

stay while I was away and finish the job. That was impossible, I said. He would sit outside and wait until I came back. The job was over, I said, as decisively as I could, and handed him his money.

No, no, no. He didn't want any money. I called Fatima and told her to give it to him. She put it in his pocket, but he took it out and threw it on the floor. They stood screaming at one another, and I felt my nerves going. Fatima ran out of the house, and we stood among the scattered notes. She returned a few minutes later with her brother and sister-in-law, who lived somewhere up the way. Fatima and the sister-in-law packed Ahmed's things while the brother advised him to be reasonable. Ahmed took the suitcase and emptied his clothes atop the banknotes. The *portero*, hearing the noise, came up and, being Italian, joined in with relish. They seemed to be yelling mostly about Mustafa, and I could stand it no longer.

"Stop it, stop it!" I yelled. "*Tranquilo, por favor. Nada más*. No more. If he doesn't want his clothes or the money, give them to Mustafa. If he won't leave, call the police."

But the row seemed to be over anyway. Ahmed picked up everything, and the women helped him pack. He turned, smiled as nicely as anyone could, and said, "Thank you for everything." Fatima cried, and so did the sister-in-law, and the *portero* wiped his eye. We moved conversationally down the hall, as if reluctantly seeing off a dear relative. The women asked whether he wanted a sandwich for the road, and the men said any time they could do anything it would be a pleasure. Then he was gone, and I stood at the window in a fresh torment of conscience.

"What time you like tea in the morning?"

It was Mustafa.

"Mustafa, the job's over. Maybe some other time."

"Now Ahmed's gone, I'll stay."

"No. Do you hear me? No."

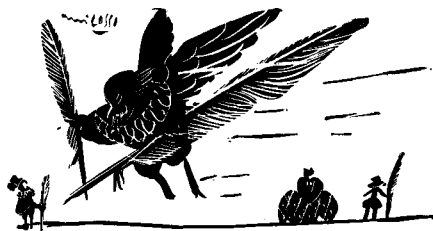
"You want whisky? Gin?"

"Nothing."

"Whisky? Gin?"

"Whisky," I said weakly. "Get me a whisky, then go home."

"It's raining," he said. I didn't bother to look. I'd given up.



## To Be and Not to Be

GERALD WEALES

"THANKS, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern," says Claudius in the second act of *Hamlet*, absently dismissing the two courtiers after having given them instructions to find out what is wrong with the prince. "Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz," says Gertrude, quietly correcting the King, smoothing over his mistake. "Charming spot," says Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*, looking out over apparent desolation (the audience). "Inspiring prospects. Let's go." Vladimir answers, "We can't," and when Estragon wants to know why, he adds, "We're waiting for Godot."

Tom Stoppard borrows Shakespeare's joke about identity and Samuel Beckett's inescapable situation and transforms them into *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, a funny, intelligent, and finally moving play about two young men, not very sure who they are, who answer a summons from some source they do not recognize to carry out a task they do not understand and to end in the darkness they do not want to think about.

Although Rosencrantz and Guildenstern step into their Shakespearean roles whenever the characters from *Hamlet* sweep on stage, throwing them clues that they are somehow compelled to answer, they resemble Beckett's tramps much more than they do Shakespeare's unctuous timeservers. When we first meet them they are on an empty stage ("between one place and another at a third place of no name, character, population or significance," as Guildenstern says), as bare as the country road where Beckett's charac-

ters do their waiting. Guildenstern, like Vladimir, is the intellectual, spinning out syllogisms, setting up tests, working desperately in the hopes that logic or illogic will let him cut a path through the uncertainty that surrounds them. Rosencrantz, like Estragon, is a bit dense, slow to follow the turn of Guildenstern's mind, flat-footed in his own ruminations, as in his long speech on death, on being shut in a box, which sends his friend screaming.

Like the tramps, they too are waiting for someone, something that will explain what is going on; and they fill their time, as the tramps do, trying to figure it out for themselves or—more often—trying to avoid thinking about it by escaping into elaborate word games, music-hall routines, complicated jokes.

Their chief activity is to analyze the scenes from *Hamlet* they have just taken part in, and it is obviously funny to an audience made up of people who once, as students, asked themselves the same groundling questions about the literal meaning of lines. Rosencrantz ends a complaint about how badly *Hamlet* has outpointed them (Shakespeare, like Beckett, plays word games), "and finally one direct question which might have led somewhere, and led in fact to his illuminating claim to tell a hawk from a handsaw."

IN ONE SENSE, the summons may be said to have come from the dramatist, from Shakespeare, for Stoppard's play is about drama as well as life. Minor characters in plays are seldom more than stereotypes, defined solely by their contribution

to the play's major action. They have no biographies, no past or future, no existence outside the scenes in which they appear; like Madam Pace in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, they materialize, fully formed and properly costumed, when the occasion demands. Thus Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, in *Hamlet*, are simply tools of Claudius, so unim-



portant in their own right that the other characters have as much trouble as the audience does in telling them apart. They do an inept double, work as a team in their attempt to get around Hamlet; but their motivation, which critics always talk about as though the two men were one, can only be assumed from their politely empty lines, from Claudius's assurance that they will do his bidding, and from Hamlet's contempt for them.

STOPPARD's device is to catch Rosencrantz and Guildenstern between scenes, to show them as befuddled young men who do not know where they are from or where they are going, forced to wait until the action of *Hamlet* flows over them again, giving them momentarily something to do. Stoppard's play, then, presents the dilemma of the character who does not know his author or the story of which he is a part, but who cannot escape it, cannot act to create himself and alter the outcome.

The sentence above may define the peripheral character in any play, but it also describes man—at least, as he is depicted in much of contemporary drama. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are modern man in a Beckett universe, incapable of action, uncertain of identity, bullied by accident or by an order so incomprehensible that it might as well be accident. "Chance, then," Guildenstern says, trying to define the

force that makes his path cross that of the raggedy actors. The Player agrees, but adds "Or fate," for the terms, at least from where Rosencrantz and Guildenstern stand, are the same. The Player is the third important character in the play, for he and his troupe meet the two heroes (if that is the word) in both their existences, and he helps to set up the analogy between the play and life. Not the conventional one that makes all of us see ourselves in Hamlet, whose very indecisiveness is positive compared to the paralysis of Stoppard's characters, but the one that reminds us that we are taking part in a drama in which we stumble over our own lines and try, vainly, to figure out why everyone else is babbling about wanting to live in a nutshell.

Near the end of the play, Guildenstern, desperate in his knowledge of what awaits them in England, tries to commit an *acte gratuit*, as though he were a character in a novel by Gide or Camus, but even that is impossible. He grabs the Player's knife and stabs him, but, after dying convincingly at Guildenstern's feet, the Player gets back up, recovers his trick knife, and goes on with his demonstration-lecture about death onstage. There, it is romantic, earth-shaking, grandiloquent, but only for the leading characters. Minor figures die offstage—or anyway out of the limelight. While the players mime the end of *Hamlet*, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern stand in spots, one at each side of the stage, until ("Now you see me—now you—") they simply disappear. The play ends with *Hamlet* again, the words of the English ambassador which give Stoppard his title and which remind us that Guildenstern has described death earlier in the play: "It's just a man failing to reappear, that's all." No one around to say, "Now cracks a noble heart."

IF THE BUZZ of voices around me as I left the theatre is any evidence, Paul Hecht, who acts the Player with appropriate panache, is the favorite with the audience. Although the approbation is deserved, it is also ironic. Plays, as this one keeps telling us, consist of grand gestures, great moments, high-tragedy deaths; and minor characters

are forced into shadows. Even now, with a play of their own, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are upstaged by the Player, and not because the actors who play the parts are less good than Hecht. John Wood, who did such a remarkable job in *The Victorians*, the series of nineteenth-century plays done on educational television stations last summer, has the disadvantage, as Guildenstern, of having to open the play on a shrill note of near-hysteria. Although that note sounds all through his performance it is modulated as the scenes allow him to show that he is capable of considerable range even within the limitations of a very nervous Guildenstern. Brian Murray, solid where Wood is volatile, provides a Rosencrantz who is physically and emotionally a complement to Guildenstern. Although even the characters get their names mixed up, Wood and Murray make the audience understand the possibility of perceivable identity implied in the nostalgic moment in which they half remember a time when each had his own name.

My chief complaint about a generally impressive production is that the *Hamlet* sequences are played



too much in the contemporary style, the music of the lines muted by the custom of reading them for sense first, sound second. An old-fashioned, rather singsong reading would have set up a rhythm against which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern could have played when they found themselves, to their surprise, speaking lines that had been assigned to them. But this is a minor irritation. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is a well-staged production of a well-written play, the happy American debut of the most interesting English playwright to come along since Harold Pinter.

# THE REPORTER Puzzle

## Acrostickler® No. 179

by HENRY ALLEN

### DIRECTIONS

- 1) Each crossword definition contains two clues. One is a conventional synonym; the other a pun, anagram, or play on words.
- 2) Letters from the acrostic should be transferred to the corresponding squares in the crossword, and vice versa.
- 3) The initial letters of the correct words in the acrostic will, when read down, spell out the name of a prominent person: the Acrostician.

A 90 196 176 56 174 68 190 32 172

140 16 Courtly or impressive way (5,6).

B 60 70 112 94 88 206 220 158 44

166 46 One who plays along.

C 194 184 216 156 170 An oblique equilateral parallelogram (alt. sp.).

D 120 40 136 24 186 64 118 18 72

152 218 Where there will be bluebirds, according to the song (5,6).

E 66 124 52 164 106 30 208 6 210 76

48 54 Son of William I, perhaps (6,6).

F 202 84 122 10 198 212 26 Turned outward.

G 98 8 114 146 126 20 178 "He who resolves never to—any mind but his own will be soon reduced, from mere barrenness, to the poorest of all imitations . . ." Reynolds, "Discourse to Students of the Royal Academy."

H 168 82 102 128 50 12 200 74 222

214 Own up to happiness (5,5).

I 86 150 108 62 80 "As soon / Seek roses in December—ice in June; / Hope constancy in wind, or corn in— . . ." Byron, "Don Juan."

J 58 130 2 100 U.S. Secretary of the Navy during part of World War II.

K 4 28 144 180 132 192 96 162 A territory of Newfoundland.

L 138 182 160 34 "— seemed either." Milton, "Paradise Lost."

M 154 110 116 42 36 142 14 104 224 Factories for turning out knitting materials (4,5).

1	2	J	3	4	K	5	6	E		8	G	9	10	F	11	12	H	13	14	M	15	
16	A		18	D		20	G			24	D		26	F		28	K		30	E		
31	32	A	33	34	L	35	36	M	37		39	40	D	41	42	M	43	44	B	45		
46	B		48	E		50	H		52	E		54	E		56	A		58	J		60	B
61	62	I	63	64	D	65	66	E	67	68	A	69	70	B		72	D	73	74	H	75	
76	E					80	I		82	H		84	F		86	I		88	B		90	A
			93	94	B	95	96	K	97	98	G	99	100	J	101	102	H	103	104	M	105	
106	E		108	I		110	M		112	B		114	G		116	M		118	D		120	D
121	122	F	123	124	E	125	126	G	127	128	H	129	130	J	131	132	K	133				
136	D		138	L		140	A		142	M		144	K		146	G					150	I
151	152	D	153	154	M		156	C	157	158	B	159	160	L	161	162	K	163	164	E	165	
166	B		168	H		170	C		172	A		174	A		176	A		178	G		180	K
181	182	L	183	184	C	185	186	D	187		189	190	A	191	192	K	193	194	C	195		
196	A		198	F		200	H		202	F			206	B		208	E		210	E		
211	212	F	213	214	H	215	216	C	217	218	D		220	B	221	222	H	223	224	M	225	

### ACROSS

1. A well-liked kind of tree, they say.
8. Small amount on the basketball court (1,7).
31. Phone MU 1-1111 for the distinguishing mark of a dromedary (3,4).
39. With 61 across and 106 down, organization headed by the Acrostician (7,2,8,8).
61. See 39 across.
72. Excellent weather or mediocre?
93. Luxor rope fame may be why Aesop wrote his fables (3,3,7).
121. May 30 or redoing time? (10,3).
151. A very chancy sort of thing in a mastiff yell.
156. One color when a capital is last.
181. Either left or right appendage.
189. Place of hanging three feet long?
211. Meetings where Sis noses the op-position?
220. Tass is an aid.

### DOWN

1. A particle which can find no port.
3. Another particle that's not belligerent?
5. Criticism for a 3 down slice, but it's hard on the scarce (1,3,2,4).
9. What the inept con man may do (7,6).
11. Ithunn sounds as though she's finished.
13. Give sufficient financial support or retreat enough? (4,5).
15. The end glare may be made greater.
37. Factory or theatrical workers? (10,3).
86. Can these gamblers never be flat? (4,6).
93. When one looks at truth, it may affect S.A.C. (4,5).
106. See 39 across.
150. Is he trim? It's Old Man Mose!
163. It's A-OK. . . 3.14 will feature this creature.
170. Isle of Ali Baba lineage.

### Solution to Puzzle 178

	H	O	R	S	D	O	E	U	V	R	E	S	
T	E	I	O	N	E								
H	A	R	D	P	A	N	T	H	E	R	M	O	S
E	R	E	E	R	R	A	T						
H	A	I	R	A	G	R	E	E	O	D	O	R	
A	N	C	A	A	S	A	A						
P	I	G	T	A	I	L	T	E	L	E	M	O	N
E	L	A	S	T	I	C		E	T	E	R	N	A
N	C	Y	H	V	T	E	E						
I	R	O	N	F	I	N	A	L	E	T	C	H	
N	R	L	A	S	M	W	O						
G	E	N	T	I	A	N	I	C	Y	C	O	O	L
	P	T	O	R	R	D							
Q	U	E	S	T	I	O	N	M	A	R	K		

Acrostician: ANTHONY QUINN

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