The atmosphere of Stoppard’s tour de force is one of confusion from the beginning to end. Guildenstern is confused about the outcome of the coin tossing and, thus, about the ruling principle of the world, Rosencrantz is confused about Guildenstern’s role-playing practice of questioning Hamlet, everyone is confused about which one of the pair is Rosencrantz and which one is Guildenstern, and they are in turn confused about everyone else. Determinism is confused with absurdity, fate is confused with chance, reality is confused with fiction, and art with life. All this is because of the coin, because of all the duality and duplicity of and in the play. When it is announced at the end that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet, all are dead, the reader or the audience are confused about what they have read and seen.

“Clearly, Stoppard is transgressing well-defined literary boundaries, and doing so in such a way that his own characters suffer the consequences of his manipulations.”287 Stoppard’s drama, a hypertext, is situated at the fringes of texts. He thematizes the textual relationships of Rosencrantz’s hypotexts. By doing so, the confusion of his protagonists is brought about by the (con)fusion of texts: “That duplicity of the object, in the sphere of textual relations, can be represented by the old analogy of the palimpsest: on the same parchment, one text can become superimposed upon another, which it does not quite conceal but allows to show through.”288 Stoppard’s hyper-, inter- and metatext is a palimpsest, a composite, a collage of literary classics. To re-write something means not only to write, but also to erase: it is both creative and destructive act. Selection does not involve only what is present, but also what is absent: the creation of Stoppard’s text results into literature under erasure