cares about is the horses regardless of Arkadina, his son-in-law Medvedenko, his wife Polina and his daughter Masha.

MASHA [*to her father*]. Papa, do let Semion have a horse! He must get home somehow.

SHAMRAYEV [*mimicks her*]. A horse . . . must get home [*Sternly.*] You saw the horses have just been to the station! How can I send them out again?

MASHA. But there are other horses. . . . [*On seeing that her father says nothing, makes a gesture of discouragement.*] Oh, you're hopeless. . . .

MEDVIEDENKO. I can walk, Masha. Really. . . . (173, 74)

Chekhov also draws such a character like Shamrayev in order to provide the transition from the serious to the comic. Arkadina begs and pleads with Trigorin on her knees not to leave her for Nina. Shamrayev's question about the actor terminates the gravity of the scene turning it into a comedy.

SHAMRAYEV [*coming in*]. I have come to inform you that the horses are ready -- I am sorry to say. It's time, my dear lady, we were off to the station: the train comes in at five minutes past two. You will do me that little favour, won't you, Irena Nikolayevna? You won't forget to inquire where the actor Suzdaltzev is now? Is he alive? Is he well? We used to stand each other drinks years ago. . . . He used to be quite inimitable in *The Mail Robbery*. . . . I remember at that time there was a tragedian Izmadov who always played with him at Elizavetgrad. . . . He was a remarkable personality too. . . . Don't be in a hurry, my dear lady, you needn't start for another five minutes. Once they were playing as conspirators in a melodrama, and when they were suddenly discovered they had to say: 'We're caught in a trap.' But Izmailov said 'We're taught in a cap. [*Laughs loudly.*] 'Taught in a cap!' (162, 63)

Instead of concentrating on a single character possessing tragicomic qualities and around whom all the tragic incidents take place, Chekhov inclines to create his tragicomic effects by instancing various experiences and personalities of a group of personas of various age, personalities and social status; yet often gathered in an estate as a result of family, friendship and dependency as exemplified in *The Seagull* and *The Cherry Orchard*.

Except for the comic scenes and characters of the play, gloomy themes of unrequited love, alienation and loneliness, passivity, the search for the self, time handled in the play generate the tragic effect on both the audience and the reader. The chain of unrequited love that Medvedenko loves Masha who loves Trepliov who loves Nina who loves Trigorin complicates the plot and it is unresolved at the end of the play in contrast to Guarini's plays with a happy marriage. Furthermore, Chekhov does not need to create a sub-plot presented by the comic characters to produce comic and humorous effect on the audience along with the serious subject of main plot. He juxtaposes contrasting characters and incidents, turns one to another.

As a result, George Bernard Shaw's definition of modern tragicomedy as "a chemical combination which [makes] the spectator laugh with one side of his mouth and cry with the other side" (Holyrod, 1988:15) suits Chekhovian tragicomedy.

1.2.2. Pirandello's Strategies to Create a Tragicomic Play

I'm a child of Chaos and not only allegorically (Bassanese, 2: 1997)

Awarded with the Nobel Prize in 1934, the Italian author, Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) states in one of his biographies evidencing not only the mythological side of his birth place but also his belief of inconceivable world where chaos dominates. Pirandello was born in a suburb of Girgento (now Agrigento) strangely named "Chaos" as the son of a mother descending from a bourgeois family and of a wealthy owner of sulphur mines. Pirandello describes his father, Stefano in his novel entitled *The Outcast* (1901) as a tall and angry man with whom it is impossible to communicate.

In 1880, the Pirandello family moved to Palermo, the capital of Sicily, where Pirandello completed his high school education and started writing poetry. Pirandello enrolled at the University of Palermo in both law (soon abandoned) and humanities, and then transferred to the University of Rome. However, owing to an academic disagreement with a professor, he went to Bonn, Germany where he

presented a thesis concerning the dialect of his native language, Girgento. He received the doctorate in philology in 1891. In Germany, Pirandello developed interest in German culture and literature translating Goethe's *Roman Elegies* and composed poetry such as *Painful Joy* (1889) and *Rhenish Elegies* (1895) under the influence of Goethe. Along with his poems, Pirandello also published his first volume of his short stories, *Loves without Love* (1894) and some critical and theoretical essays such as *The Falsification of Sentiment in Art* (1890) and *Spoken Action* (1899).

In 1894, he accepted an arranged marriage to Antonietta Portulano, the daughter of his father's business associate. This is the rising action in Pirandello's life leading to the climax with his wife's mental breakdown gradually turning her into an extremely jealous wife with paranoia as a result of her third child birth and of the collapse of his father's sulphur mines by the flood. His wife constantly accused Pirandello of fantastic infidelities, even of incest with his daughter. In this sense, it is obvious that Pirandello is influenced by his wife's illness on the grounds that his works deal with the themes of madness, the multiplicity of identity, the relativity of truth, isolation, illusion. In one of his letters, anticipating one of his major themes of duplicity of the self, Pirandello describes the dualistic side of his personality with "little me" addressing to one's regular life such as marriage and family life and "Big Me" representing the intellectuality. "There is somebody who is living my life and I know nothing about him" (Gilman, 1987: 157) is another phrase proves his notion of doubleness of identity.

Along with the turning points in his life nurturing his creative world, Pirandello is also influenced by significant ideas and theories of many names. He is indebted the idea of changeability of life except for the fixed mental concepts to Bergson. Taking into account of Bergson's thoughts, Pirandello interprets these fixed forms as masks and roles in his plays. During his years in Rome, it is evident that Luigi Capuana's theory of "verismo" (the Italian form of naturalism) has an enormous impact on Pirandello's early plays.

However, as Pirandello develops his artistic vision, he gradually seeks a more creative style distancing himself from the tenets of naturalism. *On Humor* (1908) is a result of this process. An analysis of his description of “humor” is crucial to both Pirandello’s contribution to the development of modern tragicomedy and to the understanding of the form put into practise in his drama. Pirandello’s theory of humor is associated with the mingling of tragic and comic components by many literary critics such as Foster and Hirst concerned with the genre tragicomedy. Pirandello explicitly marks the difference between “the perception of the opposite” and “the feeling of the opposite” with a vivid example:

I see an old lady whose hair dyed and completely smeared with some kind of horrible ointment; she is all made up in a clumsy and awkward fashion and is all dolled-up like a young girl. I begin to laugh. I perceive that she is *the opposite* of what a respectable old lady should be. Now I could stop at the initial and superficial comic reaction: the comic consists precisely of this *perception of the opposite*. But if at this point, reflections interfere in me to suggest that perhaps this old lady finds no pleasure dressing up like an exotic parrot and perhaps that she is distressed by it and does it only because she pitifully deceives herself into believing that, by making herself up like that and by concealing her wrinkles and grey hair, she may be able to hold the love of her much younger husband – if reflections become to suggest all this, I can no longer laugh at her as I did at first, exactly because the inner working of reflection has made me go beyond, or rather enter deep into, the initial stage of awareness: from the initial *perception of the opposite*, reflection has made me shift to a *feeling of the opposite*. And herein lies the precise difference between the comic and humor. (On Humor, 113 quoted in Hirst, 1984: 104)

The comic impact occurs with the perception of the opposite. Yet, after one grasps the reason why she dressed up like an “exotic parrot” – she tries to retain the love of her younger husband – one cannot laugh anymore and this is the feeling of the opposite which is humor as Pirandello bandies about. Furthermore, Foster makes a comparison between Pirandello and Guarini in that “the combination of two opposite feelings, then for Pirandello, and as for Guarini, does not take place in the work itself but in its artistic conception”(Foster, 2004; 29). Besides, it is a kind of balance of thought and emotion for Pirandello’s drama while for Guarini of “tempered emotions”.

Pirandello's literary production is diverse in that he wrote such novels as *The Late Mattia Pascal* (1904) and *One, None, One-Hundred Thousands* (1925), a few theoretical essays and short stories. Pirandello, like Chekhov, steps into the world of drama by turning some of his stories into one-act plays. However, his friend Nino Martoglio playwright and theatrical producer convinced Pirandello to take a serious attempt in the field of drama. Pirandello's contribution to drama is occasional until World War I. When he began to write plays, the Italian theater was traditional and an imitation of French melodrama and domestic farce. In 1917, with the production of *Right You are If You Think You are* Pirandello obtained a major theatrical success. Nevertheless, it is *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), his first play of theater within the theater trilogy, through which Pirandello established himself as a prominent dramatist although the play, like Chekhov's *The Seagull*, was initially recognized as a fiasco due to the play's break with the conventions of the drama to which the Italian audience had accustomed.

That's what I did. And, naturally, the result was what it had to be: a mixture of tragic and comic, fantastic and realistic, in a humorous situation that was quite new and indefinitely complex, a drama which is conveyed by means of the characters, who carry it within them and suffer it, a drama, breathing, speaking, self-propelled, which seeks at all costs to find the means of its own presentation; a comedy of the vain attempt at an improvised realization of the drama on stage. (Preface, xxi)

Pirandello's *Preface to Six Characters in Search of an Author*, written a few years after the first performance of the play, sheds light not only into his process of creating the play but also into the nature of the play as "a mixture of tragic and comic". As it can be concluded from Pirandello's own assertion, the tragedy of the six characters does not lie in their melodramatic story narrating incest, suicide, adultery and death, rather in their abandonment by their author rejecting them and in their inability to become alive as characters of their drama; thus, to remain immortal personas of literature as Pirandello posits in the *Preface*.

I wanted to present six characters seeking an author. Their play does not manage to get presented—precisely because the author whom they seek is missing. Instead is presented the comedy of their vain attempt with all that it contains of tragedy by virtue of the fact that the six characters have been rejected. (Preface, xiii)

In fact, Pirandello never abandons his characters only their sentimental family drama: “What I rejected of them? Not themselves, obviously, but their drama, which doubtless is what interests them above all but which did not interest me”. Instead of a novel, he casts them as the six characters in “search of another author” in a play. Pirandello obviously sees the sorrowful drama of the six characters as old fashioned, the kind of drama which he, categorizing himself as a “philosophical writer” in the *Preface*, rejects. The Father in the play accuses the Stepdaughter of the reason for their abandonment by the author: “Maybe. But perhaps it was your fault that he refused to give us life: because you were too insistent, too troublesome” (Pirandello, 1463). Nevertheless, the Stepdaughter renders the real reason as follows and the Son agrees:

THE STEPDAUGHTER: Nonsense! Didn't he make me so himself? (*Goes close to the Manager to tell him as if in confidence*). In my opinion he abandoned us in a fit of depression, of disgust for the ordinary theatre as the public knows it and likes it. (1463)

As an example of the play within a play, Pirandello puts an inner play dealing with the sentimental family drama of the six characters and performed in fragments within a comic and farcical outer play. The melodramatic story of the characters is performed comically by the actors mimicking it regardless of the suffering of the six characters.

FATHER: [Coming forward with a new note in his voice] Good afternoon, my dear.

STEPDAUGHTER: [Her head down trying to hide her fright.] Good afternoon.

FATHER: [Studying her a little under the brim of her hat which partly hides her face from him and seeing that she is very young, he claims to himself a little complacently and a little guardedly because of the danger of being compromised in a risky adventure.] Ah...but...tell me, this won't be the first time, will it? The first time you've been here?

STEPDAUGHTER: No, sir.

FATHER: You've been here before? [And after the Stepdaughter has nodded an answer.] More than once? [He waits for her reply: tries again to look at her under the brim of her hat: smiles: then says.] Well then...it shouldn't be too... May I take off your hat? (1493)

The six characters eventually persuade the Producer to create a script of their story and to act out it. The seduction scene between the Father and the

Stepdaughter taking place in Madam Pace's shop is presented to be performed by the actors, the Leading Lady playing the Stepdaughter and the Leading Actor as the Father:

(...)The door opens at the back of the set and the Leading Actor enters with the lively, knowing air of an ageing roué. The playing of the scene from the beginning to be something quite different from the earlier scene...

LEADING ACTOR: Good afternoon, my dear.

FATHER: [Immediately, unable to restrain himself.] Oh no!

[The Stepdaughter, watching the Leading Actor enter this way bursts into laughter.]...

STEPDAUGHTER: [Coming to the front.] I'm sorry, I can't help it! The lady stands exactly where you told her to stand and she never moved. But if it were me and I heard someone say good afternoon to me in that way and with a voice like that I should burst out laughing – so I did. (1495)

Pirandello demonstrates the different impact of the two scenes in that the first scene performed by the Father and the Stepdaughter creates a tragic mood and tone making the Mother cry “Oh God!” in agony, in contrast, the actors indifferent to their suffering whereas the latter scene acted out by the Leading Actor and the Leading Actress produces laughter even of the Stepdaughter. The Father realizes the situation and states that “That’s just the point – they’re actors. And they are acting our parts very well, both of them. But that’s what’s different. However much they want to be the same as us, they’re not” (1497).

The characters of the play including the actors can be divided into two categories: tragic and comic. The six “unfortunates” are drawn as tragic characters of the play, not in the sense that they perceive themselves such like, since they are rejected by the author and seeking another one. On the other hand, the actors are firstly not portrayed as comic characters; yet, what transform them into comic are the scenes in which they are trying to mimic the reality of the “sad entanglements” of the six characters.

The six characters perceive the performance of their drama as a vehicle of self justification. Particularly, the Father, “invading the author’s province” takes the control in forming the drama of them without the presence of the author. Though he is the mouthpiece of Pirandello conveying his notions concerning the difference

between theater and real life; in other words, the reality and the illusion, the Father is an unreliable authority only interested in his own self justification as the Stepdaughter interrupts with the objection to the Father's reflection of the truth about the seduction scene:

STEPDAUGHTER: [Interrupting] Ask what? What does he ask?

PRODUCER: Why you're in mourning.

STEPDAUGHTER: No! No! That's not right! Look: when I said that I should try not to think about the way I was dressed, do you know what he said? "Well then, let's take it off, we'll take it off at once, shall we, your little black dress." (1498)

At this point, Pirandello's presence as the author is felt in that he attempts to discern the characters' misconception of the genre of the play as a tragedy or melodrama by demonstrating that their vain attempt at presenting "an improvised realization of the drama on stage" turns into a comedy; in addition, the characters' struggle to present their family drama is only "a comedy in the making" as it can also be inferred from the subtitle of the play. Even the Producer, by reshaping their story for the popular taste, strives to produce "a sugary sentimental romance" as the Stepdaughter denominates in which the reality is distorted for the sake of melodramatic impact on the audience.

They come together in the middle of the stage and stand there as if transfixed. Finally from the left the Stepdaughter comes on and moves towards the steps at the front: on the top step she pauses for a moment to look back at the other three and then burst out in a raucous laugh, dashes down the steps and turns to look at the three figures still on the stage. Then she runs out of the auditorium and we can still hear her manic laughter out into the foyer and beyond. (1511)

On the one hand, it is a tragic end that the Stepdaughter goes mad, the Boy commits suicide by shooting himself and the Little Girl is drawn while the Mother is trying to regain the affection of her son. On the other hand, the actors and the stage staff leave the family story regardless of the ending doubting that all is "reality or make-believe". When the audience focuses on the inner play rather than the outer play, the tragic intensity of the six characters' story handled in the inner play overwhelms the comic features of the outer play performed by the actors. As a result, considering the play a melodrama, the spectator disregards the comic presented in the outer play.

Eric Bentley, in his much-quoted book *Life of the Drama* (1964) categorizes modern tragicomedy under two headings: “tragedy transcended” on the contrary to the “averted tragedy” in Renaissance; and “comedy with an unhappy ending or indeterminate ending” and elicits the following definition of the latter:

Where romantic comedy says: these aggressions can be transcended, and realistic comedy says: these aggressions will be punished, tragicomedy of the school here under consideration says: these aggressions can neither be transcended nor brought to heel, they are human nature, they are life, they rule the world. (Gassner and Quinn, 2002: 864)

Taking into consideration of Bentley’s classification of the modern tragicomedy, the definition of “indeterminate ending” can be an explanation of the ending of the play on the grounds that the drama of the six unfortunates neither is resolved nor goes beyond at the end of the play; additionally they remain stagnant as the tragic characters. However, they reach their aim at becoming immortal characters in the play by the author who rejects them.

1.2.3. Stoppard as a Playwright Employing Tragicomic Methods

Some writers write because they burn with a cause which they further by writing about it. I burn with no causes. I cannot say that I write with any social objective. One writes because one loves writing. (Bigsby, 1979: 5 quoted in Sunday Times, 25 February 1968)

Born Tomáš Straussler in Czechoslovakia, Tom Stoppard (1937-) first moved to Singapore with his family of Jewish descent owing to the German invasion in 1939, three years later, as the Japanese captured the city, evacuated to India with his brother and mother because his father was killed. The family name became Stoppard since his mother remarried to a British Army Major in India.

Stoppard received an English education before the family moved to England after the war in 1946. Leaving school at seventeen, he began his career as a journalist. He resigned his job for the reason he himself stated: “I really wanted to be a great journalist, but I wasn’t much use as a reporter. I felt I didn’t have the right to ask people questions” (Delaney, 1994: 13). He developed an interest in the theater while writing theater reviews coinciding with the first appearances of plays by Samuel Beckett, John Osborne and Harold Pinter. He fulfilled his own literary

attempt by completing his first play named *A Walk on the Water* (1960) which is a television play, later staged as *Enter a Free Man* in 1968.

After his only novel entitled *Lord Malquist and Mr. Moon* (1966), he went on his career as a playwright over twenty more plays varying from theater plays such as *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1967), *Jumpers* (1972), *Travesties* (1974), *The Real Thing* (1982) and *Arcadia* (1993) to his screen plays such as the Oscar winning *Shakespeare in Love* (1998). Except for his plays, Stoppard has also gained praise for his translations and adaptations for the stage such as works by Vaclav Havel and Luigi Pirandello.

Among his plays, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* is the first one rendering Stoppard as a prominent dramatist. He began writing the play in Germany in 1964 inspired by his friend Kenneth Ewing. Stoppard's first attempt was a sort of Shakespearian pastiche, one act play in blank verse named *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Meet King Lear*. Stoppard rewrote the script transforming the lines into prose lengthening the play into three acts and omitting the *King Lear* parts.

By this time I was not in the least interested in doing any sort of pastiche, for a start, or in doing a criticism of *Hamlet* – that was simply one of the by-products. The chief interest and objective was to exploit a situation which seemed to me to have enormous dramatic and comic potential – of these two guys who Shakespeare's context don't really know what they're doing (Delaney, 1994: 57).

Stoppard puts forward his objective in writing such a play like *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* not to produce a play about a play or a criticism of Shakespeare's play; yet, to use both the dramatic and comic potential of the two characters who are minor personas in *Hamlet* serving as plot devices; in other words, "to entertain a roomful people with the situation of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern at Elsinore" (Delaney, 57).

Why does Stoppard choose Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?

One of the reasons why Stoppard prefers them as the characters of his play is that he considers Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, taking Shakespeare as his model, the most famous personas of the literary world with whom everybody is acquainted

claiming that: “*Hamlet* I suppose is the most famous play in any language, it is part of a sort of common mythology.”(Delaney, 18)

Stoppard continues exposing his main reason for his preference of the “bewildered innocents”:

They choose themselves to a certain extent. I mean that the play *Hamlet* and the characters Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are the only play and the only characters on which you could write my kind of play. They are so much more than the merely bit players in another famous play (Delaney, 18).

Regarding the couple as the means corresponding him in many ways, Stoppard defines one of them as “fairly intellectual and incisive” implying Guildenstern and the other as “thicker, nicer” and “more sympathetic”. To Stoppard, they are both competent agents to employ the tragic and comic elements along with the philosophical from many ways. Firstly, inspired by Samuel Beckett’s protagonists Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*, Stoppard depicts Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as interdependent characters requiring each other’s presence, even fearing one another’s absence. Furthermore, the theme of question of identity fits to this play in that as in *Hamlet*, not only the King and the Queen Gertrude, but also Rosencrantz and Guildenstern themselves confuse their names as in the bowing scene in Act I:

Claudius Welcome, dear Rosencrantz... (He raises a hand at Guil while Ros bows – Guil bows late and hurriedly)...and Guildenstern.

He raises a hand at Ros while Guil bows to him – Ros is still straightening up from his previous bow and half way up he bows down again. With his head down, he twists to look at Guil, who is on the way up. (26)

In the scene, the audience is amused with Stoppard’s handling the theme of loss of identity comically. On the other hand, through another scene between Ros and Guil, Stoppard demonstrates the other side of the coin by drawing them as miserable men lacking a past, memory and even future: “Ros: (flaring) I haven’t forgotten – how I used to remember my own name – and yours, oh yes! There were answers everywhere you looked. There was no question about it – people knew who

I was and if they didn't they asked and I told them" (30). The desire for a stable age in which there were answers to all questions, the same answers is not applied to all questions is reflected through the words of Ros.

As the quality of intertextuality, *Hamlet* generates a subtext for Stoppard on the ground that many parts are directly borrowed from Shakespeare's play. One of them is the scene in which by Claudius and Gertrude, Ros and Guil are charged of finding out the reasons behind Hamlet's transformation, except for his father's death:

Gertrude Good (fractional suspense) gentlemen... (They both bow)

He hath much talked of you,
And sure I am, two men there is not living
To whom he more adheres. If it will please you
To show us so much gentry and goodwill...

Ros Both your majesties
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,
Put your dread pleasures more into command
Than to entreaty.

Guil We both obey,
And here give up ourselves in the full bent
To lay our service freely at your feet,
To be commanded. (28)

In contrast to Shakespeare, Stoppard creates Ros and Guil as unheroic comic men speaking a colloquial language, Guil in a manner of philosophizing and Ros in a submissive way rather than Ros and Guil in *Hamlet* using a courtly language to display their gratitude to their king and queen. However, in Stoppard's play, their royal speech produces a comic mood and tone in the play since their speech does not suit their "everyman" personalities.

As non-autonomous figures imprisoned into a play being chosen from another play by an author, Ros and Guil are destined to enact their roles they can never perceive:

Guil (tensed up by this rambling) Do you remember the first thing that happened today?

Ros (promptly) I woke up, I suppose. (Triggered.) Oh – I've got it now –

the man, a foreigner, he woke us up –

Guil A messenger. (He relaxes, sits.)

Ros That's it – pale sky before dawn, a man standing on his saddle to bang on the shutters – shouts – What's all the row about?! Clear off! – But then he called our names. You remember that – this man woke us up.

Guil Yes.

Ros We were sent for. (9)

Without questioning and thinking, they set off to somewhere they are called by a “foreigner”. The scene exemplifies their depiction of little men lacking freedom, choice and free will. Both their tragic and comic potential lie in their inability to comprehend what they are doing as Guil narrates the situation in Act II: “But for God's sake what we are supposed to do!...But we don't know what's going on, or what to do with ourselves, we don't know how to act” (58). Additionally, Hamlet is the only meaning in their lives. In other words, they are interdependent in the sense that they “need Hamlet for [their] release” (111) since they are supposed to deliver Hamlet to the king of England. We feel sympathy to them as doomed men.

Stoppard's witty and modernist usage of stage directions is evident in the sense that he renders what in words in Shakespeare's through action as illustrated in Act II:

Ophelia runs on in some alarm, holding up her skirts – followed by Hamlet.

Ophelia has been sewing and she holds the garment. They are both mute. Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced, no hat upon his hat, his stockings fouled, ungartered and down-gyved to his ankle, pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other...and with a look so piteous, he takes her by her wrist and holds her hard, then he goes to the length of his arm, and with his other hand over his brow, falls to such perusal of her face as he would draw it...At last, with a little shaking of his arm, and thrice his head waving up and down, he raises a sigh so piteous and profound that it does seem to shatter all his bulk and his being. That done he lets her go, and with his head over his shoulder turned, he goes out backwards without taking his eyes off her... (26)

On the contrary to Shakespeare's conveying of Hamlet's transformation - meaning madness in both plays - through Ophelia' mouth, Stoppard displays it in action in order to turn the situation into a comic scene. In this sense, Shakespeare's

tragic approach to the same condition is transformed into comedy so as not to produce a parody of the play, rather to adapt it to the nature of the play.

Even before the beginning of the play, the audience has no suspense that Ros and Guil are condemned to the wheel of fortune awaiting for their death since the spectator is acquainted with the end of Ros and Guil in *Hamlet*; additionally, the title of the play, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, foreshadows not only their ultimate end but also everyman. Likewise, with an alternation of aim in contrast with *The Mousetrap* in *Hamlet* accusing the King and the Queen of Hamlet's father's death, the play within the play in Stoppard's exposes the "only end" of Ros and Guil.

Ros (...) Dying is not romantic, and death is not a game which will soon be over...Death is not anything...death is not...It's the absence of presence, nothing more...the endless time of never coming back...a gap you can't see, and when the wind blows through it, it makes no sound...
(116)

Stoppard avoids a melodramatic performance and physical description of death, they just disappear. As the representative of doomed men, they did nothing to avoid their inevitable end even though they realize the fact that they carry their own deaths with themselves after discovering that the letter orders it. In this sense, to Bentley's classification of modern tragicomedy, Stoppard's play can be categorized comedy with an unhappy ending in that the comic components of the play overwhelm the tragic in the play turning the anti-heroes into tragicomic characters; however, the tragic end is unavoidable.

As a result, after the Second World War, the comic and the tragic are considered to be the same as reflected in the words of Ionesco: "It all comes to the same thing anyway; comic and tragic are merely two aspects of the same situation, and I have now reached the stage where I find it hard to distinguish one from the other" (Dunn, 1996:158). Dürrenmatt espouses the expression of modern tragedy comically asserting in *Problems of the Theatre* (1954), "But the tragic is still possible even if pure tragedy is not. We can achieve the tragic out of comedy. We can bring it forth as a frightening moment, as an abyss that opens suddenly" (*The*

Marriage of Mr. Mississippi and Problems of the Theatre, p. 32, quoted in Berlin, 1981:142).

CHAPTER II
**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF *THE SEAGULL*, *SIX CHARACTERS IN*
SEARCH OF AN AUTHOR AND *ROSENCRATNTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE*
DEAD REGARDING THE TRAGICOMIC EFFECT AND RESPONSE**

2.1 Metatheatricality Contributing to the Tragicomic Effect

2.1.1 Defining the Terms: Metatheatre and Play within a Play

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances (As You Like It, Act II, Scene
vii, 55)

Shakespeare's Jaques in melancholy narrates this famous phrase through monologue comparing the world to a stage, life to a play and all human beings to players who perform their predetermined roles and then exits.

What is life? A frenzy, an illusion,
A shadow, a delirium, a fiction.
The greatest good's but little, and this life
Is but a dream, and dreams are only dreams. (Calderon, Act II, 295)

Calderon, in this soliloquy recited by Segismundo, questions the meaning of life and considers life as an illusion "which only death awakens".

Borrowing both from Shakespeare and Calderon and considering both of them as the modern precursors, the critic and playwright Lionel Abel, in his book *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form* (1963), delineates the term he coined "metatheatre" as "the world is a stage" and "life is a dream". To Abel, metatheatre, deriving from the Greek prefix "meta" meaning "beyond", is a kind of genre in which the modern playwrights and their characters question every assumption due to their loss of faith in a non chaotic world. The characters also inquiry the genres of the plays in which they are imprisoned by one of the character's pretending of himself or herself as "the playwright within the play"; in other words, "the internal playwright", even dominating on the other characters.

Besides, Abel treats metatheatre as a genre in itself as opposed to tragedy proclaiming that "tragedy is difficult if not altogether impossible for the modern dramatist" (<http://www.holmesandmeier.com/titles/abel.html>) and "true" tragedy was extremely rare in modern times; and adds that tragedy has evolved in to metatheatre. Abel provides a broader definition of the term:

Theatre pieces about life seen as already theatricalized. By this I mean that the persons appearing on the stage in these plays are not there simply

because they were caught by the playwright in dramatic postures a camera might catch them, but because they knew they were dramatic before the playwright take note of them. What dramatized them originally? Myth, legend, past literature, they themselves. They represent to the playwright the effect of the dramatic imagination before he has begun to exercise his own. (Abel, *Metatheatre; A New View*, 40 quoted in Canning, 2004; 153)

In this respect, the characters in a metaplay are aware of the fact that they possess dramatic stance even before the playwright gives life them. Thacker's description of the term functions as a comprehensive explanation of Abel's notion of metatheatre reflected in the quotation above:

(...)metatheatre as the dramatist's creation of characters who are aware of the theatricality of life, who can play, who refuse to view themselves as predictable actors in a monolithic system of prescribed behaviour. Because they share an awareness with the audience that their fellow characters are acting, are part of a play, these characters often develop a close relationship with the spectators that is based on mutual understanding. (Thacker, 2002: 3)

Thacker draws attention to the fact that not only the spectator but also the characters on the stage are conscious of that they are merely actors. In this respect, they share a kind of theatrical awareness; in other words, a "mutual understanding".

Upon Abel's invention of the concept, many drama critics, along with Thacker, attempt to reshape and widen the examination of the term. Calderwood is only one of them, defines metatheatre as "a dramatic genre that goes beyond drama, becoming a kind of anti-form in which the boundaries between the play as a work of self-contained art and life are dissolved" (Calderwood, 2009: 4). Calderwood's study is based on the notion that "Shakespeare's plays are not only about the various moral, social, political, and other thematic issues with which critics have so long and quite properly been busy but also about Shakespeare's plays" (Ibid., 5). Pavis generalizes Calderwood's theory stating that "any play can be analyzed according to its author's attitude toward language and toward his own production, an attitude that can always be glimpsed in the text, and often the author is so aware of the problem that he thematizes it" (Pavis, 1998: 210).

Pavis asserts that Abel, who coined the term, simply extended the old theory of play within a play and criticizes Abel's definition of the term as it is insufficiently

described in terms of dramaturgical forms and theatre discourse. To Pavis, metatheatre means “theatre which is centred around theatre and therefore “speaks” about itself, “represents” itself” becoming a form of antitheatre, where the dividing line between play and real life is erased” (Pavis, 210). At this point, the critics interested in metatheatre agree about that metaplays surpass drama to merge with life.

Hornby, another critic who extends the study of Abel, points out that metatheatre occurs when “man distrusts reality around him”, “[w]henever the play within the play is used” (Hornby, *Drama, Metadrama, and Perception*, 45 quoted in Thacker, 2002: 17) and “whenever the subject of a play turns out to be, in some sense drama itself” (Hornby, 17 quoted in Ringer, 1998: 13). Moreover, Hornby tries to convey the effect of metatheatre upon the spectator:

The metadramatic experience for the audience is one of unease, a dislocation of perception. It is possible to talk about the degree of intensity of metadrama which varies from very mild to an extreme disruption. At times, metadrama can yield the most exquisite of aesthetic insights, which theorists have spoken of as "estrangement" or "alienation." This "seeing double" is the true source and significance of metadrama (Hornby, 32 quoted in Ringer, 1998: 22)

Hornby divides metatheatre into five headings: the play-within-the-play, ceremonies within-the-play, role-playing-within-the-role, literary and real-life reference, and direct self-reference. He employs a sixth type as well, drama making “perception” its theme such as classic plays in which the playwright takes perception as an “overt” theme revealing what is always implicit.

Lastly, Martin Puchner summarizes the description of metatheatre claiming that the word defines itself if you see the performance of plays by such dramatists Shakespeare, Pirandello and Genet.

Metatheatre utilizes the device “play within a play” comprising of an “inner” or “interior” and “outer” or “frame” play and allowing both the playwright and the characters to discuss the theatricality of the play and literature itself through which the dramatist philosophizes on the notion of reality versus illusion. It includes an internal theatrical performance in which actors act an additional role in addition to their basic, and an “internal audience” is present on stage apart from the actual off stage spectators. Its origin dates back to the sixteenth century firstly with Medwall’s *Fulgence et Lucrece*

in 1497, and then with *The Spanish Tragedy* by Kyd in 1589, and with Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in 1601. The device play within a play is related to metatheatre in terms of considering the metaphor of life as stage.

To Fischer and Greiner, the most prominent characteristic of the device is that:

it doubles an aesthetic experience which already presents a dual reality: the actor, who appears on stage both in his/her own physical presence and in the part he/she portrays, assumes and plays yet another role, thus adding a third identity which itself is constructed in the context of a third level of time, space, characterisation and action. (Fischer and Greiner, 2007: xi)

Pavis calls this doubleness “a game of superillusion” through which “the external reality acquires a heightened reality – the illusion of illusion becomes reality” (Pavis, 1998: 270).

The play within a play serves various functions as Fischer and Greiner touches upon: “as an artistic agency of self-reference and self- reflection refer[ring] back to itself”. At this point, Fischer and Greiner regard the device as metatheatrical. They also characterize it as an artistic mode allowing shift from one genre to another.

Zipfel divides the functions of the device into three categorizations: first one is the “catalytic function” furthering the plot of the outer play as in the case of *The Murder of Gonzago* in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; the next one is to resolve and conclude the conflicts presented in the outer play - Zipfel provides the example of revenge dramas such as Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*; and lastly to produce “a particular atmosphere, especially when the inner play is not a substantial element in the plot of the outer play” (Fischer and Greiner, 2007: 204).

The major effect of metatheatre is to compel the spectator to go beyond the inner play. At this point, the audience delves into the field of criticism functioning as the critics of the play during the performance as the playwright fulfils the same objective with the help of the characters in the play. In this sense, the audience turns out to be more than the “merely players” in this world's stage into the critics of the play.

2.1.2 Metatheatricality in *The Seagull*

There is a regular army of people in my brain begging to be

summoned forth and only waiting for the word to be given.
Chekhov

Along with Chekhov's own assertion that the play possesses "a great deal of conversation about literature" quoted before, in the second part of Chapter I of this study, it can be inferred from the first stage direction that *The Seagull* is a play about plays.

[The park on SORIN'S estate. A wide avenue leads towards a lake in the background. A rough stage erected for an amateur theatrical performance has been built across the avenue and conceals the view of the lake. There are bushes close to the stage, right and left, and in the foreground a few chairs and a small table.

The sun has just gone down. YAKOV and some other men are working on the stage behind the curtain; they can be heard hammering and coughing. (119)

It is hardly surprising that Chekhov writes a play about the nature of art and artist after the failure of the debut of *The Wood Demon*. Even before the curtain rises, it is obvious that *The Seagull* is not a conventional play, as opposed to the audience's expectations from the symbolic title of the play, in that the noise of the stage staff working on the stage behind the curtain can be audible. Medviedenko informs us about the inner play written by Trepliov and acted by Nina. Trepliov, undertaking the role of "the internal playwright" and producer of the inner play, announces that the play within the play is about to begin. Nina appears on the stage acting a double role. The rest of the estate members presume the role of the audience of the internal play; yet, at the same time, they continue carrying out their roles as the characters of the outer play. Through the play within the play, the reality is duplicated on the grounds that the actors on the stage firstly as their own personalities, then as the actors of the outer play and actors, such as Nina, of the internal play.

The device play within the play in *The Seagull* functions as an introductory medium to the debate over theatre, or more generally over literature. Likewise, the core theme of the nature of art and artist in the play is introduced through the use of play within the play.

Like Chekhov's, the performance of the play results in disaster in that Trepliov interferes calling the curtain as the producer and writer of the inner play because of Arkadina's humiliation of the play. Also Nina criticizes Trepliov's play

stating that “It's difficult to act in your play. There are no real living characters in it... But there's hardly any action in your play, there are only speeches. And then I do think there ought to be love in a play” (126). A parallel can be drawn between Trepliov's play and *The Seagull* depending on Chekhov's own description of his play having “very little action”. In this sense, Chekhov allows the spectator of the play within the play as well as the actual audience and himself to make a criticism of his play in terms of being deprived of action.

Unlike Nina and Arkadina, Dorn praises Trepliov's play in that he is moved by the impression of his play. Besides, he advises Trepliov to depict only the significant and permanent parts of life presenting a clear and definite idea with a definite goal. The presence of Chekhov guiding young writers in their developments is unmistakably felt.

DORN [*alone*]. I don't know, maybe I don't understand anything, maybe I've gone off my head, but I did like that play. There is something in it. When that child was holding forth about loneliness, and later when the devil's red eyes appeared, I was so moved that my hands were shaking. It was fresh, unaffected. . . (135)

Despite the two years of the elapses between Act III and Act IV, Dorn's comments of Trepliov's artistic creation remain same in that he still complains about the lack of a specific aim in his art.

Trepliov conveys his notions concerning literature touching upon the need for “new forms of art” complaining about the theatre of the time announcing it conventional and prejudice repeating itself by presenting various forms of the same thing many times. However, in Act IV, Trepliov contemplates on his own artistic creation reading what he wrote and realizes that he himself is gradually beginning to be taken into the same “rut” he criticizes by talking about innovation in art. He compares his style to Trigorin's easy method by quoting from one of Trigorin's stories. He concludes that “[he is] becoming more and more convinced that it isn't a matter of old or new forms -- one must write without thinking about forms, and just because it pours freely from one's soul” (177). These words of Trepliov are the echoes of Chekhov's “unconsciousness” towards neither himself nor the readers in the process of writing.

Except for Trepliov, the play is peopled by artists such as Arkadina, Trigorin and Nina. Arkadina is a well-known actress who is proud of her beauty in spite of her middle age and of herself as a successful actress. Trepliov describes her: “there is no

doubt about her being very gifted and intelligent: she's capable of weeping bitterly over a book, of reciting the whole of Nekrasov by heart" (122). She is partly concerned with his son; yet, mostly forgetful of him and Trepliov asserts that she hates him since he is the reminiscent of her age. She is in love with the famous writer Trigorin who perceives everybody and everything surrounding him as a literary "raw material" for his artistic creation making notes in his book such as for Masha: "Takes snuff and drinks vodka. Always dresses in black. A schoolmaster in love with her" (146). He himself confesses his intention that he is interested even in Nina as a source of inspiration for his art:

TRIGORIN. Good morning. It turns out that we may have to leave here today, rather unexpectedly. It doesn't seem very likely that we shall meet again. Girls don't often come my way, I mean girls who are young and interesting to meet. I've forgotten what it feels like to be eighteen or nineteen, indeed I can't imagine it at all clearly. That's why the girls in my novels and stories are usually so artificial. I wish I could exchange places with you, even if only for an hour, just to find out what your thoughts are, and what kind of a pretty little thing you are in a general sort of way. (146)

At the end of the play, Nina accepts that she still loves Trigorin although he abandons her ruining her life and career. Yet, she does not want to be "A subject for a short story ... That's not it. [*Rubs her forehead.*] What was I talking about? ... Yes, about the stage. I'm not like that now" (181).

Trigorin, at the end of the play announces that the critics attacked Trepliov's style deprived of "ordinary people". At this point, the difference between Trigorin's and Treplev's method is revealed in that Trepliov does not take the advantage of consuming the experiences of the people around him as Trigorin does.

Even though he is jealous of Trigorin because of Arkadina and Nina, Trepliov admits that Trigorin is a "clever and charming" writer and adds "that if you've been reading Tolstoy, or Zola, you don't feel like reading Trigorin afterwards".

In contrast to Trepliov's art which she has not read anything of his yet, Arkadina praises Trigorin's writing saying:

ARKADINA (...) you're the best of all the modern writers, the only hope of Russia. . . .You have such sincerity, simplicity, freshness, stimulating humour. . . . With a stroke of your pen you can convey the whole essence of a character or a landscape; people in your books are so alive. It is impossible to read your work and not be delighted by it. (161)

The fact that Trigorin creates lively characters as Arkadina appreciated in contrast to Treplev's lies in his exploitation of his friends' life for the sake of his own literary creation.

Trigorin also recounts the nature of his artistic creation not in a challenging way as Trepliov does. On the contrary, he defines his writing as a compulsory process: "I'm obsessed day and night by one thought: I must write, I must write, I just must. ... For some reason, as soon as I've finished one novel, I fed I must start writing another, then another, then another. ... I write in a rush, without stopping..." (147).

Trigorin continues exposing his process of writing depicting it something unavoidable and tormenting in his life.

TRIGORIN. (...) When I finish a piece of work, I dash off to the theatre, or go off on a fishing trip, and that's the time when I ought to relax and forget myself -- but no! Something that feels like a heavy cast-iron ball begins to revolve in my brain -a new subject for a novel! So immediately I drag myself back to my desk again, and I have to push on with my writing once more, to keep on writing and writing. ... (148).

In Trigorin's narration, the reader is able to capture the same idea as Chekhov's about "the army of people" in his brain. He describes his life as "haze" and himself as a suffering writer compared to a "fox" followed by the hounds.

Through the staging of Trepliov's play, the audience is introduced to Nina as a fervent and enthusiastic young actress who is firstly in love with Trepliov and then immediately falls in love with Trigorin. Her performance is admired with her looks and lovely voice even by Arkadina. Nevertheless, in Act IV, after an interval of two years between the last two acts, upon Dorn's inquiry, Trepliov narrates her career as an actress in contrast to the beginning of the play:

TREPLIOV. That was worse still, I believe. She started acting in a small theatre at some holiday place near Moscow, then went to the provinces. I never lost sight of her at that time, and wherever she went, I followed. She would always take on big parts, but she acted them crudely, without distinction -- with false intonations and violent gestures. There were moments when she showed talent -- as when she uttered a cry, or died on the stage -- but they were only moments. (171)

Taking into consideration the notions and approaches related to literature in

the work, the play embraces two kinds of theatre: conventional represented by Arkadina and Trigorin, and modern which is in favour of innovation, whose representatives are Trepliov and Nina in the play. During the play, the innovative theatre is ridiculed by the traditional with Arkadina's humiliation of Trepliov's play and by the critics of it; additionally, it is destroyed by the exploitation of the established theatre, particularly in the case of Trigorin and Nina. In fact, the same failure is not valid for Chekhov regarding the later success of *The Seagull*.

Along with these artists, the play also includes the characters who carry their stories in them functioning as a source of literary creation. Being regretful of his past claiming that" (...) years ago there were just two things I wanted passionately. One was to get married and the other was to be a novelist. I haven't managed to pull it off either way. Yes, even to be a minor writer must be rather nice..." (124), Sorin wants to provide an idea for a story for Trepliov:

You know, I'd like to give Kostia a subject for a novel. I'd call it 'The Man Who Whished'. *L'homme qui a voulu.* Long ago in my young days I wanted to become a writer -- and I didn't; I wanted to be a fine speaker -- and I spoke abominably..." (169)

Considering the distinctive characteristic of the play serving as a medium of debate over literature, Chekhov intentionally makes references to authors such like Shakespeare, Maupassant and Turgenev in the play.

In the case of Shakespeare, Arkadina and Treplev recite from Hamlet just before the performance of Trepliov's plays:

ARKADINA [*reciting from Hamlet*].
'Oh, Hamlet, speak no more! Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul;
And there I see such black and grained spots As will not leave their tinct.'
TREPLIOV. [*from Hamlet*].
'And let me wring thy heart, for so I shall, If it be made of penetrable
stuff'. (128)

Intertextuality from *Hamlet* contributes not only to the discussion of literature but also to establishment of the Oedipal relationship between the mother and son rendering Trepliov as Shakespeare's Hamlet, Arkadina as Gertrude and Trigorin as the King. Moreover, another parallel can be drawn between *Hamlet* and *The Seagull* is the play within the play which causes, in both plays, a tumult and is ended with the

interventions. Influenced by Shakespeare, Chekhov makes use of the device play within a play portraying an isolated son from the others similar to Hamlet.

The other scene in which *Hamlet* is mentioned is when Trepliov sees Trigorin approaching and utters: “But here comes the real genius, stepping out like Hamlet himself, and with a book, too. [*Mimicks.*] ‘Words, words, words.’ ...” (146). Lastly, Shakespeare’s name is echoed by Nina in Trepliov’s play “This common soul of the world is I -- I. ... The souls of Alexander the Great, of Caesar, of Shakespeare, of Napoleon” (129).

Trepliov uses the name Maupassant expressing his distaste of the conventional theatre “when I’m presented with a thousand variations of the same old thing, the same thing again and again -- well, I just have to escape, I run away as Maupassant ran away from the Eiffel Tower which so oppressed him with its vulgarity” (123). Maupassant is also quoted at the beginning of Act II, Arkadina is reading aloud from a part of Maupassant’ *Sur L’eau* (1888) about a woman “who wishes to capture, she lays siege to him with the aid of compliments, flattery and favours” (139).

Turgenev is the other author whose presence is felt in some parts of the play. Nina and Trigorin discussing about Trigorin’s creations, Trigorin states his dissatisfaction with what he writes. At this point, the scene is the reminiscent of Chekhov’s displeasure with his early works, particularly when he began writing for theatre. Trigorin also complains about the public’s comparison of Trigorin’s and Turgenev’s writing evaluating Trigorin’s inferior to great writers: “And then the public reads it and says: ‘Yes, it’s charming, so cleverly done. ... Charming, but a far cry from Tolstoy.’ ... Or ‘A very fine piece of work, but Turgenev *Fathers and Children* is a better book” (149). In the other scene, sorrowful and regretful of her past, Nina tries to find comfort in Turgenev’s words: “Fortunate is he who on such a night has a roof over him, who has a warm corner of his own.’ I am a seagull. . . . No, that’s not it. [*Rubs her forehead.*] What was I saying? Yes. . . . Turgenev. . . .’And Heaven help the homeless wayfarers’. . . Never mind . . .” (179).

Along with the motif of love as Chekhov himself stated, the chief concern of the play turns out to be drama itself “referring back to itself” and speaking about itself. Chekhov is so aware of the fact that his play pertains to drama or literature itself. This notion is the reminiscent of Pavis’ assertion that the author consciously “thematizes” it.

When the metatheatrical quality of the play is omitted, the play remains a conventional play or a piece of melodrama narrating the tragic lives of a group of people inhabited in an estate and ending with a suicide. This is what Chekhov struggles to avoid. To reach and fulfil his objective, he employs the play within the play device through which the basic idea in the play begins to be exposed and furthered. In this respect, the use of the technique of play within the play serves as a “catalytic” function extending and developing the essential concern of the play.

2.1.3 Pirandello’s Metatheatrical Devices

When the characters are really alive before their author, the latter does nothing but follow them in their action, in their words, in the situations which they suggest to him; and he must want them to be what they want to be: and this bad luck if he doesn’t do what they want! When a character is born he immediately assumes such an independence even of his own author that everyone can imagine him in scores of situations that his author hadn’t even thought of putting him in, and he sometimes acquires a meaning that his author never dreamed of giving him. (1503)

The Father’s words in Pirandello’s play entitled *Six Characters in Search of an Author* are the reminiscent of Abel’s description of metatheatre in that the characters are aware of the fictitious nature or in Pirandello’s words “independence” in themselves whenever they are born presenting the author what is hidden in their natures. Pirandello’s “Fantasy”, which is his inspiration as he himself denoted in the *Preface* to the play, brings him the six characters:

“who are seen coming on the stage at the beginning of the play. Now one of them and now another – often beating down one another – embarked on the sad story of their adventures, each shouting his own reasons, and projecting in my face his disordered passions, more or less as they do in the play to the unhappy Manager. (Preface, xiii-xix)

However, Pirandello rejected their sentimental story but not the Six Characters. Had Pirandello admitted the family drama of the Characters, the play would have been a conventional, pathetic and melodramatic piece of literature. Moreover, Pirandello bestows them “raison d’etre” which is their real function in the play that they are the six characters seeking an author. Particularly the Father, who is aware of this metatheatrical function, invades “the author’s province” positioning himself as the

“internal playwright” by “assuming some of the author’s responsibilities” and trying to dominating on the Characters; yet, being unable to control the Stepdaughter. Additionally, the Father also attempts to change the genre of the play imposing the different versions of their sentimental stories changing it for the sake of their self justification. On the other hand, Pirandello claims that the Mother is unaware of the fact that she is a character looking for an author not in the hope of gaining life with the help of the author but of a scene with the Son. Furthermore, the Actors in the play do not carry the metatheatrical awareness the Characters possess. Pirandello’s refusal to produce such a play dealing with the sad story of the family filled with incest, prostitution, adultery and so on allows him to create a metaplay employing the technique of play with in the play; in other words, theatre within the theatre, a metadrama going beyond drama in which the difference between theatre and life, more generally reality and illusion is erased.

Pirandello makes use of the play within the play to probe and reveal “the inherent tragic conflict between life (which is always moving and changing) and form (which fixes it, immutable)” (Preface, xxiii) by presenting two interwoven plays including an outer and an internal play in addition to the two groups comprising of a division of the Actors and the Characters.

The initial stage direction suggests that the audience is about to see an unconventional play as in the case of Chekhov’s *The Seagull*:

Upon entering the theatre, the audience finds the curtain already raised and the stage the way it is during the day without the wings or scenery in view, semi-dark and empty, so that from the beginning the audience will have the impression of an impromptu performance.

Once the lights of the theatre are dimmed, from the door on stage the TECHNICIAN appears dressed in dark-blue overalls with a bag hanging from his belt; from a corner backstage he picks up a few rigging boards, puts them down up front and kneels down to nail them. While the hammering is going on there enters from the directions of the dressing-rooms the STAGE MANAGER. (5)

Apart from the fact that when the audience enters the curtain is already up, the stage staff including the Stage Hand and the Stage Manager is present on the stage instead of the actors who are supposed to act their roles before the audience. The only hint which demonstrates that the play is about to begin is the houselights. The whole view implies that the spectator is about to see a rehearsal rather than a performance.

Putting such a scene in the play, Pirandello aims to put an emphasis on the theatricality breaking the illusion between the actual life and theatre.

From the Stage Manager's words, the spectator concludes that the theatre company is about to rehearse a play, *Il giuoco delle parti*, *The Rules of the Game* by Pirandello. At this point, the audience is confused once again questioning themselves whether they are going to watch a performance of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* or another play by Pirandello.

The rehearsal is interrupted firstly by the Prompter followed by the Six Characters. From the title of the play, the spectator knows that they are the abandoned six characters looking for an author to give them life as characters. The encounter between the Father and the Stepdaughter which takes place in Madame Pace's dress shop is performed twice; first of all by the Father and the Stepdaughter, and then reenacted by the Leading Actress and the Leading Actor.

The scene between the Father and the Stepdaughter; in other words, the inner play is initially interrupted by the cry of the Mother since she considers the acting real. At this point, the spectator regards the Characters and the scene as real. The Mother cannot stand the reality even if it is a performance because it is reality for her. Her suffering is endless indicated also in her lines "the agony repeats itself endlessly" (1499) as her reality is eternal, fixed in the work of art. On the other hand, for the Actors, what is real according to the Characters is only "make-believe" questioning "Is it real? Has she really fainted?" (1475). The Son cannot leave the stage since "He's chained to [them] for ever" (1506). Actors and actresses enact the sufferings of the characters on stage. When the play ends, they become themselves oblivious of the sorrow of the characters they performed. The Father's lines clarify the conflict between reality and illusion:

Whatever is a reality today, whatever you touch and believe in and that seems real today, is going to be – like the reality of yesterday – an illusion tomorrow. (1503)

However the notion of the Characters as real is reversed by the intervention of the Actors making fun of the Characters: "Be careful! Those are our hats!" This is the point that the audience perceives the Actors rather than the Characters as real. It is unusual in the sense that the actors are the fictive creators of the theatrical world. The

Actors and the Characters see each other as fictitious whereas the audience discerns both the Actors and the Characters illusionary.

The rehearsal of the seduction scene by the Actors is intervened also by the laughter of the Stepdaughter seeing the performance of the Actors unconvincing; and by the Father's words: "That's just the point they are actors" (97). In this respect, the scene concretizes the distinction between the actual and the fictive as well as the actor and the character. Furthermore, the Stepdaughter tries to emphasize that she must be naked in order to present reality whereas the Producer demonstrates the shortcomings of the theatrical world concerning the putting real life on stage: "This is the theatre you know! Truth's all very well up to a point" (98).

When they are rehearsing the scene in Madame Pace's shop, they suddenly realize that the scene cannot be performed without Madame Pace. In fact, the audience as well as the Producer and the Actors already know the story because her part is narrated. Yet, she is crucial to the theatricality of the play as the Characters want it to be real; additionally, she is the seventh character and she is real just as the Characters. Pirandello, in the Preface, narrates the birth of Madame Pace so:

(...)Madame Pace is born among the six characters and seems a miracle, even a trick, realistically portrayed on the stage. It is no trick. The birth is real. The new character is alive not because she was alive already but because she is now happily born as is required by the fact of her being a character- she is obliged to be as she is. There is a sudden break here, a sudden change in the level of reality of the scene, because a character can be born in this way only in the poet's fancy and not on the boards of a stage. (Preface, xxviii)

With the appearance of Madame Pace on the stage, the Producer calls the situation as a "trick" as opposed to Pirandello's evaluation of the event as "miracle". Upon the Producer's and the Actors' assessment of the situation, the Father clarifies it both for them and the audience:

FATHER: Wait a minute! Why do you want to spoil a miracle by being factual. Can't you see this is a miracle of reality, that is born, brought to life, lured here, reproduced, just for the sake of this scene, with more right to be alive here than you have? Perhaps it has more truth than you have yourselves. Which actress can improve on Mme. Pace there? Well? That is the real Mme. Pace. You must admit that the actress who plays will be less true than she is herself – and there she is in person! (1491)

In the Father's explanation of the situation as "miracle of the reality", a paradox emerges in that the word miracle is something supernatural in contrast to the reality. To Father, the presence of Madame Pace is essential to the staging of their reality as the Actors are less factual than the Characters. For the internal audience (the Actors) as well as the actual audience, the sudden appearance of Madame Pace is an illusion. Pirandello, throughout the play, compels both the spectator and reader to ponder about the borders of reality and illusion accounting on the levels of truth.

The conversation between the Father and the Producer during the performance of the scene in which the Little Girl is drawn and the Little Boy shoots himself exposes what is reality and what is illusion.

PRODUCER: What else should we call it? That's what we do here - create an illusion for the audience...

LEADING ACTOR: With our performance...

PRODUCER: A perfect illusion of reality! (...)

FATHER: [After a short pause as he looks at them, with a faint smile.] Isn't it obvious? What other reality is there for us? What for you is an illusion you create, for us our only reality. (1502)

This is the heart of the conflict between the character and the actor. The producer cannot understand the Father as he evaluates the situation from the point of theatrical world. On the other hand, the Father, approaching the same point from a different perspective, considers that a character is "someone" who has a life filled with his own eternal life because his life is immutable and everybody knows him whereas a man is totally "nobody".

The Characters demands everything including the scenery similar to what is real. The Son must be shut in the house and the Little Girl playing in the garden. However, it is impossible for the theatrical world to change the setting or to put a performance of life minute by minute even if the authors follow the unity of time. Pirandello displays the universal problem of authors that the reality has to be altered on the stage. As a solution, the Producer changes the reality combining the two scenes in the garden and the other in the house:

PRODUCER: (...) Look here now: the little boy can come out here in the garden and hide among the trees instead of hiding behind the doors in the house. But it's going to be difficult to find a little girl to play the

scene with you here where she shows you the flowers. (1505)

Pirandello alludes to another question echoed in the play that how death can be portrayed on stage when the audience knows that death does not exist for the characters as the Father touches upon the fact that “whoever has the luck to be born a character can laugh even death. Because a character will never die” (1474).

LEADING ACTRESS: (...) He’s dead! The poor boy! He’s dead! What a terrible thing!

LEADING ACTOR: (...) What do you mean, dead? It’s all make-believe. It’s a sham! He’s not dead. Don’t you believe it!

OTHER ACTORS FROM THE RIGHT: Make-believe? It’s real! Real! He’s dead!

OTHER ACTORS FROM THE LEFT: No, he isn’t. He is pretending! It’s all make-believe.

FATHER: [Running off and shouting at them as he goes.] What do you mean make-believe? It’s real! It’s real, ladies and gentlemen! It’s reality!

PRODUCER: [Not caring any more.] Make-believe?! Reality?! (...) And we’ve lost a whole day’s work! (1510).

The Characters are not surprised by the death of the children because it is a part of their unalterable nature. The Mother is terrified when she sees the children stepping onto the garden set as she knows what is going to happen. For the Producer, it is a waste of all the day’s work. The Characters consider their death actual while the Actors and the audience illusionary. At this point, Pirandello reflects the reactions of the audience through the Actors’ since the audience sees the death on the stage a kind of delusion as the Actors do.

As a result, the use of theater within the theatre serves firstly as a “catalytic” function developing the subject as well as the plot of the outer play questioning: “what is reality or illusion? What is the relationship between life and theatrical world or the actor and the character?”. In this sense, Calderwood’s definition of metatheatre “go[ing] beyond drama, becoming a kind of anti-form in which the boundaries between the play as a work of self-contained art and life are dissolved” suits Pirandello’s play. Besides, the element of play within the play provides, as Fischer and Greiner points out, Pirandello the transition from tragedy to comedy while the drama of the Characters is performed or mimicked by the Actors. The Characters as well as their tragedy become less real transforming it into a comedy; thus creating a mixture of both form. Lastly, the play, through theatre within the theatre, also discusses acting, staging and creating

transforming the play about drama itself; therefore, preventing the play to become an example of melodrama; but gaining a philosophical extent.

2.1.4. The Metatheatrical Quality of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*

Don't you see?! We're actors – we're the opposite of people! (...) We're actors...We pledged our identities, secure in the conventions of our trade; that someone would be watching. And then, gradually, no one was.
(55)

The speech of the Player of the troupe in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, who performs *The Murder of Gonzago*, is the echoes of the Father's lines in Pirandello's play *Six Characters in Search of an Author* concerning the debate over the conflict between the real and the fictive. Stoppard is evidently indebted to Pirandello for the subject; yet, Stoppard compels the audience to think more deeply about the division between them when compared with Pirandello.

The ancient Greek authors such as Homer choose their characters among the mythological characters. Shakespeare prefers well-known historical characters such as Julius Caesar employing his own distinctive style to recreate them. Pirandello presents the Six Characters abandoned by an author seeking another one to complete their story. Yet, Stoppard borrows Rosencrantz and Guildenstern already created by Shakespeare in a finished play, *Hamlet*. Stoppard turns the two Elizabethan minor characters of *Hamlet* into major characters of his play inserting them clownish and tramp identity like Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon. They preexist in another play by another playwright. In this respect, the audience knows that they possess a theatrical stance before Stoppard creates them causing a confusion in the minds of the audience to consider Rosencrantz and Guildenstern whether they are fictitious or actual.

Stoppard, unlike Pirandello, begin to introduce the nature of reality before employing the use of play within the play and the dumbshow:

Guil: A man breaking his journey between one place and another at a third place of no name, character, population or significance, sees a unicorn cross his path and disappear. That in itself is startling, but there are precedents for mystical encounters of various kinds or, to be less extreme, a choice of persuasions to put it down to fancy; until – 'My God,' says a second man, 'I must be dreaming, I thought I saw a unicorn.' At which point, a dimension is added that makes the experience

as alarming as it will ever be. A third witness, you understand, adds no further dimension but only spreads it thinner, and a fourth thinner still, and more witness there are the thinner it gets and the more reasonable it becomes until it is as thin as reality, the name given to the common experience...(12)

If a person sees a unicorn, it is vision; yet, when the number of the people seeing it increases, it becomes reality. The example of “unicorn” serves to reveal the fact that people do not question reality, instead accept it blindly. At this point, Stoppard invites the audience and the reader to involve in the argument. The philosophical argument between Ros and Guil about reality through the example of “unicorn” provides a basis for the debate over “being and acting” before the coming of the Tragedians, which make the audience and the reader to think of Pirandello’s Six Characters:

The Tragedians are six in number, including a small boy (Alfred). Two pull and push a cart piled with props and belongings. There is also a Drummer, a Horn-Player and a Flautist. The Spokesman (‘the Player) has no instrument. He brings up the rear and is the first to notice them.

Player: Halt!

The Group turns and halts.

(joyously) An audience! (12)

The Players call Ros and Guil as audience. At this point, the actual spectator regards Ros and Guil as real whereas the Players as fictitious. The border between the actual and the fictive blurs when the Player defines Ros and Guil as “fellow artists” upon the question of Ros about their own identity. The Player and his troupe are aware of the fact that they are actors “always in character” never changing of their costumes since they are characters in Stoppard’s play deprived of any identity out of Stoppard’s play. Likewise, Ros and Guil are constantly in character as they are characters in both Stoppard’s play and Shakespeare’s. The Tragedians carry the awareness which the Actors, as opposed to the Characters, of Pirandello lack.

An affinity can be drawn between the Characters of Pirandello and Stoppard’s Rosencrantz and Guildenstern on the grounds that they both carry an immutable, eternal reality toward which they stand helpless. The play opens with the scene in which the two “bewildered innocents” flip coins and each time the coin comes up heads. They question the possibilities trying to find an explanation. The second possibility Guil

offers is that “time has stopped and the single experience of one coin being spun once has been repeated ninety times...” (6). From the very beginning of the play, a sense of perpetuity is determined upon Ros and Guil.

The conversation among the Player, Ros and Guil when Guil ask who decides what happens strengthens the notion of an unalterable and unavoidable reality rest upon them:

Guil: Who decides?

Player: (switching off his smile) Decides? It is written. (...) We’re tragedians you see. We follow the directions – there is no choice involved. (72)

Before moving to the play within the play in which *The Murder of Gonzago*, which is also presented as the play within the play in *Hamlet*, is performed, Stoppard employs the dumbshow making the action, as the Player explains, more comprehensible and removing the obscurity of the language. During the dumbshow, Ros and Guil with the Player act as the audience, even the critics of the play commenting on the advantages of the device. However, the core of the rehearsal lies in the appearance of the two Spies:

The two Spies present their letter; the English King reads it and orders their deaths. They stand up as the Player whips off their cloaks preparatory to execution. (...)

The whole mime has been fluid and continuous but now Ros moves forward and brings it to a pause. What brings Ros forward is the fact that under their cloaks the two Spies are wearing coats identical to those worn by Ros and Guil, whose coats are now covered by their cloaks. Ros approaches ‘his’ Spy doubtfully. He does not quite understand why the coats are familiar. (74)

Ros and Guil cannot recognise themselves played by the Tragedians as in the case of Pirandello’s *Six Characters* played by the Actors. To the audience, Ros and Guil become real characters who cannot identify themselves with the actors playing their roles. Stoppard, influenced by Pirandello’s *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, plays with the levels of reality.

Stoppard does not remain faithful to the Shakespeare’s content in that he changes and omits lines and scenes of *Hamlet*. Nevertheless, Ros and Guil do not escape from their predestined end realized before in another play and goes on repeating itself “next time”. On the one hand, they are incapable of changing their destiny

predetermined by Stoppard as the title of the play suggests; additionally, by another playwright in another play. On the other hand, they are actors to which death is not real. In this respect, acting is the only reality in their life. They must die according to the play's title or to their predetermined end in a pre-existent play repeating itself "next time" in another play. At this point, their situation is linear.

Also inferred from the title of the play, the theme of death recurs throughout the play. Stoppard treats the principal idea in the play in relation to the subject matter of the death on stage versus the actual presented through the conversation between the Player and Ros and Guil. The Player defines death from the point of an actor:

Player: It's what the actors do best. They have to exploit whatever talent is given them, and their talent is dying. They can die heroically, comically, ironically, slowly, suddenly, disgustingly, charmingly, or from a great height.

As a substitute for the audience, Guil reacts against the Player's claim:

Guil: (fear, derision) Actors! The mechanics of cheap melodrama! That isn't death! (more quietly) You scream and choke and sink to your knees, but it doesn't bring death home to anyone – it doesn't catch them unawares and start the whisper in their skulls that says – 'One day you are going to die' (He straightens up.) You die so many times; how can you expect them to believe in your death? (76)

The last words of Guil remind the Actors reactions against the death of the Little Girl and Little Boy in *Six Characters are in Search of an Author* considering their death illusionary. However, the Player provides another perspective: "Audiences know what to expect, and that is all that they are prepared to believe in" (76). Guil is not satisfied with the Player's assertion and goes further saying:

Guil: (...) I'm talking about death – and you've never experienced that. And you cannot act it. You die a thousand casual deaths – with none of that intensity which squeezes out life... and no blood runs cold anywhere. Because even as you die you know that you will come back in a different hat. But no one gets up after death – there is no applause – there is only silence and some second-hand clothes, and that's – death. (115)

The Player tries to prove his notion upon Guil's vengeance and scorn of his claim by cheating Guil pretending to die with a fake blade and saying: "You see, it is the kind they do believe in – it's what is expected" (115). Nevertheless, Stoppard

describes what death is for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, more generally for a character: “Death is not anything...death is not...It’s the absence of presence, nothing more” (116).

Pirandello’s Characters know their story as opposed to Ros and Guil who tries to comprehend the world beyond their understanding. The only thing they know and remember is the instruction given by the King, Claudius who is, in a sense, the director of their story. The performance of their drama for the Characters of Pirandello functions as a sort of liberation and justification whereas Ros and Guil feel more trapped or imprisoned when their story is performed in the dumb show before them because their destiny is not “decided” but “written” dragging them to their unavoidable end as in the title.

Pfister explains the function of the play within a play in a metatheatrical context as following:

By inserting a second level into the text the dramatist duplicates the performance situation of the external communication system on the internal level. The fictional audience on stage corresponds to the real audience in the auditorium and the fictional authors, actors and directors correspond to their real-life counterparts in the production of the text. (Pfister, 1988: 223)

Applying Pfister’s theory into the plays under consideration, the fictional audience on stage comprises of the spectator of the play within the play; in other words, the actors of the outer play serving the duty of the audience: in *The Seagull*, the members of Sorin’s estate except for Nina and Trepliov, in Pirandello’s play, the Actors of the theatre, in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, Ros and Guil themselves. Besides, the actor- directors or the actor-playwrights as well as the fictional actors serve as the substitutes for their actual counterparts. Trepliov in Chekhov’s play functions as the playwright and director and Nina as the actress of the internal play, in Pirandello’s play, the Father as the internal playwright, the Producer as the internal director and the Actors as the actual actors, in Stoppard’s play, the Tragedians as the actors.

The dramatist attempts to confuse the audience by blurring the lines between the real and fictitious, even make the audience perceive reality itself as illusionary emphasizing the idea that “all the world is a stage”. Considering Chekhov’s play in relation with his audience in his time, it is not possible for him to force his spectator to

make such a complex division; therefore, Chekhov does not present a complicated presentation of reality versus illusion. By the same token, Pirandello does not confuse his audience by making a division between the Characters and the Actors – even using special mask and lights for the Characters. Stoppard, predicting the capacity and potential of his audience who are acquainted with metatheatrical plays, delves into more complicated metatheatrical experiences.

In Chekhov's play, the play within the play is presented as a short episode inserted into a more extensive sequence of primary action; nevertheless, it is a starting point or a medium to introduce the main theme or the subject of the play. On the other hand, in Pirandello and Stoppard, it is superior to the outer play reducing its function as a kind of frame since the core ideas – life versus theatrical world – are presented in the subordinate plot. In this respect, as Pfister asserts that “theatre and drama become their own themes and foreground the nature of the relationship between the real audience and the real performance” (223). The metatheatrical quality of the aforementioned plays with their use of play within the play and making drama their main subject matter deactivates the melodramatic elements such as adultery, prostitution and incest, tragic components such as suicide and death; additionally, allows the dramatists to employ the tragic and comic elements creating a blending of both of them.

2.2 Theatrical Devices in the Plays Reinforcing the Tragicomic Response: Language, Stage Directions and Costumes

But isn't that the cause of all trouble? Words! We all have a world of things inside ourselves and each one of us has his own private world. How can we understand each other if the words I use have the sense and the value that I expect them to have, but whoever is listening to me inevitably thinks that those same words have different sense and value, because of the private world he has inside himself too. We think we understand each other: but we never do. (1478)

In *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, the Father's perception of words as relative and slippery in communication can be applied to drama in that it is through language as well as costume, gestures and action, the characters are allowed to present themselves directly to the audience. Likewise, language in drama possesses a fundamental function in terms of determining not only the nature of the dramatic

personas but also contributes to establish the mood and even the genre of the play.

Language in Chekhov's *The Seagull* undertakes the task of the action since Chekhov employs the device of indirect action in his play so as to avoid the melodramatic effect on the audience. Trepliov, upon the Dorn's inquiry of Nina, taking the position of a narrator informs the audience and the reader about Nina: "She ran away from home and had an affair with Trigorin (...) She had a child. It died Trigorin fell out of love with her and went back to his former attachments" (170-1). Chekhov consciously prefers "verbal action" in order to demonstrate that his play is not a piece of drama dealing with the melodramatic entanglements of the characters; thereby, the tragic mood does not overwhelm in the play.

Chekhov's characters perceive themselves as tragic; yet, the dramatic language they use and their actions contradict them. Trepliov, during his dialogue with Sorin, attempts to draw his self portrait as a miserable son, lover and writer. The contrast between what he is saying and what he is doing – he pulls the leaves of a flower saying "She [his mother] loves me, loves me not" (122) – ruins the serious mood producing a contradictory effect on the audience.

The "cross-purpose speech" in which the figures talk to each other without caring what the other one is saying as exemplified in the dialogue among Trigorin, Arkadina and Nina:

NINA [*to* TRIGORIN]. It was a strange play, wasn't it?

TRIGORIN. I didn't understand it at all. But I watched it with pleasure, all the same. You acted with such sincerity. And the scenery was beautiful.

[*Pause.*]

There must be a lot of fish in this lake.

NINA. Yes.

TRIGORIN. I'm very fond of fishing. As far as I'm concerned, there's no greater pleasure than to sit on the bank of a river in the late afternoon and watch the float . . .

NINA. I should have thought that for anyone who'd experienced the joy of doing creative work no other pleasure could exist.

ARKADINA [*laughing*]. You mustn't talk like that. When anyone talks high-flown language to him, he hasn't the least idea what to say. (133-4)

Shamrayev's irrelevant story concerning an opera in Moscow to the context of the conversation causes laughter among the spectator. Chekhov develops his technique in his later play named *The Cherry Orchard*.

LOPAKHIN. We must decide once and for all: time won't wait. After all, my question's quite a simple one. Do you consent to lease your land for villas, or don't you? You can answer in one word: yes or no? just one word!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Who's been smoking such abominable cigars here? [Sits down.]

GAYEV. How very convenient it is having a railway here. [*Sits down.*] Here we are -- we've been up to town for lunch and we're back home already. I put the red into the middle pocket! I'd like to go indoors now and have just one game. . . . (357)

In the dialogue, none of the participants of the conversation, neither Andryeevna nor Gayev, demonstrates a reaction against the first speaker; but talks about unrelated subjects. Particularly, Andryeevna's speech is significant in that Lopakhin expects a direct and definite answer from her. As opposed to the demand of him, Andryeevna without responding deals with extremely unrelated external situation. The scene is a remark of the lack of communication which is tragic, but the result is comic somehow. The irrelevancy of the utterances to the previous ones produces both tragic and comic effect.

In dialogical dialogue, the partners talk to each other, even interrupt or display their agreement or disagreement. Nonetheless, as a result of inability to communicate or disinterestedness in the subject causes the dialogue turn into a monologue in which one of the partners does not care what his or her partner is saying as it is true for the following dialogue between Trepliov and Dorn:

DORN. Yes. But you must depict only what is significant and permanent. You know, I've lived a varied life, I've chosen my pleasures with discrimination. I'm satisfied. But if it had ever been my lot to experience the exaltation an artist feels at the moment of creative achievement, I believe I should have come to despise this material body of mine and all that goes with it, and my soul would have taken wings and soared into the heights.

TREPLIOV. Forgive me, where's Zaryechnaia?

DORN. There's one more thing. A work of art must express a clear, definite idea. You must know what you are aiming at when you write, for if you follow the enchanted path of literature without a definite goal in mind, you'll lose your way and your talent will ruin you.

TREPLIOV [*impatiently*]. Where is Zaryechnaia? (136)

In spite of the presence of two partners, Dorn's speech turns out to be a monologue in that Trepliov does not care about what Dorn is saying. Dorn seems a

character who speaks to himself since the other partner is no longer present in the dialogue. The situation produces both humorous and tragic effect on the audience.

The repetition of the previous scene and the speech is another technique which possesses an affect on establishing the mood of the play. Upon firstly Sorin's demand of money for Trepliov and then Trepliov's for Sorin, Arkadina's insistence on her having adequate money only for her claiming that "I have no money. I'm an actress, not a banker" (157) constitutes an example. The repetition of the same utterances causes laughter despite the seriousness of the subject.

Six Characters in Search of an Author includes two groups of dramatic figures including the Characters and the Actors; additionally, two types of language for the Characters: melodramatic language while rendering their family drama and the conceptual language while narrating their real drama concerning their searching for an author and delving into the discussion of art. The type of language used by the Stepdaughter while rendering the details of the garden scene to the Producer suits to the nature of the story:

FATHER: (...) The drama broke out, unexpected and violent, when they came back: when I was driven by misery by the needs of my flesh, still alive with desire...and it is misery, you know, unspeakable misery for the man who lives alone and who detest sordid, casual affairs; not old enough to do without women, but young enough to be able to go and look for one without shame! Misery! Is that what I called it. It's horrible, it's revolting, because there isn't a woman who will give her love to him anymore. (1481)

The Father's ironical speech about morality is a part of his self justification; thus he chooses his words carefully which are convenient to their story. However, the shift in language is obvious when the subject matter of the speech is drawn away from the sentimental family drama to the very Pirandellian perception of relativity:

FATHER: This is the real drama for me; the belief that we all, you see, think of ourselves as one single person: but it's not true: each of us is several different people, and all these people live inside us. With one person we seem like this and with another we seem very different. (1482)

The transition from the sentimental speeches and clichés pertaining to the

melodrama to the conceptual language matches to and is necessary for the shift in the subject matter; additionally, the conceptual language surpasses the gravity and intensity of the other one. In this respect, Pirandello realizes his aim at reproducing the tragic story of the family by transforming it into the “comedy of their vain attempt”. The Father, as well as the Mother, is not a tragic hero carrying his tragic flaw in his nature, instead, he is a miser talking about morality. His speech does not produce the same impact on the audience as tragedy does. By the same token, the Little Girl’s drawn and the Little Boy’s suicide do not allow the audience to construct a meaning as they are dead from the beginning of the play. What behind their family drama is “literature” as the Son cries out. Their tragedy for the Actors is a kind of enjoyment. Even the Characters are aware that what the Producer tries to produce remains as “little sentimental romance” creating a reverse impact which is comedy on the audience. The Producer’s careless reaction at the closing of the play saying “Make-believe?! Reality?! Oh go to hell the lot of you!” (1510) destroys the tragic and emotional ending of the play within the play causing a humorous effect on the audience since they no longer consider the story of the Characters a melodrama.

The language which is punctuated by frequent exclamations “It’s real! Real! He’s dead!” (1510), “You know how to talk. I don’t...But believe me, sir, after he married me ...” (1478) and rhetorical questions “Isn’t it obvious? What other reality is there for us?” (1502) is simple but effective and dynamic dealing with the complex ideas of reality and delusion. They all contribute to the dynamic nature of the dialogue. The speech of the Mother trying to unveil her internal torment comprises of short sentences ornamented with the cries of grief. Nonetheless, it remains inadequate to realize her objective creating an opposite effect in relation with her portrait as a wicked character, but not a tragic character like Antigone.

Like in Pirandello’s play, the audience and the reader of Stoppard’s play is confronted with the types of dramatic figures; Ros and Guil as Elizabethan courtiers in Shakespeare’s play as a result using a royal language; and Ros and Guil as clowns in Stoppard’s play; thus a different language peculiar to their nature. Besides, Ros and Guil differ from one another, as Stoppard himself stated, regarding their personalities in that Ros as questioning and Guil as more casual just having fun; thereby, their languages differentiate from each other:

Guil Wheels have been set in motion, and they have their own pace, to which we are... condemned. Each move is dictated by the previous one – that is the meaning of order. If we start being arbitrary it'll just be a shambles: at least, let us hope so. Because if we happened, just happened to discover, or even suspect, that our spontaneity was part of their, we'd know that we were lost.

Ros Fire!

Guil jumps up.

Guil Where?

Ros It's all right – I'm demonstrating the misuse of free speech. To prove that it exists. (51)

Guil's speech concerns with the wheel of fortune to which they are condemned. The speech suggests their immutable nature as characters. They converse, they contradict each other, they ask each other, Guil tries to reason what is happening around them while Ros making fun. Trough their speeches as well as their actions, they are depicted as comic characters despite the tragic background.

The dialogues employed in Stoppard's play between Ros and Guil exemplify the "phatic function" of the dialogical language which helps establishing and preserving the contact between the speakers:

Ros We could play at questions.

Guil What good would that do?

Ros Practice!

Guil Statement! One-love.

Ros Cheating!

Guil How?

Ros I hadn't started yet.

Guil Statement. Two-love.

Ros Are you counting that?

Guil Foul! No repetitions. Three-love First game to... (33)

The choice of short instead of full sentences creating a sense of a game of tennis also in Beckett and Pinter display the function of keeping contact with each other as they are not depicted as individual figures and of passing time. Their rapid and unceasing dialogues with the repetitions do not seem to become an end. It depicts the problem of human communication as a result of the fear of alienation and isolation. It is an example of "conversation for conversation's-sake" producing a comic effect on the audience on the other side the tragicomic existence of the characters who use dialogue only to pass time.

Stage directions in the secondary text, which includes dedications and prefaces, the *dramatis personae*, indications of acts and scenes, even the title of the play, render instructions concerning both the actors and the visual and acoustic stage properties. Those related with the actors inform the entrances and exits, mask and costumes, gestures and mime, the paralinguistic elements of the speech, the grouping of the actors and interactions of the physiognomy. The other sub division of the stage directions conveys the instructions: lighting, music and sound, special theatrical effects, stage machinery, the set and properties, changes of acts and scenes, transformations of the scene on open scene.

However, the use of stage directions are not restricted to the secondary text, that is to say, they may be existent in the primary text, which comprises of the dialogues among the dramatic figures. Chekhov, in *The Seagull*, exemplifies “implicit stage direction in the primary text” while narrating the off stage actions taking place in two years elapses between Act II and Act III. The audience is informed about Trepliov’s suicide attempt, as noted before in this study, through the mouth of Trigorin: “First he shoots himself” (153). The dramatic situation is transmitted in the “speech act”; in other words, the “spoken action”; thereby, the tragic effect on the audience is hindered. Moreover, Masha’s black dress indicated in the opening scene through the implicit stage directions, in the words of Medvedenko, is contradicted by the dialogue between them turning into a comic duel about which one is more miserable. Likewise, the stage directions in the secondary text establishes the contrast between the on stage and off stage action as in the scene in which Arkadina and other members of the estate are enjoying themselves playing cards on the stage whereas Trepliov is playing “A waltz with a melancholy tune is being played off-stage”(175).

The stage directions in *Six Characters in Search of an Author* primarily functions as a vehicle to differentiate the Characters from the Actors with the help of lighting, the use of masks and; to give strong hints concerning the physiognomy, costumes, gesture and position of the Characters on the stage:

(...) Every effort must be made to create the effect that the SIX CHARACTERS are very different from the ACTORS of the company. The placing of the two groups, indicated in the directions, once the CHARACTERS are on the stage, will help this: so will using different coloured lights. But the most effective idea is to use masks for the

CHARACTERS. (1471)

The Characters are portrayed as “timeless creations of the imagination”; thus, as “more real and more consistent than the changeable realities of the Actors” (1471). The masks of the Characters are intended to “give the impression of figures constructed by art” and they are perceived as personified abstractions with a fixed passion which are the universal human emotions: remorse for the Father, revenge for the Stepdaughter, scorn for the Son, and sorrow for the Mother. By the same token, the stage direction concerning the seduction scene: “The playing of the scene from the beginning to be something quite different from the earlier scene...” (1475) denotes the distinction between the performance of the Characters and Actors; thereby helps to mark the turning of the tragic action into a comic one.

The initial stage direction in the primary text in Stoppard’s play describes the costumes of the two Elizabethan figures, Ros and Guil: “They are well dressed – hats, cloaks, sticks and all. Each of them has a large leather money bag” (1). Nonetheless, as opposed to their costumes, they are depicted as clownish figures passing time spinning coins by the next stage direction. The contrast between their costumes and their depiction allows Stoppard, from the very beginning of the play, to portray them as tragicomic personas. Similarly, the stage directions in the secondary text reflect both the tragic and comic actions of the two likeable figures as exemplified in the greeting scene with the king and the queen:

Claudius Thanks Rosencrantz (Turning to Ros who is caught unprepared, while Guil bows.) and gentle Guildenstern (Turning to Guil who is bent double).

Gertrude (correcting) Thanks, Guildenstern (Turning to Ros who bows as Guil checks upward movements to bow too – both bent double, squinting at each other.)...and gentle Rosencrantz. (Turning to Guil, both straightening up – Guil checks again and bows again. (28)

The fact that even Ros and Guil except for the King and the Queen do not distinguish themselves produces both the laughter and sympathy towards the “bewildered innocents” in the audience considering the tragic and comic dramatization of the question of identity.

The repetitious nature of dramatic action in the play is also demonstrated by the stage directions in the secondary text:

Guil sits despondently. He takes a coin, spins it, lets it fall between his feet. He looks at it, picks it up, throws it to Ros, who puts it in his bag. Guil takes another coin, spins it, catches it, turns it over on to his other hand, looks at it, and throws it to Ros who puts it in his bag. Guil takes a third coin, spins it, catches it in his right hand, turns it over on to his left wrist, lobs it in the air, catches it with his left hand, raises his left leg, throws the coin up under it, catches it and turns it over on to the top of his head, where it sits. Ros comes, looks at it, puts it in his bag. (5)

According to the first stage directions describing their costumes, they are two courtiers who pass their times flipping coins again and again. Stoppard creates contrasting dramatic situations for their two anti heroes.

The stage area presented to the audience is either an illusionist stage which provides to maintain the theatrical illusion such as naturalist traditions to create a perfect representation of the real or an anti-illusionist stage which offers a stage like in Brecht's ideal epic stage consciously and deliberately removing all the illusionistic effects. Nonetheless, it can be taken into account of an intermediate realm in which both elements exist as in the case of play within a play. *The Seagull* can be taken as an example on the grounds that the play opens with or the initial stage direction displays the stage within a stage which is constructed for Trepliov's "amateur dramatic performance". Trepliov's stage is described by the use of implicit stage directions, in Trepliov's words, for the reader: "Just a curtain with the two wings and an empty space beyond. No scenery. There's an open view of the lake and horizon" (121). Trepliov's naturalist stage with a fictitious audience breaks the illusionistic effect of the actual stage. By the same token, in Pirandello's play, the "physical stage-area" and the "fictional locale" coincide. Pfister elucidates:

The stage used by the fictional actors in [*Six Characters in Search of an Author*] (1921) for rehearsals is not the same as the real stage in front of the audience because on the real stage a play is being performed, whereas on the fictional stage a performance of a play is being rehearsed. (247)

Pfister applies the same notion to the distinction between the reality and fictionality of time as the actual performance takes place in the evening whereas the latter during the daytime. Besides, to Brecht theory of "gestus of showing" which

breaks the theatrical illusion with scene-changes on open stage, costumes and scenery distanced from reality and actors who are not completely transformed into the fictional figure; thereby, the illusion of the dramatic performance is broken. In *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, the effort to constitute an illusionistic stage which is an example of the transformation of the scenery before the audience and actors' inability to absorb the personalities of the Characters produces a tragicomic effect in that the impossibility of theatre to create reality does not meet the Characters' demand of a fictional locale and perfect presentation of reality very similar to the actual. The audience unable to transform into the fictional locale with the physical stage area, the fictional figure with the actual character, and the illusionary costumes with the real into the corresponding objects in the fictional world. Taking into account of this theory, the breaking of the illusion destroys the tragic stance of the play; thus, diminishing the tragic effect on the audience.

CONCLUSION

The present thesis attempts to provide a more precise conceptual framework for tragicomedy by dealing with the rise of the genre and its avatars in the twentieth century European drama, particularly in Chekhov's *The Seagull*, Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. With the analyses of the mentioned plays as representatives of the genre, this study enables to demonstrate the contribution of the aforementioned playwrights to outline the inherent characteristics of the modern tragicomedy.

The first part of Chapter I enables a discussion of tragicomedy as a genre offering opposing, supportive and defensive manifestations concerning its emergence, determining characteristics of the kind illustrated in various dedications, prefaces and plays in different periods. The debate over the background of tragicomedy dates back to the ancient times though the genre has flourished in Renaissance. Almost all critics throughout the history have something to posit whether to justify and advocate or to condemn and criticise tragicomedy as a dramatic genre. In ancient period, Aristotle's condemnation of the kind which is popular among the audience and Plautus' *Amphitryon* play a great role since many critics cited them for the justification of the form. The mystery and morality play in Medieval Drama carry a generating influence on determining the features of the genre with their employment of a comic subtext presented by comic characters to the tragic main plot.

In Renaissance, the opponent and proponent embodiments of the kind in many different countries along with the tragicomic representative plays appear acting as a manifestation of the kind as a separate genre despite the restraints of the classicism. Tragicomedy's popularity survives until the closing of the theatres as a result of the interregnum in dramatic activities and is subjected to a constant decline owing to the influence of French classicism. The re-emergence of tragicomedy is inevitable in the late nineteenth century since the playwrights of the period such as Ibsen, Chekhov, Synge and O'Casey sees melodrama inadequate and pure tragedy impossible in order to reflect the both side of human life constituting of tragic and comic simultaneously.

The second part of the Chapter, with an investigation of Chekhov's *The Seagull*, Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and Stoppard's *Rosencrantz*

and Guildenstern are Dead, characterizes the features of modern tragicomedy illustrating the distinctive and similar techniques of the mentioned writers with their contribution to the genre.

The second chapter includes the debate over the metatheatrical qualities of the said plays which allows the aforesaid dramatists to thematize the drama itself in their plays; thereby, diminishing the pervading tragic and sentimental effect on the audience. By the same token, the theatrical devices employed in the plays such as language, stage directions, scenery and costumes producing tragicomic response are handled using the compare and contrast method in the second part of the chapter.

Taking into account of the comparative analysis of the plays under consideration, it is concluded that the representative playwrights, Chekhov, Pirandello and Stoppard employ some common and distinctive strategies so as to create tragicomic effect:

1. Characters: An affinity can be drawn between Chekhov's and Pirandello's characters in that they are not drawn as tragic; in fact, they see themselves as tragic whereas Stoppard's characters are presented as comic enrolling circus clown routines and repetitions such as spinning coins. Pirandello presents two groups of dramatic figures including the Characters and the Actors. The Characters are tragic not in the sense that they perceive themselves; yet, they are seeking an author to complete their story while the Actors turns into comic characters who are mimicking the Characters. In contrast to Renaissance tragicomedy presenting tragic characters in a comic world, Stoppard's characters are portrayed as comic characters who lack free will, notion of identity and a sense of past in a tragic universe. The presence of an author with a previous one controlling their lives and determining their end remarks the "bewildered innocents" as tragicomic characters with Stoppard's use of humor. Unlike Brecht, the audience is not alienated from Stoppard's anti-heroes constructing sympathy towards them. Besides, Hamlet, Claudius and Gertrude are construed as high whereas Ros and Guil, and the Players as low characters; thereby, Stoppard presents a mixture of characters from different social classes like Renaissance tragicomedy does. The characters in the plays are passive in the sense that they do nothing to change their destinies admitting the predetermined role endowed them by their authors.

2. The method of creating tragicomic effect: In *The Seagull*, Chekhov

juxtaposes the contrasting elements through the use of indirect action by presenting either the serious on stage or the humorous off stage. Another technique Chekhov employs to produce tragicomic effect is the transformation of what is tragic into comic as in the case of Trepliov's suicide attempt. Likewise, the Characters' family drama turns into a laughable scene when performed by the Actors mimicking the Characters in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. Hamlet's madness is transformed into a comic scene in Stoppard's play. Besides, the serious is interrupted by the comic in both Chekhov's and Pirandello's plays. Chekhov inserts Shamrayev's comic and irrelevant story into the serious dialogue among Trigorin, Arkadina and Nina whereas the rehearsal of the sad entanglements of the family is interrupted both the laughter of the Actors and the Stepdaughter. Unlike Chekhov and Pirandello, Stoppard prefers the integration of the comic and the tragic which is exemplified particularly in the scene Ros and Guil cannot identify themselves with the Players disguised as Ros and Guil in the play within the play. The situation in Stoppard's play is tragicomic in terms of the unavoidable and predetermined end waiting for Ros and Guil while the figures are depicted as comic characters. In this respect, the play is erected on both a comic foreground and tragic background. In fact, the audience laughs at what is tragic since Stoppard's, as opposed to Pirandello and Chekhov, is based on a comic foreground. The tragic is overwhelmed by the humorous in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. Conversely, Pirandello's and Chekhov's plays are constructed on a tragic foreground while the comic is inserted into it.

3. Tragic or comic ending: In spite of the fact that *The Seagull* ends with the off stage suicide of Trepliov, Chekhov denominates his play as comedy. The tragic is hindered by presenting the suicide scene off stage and by creating a contrasting scene in which the dwellers of the estate continues playing cards disregarding the noise of the shot. Similarly, the play within the play ends tragically since the story of the Characters left unfinished whereas the whole day is wasted for the Producer and the Actors in Pirandello's play. Stoppard does not present the death of his comic characters, Ros and Guil. They just disappear.

4. Metatheatricality contributing the tragicomic effect: The metatheatrical quality of the plays enables Chekhov, Pirandello and Stoppard to thematize drama itself in the plays. The use of play within the play in *The Seagull* functions as a medium to

introduce the discussion of art and artist; thus, reducing the melodramatic effect of the outer play whereas Pirandello employs theatre within the theatre to create a tragicomic impact on the audience. Mimicry of the sentimental story of the Characters by the Actors is presented in the play within the play turning what is tragic into comic. The use of play within the play both in Pirandello and Stoppard, in a way, forces the reader to ponder about the reality of the characters on the stage and the actions. This realization of the dramatic figures as fictitious characters created by the playwright; in other words, the breaking of the theatrical illusion, decreases the tragic side of the characters and their actions.

5. Theatrical devices reinforcing the tragicomic response: Through the use of “verbal action” in *The Seagull*, the tragic effect is undermined. Moreover, the “cross-purpose speech” produces both the tragic and comic response. The dramatic dialogues in *The Seagull* carry the monologue tendency as a result of the lack of communication between the partners; therefore, the result is both the tragic and comic. Both Pirandello and Stoppard employ two types of language. The shift in Characters’ language in *Six Characters in Search of an Author* is apparent when they are narrating their family drama and the core idea in the play concerning the conflict between the theatre and the actual world. By the same token, the language used by Ros and Guil when they are enrolling in the *Hamlet* context contradicts the one used by Ros and Guil as clowns in Stoppard’s play. The royal language does not suit their clownish nature; thereby creates a comic effect. The difference between Ros and Guil’s language is also obvious reflecting the distinction between the personalities of the two characters remarking Guil as the questioning and Ros as the more casual. The repetitions and “conversation for conversation’s sake” portray Ros and Guil tragicomic characters. The dramatic dialogue functions only to pass time or to keep the contact between the characters both in Chekhov and Stoppard.

The use of “implicit stage directions” in the primary text helps Chekhov to remove the melodramatic scenes in *The Seagull* by rendering the off stage sentimental events such as Trepliov’s suicide attempt and Nina’s affair with Trigorin; additionally, to present contrasting scenes on stage and off stage. In Pirandello’s play, stage directions in the secondary text operate as a vehicle to make a division between the Characters and the Actors as well as denoting the difference between the performance

of the Characters and the Actors; in other words, the serious and the humorous. As for Stoppard's play, the stage directions in the secondary text serve as a device to create comic scenes such as demonstrating Hamlet's madness, and the bowing scene in which not only the King and the Queen but also Ros and Guil distinguish themselves. The repetitions are presented in the stage directions as well as through dramatic dialogues as reflected Ros and Guil's spinning coins again and again. The emphasis on the distinction between the actual stage area and the fictional locale in the play within the plays demolishes the illusionistic effect of the theatre; thus, the tragic side of the plays.

Along with the language and gestures, the costumes of the dramatic figures help to establish the nature of the characters. For instance, Masha's black dress in *The Seagull* indicated in the implicit stage direction in the primary text is contradicted with the comic content of the dialogue between Masha and Medvedenko in the opening scene. The Leading Actor's cook costume with a comic hat establishes the Actors as the comic characters from the very beginning of *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. Likewise, the courtly costumes of Ros and Guil do not suit their comic representations in Stoppard's play.

Pozzo in Beckett's play entitled *Waiting for Godot*, in a way, defines tragicomic effect: "The tears of the world are a constant quantity. For each one who begins to weep somewhere else another stops. The same is true for the laugh" (22).

To Foster, modern tragicomedy integrates tragic and comic experience, the one generating and modifying the other; thereby, creating a complex audience response. We laugh at what is unhappy as reflected in the plays under considerations; therefore, such kind of laughter, instead of distancing, the spectator is drawn into feeling of sympathy towards these characters since their situations reflect human condition.

In the light of the analyses in the main body of this thesis, it may be finally concluded that Chekhov's *The Seagull*, Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* exemplify and illustrate the tragicomic elements in modern period even though the techniques each of them employ occasionally come closer or differs.

The comparative analysis of the plays under consideration discussed above concerning the common and distinctive strategies to produce tragicomic effect is presented in the following table:

Table 1. The Similarities and Distinctions among the Aforementioned Plays

	<i>The Seagull</i>	<i>Six Characters in Search of an Author</i>	<i>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead</i>
Characters	*The characters perceiving themselves as tragic like Medvedenko, Trepliov, Masha, Sorin *also comic character like Shamrayev	* the Characters perceiving themselves as tragic, the Actors as comic characters while mimicking	*Ros and Guil as comic characters in a tragic universe * the mixture of high and low characters
The Methods of Creating Tragicomic Effect	*indirect action	* -	*-
	*transforming tragic into comic	*mimicry of the Characters by the Actors	*Hamlet's madness in action
	*the interruption of the serious by the comic	*the rehearsal of the family drama interrupted by both the Characters and the Actors	*integration of comic and tragic, serious and humorous
Tragic or Comic Ending	*off stage tragic suicide in contrast to comic scene on stage	*tragic ending for the Characters as opposed to the Actors	*death of Ros and Guil just as disappearance
Metatheatricality contributing the tragicomic effect	*thematizing art and artist *play within the play to introduce the core idea	* + * play within the play to create tragicomic effect	* + *+
*language	*verbal action *cross-purpose speech *monologue tendency in dialogues *repetitions	*two types of language: conceptual and sentimental	*two types of language of Ros and Guil: royal and colloquial *conversation for conversation's sake *repetitions
*stage directions	*implicit stage directions in the primary text	*explicit stage directions in the secondary text distinguishing the characters	*repetitions and comic actions narrated through the stage directions in the secondary text for comic effect
*costumes	*Masha's mourning dress in contrast to the comic dialogue	*the Leading Actor's cook hat for comic effect	*the Elizabethan costumes of Ros and Guil in contrast to their comic nature

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