

MORALITY AND POLITICS IN TOM STOPPARD

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Abstract

This paper argues how Tom Stoppard reflects his moral and political concerns in his plays. Stoppard is a moral writer and opposes any political idea rejecting morality, particularly under the name of modernity. Nevertheless, he is not a political writer and his power of comedy suppresses his ideological criticism. He is a man of universal writing avoiding daily and would-be out of date news.

Though the playwright seems to favour conservative beliefs and ideas, in his plays, personal choices are preferred to a morality imposed by the laws or legislations because he believes that there cannot be fixed moral realities. He has proved to be a man of human rights both with his thoughts and actions. His criticism of Marxism and Leninism is a clear evidence of it. While tolerating the mistaken ideas of artists, he does not show the slightest sympathy for the political oppressors.

Key words: Tom Stoppard, Human rights, Morality, Politics.

TOM STOPPARD'DA AHLÂK VE SİYASET

Özet

Bu yazı, Tom Stoppard'ın ahlâk ve siyasete ilişkin görüşlerini nasıl oyunlarına yansıttığını ortaya koymaya çalışır. Stoppard ahlâkı önemseyen bir yazardır ve özellikle de modernlik adına ahlâkı yok sayan siyasi fikirlere karşı koyar. Ancak, politik bir yazar değildir ve yazarın komedi yeteneği amaçladığı ideolojik eleştirileri gölgede bırakır. Stoppard evrensel konuları işleyen bir yazardır, bu yüzden güncelliğini kaybedecek günlük konular hakkında yazmaktan kaçınır.

Yazar çoğunlukla muhafazakâr düşünce ve fikirleri destekler görünse de, değişmez ahlak ölçütlerinin olamayacağını düşünür. Bu nedenle, oyunlarında kişisel seçimler, kanun veya kuralların dayattığı bir ahlâk anlayışına tercih edilir. Ayrıca, söz ve davranışlarıyla bir insan hakları savunucusu olduğunu da kanıtlar. Marksizm ve Leninizm eleştirisi bunun bir göstergesidir. Sanatçıların hatalı düşüncelerine anlayışla yaklaşmasına rağmen baskıcı siyasilere hiç ödün vermez.

Anahtar kelimeler: Tom Stoppard, İnsan hakları, Ahlâk, Siyaset.

1. Introduction

An opinion poll made by MORI in England (Oakland 314-315) found that traditional kind of religious thinking is no longer popular, but there still exists a belief in religion to some extent. The religious belief is rather structured on the base of personal morality and civic responsibility. There still persists a belief in terms of individual thought, but not through orthodox institutions. The individuals have developed a sense of right and wrong which is not tied to the doctrines of the established Christian church although the poll shows several differences between men and women, the young and old generations. Taking drugs, hooliganism, violence on television, adultery, homosexuality, abusing human or animal are thought to be the chief common wrongs.

According to this survey, marriage, family life, moral demands and love are the values still held dear by the majority as universal values. But within the family some balances have changed, there are no longer any privileged households because of more equality, mutual respect, understanding and faithfulness in a marriage. British people are mainly obedient people, and parents want their children to develop good manners, such as honesty, and to be respectful to other human beings. People, who make permanent objection to the present society, who make demonstrations and protests, who break the laws and who encourage children to disobey, are not welcomed in the society. General strikes and their supporters are not approved by the majority. It is possible to say that most results of this poll featuring the general characteristics of the British people also reflect Tom Stoppard's world views, if not all.

The result of this poll also suggests a general return to traditional values in the 1990s. Moral traditionalism, old values and social responsibilities are favoured. Morality should not be reduced to written commandments and cannot be dictated by the laws. Stoppard defends a similar approach to morality in his plays, notably in *Dirty Linen* (1976), although he defines himself as a conservative in politics, education and literature (Cater 2).

2. Tom Stoppard's Political Stance

From the 1950s onward, the political left began to be influential on English Theatre. Unlike this trend, Stoppard seemed, from the production of *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* (1977) on, to be close to the right-wing policies although he avoided being called a political writer throughout his career. At times he felt sympathy with Margaret Thatcher and Thatcherism. However, examining Stoppard's work only from a political perspective discards its artistic value.

He openly admitted his support for Thatcher during her first years in office. Particularly, he admired her frankness and unions policy. She passed the laws which limited the powers of trade unions including British newspaper unions, with which Stoppard personally got troubled once. When he was a young journalist he

refused to participate in a strike, which resulted in his suspense by the British newspaper unity. He usually accused this unity of this suspense. He wrote about it in his play *Night and Day* (1978), which angered the leftists. Later, Stoppard's support for Thatcher lessened and at times he criticised her when he felt she was doing wrong, and finally he withdrew his support on seeing some of her policies cost the country much.

In 1977 Stoppard reviewed, and was seemingly influenced by, Paul Johnson's book *Enemies of Society* (1977). This book favoured western liberal democracy in which intellectuals, modern middle class and a moral order based on Christian values were foregrounded. Stoppard argued that Marxism had a relative and missing worldview and he praised Johnson's ideas (Hunter 13).

Stoppard has usually been an active human rights supporter and been against the countries where justices and liberty are violated. On 14 February 1992, he joined a rally condemning the fatwa for the execution of Salman Rushdie. He made a speech criticizing Iranian government, repressions and limitations of the free expression on writing. He told the crowd: "I have never been comfortable with the idea that words have preferential status over and above the discomfort they may give others" (qtd. by Nadel 422-423).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, his political works, such as *Squaring the Circle* (1984), *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* (1977), *Cahoot's Macbeth* (1979), *Professional Foul* (1977) and *The Cost of Utopia* (2002) take the Soviets, Eastern European Communist countries and their repression as the subject of criticism. In some of his plays he also criticizes his birthplace Czechoslovakia. He implicitly backs and praises the political system and freedom in England. He focuses on human rights violations in Eastern Europe, repudiating Marxist ideology. Soviet's occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 increased Stoppard's anger at Communist Russia. The impossibility to express oneself and the obstacles in front of the different and independent ideas and thoughts in Russia were the main reasons for his attacks on the Soviet regime. Stoppard has usually given importance to the individual freedom. Now that a truth on which everybody can agree is not possible, instead of insisting on such crucial mistakes, local realities should be respected. Therefore, man should be left free to find his own reality. Individuals should be able to negotiate with the authorities or legislators even though a possible agreement is not expected. Apparently his interest in the politics or his writing political plays derives from his humanistic world view, and shows his reaction against the abusing politics for tyrannical practises (Hinden 405-406).

The plays on human rights, such as *Professional Foul* and *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, are more serious than his other plays. In *Professional Foul*, an important formal academic philosophical conference coincides with a World Cup Eliminator football match. As a writer of comedy he cannot help mixing seriousness with comedy, which is the reason for this coincidence. The title itself of the play recalls a soccer match. A Czech dissident meets Anderson, the

professor of philosophy and wants him to take a risk and to take his illegal thesis to England, breaking the laws and moral values, thus to make a professional foul as the title indicates. Affected deeply by the repression on this Czech dissident, he changes his paper which he announced to present in advance. The new subject is more influential, daring, and full of implications blaming human rights violations made by the Czech authorities. And not surprisingly, it leads to anger among the organizers. He comes to realize how political interruptions can limit the freedom of man and manipulate anything in life just for the sake of the interests of ideologies. However, freedom or happiness of humanity is of utmost importance, so when needed, any law should be broken to achieve a more important achievement which is the freedom of man (Brater 128). Anderson seeks the ways to change the world he lives in. Because of his concern for ethics, he presents an admirable self-sacrificing behaviour and action.

3. Morality, Politics and Art

The playwright clearly claims that Marxism is lacking. The biggest wrong Marx did, Stoppard believes, was his insist on class solidarity, which should be human solidarity instead. This idea originally belongs to German socialist Edward Bernstein (1850-1932) by whom Stoppard seems to be inspired:

It was only a matter of time before somebody – it turned out to be (moderate German socialist Edward) Bernstein in 1900 – somebody with the benefit of an extra 50 years' hindsight, would actually point out that Marx had got it wrong, but that didn't matter because social justice was going to come through other means. Bernstein reckoned that the class war wasn't the way, that human solidarity was a better bet than class solidarity (Cater 3).

His trilogy *The Cost of Utopia* is a kind of historical account about the origins of Russian Socialism. Stoppard's hero, Herzen who is obviously the spokesman for Stoppard, in *Utopia*, voices similar views like those of Bernstein. Herzen is a rival of Marx and opposes the choice of a single class. In contrast with Marx, he thinks that recipes should be for all humanity, not only for one class, and he ridicules Hegel's determinism which closely associates the happenings with the past, underestimating human free will. He thinks that fights take place not just because history wants so and it has no plan, so it is we who decide what will happen next. Thus, he puts forward his ideas which openly stress the invalidity of dialectical materialism of Marx which foresees historical events and wars as a packet line of historical events. At the end of the play, Herzen shows the impossibility of any Utopia. Defending an existential world view concerning this and his other plays, Stoppard tells the BBC that "What I believe in is that utopia is an incoherent concept that there is no overall right answer to all these questions which have puzzled people for several thousand years" (Cater 3).

Of all the values held dear, morality has a significant place in his plays. He puts forward, as in *Professional Foul*, that ethical attitudes may show differences in different conditions. For example, although smuggling is unethical, sometimes and somewhere it could be the single way to reach the moral truth. In *Professional Foul*, the professor of ethics ends up smuggling to correct a wrong, an unethical and unfair situation though at first he himself thinks that smuggling is an unethical behaviour. He smuggles some political writings of the Czech dissident who is treated unfairly in his country. Furthermore, he is involved in a second action which may be regarded as another unethical behaviour, by hiding the forbidden documents in his friend's suitcase knowing for sure that he would not be checked as carefully as himself. Thus, although the professor has committed some seemingly wrong actions, ultimately he has done right to correct a greater wrong. He believes that ideas should lead to a better world, if not a utopian one, which is supported by moral values (Cater 3-4).

Jumpers (1972) carries the modern philosophical world to the stage. The hero, who is the namesake of the 20th century English philosopher George E. Moore, tries to prepare a speech for a conference on moral philosophy. His study is often interrupted by the "chameleon-like philosophers" who jump here and there as jumpers do and, besides, these types of philosophers have also constituted the ideological picture of the then English government (Cahn). The play is a reaction to the modern rejection of moral values. The implications in *Jumpers* point to a terrible world of familial and academic issues "where human values seem to be corroding as the direct and adverse consequences of materialistic habits of thought" (Brassell 121).

University's Vice-Chancellor, Sir Archibald Jumper is the representative figure of logical positivism. He is a many sided professor ranging from philosophy, law, medical therapy, politics and, above all, gymnastics which is also implied with his name Jumper and with his students, the jumpers. He is also a fanatic supporter of Radical-Liberals, for which a celebration party in the wake of its election victory is given at Dotty's flat, which is also the opening of the play. This party is dedicated to the rationalisation of all institutions and the Liberals are eager in achieving the goals. The leader of the action atheist Sam Clegthorpe is mentioned by name in the play when George points at him from the window of his room: "Good God! (*At window*) I can actually *see* Clegthorpe!—marching along, attended by two chaplains in belted raincoats" (29). Sam Clegthorpe is the first Radical-Liberal spokesman for agriculture, than was appointed as Archbishop of Canterbury in order to rationalize the church as well as other institutions (Brassell 122).

Logical Positivism emerged in Vienna in the 1920s. A group of university professors in philosophy and mathematics formed a group called 'Vienna Circle' there. Their philosophy can be summed up as a philosophy which should underlie logic as in science, and for them philosophy should provide strict judgements as true, false or meaningless. Its pioneers are the members of Vienna Circle: Moritz

Schlick, Rudolf Carnap, Otto Neurath, Friedrich Waismann, John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Neils Bohr and A. J. Ayer. This philosophy is called logical empiricism, rational empiricism or neo-positivism. They attribute great importance to science, so if a proposition cannot be verified scientifically, then it is meaningless. Therefore, the issues concerning theology and metaphysics are nonsense. Empirical verifications and observable facts are essential, so many defenders support realism, materialism and empiricism. A. J. Ayer is regarded as the most influential figure spreading the philosophy in England. This movement dismisses the traditional philosophies for being nonsense. It aims to help philosophies get rid of their traditional privileged freedom, which is thought to be obsolete. To rationalize philosophy is one of its most important goals, and it adopts strict scientific rules. Its rejection of metaphysical, ethical and theological ideas led to a great hostility after the Second World War. It was attacked for being misleading and even dangerous.

Ayer insisted that talks about God cannot be placed on logical basis because God's existence, if exists, is a metaphysical issue. Therefore, whether God exists or not is out of question for the Logical Positivists. In the case of ethics it's same because we cannot differentiate between good and evil in terms of concrete terms. Ayer claims that words expressing moral judgements are meaningless because they only express feelings, and therefore they are not likely to be evaluated as true or false. Ayer also makes it clear that ethic's not being a matter of logic does not mean that it is worthless, but it cannot be discussed as scientific arguments.

The success of the Radical Liberals favouring Logical Positivism sounds as a coup d'état rather than a general election because we get military implications when Archie says that "the Police Force will be thinned out to a ceremonial front for the peace-keeping activities of the Army" (56), and when George and his wife Dotty hear jets flying low overhead:

George:...the Radical-Liberals...It seems in dubious taste. Soldiers,
fighter planes... After all, it was a general elections not a
coup d'état.

Dotty: It's funny you should say that.

George: Why?

Dotty: Archie says it was a *coup d'état*, not a general election (25-26).

It's clear that Archie has a significant influence on Dotty. Dotty usually refers to his thoughts when speaking to George and says something different from, and often contrary to, what George claims. Dotty believes in Archie and in his power of problem solving. This problem solving ability comes from the Radical-Liberal's election motto, which is also declared in the play: "No problem is insoluble given a big enough plastic bag" (31). This is also the philosophy which makes the party win the election although it's a narrow political discourse on which the Logical Positivists rely. Dotty is in a hurry to get rid of the corpse in her bedroom, so she asks George whether he has a large plastic bag or not (31) as a

reference to the motto of the Liberals. Although it seems absurd, a plastic bag will really do it, for it is what Archie and his students need exactly to solve the problem. And in real life Archie practises his own philosophy. Here the writer emphasizes the contradiction between morality and the rational thought of Logical Positivism. The professor tries to dispose of the corpse in a practical way regardless of any moral concerns. It does not matter who is killed, who killed and what the responsibility ought to be. A hidden satire is felt throughout *Jumpers*, and particularly Archie, Dotty, the inspector Bones and even George are criticised for immorality, selfishness, cuckoldry, positivism and indifference. Logical Positivism, which sets everything on rational basis, is criticised for its limited world view and for its high respect for a superficial rational thought (Brassell 122).

At the conference, George intentionally broadens the discussion including abstract terms such as love and other emotional ones and comes up with the conclusion that Radical Liberals have a limited vision by squeezing all things in a narrow concrete realm, such as a 'plastic bag.' Therefore he pinpoints the shortcomings of Logical Positivism. Professor Moore tries to prove the existence of God in a critical time when Liberal Radical Party's dictatorial movement got the power (Schwanitz 143). While George tries hard to challenge a rational but restricted world featuring emotional state, in real life he undergoes a life very much in contrast with his ideas he seems to support. He does not experience an emotional marital life with his wife who's ignored and neglected by George. He does not take his wife's fragile and susceptible state into consideration. On one hand, George is privileged by challenging a sheer rationality; on the other hand, he is shown to live a life irrelevant to his ideas. The picture in terms of academic life is not brilliant either in case of Archie or George. Both academicians are on the margins and lead lives that are not acceptable, so to speak, in a world of wisdom and science. Through these professors, the writer attacks the immoral lives of the academicians in whole.

All of the characters in *Jumpers* continue to be losers. George loses both at home and at the conference, Dotty loses her nerves, and her fame. The inspector cannot carry out his task so he is lost at the end of the play. Though Archie seems to win, in fact he has lost his moral and humanitarian self. As a result, there is no winner. Everybody in the play loses something, the most important of which are dignity and identity.

The time of *Travesties* (1979) coincides with the years of the First World War in Europe. This war was one of the most devastating wars which caused numerous destructions and despair among the Europeans. This was not simply a war, which just afflicted the nations it involved, but its impacts dominated the whole 20th Century. Unlike other wars, this war was not limited with a certain place or period. Humanity suffered from misery and other destructive effects. Technological and scientific developments increased the destructiveness of the war beyond recognition. One of the most crucial influences the war caused was the long lasting clash between communism and capitalism, which continued in the cold war

years in which a psychological war afflicted millions of people. While America became the world power, the decline of Britain, and its dependence on the US began with this war. After the World War I, the great and undefeated empires of centuries were broken up and new states came to exist. The old ruling classes weakened while socialist and communist ideas strengthened all over the Eastern Europe. In 1917 the Russian Revolution broke out resulting in Bolsheviks' gaining power. After a short while, the Bolsheviks founded the Soviet Communism.

Switzerland, which is home to *Travesties*, was not involved in this war as well as in the Second World War. This neutrality won Switzerland wealth, security and peace. That's why, many intellectuals, scientists and leaders, including James Joyce, Tristan Tzara, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov Lenin and Henry Carr, the main characters of the play, preferred to take refuge there. Lenin's exiled life in Switzerland ended in April 1917, so he turned to Russia. Then began in Russian history Lenin's oppressive and powerful term hoping similar revolutions would spread across other European countries ('Travesties' 3-4).

4. Artist and Politician

In *Travesties* Stoppard gives artists a privileged position in search for truth and meaning. These ideas are put forward by his characters Tzara and Joyce. The politicians are criticized while the artists are praised even though, at times, they are parodied or mocked. Stoppard is angry with the politicians like Lenin in *Travesties* or Professor Archie in *Jumpers* for their abusing art or philosophy for their self-interests. While he tolerates the mistaken ideas of artists, he does not show the slightest sympathy for Lenin or Archie. For example, he never applies any elements of comedy when referring to Lenin. He ridicules political reasons by treating them as absurdities of reason. Although Lenin is a man influenced by art, particularly music, this influence fails in making him an affectionate person towards human beings (Karwowski).

On one hand, making pastiches from different historical and literary events, the playwright makes up a comic play; on the other hand, not mixing politics into the same paste, he isolates Lenin's position and criticizes him. While there are many jokes in the case of Tzara, Joyce and Henry Carr, there is hardly any in that of Lenin. Stoppard sort of makes a summary of his political implications in some of his plays, such as *Jumpers* and *Travesties* when he says:

All political acts must be judged in moral terms, in terms of their consequences...The repressions which for better or worse turn out to be Leninism in action after 1917 was very much worse than anything which had gone on in Tsarist Russia. I mean, in purely mundane boring statistical terms, which sometimes can contain the essence of a situation, it is simply true that in the ten years after 1917 fifty times more people were done to death than in the fifty years before 1917 (qtd. by Brassell 158).

In *Travesties*, as he did in some other works, such as in *Squaring the Circle*, Stoppard again targets Russia as the leading communist country, and this time one of their most famous leaders, Lenin who changed the progress of the history, is criticised. As informed in the play, Lenin spends almost one year in Zurich between 1916, the year he was exiled, and 1917 when the revolution broke out. It has been reported that he lived in a shabby boarding house among whose inmates were also prostitutes and criminals, and according to Carr's memoirs, Lenin arranged his major work, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, a treatise which was actually completed in 1916, in the city's library (Brassell 155).

Stoppard gives an account of official history, including Lenin, Tzara and their achievements in *Travesties*. For example, in one of her lectures Cecily informs the readers about Lenin and the history:

Lenin was convinced, like Marx, that history worked dialectically, that it advanced through the clash of opposing forces and not through the pragmatic negotiation of stiles and stepping-stones. He was a hard-liner (68).

The playwright is keen in showing how art can be affected and dominated by ideologies. Carr agrees with Joyce on the superiority of art, and they argue that artists are like magicians. Lenin admits that this is the case, but with a limited and conditional view:

Today, literature must become party literature. Down with non-partisan literature! Down with literary supermen! Literature must become a part of the common cause of the proletariat, a cog in the Social Democratic mechanism...The freedom of the bourgeois writer, artist or actor is simply disguised dependence on the money-bag, on corruption, on prostitution. Socialist literature and art will be free because the idea of socialism and sympathy with the working people, instead of greed and careerism, will bring ever new forces to its ranks (85).

Here and in some parts of the play Stoppard tries to show the conflict and inconsistencies of Lenin to set a trap for himself with his own words. By the term art and freedom he means their restricted version of his world view. Stoppard deliberately uses Lenin's remarks about Beethoven's *Appassionata* to prove his ideas about Lenin's cruelty and his contradictory thoughts:

I don't know of anything greater than the *Appassionata*. Amazing, superhuman music. It always makes me feel, perhaps naively, it makes me feel proud of the miracles that human beings can perform. But I can't listen to music often. It affects my nerves, makes me want to say nice stupid things and pat the heads of those people who while living in this vile hell can create such beauty. Nowadays we can't pat heads or we'll get our hands bitten off. We've got to *hit* heads, hit them without mercy, though ideally we're against doing violence to people (89).

What we are introduced to is a cruel, anti-art and against anything concerning beauty and mercy as Lenin is made to admit “I’m a barbarian” (87). Art is seen as counter revolution, a calming and emasculating force. Feelings are nothing but nonsense, stupid things. So, artists as art producers should be disciplined under strict measures. Stoppard argues that, as Brassell points, “the stifling dominance of ‘Socialist Realism’ in post-revolutionary Russia can certainly be traced to Lenin’s own views on art” (160).

Lenin’s words and actions are intentionally used to show how contradictory his ideas are. In *Travesties*, Stoppard makes Lenin talk to show how political dictatorship might include artistic dictatorship. Stoppard applies some of Lenin’s his own words taken from his real conversations or speeches, such as Lenin’s memo to A. V. Lunacharsky, the Commissar for Education in 1919, the effects of which dominated Russia until recently:

Aren’t you ashamed for printing 5000 copies of Mayakovsky’s new book? It is nonsense, stupidity, double-dyed stupidity and affectation. I believe such things should be published one in ten, and not more than 1500 copies, for libraries and cranks. As for Lunacharsky, he should be flogged for his futurism (87).

Stoppard is against anything restricting art or artist, so Carr says: “The easiest way of knowing whether good has triumphed over evil is to examine the freedom of the artist” (39). Stoppard lays the principles of an artful, healthy and a lovable world where there should not be cruelties. What he wishes is to defend artists’ rights, and he is against any oppression and morality imposed on them. Furthermore, he seems to show that even if no matter how fierce or deconstructing an art form may be, like Dadaism, it gives no harm. Even such a challenging style can be tolerated provided that it does not go beyond its artistic and thinking dimension and turn into a political dictatorship, as in the case of Logical Positivists’ application of ideas mercilessly in politics. Carr’s last words, though mocking, are quite important in providing a summary for what Stoppard is trying to put forth:

Firstly, you’re either a revolutionary or you’re not, and if you’re not you might as well be an artist as anything else. Secondly if you can’t be an artist, you might as well be a revolutionary (98-99).

In April 1976 Stoppard met Victor Fainberg, who spent five years in Soviet prison hospitals and was claimed to be insane for denouncing the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, and then he wrote and completed his work *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*. The playwright wrote *Professional Foul* in the same year he visited Russia in 1977. He visited Russian dissidents in Moscow. That journey and his meeting with Fainberg was the main inspiration in completing both of these plays.

In *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, Stoppard chooses Russia and its KGB to criticize for their illegal detentions of political prisoners. The political

detainee Alexander is put in a cell with a real lunatic with the same name. Alexander is a dissident who is imprisoned as a lunatic, like Fainberg. The other character is Ivanov, who has illusions of having a real orchestra, assumes to have symphony orchestra, the sound of which is heard only by him. Alexander is officially reported to be imprisoned in the interests of public security, but, in fact, this incarceration is in the interests of state security. The doctor, who is responsible for both characters, takes the orders from a colonel. We also see Alexander's son Sacha with his teacher in a school room. Alexander has been transferred to this hospital from a stricter one as a result of his hunger strike, which has almost resulted in his death. He begins another hunger strike and refuses to come to an agreement with the authorities. To force him, the executives use his son as an emotional means. However, Alexander is decisive in his action, so this does not work, either. Finally the colonel thinks about a new solution because he has had enough of this dissident and wants to get rid of him. During an official assessment, making use of their namesakes he replaces them, so Alexander and Ivanov are freed because Alexander tells them he does not hear any orchestra and Ivanov does not speak about anything slanderous. Thus, the colonel gets rid of them. The playwright masterfully shows how unfair the practices, in terms of human rights, are in Soviet Russia:

One day they arrested a friend of mine for possessing a controversial book, and they kept him in mental hospitals for a year and a half... Soon after he got out, they arrested a couple of writers, A and B, who had published some stories abroad under different names. Under their own names they got five years' and seven years' hard labour. I thought this was most peculiar. My friend, C, demonstrated against the arrest of A and B... and they put him back into the mental hospital. D was a man who wrote to various people about the trial of A and B and held meetings with his friends E, F, G and H, who were all arrested (109).

Every Good Boy Deserves Favour shifts the focus towards an unfair imprisonment in a modern Soviet prison hospital, where patients suffer under the excuse of 'logic', and seemingly Archie, in *Travesties*, uses the same logic in a similar abusing way. The confrontations of such abuses have successful conclusions in *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* and in *Professional Foul*. The individual efforts with an obstinate resolute fight come to a happy ending in these plays. With these plays we get the impression of "a deep respect for human life and a devout belief in an individual's freedom of conscience which derive from a philosophical conviction about the nature of all human values" (Brassell 267).

Stoppard's sole aim is not only criticising the Communist country, but he is also against anything or anybody who tries to restrict human freedom. Such violations occur mainly in the communist countries and, that's why, he directs his criticisms mainly towards the oppressions and cruelties in these countries. Stoppard insists on what he sees as truth. This insistence is seen in almost all his plays, other than *Professional Foul* and *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*.

In Dirty Linen the members of the Parliament hold a meeting to discuss the morality. When the Members of Parliament convene, an absurd ceremony of conveying underclothes to the clerk goes on throughout the play. Each member tries to make the clerk forget what happened at the weekend. The committee, similar to those professors in *Professional Foul*, which is to decide the moral standards, has a dilemma in itself. All the members have had a love affair with that mysterious woman, who turns out to be the clerk, Maddie, and now they are in a struggle to cover it. Meanwhile, the chairman warns the members that private lives of the members should constitute a model for the British public in general (35). But, in fact, all the members have something to hide, which presents an obvious contradiction, and Maddie cannot help interfering with this nonsensical, self-deceiving hypocrisy: "People don't care what M.P.s do in their spare time, they just want them to do their jobs properly bringing down prices and everything" (99). She insists on her natural thinking, so she cannot bear the pretensions of the politicians and finally bursts out:

The Press. The more you accuse them of malice and inaccuracy, the more you're admitting that they've got a right to poke their noses into your private life. All this fuss! The whole report can go straight in the waste-paper basket. All you need is one paragraph saying that M.P.s have got just as much right to enjoy themselves in their own way as anyone else, and Fleet Street can take a running jump (105).

Revealing this hypocrisy, Stoppard criticises the P.M.s in this play, as he criticises professors or political authorities in such plays as *Jumpers*, *Travesties*, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* and *Professional Foul*.

Meanwhile the sixth member, French arrives. He is a person whose moral reputation has not been blemished yet. He advises the committee should decipher the private lives of M.P.s who do not act accordingly. This, of course, is not welcomed by the others, but just before that, the bell sound is heard showing the break time. Apart from Maddie and French, all other members leave the room. Maddie asks French to lead her to the ladies' cloakroom where what happens is not clear. However, whatever happens there is influential enough to change French's mind. Now, French agrees with Maddie in that every member should be free in private life. When the committee reassembles to continue to discuss the subject, all the members adopt the suggestion unanimously. At that moment French is seen to wipe his face with Maddie's knickers, which clearly tells us the reason why French has changed his mind.

Stoppard also questions the accuracy of historical events and biographies of historical figures. He urges people to think over what they had assumed to be true. He makes our minds confused, and we are not sure of anything we formerly believed to be true any longer. The scepticism of his plays brings about a radical change in the way we begin to consider the world and its history. Historical events, historical figures, great or notorious leaders have been displaced from their

unshakable thrones, and they have been put on an ambiguous and slippery environment instead.

5. Conclusion

Stoppard does not like to write about daily issues, unlike many writers do. The universality of his playwriting approaches him to the great authors. He is against injustices and immoralities carried out under the mask of ideology or logic. Stoppard is a master in comedy and his political criticism is felt as the secondary theme and it makes itself felt only after the play ends as the thought process advances (Brater 127-128).

Making pastiches from different historical and literary events, the playwright makes up a comic play. For Stoppard, any art form can be tolerated provided that it is harmless and does not go beyond its artistic and thinking dimension and turn into a political dictatorship. Stoppard suggests that political acts should be judged in moral terms and in terms of their consequences they cause. There are no ultimate moral realities and at times one might seem to act unethically to correct a catastrophic wrong. Sheer rationality, immorality, cruelty, political oppression, selfishness, cuckoldry, positivism and indifference are the main criticised subjects in his plays.

Consequently, Stoppard's belief in absolute moral values has never diminished. These values were supposed to guide public decisions, and he voiced this idea in his action for human rights (Cater 2). He criticised human rights violations and pressures on individual freedom in the communist countries, notably in Russia. He never adopted modernist nihilism supported and emphasized by the Marxists. He seemed to favour a traditional bourgeois stance. However, in some of his plays, such as *Professional Foul*, there are also traces of powerful socialist playwriting, and sometimes he directs his criticism to the Western authorities because of moral issues.

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