

A Study of Tom Stoppard's *Where Are They Now?* and Mohammad Enani's *The Dervish and the Belly Dancer* as Time-travel Plays

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Abstract:

This paper compares between the British Playwright Tom Stoppard and the Egyptian counterpart Mohammad Enani. Stoppard's *Where Are They Now?* (1970) and Enani's *The Dervish and the Belly Dancer* (1991) reflect the playwrights' experimentation with time. Both dramatists are influenced by the time theories of Henri-Louis Bergson and J. Dunne. The study throws light on their use of modern technical devices like surrealism and deconstruction to allow the protagonists to travel through time easily and strangely at

the same time. Stoppard and Enani are keen on keeping the audiences/readers astonished and surprised to see imaginative events from the beginning till the end of the plays. On the one hand, Stoppard gives different names to protagonists in the past and at present to arouse ambiguity and doubts. On the other hand, Enani makes Abou Sabbagh move from the modern age to the ancient time as soon as he reads few lines in a book. Finally, the research reveals some common issues raised by both Stoppard and Enani like freedom and injustice.

Keywords:

Modernism- Experimentation-
Time-travel- Time Theories-
Space- Ambiguity- Doubts

الملخص:

يقارن البحث بين الكاتب البريطاني توم ستوبارد والكاتب المصري محمد عناني في تناولهما لعنصر- الزمن في مسرحيتهما أين هم الآن؟ و الدرويش والغازية على التوالي. وتوضح الدراسة كيف تأثر كل من الكاتبين بنظريات الزمن التي وضعها هنري لويس بروجسون و ج. دون. وتلقي الورقة الضوء على استخدام كل من ستوبارد وعناني لأدوات التقنية الحديثة مثل السيريالية والتفكيكية لتمكين الأبطال من السفر عبر الزمن بسلاسة مع الاحتفاظ بعنصر الاستغراب، حيث يحرص كل من ستوبارد وعناني على إبقاء المتفرجين أو القراء في حالة دهشة وتعجب من الأحداث الخيالية. وقد قام ستوبارد بتغيير أسماء أبطال مسرحيته أين هم الآن؟ في الزمنين الماضي والحاضر ليشير الغموض والشك. أما عناني فقد جعل بطله أبو صباغ في مسرحية الدرويش والغازية يذهب من العصر-

الحديث إلى العصر القديم بمجرد أن يقرأ سطوراً قليلة في كتاب. وأخيراً يكشف البحث عن تشابه الموضوعات التي يطرحها كل من ستوبارد وعناني مثل الحرية والظلم.

الكلمات الدالة:

الحداثة- التجريب- السفر عبر الزمن- نظريات الزمن- الفضاء- الغموض- الشك

Science-fiction literature in the late eighteenth century tackled time- travel, and this is obvious in H.G.Wells's novel *The Time Machine* (1895). In the early twentieth century, modern scientists and philosophers showed more interest in time-travel. The Germans Albert Einstein (1879-1955) and Martin Heidegger (1888- 1976) investigated this new field.

Einstein's theory of relativity exposes that gravity holds both objects and time; accordingly, time flies faster in the outer space

than on earth. In space, time frees itself from the gravitational mass on earth. Hence, time dilation can be observed, but each observer grasps the same event at different time according to where he exists in the universe. Heidegger disagrees with René Descartes's rational belief that the man who thinks is existent. For Heidegger, man is existent whether he thinks or not. Man rather views his existence through time, and this is the mystery of existence according to Heidegger.

In 1927, Heidegger published his masterpiece *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time) where he treats the question of Being, confirming that man sees one immediate image at present time, and does not observe the other images of the past and future. Such unseen images of time, according to Heidegger, exist in our

consciousness. This is the core of Heidegger's phenomenological philosophy, which he primarily learnt from his master Edmund Husserl (1859- 1938).

This paper examines the use of spacial and temporal simultaneity in stage settings, character interaction and plot construction in Tom Stoppard (b.1937)'s *Where Are They Now?* (1970) and Mohammad Enani(b.1939)'s *The Dervish and the Belly Dancer* (1991). Stoppard is British, while Enani is Egyptian. Though they belong to different cultural backgrounds, both are contemporary playwrights who have experienced similar global events like the depression after World War II and the Cold War. Their plays feature unusual simultaneous time and space arrangements, creating fantasy, uncertainty and ambiguity. The research shows

how Stoppard and Enani play with time to build in the spectators the sense that “time is out of joint.” They use surrealism to encourage audiences to imagine, dream, trust their own mental capabilities and work to change inconvenient situations.

Contemporary plays like *Where Are They Now?* and *The Dervish and the Belly Dancer* are surrealistic in the sense that they have no linear sequence of time and look dream-like. Gloria Orenstein points out that surrealism “reveals the theater to be an alchemical stage [where matters and characters magically change] in an ongoing visionary process” (1). Her statement echoes R. White’s definition of surrealism as an attempt “to break through the empirical fixation of realism and the determination of naturalism” (194). Moreover, Dylan Thomas

states, “The Surrealists wanted to dive into the subconscious mind ...and dig up their images from there without the aid of logic of reason, and put them down, illogically and unreasonably, in paint and words” (190).

Tom Stoppard’s *Where Are They Now?* and Mohammad Enani’s *The Dervish and the Belly Dancer* are two modern comedies of ideas that exhibit an atmosphere of cognitive uncertainty. Both playwrights believe in the unreliability of perception. In their drama, Stoppard and Enani tackle the motion of time, and deal with the possibility of accessing the past and future while awake. As contemporary dramatists, they view nothing as without relevance. They convey the truth that people act differently in the world because they build their various points of view on their personal

beliefs, individual cultures, subjective illusions and even hallucination. Stoppard and Enani travel through time to synthesize different time images to highlight their own subjective viewpoints.

Stoppard's *Where Are They Now?* (1970) and Enani's *The Dervish and the Belly Dancer* are postmodern plays in that they celebrate difference, chaos, and incoherence, and preach for tolerance. Nick Caye asserts that postmodern art promotes fragmented unsettled multi-meanings (21). In that sense, both Stoppard and Enani deliberately dismantle the time-line in their plays. David Herman contends that some postmodern writers mean to confuse the reader by narrating stories in an unordered way to "impede a reader... to reconstruct the time-line connecting the situations and events that they

portray (249-250). By the same token, Michael Whitworth argues, "Time remains important to modernism, but only because movement involves both space and time" (637).

Rodney Simard points out, "Stoppard's plays reflect the postmodern obsession with ideas, which form the basis of his work and are most often his subject matter" (49). Although *Where Are They Now?* is chaotic and ambiguous, it clearly discusses unhappiness, satisfaction and oppression and highlights different viewpoints. The stage presents two locations from different times and places. Location 2 shows a school dinner, occurring in 1945, i.e. twenty-four years ago. Location 1 exhibits an Old Boys' reunion dinner, occurring at present in 1969 (119).

Five characters are common factors in the two locations: The headmaster, Mr. Dobson and three boys. In Location 2, the thirteen-years-old mates Harpo, Groucho and Chico are sitting with other school boys at the table. They are supervised by the headmaster and Mr. Dobson. In Location 1, the same three protagonists are in their thirties. They are sitting with Old Dobson, the headmaster and other boys and men at a hotel.

What makes *Where Are They Now?* ambiguous is Stoppard's trick of changing Harpo and Chico's names after they have grown up. The audiences are left to discover by themselves that Harpo is the businessman Marks, Groucho is the journalist Gale, and Chico is the clerk Brindley. Terry Hodgson notes,

The serious interest lies in identifying the characters of the

Old Boys with their younger selves. As schoolboys, three Old Boys, now a businessman, cleric and journalist respectively, were dubbed Harpo, Groucho and Chico. It seems fairly evident which characters are which, but Stoppard plays a trick on us. The talkative Old Boy Marks with the apparently happy memories was the silent tearful Harpo and not the silent Old Boy Gale (39).

It is indeed confusing for the audiences to find different characters in each location. Action starts in Location 1 where the Old Boys interact together (122). In Location 2, there are the classmates Harpo (Marks), Groucho (Brindley), Chico (Gale) and Anderson. In Location 1, there are Marks, Brindley and Gale of the same school years on the one hand; and there are Jenkins, Crawford, Young Marks and Bellamy of

different school years on the other hand. It is worth mentioning that Anderson who exists in Location 2 is absent in Location 1. It is also observed that Jenkins, Crawford, Young Marks and Bellamy who are there in Location 1 are not found in Location 2.

The action alternates between the two locations. For example, Brindley, Dobson and Marks keep addressing Gale in Location 1, while the latter remains silent (125-126). In Location 1 also, Dobson, Jenkins, Marks, Brindley and Crawford keep recalling their past at the boarding school during World War II (126- 127). Then, Dobson in Location 2 asks the boys to finish all their food (128). He asks Anderson to go after lunch to Ms. Staggers since he feels sick. Suddenly, Dobson discovers that Anderson has been reading a book while eating, so he

orders him to translate a page from French to Latin as punishment (129).

Characters in Location 1 take the floor. Dobson asks Crawford to pass the wine. Jenkins starts saying a monologue, addressing Gale. Though Gale does not bother to positively respond to him, Jenkins continues saying that he did not like to go back home after the war. Instead, he used to travel abroad on vacation. He considers the school to be his actual home (130). Jenkins, Marks and Brindley reminisce about the good old days (132). Subsequently, Crawford becomes angry and fights with Marks and Bellamy (133). Later, the headmaster sadly announces the death of the French teacher Mr. Jenkins(134).

The group, except Gale, abides by the headmaster's request to stand in silence thinking of Mr.

Jenkins (134). Gale remains sitting, and bursts into a monologue, "I'm sitting down for Jenkins. We stood for Jenkins long enough.And anyway Jenkins has stood me up. ...He made us afraid" (134-135).

Dobson tries in vain to hush Gale. Gale states that Jenkins did not teach them anything and was a violent teacher (135). He explains, "We walked into French like condemned men. We were too afraid to learn. All our energy went into ingratiating ourselves and deflecting his sadism on to our friends.What a stupid man" (135)!

The tension continues in Location 2, where the headmaster blames the boys for being seen downtown in the company of girls and without having their caps on (135). Jenkins and Marks in Location 1 assure Gale that their

school time was not all gloomy (136). However, Gale keeps talking about his suffering at school (136-137).

The play ends with the Old Boys in Location 1 singing the school song. At the same time, Gale goes into a flashback and becomes a child in Location 2. He interrupts the song with loud laughter while playing with his schoolmates (139). This conclusion indicates that Gale has some happy memories at school. Gale is shown as mentally ill. His childhood complexes affect his present and future.

Terry Hodgson points out that Tom Stoppard believes that *Where Are They Now?* simply carries that idea of children who exaggerate their problems at school; when they grow up, they realize that the problems were nothing (39). Rodney Simard

assumes, "Stoppard's plays juxtapose different levels of reality" (54). Stoppard believes that reality is subjective, that is why, there are multiple possibilities (56-57). This is obvious in Jenkins and Gale's different attitudes towards school. Jenkins loves school, while Gale hates it.

Stoppard uses an episodic structure, which, along with the nationalist song which glorifies Britain, creates a systematic Vorticist feature in the play. Miranda Hickman asserts that Vorticists like Stoppard use geometry to give non-traditional meanings "conditioned by their environment and suitable to their own aims and desires" (xiii). She adds, "[T]he Vorticist is most interested in the shape created, and what it suggests in itself" (4). For example, the lines that Stoppard

draws between the past and present episodes reflect time-shifts and social transformation.

Stoppard, as a Vorticist, does not criticize the war. Ira Nadel puts forward that Vorticism is an abstract 'anti-humanist' movement which "suddenly appear to join the dehumanized violence of war" (48). Paul Delaney contends that Stoppard, despite his origins as "a Czech immigrant who had been a refugee in Singapore and India" (279), he later became a British Vorticist in the vein of Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, Oscar Wilde and William Butler Yeats. They all advocate the powerful British empire, totalitarianism and war.

The Egyptian Enani is not, of course, Vorticist like Stoppard. However, he employs unconventional staging like flashbacks and time-jumps like Stoppard. In *Where Are They Now?* Stoppard makes the

action occur at different times and in different places, but shows it simultaneously. In *The Dervish and the Belly Dancer*, the protagonist Abou Sabbagh goes backward and forward in time once his attention focuses on a certain era.

Abou Sabbagh practices quackery in Abou El-Rish village, deceiving ignorant villagers with his fraudulent medical practices. Scene 1 opens with Abou Sabbagh expressing his pride to have become a dervish (10). He tells the audiences how he travels freely in time and space while reading classical books. The present action is frequently cross-cut when Abou Sabbagh starts to read *Al-Tabary*, a well-known collection of Islamic historical tales and apocrypha. Two characters from the Pre-Islamic period chase him, mistaking him

for a murderer called 'Kolthoum' (12). They are followed by several bedouins, and they all talk in verse. When they leave the stage, Abou Sabbagh thanks God for being saved (13).

The men return to capture Abou Sabbagh and take his two wives Tafida and Ifadat as captives (14). The women are puppet-like figures. They wear complete veil and talk like robots (13). Meanwhile, the men realize their mistake. They leave after discovering that Abou Sabbagh is not the alleged person (15).

In a soliloquy, Abou Sabbagh says that he has been reading *El-Asfahany's Songs* an hour before. He wonders what the beautiful singer Rabab looked like. Suddenly, she appears, talking in verse (17). Abou Sabbagh comes back to consciousness when two villagers Ellewa and Hussein come

to his prayer room to keep their money with him (18). He reluctantly takes their money, and promises to make it increase seven-fold (20).

After the villagers leave, Abou Sabbagh yearns for the time of the Umayyad Caliph Al-Waleed bin Yazeed. He knows the caliph offers much money to the poet who praises him in verse (22). Caliph Al-Waleed appears, and Abou Sabbagh recites poetry to him (22). The caliph rewards him with gold (25). Atrees interrupts the dream and wakes Abou Sabbagh up again, informing him that the belly dancer Fatheia needs to take an appointment, so he asks to see her in the evening (27).

In scene 2, a band happily performs folk dance, song and music (29). Risha beats the drums, Shehta and Shenshal play the violin, and Fatheia sings, while

Mounira and Saedia dance (29-30). Fatheia dreams of achieving fame by recording an album. She is proud of mixing eastern and western music. She tells the group about her plan of making the fraud Abou Sabbagh fund a project to hold a cassette firm in her name, a popular practice in Egypt in the 1980's and throughout the 1990's (33-34).

Scene 3 shows the palace of Caliph Al-Waleed. Abou Sabbagh lets Nawar recite one of his poems. Al-Waleed likes it, and decides to reward Abou Sabbagh (37). The caliph flies into a rage. Abou Sabbagh asks for his slave girl Rabab as a reward. The guards immediately chain him, carrying out the caliph's orders (39).

In Scene 4, Abou Sabbagh frees himself from the chains, and returns to the present once he hears Fatheia's song (41). He is

infatuated with Fatheia, and calls her 'Rabab' (43). Abou Sabbagh's two wives interrupt their meeting and prevent Fatheia from staying alone with their husband, so she leaves (44-45).

A desperate man named Abdullah visits Abou Sabbagh, not knowing his name or identity. He thinks Abou Sabbagh is an ordinary dervish and can heal him (46). Abdullah narrates his tragedy to the dervish. He says that somebody who is called Abou Sabbagh has ruined his life, making him lose his friends and his job. Abdullah asks the dervish to help him die without going to hell (47-48).

Abou Sabbagh does not reveal his true identity to Abdullah, and offers him a job. He asks him to become his law consultant since he was a former lawyer (51). In a soliloquy, Atrees thinks that if

Abou Sabbagh shows Abdullah his papers and safe box, he will discover the hoax (53).

A man named Ghadban comes to offer Atrees a bundle of money to keep for him, believing him to be the dervish (54). Abou Sabbagh enters and asks Abdullah to record Ghadban's money in the ledger. Atrees realizes that he can never cheat Abou Sabbagh or take the money for himself (55).

In scene 5, Abou Sabbagh reads a book that thrusts him into the Middle Ages again. A guard called Al- Monzer captures him (57). Al- Monzer says that the caliph has condemned Abou Sabbagh to death (58). The guard sympathizes with the protagonist saying that the caliph is known for oppression (58). A roar is heard, and El- Fattih enters to free all prisoners, announcing the death of Caliph Al- Waleed (59). Afterwards,

Hanzala and Al- Fattih order Abou Sabbagh to go to Al-Shahbaa, the caliph's wife, in the evening at her palace, since she has chosen him to be the slave girls' voice teacher.

Abou Sabbagh's two wives refuse to allow Abdullah to stay with them in the house as a bachelor. They suggest that he marries Mofida, who wears a face veil (burka) like them (64-65). Abou Sabbagh disallows Abdullah to see Mofida's face until he signs the wedding contract (65).

Scene 6 occurs in the medieval time. Hanzala notes that Al-Shahbaa has ordered to keep Abou Sabbagh with the captives. The guards immediately chain his feet (69-70). Lady Al- Shahbaa arrives and gets angry to see the slave trader investigating Abou Sabbagh (71). She orders to capture and kill Al- Monzer for not sending the man directly to her palace (72-73).

Scene 7 shows the band rehearsing songs and dances in preparation for the Abou El-Rish's birthday celebration. Atrees convinces Abdullah to join them as a singer in the band since he has sweet voice. He agrees to leave Abou Sabbagh and work with them (78). Atrees tells Fatheia that having Abdullah with them is a gain since he has all the legal papers and knows the law (83).

In Scene 8, Fatheia secretly meets Abou Sabbagh to convince him to fund her cassette firm. She tempts him by showing readiness to marry him (89). He agrees and orders Atrees to write a contract to be authorized the following day (91).

Interestingly, Abou Sabbagh confronts Abdullah that he believes in Atrees's betrayal to him. He declares that Atrees must have revealed his true identity to

him. Abou Sabbagh humbly confesses his fault and repents (93). He illustrates that he prefers to live in the past where there is no deceit. According to Abou Sabbagh, artifice is the trait of the present time. Abou Sabbagh gives Abdulla a history book. He asks him to open page 1245 and read few lines. While reading, both Abou Sabbagh and himself move to the Middle Ages (94).

Lady Al- Shahbaa orders her guards to take Abou Sabbagh to a doctor. For security reasons, she orders that he be castrated before training the palace ladies (98). Al- Fattih explains to Abo Sabbagh that the lady wants to protect the women from his desires (99). In order to save himself, Abou Sabbagh begs Abdullah to burn the book which they have been reading. He hopes he could go back to the modern age. However,

Abdullah says that he cannot find the book, and looks glad to get rid of Abou Sabbagh (99).

Scene 9 reveals Abdulla in the dervish's costume. He happily replaces Abou Sabbagh. Fatheia, Atrees and the two wives are all surprised (108). Abdulla brags that he has all the money, papers and secrets (109). He powerfully threatens to fire Atrees if he insists upon asking about Abou Sabbagh. He turns to Fatheia, and says that he will marry her. Atrees immediately backs up, and declares that he will be his loyal helper (109).

Abdullah announces that Abou- Sabbagh is lost in the past (110). Abou Sabbagh's two wives surprise everyone by uncovering themselves. They are shown to be men. Mofida, Abdullah's future bride, also removes her veil and proves to be a man. Both Fatheia

and Atrees are shocked. All characters laugh, and Fatheia agrees to marry Abdullah (111).

Abdullah asks Fatheia's band to make a show celebrating their wedding (112-114). They all sing and dance on stage (114). Unexpectedly, Abou Sabbagh appears, and everyone gets confused. He promises to come back from the past one day (115).

Both Mohammad Enani and Tom Stoppard are influenced by Henri-Louis Bergson (1859-1941)'s theory of duration and J.W. Dunne (1875- 1949)'s theory of serial time. Their protagonists in *Where Are They Now?* and *The Dervish and the Belly Dancer* transcend time and space limits. The continuity and simultaneity of action, and the overlap of past and present reinforce Bergson and Dunne's time theories. Michael Dixon and Liz Engelman assert

that time is often inconstant in contemporary plays. According to Einstein, time is changeable and "exists only in relation to place and motion" (vii).

Allegra Steward proposes, "Henri-Louis Bergson is against the delineation of chronological [linear] time and calls for emphasizing 'the interior time of consciousness. ...[or] duration'" (98-99). Edmund Thomas and Eugene Miller contend, "For Bergson, the world ... is of continuous becoming or process. Bergson's most original thinking is to be found in his doctrine of the *élan vital*, or vital impetus, which he considered to be a "current of consciousness" that penetrates matter, gives rise to living bodies, and determines the course of their evolution" (218). Bruno Latour determines, "every cohort of contemporary elements may bring

together elements from all times. In such a framework, our actions are recognized at last as polytemporal” (75).

Besides, A. S. Russell argues that Dunne in his book *An Experiment with Time* (1927) states that nothing dies in the universe since all events exist at different spaces. Dunne explains his idea of a serial universe by describing a painter drawing a painting. He draws inside it himself painting the same painting. This is repeated in several smaller scopes. If a viewer maximizes every painting, he will observe the same scene at a different time. According to Dunne, the unfolding of Time 1 in our waking consciousness is measured by an observer in Time 2 after a passage of time. Then, an observer in Time 3 observes the event at Time 2, and so on in an

infinite series. Hence, there are series of times and series of observers in the universe (51- 54).

The complex structure of *Where Are They Now?* and *The Dervish and the Belly Dancer* indeed makes the plays unusual. It is strange to see the protagonists travel through time and space. Stoppard and Enani make the plays episodic and chaotic in order to reflect the free motion of time. They mean to reflect the social and cultural transformation. They raise issues like freedom, control, oppression and justice. However, they do not solve the protagonists’ problems.

On the one hand, Stoppard gives two different names to each of the three protagonists Harpo, Groucho and Chico to make the audiences think deeply of their identities. On the other hand, Enani highlights the element of

anachrony to stress the strangeness of situation. Bronwen Martin and Felizitas Rimgham point out, "An anachronism is the setting of an event, scene, person or object in the wrong historical period" (26). For example, Abou Sabbagh praises the medieval caliph Al-Waleed bin Yazeed by comparing him to the modern music composer Abdel Wahab (24). Moreover, the medieval guard Al-Monzer tells Abou Sabbagh, "You seem to be a stranger from a far-away country, of a different language, and from a different time" (58). Besides, Abou Sabbagh astonishes and confuses Fatheia by telling her that he will train the palace maids to sing her songs (88). She knows that there are neither palace maids nor slaves in the modern age.

By the same token, Enani appeals to intertextuality. In *The*

Dervish and the Belly Dancer, the characters refer frequently to Enani's previous play *The Dervishes* (1981). They declare that they are the same characters, and imply that they continue their life story in the other play *The Dervish and the Belly Dancer*. For instance, Abdullah laments his separation from his fellow dervishes in Abou El-Rish agency, and blames Abou Sabbagh for causing this tragedy in the previous play *The Dervishes* (47-48). Abdullah and Atreees recall the good old days of the dervishes and feel nostalgia (77). *The Dervish and the Belly Dancer* shows the return of the dervishes to Abo El-Rish village because the villagers are easily deceived. If the audiences/readers want to know details about the dervishes' early life, they have to read Enani's early play *The Dervishes*. *The*

Dervish and the Belly Dancer includes incomplete details about the dervishes' early life.

Incoherence in Stoppard's *Where Are They Now?* and Enani's *The Dervish and the Belly Dancer* clearly indicates a deconstructivist way of viewing events. Thomas Schmitz notes that the deconstructionists claim that there is no context [or centre] in any text since "every text is already decontextualized" (138). According to their logic, Schmitz says, "We will never be able to find a stable core meaning, a real presence of significance within the text. This consciousness of the limits of validity of all interpretation is the most important legacy that deconstruction has left" (139). Hence, in Derrida and Barthes's opinions, readers are free to come up with any interpretation of any

text disregarding the author's intention.

However, Michel Foucault (1920-1984) in his article "What Is an Author?" (1969) asserts, "the author function today plays an important role in our view of literary works" (269). Then he explains that both reader and author participate in making the meaning in a text:

The text always contains a number of signs referring to the author The author is ...the principle of a certain unity of writing. The author...serves to neutralize the contradictions that may emerge in a series of texts. (270).... [T]he author's name ...seems always to be present, marking off the edges of the text, revealing, or at least characterizing, its mode of being (267).

Accordingly, meanings are fragmented in Stoppard's *Where Are They Now?* This can be seen in Stoppard's emphasis on the fragility and deceptiveness of memory. For example, in location 2, the signs of aging appear on the headmaster and Mr. Dobson's faces. Dobson suffers from a degree of deafness, but tries to communicate with his students. However, Dobson raises doubts about the student Jenkins when he mentions his close friend 'Bunny Sullivan' who was the Squash captain (131). Dobson corrects the name as 'Bunty Seilgman' and confirms that he was captain of Fives (131). Dobson addresses Marks, "You realize, Marks, that that fellow isn't really Jenkins at all? ...I don't know that chap...he's an impostor" (131). Jenkins turns to Gale and comments, "He [Dobson] must

have a complete nonentity. ...I mean, there's something damned odd about that man....he's mixing up this school with some other school he was at. ...Bunty and I were sick as dogs" (131). It is unclear who is right, and who is wrong. In one interpretation, Dobson's memory becomes weak because of senility. In another interpretation, Dobson has a strong memory and realizes Jenkins's lies and fraud.

Similarly, meanings are indefinite in Mohammad Enani's *The Dervish and the Belly Dancer*. After Abou Sabbagh has given all his secrets and papers to Abdullah, the latter shows disgust and fear at marrying Mofida (65). Later, he shows everyone that he knows since long time that Mofida is a disguised man (111). He has been acting that he will sadly marry a disagreeable woman. It is obvious

that he knows from the beginning that Mofida and Abou Sabbagh's two wives are all men. It seems that Abou Sabbagh needs women to deceive the female villagers. He knows women trust their sisters. So, he disguises his nephews as three ladies.

Another example of perplexity in the play is Abou Sabbagh's traveling to the Middle Ages while knowing that Caliph Al-Waleed's guards are chasing him to be killed (58). He could have evaded the situation and saved himself by not approaching that era.

The production and direction of time-travel drama are difficult. Modern technical devices are employed like grotesquery, intertextuality and surrealism. Because of the complication, Enani states in the epilogue of *The Dervish and the Belly Dancer*, "I think that *The Dervish and the*

Belly Dancer is good for reading. It would be fruitful if the text is read rather than performed" (122).

In contrast, Stoppard refuses to present his play as a 'closet drama'. J. A. Cuddon defines closet drama as a "play ... designed to be read rather than performed" (125). John Fleming confirms, "Stoppard has often described theatre as an event, not a text, meaning that his plays are designed to live and breathe on the stage and are meant to be experienced in the theatre" (5).

Tom Stoppard's *Where Are They Now?* and Mohammad Enani's *The Dervish and the Belly Dancer* are postmodern time-travel plays. They present incredible ambiguous action, and stress strangeness and chaos. Stoppard and Enani mean to confuse the audiences/readers, and enrich their imaginative abilities. The

dramatists apply Henri-Louis Bergson and J.W. Dunne's theories of time, revealing that the present time is immediate, and the other times are in motion. The playwrights employ the surrealistic device to create a dream-like atmosphere that allows imagination. They mean to be more transcendental than rational by creating fragmented scenes and incoherent texts. Their plays include ambiguity, but they convey rich meanings. They address both conscious and unconscious minds. They introduce the audiences/readers to a deep form of truth. Finally, they positively push them to improve their social and political status rather than surrendering to oppression and depression.

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