

Literature Higher Level – Paper 2 (Drama)

Groundwork Notes

Hamlet (1601) by William Shakespeare

Genre: Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy (modeled upon the Senecan revenge tragedies) which are subverted by an over-contemplative revenge hero and the pioneering of soliloquies, including fixtures such as:

- Revenge hero
- Deception and plotting
- Dumb-show
- Madness
- Bloodbath

Audience: Elizabethan audience familiar with conventions

Playwright: William Shakespeare

- 1564-1616
- Arguably the most influential writer in the English language
- Linkage of the Reformation (breakaway of Protestants) and skeptical humanism of late Renaissance age in Northern Europe

Setting: Denmark in the 1200s; “an English problem set in foreign countries”—the Reformation and advent of humanism

Main plot: Hamlet’s quest for revenge

Sub-plot: Norway & Fortinbras, Ophelia and her family & Hamlet

Dumb-show: an interlude of mime, an allegorical performance, usually to prepare the audience for the main content of the play to follow

- Used in 3.2 to display the murder followed by a spoken play
- Tension created by the dramatic irony and anticipation of the audience

Themes

Action and Inaction

- Hamlet is a revenge play, but the revenge hero in Hamlet cannot bear to avenge his father
- Delays all the time and overthinks problems into existence
 - 1.2 sees him “hold [his] tongue”
 - Laments his inaction and lack of motivation in 2.2 “am I a coward”
 - 3.1: “conscience does make cowards”
 - The climactic prayer scene of 3.3 is an example of dramatic irony: Claudius’s “thoughts fly up, [his] words remain below”—“Words

- without thoughts never to heaven go”, while Hamlet psyches himself out of the act
 - Appearance of the Ghost in 3.4 displays his awareness of his inaction: “Do you not come your tardy son to chide”
 - Resolve to act in 4.4 where he meets with the Norwegian army: “my thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth.”
- Linkage to the idea of fate and free will: Hamlet cannot escape the task that is given to him
- Furthermore, the characters in the play who actually act are also met with death, e.g. Claudius, Laertes and Gertrude—special significance goes to Laertes as the foil to Hamlet

Appearances and Reality

- Deception, plotting and traps laid by almost every important character
- Hamlet—driven by usage of soliloquies as well
 - 1.5: conspiring with his friends to “put an antic disposition on”
 - 2.2: Hamlet also engages the help of the players to stage a dumb-show, The Murder of Gonzago and in 3.2 where he coaches the players
- Claudius
 - 2.2: engages R&G to spy on Hamlet and “get from him why he puts on this confusion”
 - With Polonius in 3.1: positioning Ophelia reading a prayer-book in order to bait Hamlet and spy on him
 - 4.7: plotting with Laertes to stage a fencing match and murder Hamlet; “I’ll have preferred him a chalice for the nonce, whereon but sipping...” resulting in the ensuing bloodbath

Women

- Hamlet sees them as immoral and untrustworthy
 - 1.2: “Frailty, thy name is Woman”
 - 3.1: “God hath given you one face and you make yourselves another. You jig and amble and you lisp, you nickname God’s creatures and make your wantonness ignorance.”
 - 3.4: “such an act that blurs the grace and blush of modesty” in reference to the remarriage
- Women in general also depend on men in the play
 - Gertrude’s only way to retain her power is to remarry; she derives her power from the male figure
 - Ophelia cannot act given her madness; Laertes attempts to seek revenge on behalf of her and their father

Death and Disease

- Death being both the cause and consequence of revenge, it is tied to ideas of justice and revenge
 - 1.5: “murder most foul”

- Death is seen as a convenient answer to the uncertainty and ambiguity of life—seen in “to be or not to be” (3.1), which also contemplates the religious legality of death
 - 1.2: “or that the Everlasting had not fixed his canon ‘gainst self-slaughter”
 - 3.1: “to die: to sleep – no more, and by a sleep to say we end [suffering]”, but “in that sleep of death what dreams may come”, recalling the ghost
- The health of a nation was connected to the legitimacy of the king—hence the notion of filth and rot in Denmark
 - 1.2: “tis an unweeded garden that grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature possess it merely”
 - 1.4: “something is rotten in the state of Denmark”

Characters

- Note their characterization, especially Hamlet as the contemplative thinker through the usage of soliloquies
- Polonius as the bumbling fool through his verbosity and dimwittedness
- Claudius as the Machiavellian villain through his plotting and prior crimes of regicide, fratricide and incest in one fell swoop
- Laertes as the true conventional revenge hero through his rashness of thought and action
- The women as powerless through their social situation and resultant ends (by the wine glass and by drowning)

Motifs and symbols

- Incest: through Gertrude and Claudius, and to a smaller extent Laertes and Ophelia, given the sexual nature of their speech and how he leaps into the grave to hold her
- Misogyny: Hamlet’s cynicism of women through Gertrude’s remarriage and Ophelia’s rebuffing of him
- Ears and hearing: the use of words by Claudius in his royal address in 1.2 and pouring of the poison in Old Hamlet’s ear
- Flowers—when mad Ophelia gives them out to members of the court, each flower contains a special significance: rosemary for remembrance, pansies for thoughts, fennel for flattery, columbines for infidelity and rue for repentance.
- Hamlet is not a very symbolic play—the only real symbol is Yorick’s skull in 5.1 where Hamlet contemplates the inevitably and leveling nature of death: “where be your jibes now – your gambols, your songs, your flashes of merriment, there were wont to set the table on a roar?”

The Duchess of Malfi (1614) by John Webster

Genre: Jacobean Macabre Tragedy (modeled upon the Senecan revenge tragedies), unique given its love of the bloody, spectacular and gruesome, with fixtures such as:

- Revenge hero
- Deception and plotting
- Dumb-show
- Madness (lycanthropy)
- Bloodbath

Audience: Jacobean audience familiar with conventions

Playwright: John Webster

- 1580-1634
- A specialist in the macabre—a “connoisseur of the bizarre”
- Loved to use onstage deaths and gore
- Running social commentary on broader contemporary crises such as anti-Catholicism and class consciousness
- Elizabethan nostalgia: Duchess is said to mirror Elizabeth I, the corruption of the males said to reflect James I and his reign

Setting: Amalfi Coast, Italy—the placing of “relatively good people in a nightmarish stew of Italian political and ecclesiastical corruption, characterized by a peculiar devotion to bizarre displays of madness, fragmentation and truncation...Duchess is an exemplar of heroic constancy in a twisted world.” (British problem in a foreign setting: anti-Catholicism, class-consciousness, Elizabeth I)

Main plot: Duchess’s and Antonio’s marriage

Sub-plot: Cardinal & Julia and the continuation of familial legacy of the Duchess

Dumb-show: an interlude of mime, an allegorical performance, usually to prepare the audience for the main content of the play to follow—avoids the lengthy and elaborate spectacle

- Takes place in 3.4, when the Duchess and Antonio are “banished Ancona” and the Cardinal is installed in the “habit of a soldier”
- Two functions: firstly to illustrate the banishment and emphasize the wrongness of these actions, as repeated by the words of the pilgrims; next, to display the Cardinal’s ambition—subversive towards religion and raises Catholic fear

Themes:

The Macabre

- The good are associated with light and the bad are associated with the dark
- Usage of props such as the fake corpses and the severed hand in 4.1
 - “Here’s a hand, to which you have vowed much love. The ring upon’t you gave.” “Ha? — Lights! Oh, horrible!” (a sad spectacle creating despair and sorrow)

- “Here is discovered, behind a traverse, the artificial figures of Antonio and his Children, appearing as if they were dead.” (note use of “discovered” as a sudden theatrical display)
- Madmen in 4.2: “a mad lawyer and a secular priest, a doctor that hath forfeited his wits by jealousy; an astrologian that in his works said such a day o’ th’ month should be the day of doom and failing of’t, ran mad; an English tailor crazed i’t’h’ brain with the study of new fashion; a gentleman usher quite beside himself with care...a farmer, too, an excellent knave in grain, mad ‘cause he was hindered transportation.” — note the corruption and subversion of all these characters, and the Duchess is still unaffected
- Clever use of language to paint the evilness of the brothers
 - Obsession with fire: “We must not now use balsamum, but fire —” (2.5), “I would have their bodies burnt in a coal pit” (2.5)
 - Significance of salamander and choler in 3.3: “a very salamander lives in’s eye,” as well as the scorpion in 2.5: “I’ll find scorpions to string my whips”
 - Associations with the devil: “take your devils” in 1.2 and “this great fellow were able to possess the greatest devil and make him worse” in 1.1

Disguise and Deceit

- Prime exhibit is Bosola—the audience is given access to his private thoughts through the use of soliloquy and asides
 - 2.1: “I observe our Duchess is sick a-days: she pukes, her stomach seethes...” a monologue when he is alone on stage which recurs in 2.3: “sure I did hear a woman shriek” and “a child’s nativity calculated”
- Deceives Duchess in 3.2 when Duchess confesses her marriage: “Oh, the secret of my prince, which I will wear on th’inside of my heart!”
- He literally disguises as an old man who has come in 4.2 to “make thy tomb”
 - However, he voices out his misgivings on his role as early as 1.2: “me an impudent traitor” and in 3.3: “Oh, this base quality of intelligencer!”
- Even the Duchess partakes in disguise, seen in how she tricks Antonio into marrying her, asking Cariola to “conceal this secret from the world” (1.2), and how she creates a false flag to save Antonio in 3.2: “I must now accuse you of such a feigned crime as Tasso calls *magnanima mensoga*: a noble lie...” and laments their state as “unjust actions should wear these masks and curtains and not *we*”

Fertile Woman

- Could have linked to Elizabethan nostalgia which paints Elizabeth I as the ideal ruler while contrasting the idea of fertility and she was chaste
- The brothers have a cynical and dark view of sexuality—they believe Duchess is lustful
 - “You know already what man is” (1.2) and “whores by that rule are precious (1.2)

- "These lustful pleasures, are like heavy sleeps, which do forerun man's mischief" (1.2)
 - "Women like that part which, like the lamprey, hath ne'er a bone in it...farewell, lusty widow!" (1.2)
- The reality is that their marriage paints a picture of domestic bliss; illustrated in 1.2 and 3.2
 - "That we may imitate the loving palms, best emblem of a peaceful marriage, that ne'er bore fruit divided." (1.2)
 - "Fie upon this single life! Forgo it. We read how Daphne...became a fruitless bay tree...whereas those which married...were by a gracious influence transshaped into the olive, pomengranate, mulberry—became flowers, precious stones or eminent stars." (3.2, usage of fruits as a symbol and the image of growth and plentiness)
 - "When were we so merry?" (3.2)
- Duchess is a domestic figure
 - 3.1: "She's an excellent feeder of pedigrees"
 - Before her death in 4.2 to Cariola: "I pray thee, look thou giv'st my little boy some syrup for his cold, and let the little girl say her prayers ere she sleep."
- The denouement also reinforces this and sees the eldest son restored in the name of the Duchess, restoring order to Italy

Perversion of Justice and Corruption

- The law is nothing but a political tool—the institution and rule of law are gone: "the law to him is like a foul black cobweb to a spider: he makes it his dwelling and a prison to entangle those shall feed him." (1.2)
 - Ferdinand recognizes this in 4.2: "by what authority didst thou execute this bloody sentence" "was I her judge?"
- Corruption of the Catholic Church in 1.2 of the Cardinal: "he did bestow bribes so largely and so impudently as if he would have carried it away without heaven's knowledge."
- Perversion of the court in general seen through key emblems: the poisoned bible, Cardinal keeping a mistress and even his adoption of military office

Issues of Class and Rank

- Reputation and legacy are very important to the brothers, more so the Cardinal—there is a subversion as the higher classes are more prone to gross transgressions; furthermore, the ones who placed the most emphasis on class and rank do the most damage
 - "Lay her general territory a waste as she hath done her honors!" (2.5)
 - "Shall our blood, the royal blood of Aragon and Castille, be thus attainted?" (2.5)
 - "The witchcraft lies in her rank blood" (3.1)
- Bosola's class consciousness illustrated in 2.1: "I look no higher than I can reach"
 - His praise of Duchess's progressiveness in 3.2 tempered by dramatic irony—he is the intelligencer

- The Duchess does not really care, sees that character transcends rank or birth: "turn your eyes and progress through yourself" (1.2)
 - Mocks the Count Malatesta in 3.1 as a "mere stick of sugar candy"
- She actually sees it as a burden in 1.2: "the misery of us that are born great! We are forced to woo because none dare woo us."
- Her nobility means nothing in the end anyway: "I am Duchess of Malfi still" (4.2)
 - Commentary of the old man Bosola: "my trade is to flatter the dead, not the living"—that is the job of the sycophantic royal court

Cost of Evil

- Evil destroys a whole family of five to just one survivor
- It also destroys the perpetrators: all three evil characters die and pay their dues
- Ferdinand goes mad due to his intense anger and derangement, which almost consumes him, resulting in lunacy and lycanthropy: digging up corpses and wracked with guilt in 4.2
- Cardinal dies and loses reputation; was very concerned about reputation and legacy earlier on in 2.5 but at his death he merely wishes to be blotted out in 5.5: "I pray, let me be laid by and never thought of."
- Though Bosola wishes to redeem himself, the comedy of errors results in his murder of Antonio; he does not really kill the brothers as it is Ferdinand who does the deed

Characters

- Note their characterization, especially Bosola as the intelligencer-turned-revenge hero and the Duchess as the pure, simple virtuous character
- Characterization of the brothers by people like Antonio and the pilgrims
- Bosola's turnaround and the illustration of this turnaround through windows into his state of mind by aside and soliloquies
- Relationship between the Duchess and Antonio
- Cariola as a foil to the Duchess in death

Emblems

- The jewel is emblematic of virtue and desirable traits: traced through 1.2 and 3.2
 - 1.2.8: "*Antonio receives the jewel.*"
 - 1.2.216: "*Whores by that rule are precious.*"
 - 3.2.249: "Let me show you what a most unvalued jewel you have in a wanton humor thrown away"
 - 4.1.46: "I will leave this ring with you for a love-token" on the severed hand
- The key to her chamber, in 3.1-2 and 4.1
 - 3.1: Ferdinand has a false key
 - 3.2: He uses this to confront the Duchess
- Palm trees to symbolize fertility and marital bliss

- The poniard to symbolize the danger that the Duchess faces in 1.2 and confrontation with Ferdinand in 3.2: "*Ferdinand [shows himself and] gives her a poniard.*"
- The poisoned bible—the perfect symbol of sacrilege and subversion

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (1967) by Tom Stoppard

Genre: Tragicomedy characterized by absurdist and post-modernism—a refreshing take on Shakespeare's Hamlet

- Wordplay and lack of communication
- Vaudeville
- Irreverence and subversiveness
- Blurring of time, place, and identity
- Surrealism
- Barren set pieces
- Pastiche, primarily from Hamlet
- Extremities in dialogue (slow paced monologues follows by fast paced stichomythia)

Audience: Postwar audience familiar with ideas of futility and meaninglessness in life

Playwright: Tom Stoppard

- 1937-present day
- Born to Jewish parents in a Czech town, evacuated before the German occupation and grew up in South Asia
- Father killed when he was four

Setting: No man's land in the first scene, the royal court in the second, and a boat in the third—the lack of established setting, the confusion of the royal court and the inescapable futility of the boat all add to the tension and absurdity of the play as it unfolds

Main plot: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern trying to fulfill their task

Sub-plot: R&G finding meaninglessness in life and the events of Hamlet

Dumb-show: an interlude of mime, an allegorical performance, usually to prepare the audience for the main content of the play to follow—avoids the lengthy and elaborate spectacle; "makes the action that follows more or less comprehensible"

- Takes place in Act 2: main function to create dramatic irony of the death of R&G and also raise idea of the confusion of identity and self-denial
- "The plot has thickened—a twist of fate and cunning has put into their hands a letter that seals their deaths!"

- "...the two SPIES are wearing coats identical to those worn by ROS and GUIL, whose coats are now covered by their cloaks."
- Before the dumb-show: "I'd prefer art to mirror life..." (2) by Guildenstern

Themes:

Death

- R&G are Dead is ultimately a play about death
- Death of R&G are a foregone conclusion even apart from the title itself
- Fatedness and inevitability of death are made even more apparent by the fact that they are characters drawn from Hamlet and their deaths already scripted
- Human acceptance of death is shown as difficult to achieve; impossibility and self-denial—it is difficult to properly describe death
 - Act 2 sees the tragedians and R&G debate on death: "What do *you* know about death?"
 - "Dead in a box" debate in Act 2: Rosencrantz's monologue, "one thinks of it like being *alive* in a box, one keeps forgetting to take into account the fact that one is *dead*..."
 - Act 3's climax sees Guil stab the Player while claiming that "you've never experienced *that*. And you cannot *act* it...no one gets up after *death*—there's no applause—there is only silence and some second-hand clothes" but the Player ruins the argument by saying his fake death was "what [was] expected."
- Death remains elusive—all the deaths are staged and fake, the performances of this play within a play
 - Commentaries on death create dissatisfaction and unease (Act 2: "That isn't *death*! You scream and choke and sink to your knees, but it doesn't bring death home to anyone...how can you expect them to believe in your death?" "On the contrary, it's the only kind they do believe.")
 - The sudden, gore-less and quiet sudden disappearance of R&G representing death is all the more unsettling: "now you see me, no you—(*and disappears*)"
- Failure to deliver a complete understanding of death emulates human understanding of death—one is merely "born with an intuition of mortality" (Act 2)

Identity

- Subversion of roles—the minor characters in Hamlet take center stage while the major characters move in and out, upstage and downstage—roles are greatly diluted
 - Another example of this is in how Alfred is given much more attention than the rest of the troupe though he is the weakest, most minor character
 - Highlighting characters in this way serves to emphasize powerlessness

- Confusion of identities by both R&G and the royal court
 - Confusion in Act 3 about whose leg is whose: "What are you feeling?" "A leg. Yes, it feels like my leg." "How does it feel?" "Dead." "Dead?" "I can't feel a thing!" "Give it a pinch! (and yelps)"
 - Are unable to recognize themselves in Act 2 during the dumb-show: "Well, if it isn't—! No, wait a minute, don't tell me—it's a long time since—where was it? Ah, this is taking me back to—when was it? I know you, don't I...no, I don't know you, do I?" Rosencrantz loses track of the where, the when, and the who.
 - "You must have mistaken me for someone else"—Rosencrantz suddenly thinks it is the spy who seems to recognize him in this dumb-show
 - Confusion in the royal court: Act 1, "Welcome, dear Rosencrantz...(he raises a hand at GUIL while ROS bows—GUIL bows late and hurriedly)...and Guildenstern."
 - Same Act: "Thanks, Rosencrantz (*turning to ROS who is caught unprepared, while GUIL bows*) and gentle Guildenstern (*turning to GUIL who is bent double*)" before correcting herself: "Thanks Guildenstern, (*turning to ROS, who bows as GUIL checks upward movement to bow too—both bent double, squinting at each other*)..."
 - Meeting with Hamlet for the first time in Act 1: "My excellent good friends! How dost thou Guildenstern? (*Coming downstage with an arm raised to ROS, GUIL meanwhile bowing with no greeting. HAMLET corrects himself...*)"
- R&G and the Player confuses Hamlet's, Claudius's and Polonius's relationships with Ophelia in Act 2
 - "The old man thinks he's in love with his daughter" "No, no, no—he hasn't got a daughter—the old man thinks he's in love with *his* daughter" "Hamlet, in love with the old man's daughter, the old man thinks." Note how the italics do not help at all

Fate and Free Will

- What is choice, action and progress? Their decisions and actions seem less and less consequential as the play proceeds—Hamlet itself is a play which is driven by Hamlet's passiveness
- Every effort is overridden by a trajectory towards death—like being on a boat (Act 3):
 - "We can move, of course, change direction, rattle about, but our movement is contained within a larger one that carries us along as inexorably as the wind and current..."
- Considering that they are mere pawns in the larger play of Hamlet, all the events that follow give rise to dramatic irony and futility; can R&G really affect any change?
 - Letter condemning to death is written in Hamlet itself
 - Attempts to restrain Hamlet in Act 2 are futile—" [*joining*] the two belts, and [*holding*] them taut between them" leading to Hamlet

"[entering] upstage, [making] a small arc and [leaving] by the same side, a few feet downstage."

- Pirate attack was also scripted in Hamlet though it appears to be spontaneous
- Their refusal or lack of action following their death sentence is the most alarming—have they accepted their lack of free will?
- "There's a logic at work—it's all done for you, don't worry. Enjoy it. Relax." (Act 1)
- Despite this, they are also capable of choosing to be kind to others and be honorable
 - Guildenstern's tenderness toward Alfred (Act 1: "you and I, Alfred—we could create a dramatic precedent here") and comforting Rosencrantz in Act 3 ("I wanted to make you happy.")

Absurdity

- All human meaning is undermined by the meaninglessness of the world humans inhabit—what is absurd in our world is reality in their world
 - Act 1: the coin toss, a hundred-long streak of Heads
- Frequent apparent mistakes in speech happen to actually make more sense than the "correct" phrasings
 - Act 1: "home and high—dry and home", "—over my step over my head body!—I tell you it's all stopping to a death, it's boding to a depth, stepping to a head, it's all heading to a dead stop—", "...and we'll soon be home and dry—and *high* and dry..."
 - Act 2, post-verbal tennis: "He *murdered* us", "I should concentrate on not losing your heads", "stark raving sane".
- Subversion of joke openings in Act 2: "two early Christians chanced to meet in Heaven," "A Christian, a Moslem and a Jew chanced to meet in a closed carriage," "A Hindu, a Buddhist and a lion-tamer chanced to meet, in a circus on the Indo-Chinese border."

Theatre

- Meta-theatricality—multiple comments on plays and theatre, facilitated by presence of the players
- Criticizes the inability of the theatre to represent and portray death, its differences from life and derives meaning from their role in theatre
- Subversion of roles—an inside-out view of Hamlet, with major characters going in and out, but R&G are still trapped within the confines of their role
- Repetition, allusion and meta-theatrical observations to create a sense of claustrophobia
 - Locked into small actions such as the coin, the game of questions, trying and failing to remember the past, and locked into the larger confines of the play

Characters

- Rosencrantz is clearly the beta male—"I can't think of anything original. I'm only good in support." (Act 3, also a meta comment on his minor role in Hamlet)
 - Bullied by Guildenstern
 - Rosencrantz is more dominant in their interactions with other characters though
- Rosencrantz is also the feeler and voice of reason
 - *"However, he is nice enough to feel a little embarrassed at taking so much money off his friend."* (Act 1)
 - To him, a good play is one that is a "good story with a beginning, middle and end" (Act 2)
 - "I wanted to make you happy." (Act 3)
 - "We're [Hamlet's] friends." (Act 3)
- However, he is also able to engage in lucid thought and reasoning governed by common sense
 - "We must be born with an intuition of mortality. Before we know the words for it, before we know that there are words, out we come, bloodied and squalling with the knowledge that for all the compasses in the world, there's only one direction, and time is its only measure." (Act 2)
- The two characters become indistinct—they are two halves of the same personality and each character is not what they seem to be at first glance—it is what they have within that "passeth show".
- Even at the end: "Rosen—? Guil—?"

Emblems

- The coin—disobeying conventional laws of probability and signaling the absurdity of the world that R&G inhabit; "heads" also hint at the inevitability or the certainty of death
- The boat—symbolizing the trajectory of human life and the fundamentally limited and futile nature of human action; furthermore, it also represents R&G hurtling helplessly towards their deaths

Exam Questions/Practice

Specimen Paper Q1: Explore the ways in which dramatists have made use of monologues and/or soliloquies in at least two plays you have studied.

Texts used:

Hamlet (1601) by Shakespeare and The Duchess of Malfi (1614) by Webster

Defining monologues and soliloquies:

Monologues refer to a speech delivered by one character to the rest of the stage, while soliloquies refer to when a character talks to himself and relates thought and feeling, usually regardless of other characters.

Thesis statement:

In both Hamlet and Malfi, the playwrights Shakespeare and Webster both use monologues by different characters for the purpose of exposition and introduction of the situation at hand. Both use soliloquies for the purpose of displaying the innermost thoughts of Hamlet and Bosola, who are both revenge heroes in their own right.

The difference is marked in the effect of the soliloquies that each of these characters make—Hamlet's soliloquies allow the audience to be privy to his reasons for delaying the revenge and his mental state, creating tension through dramatic irony, while Bosola's soliloquies allow the audience to see his scheming nature and eventual change of heart after playing a major role in the death of the Duchess. Both are novel takes on the conventional revenge hero of an Elizabethan/Jacobean revenge tragedy.

Analysis (monologues as exposition)

Hamlet	Duchess
<p>Act 1 Scene 1: Horatio's monologue begins the Norway subplot, which has major consequences on the events of the play (the rot of Denmark, Hamlet's change of heart, and the denouement).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Young Fortinbras, of unimproved mettle, hot and full, hath in the skirts of Norway here and there sharked up a list of lawless resolute..."• Characterization of Fortinbras as less skilled and able as the old guard—a foil to Hamlet too, given his rash nature	<p>Act 1 Scene 1: Antonio returns from France and comments upon the French court; this hints at the current corruption in the Italian court and suggests Elizabethan nostalgia.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Quits first his royal palace of flattering sycophants, of dissolute and infamous persons"• "Some cursed example poison't near the head, 'death and diseases through the whole land spread.'"—Usage of an aphorism to emphasize danger of corruption

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme of rot and corruption in Denmark opening itself up to invasion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of Bosola: "The only court-gall..." suggesting a bitterness and melancholic cynicism <p>He also comments on Ferdinand and the Cardinal in a later monologue in the same scene:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "He and his brother are like plum trees that grow crooked over standing pools: they are rich and o'erladen with fruit, but none but crows, pies and caterpillars feed on them."
<p>Act 1 Scene 2: Claudius's monologue mentions the Norway subplot and also opens the main plotline, of Old Hamlet's death and their remarriage; dominated by antithetical and calculated statements to stamp his authority on Denmark.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death the memory be green" • "Our sometime sister, now our Queen, th'imperial jointress to this warlike state..." • "With an auspicious and dropping eye, with mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage..." • Claudius legitimizes his rule by using Gertrude's legal right and their marriage; the usage of "sister" and "Queen" in the same word hint at incest • Calls the marriage an "affair"—very telling. Furthermore, Old Hamlet's death is still "green" • Uses the rest of the speech to settle matters with Laertes, Norway and finally Hamlet 	<p>Act 1 Scene 2: Antonio has another monologue criticizing the Cardinal and suggesting that the Cardinal took a bribe.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "He is a melancholy churchman." • "He did bestow bribes so largely and so impudently as if he would have carried it away without heaven's knowledge." <p>In a later monologue, Antonio plays the "wire-drawer with her commendations".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The right noble Duchess, you never fixed your eye on three fair medals cast in one figure of so different temper." • "She stains the time past, lights the time to come."
<p>Act 1 Scene 2: Claudius chides Hamlet for mourning Old Hamlet; gives way to some measure of dramatic irony.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "It shows a will most incorrect to heaven..." • "We beseech you...to remain...our chiefest courtier," 	<p>Act 1 Scene 2: Duchess's monologue complaining about her lack of freedom in courting and remarrying displays the control that the brothers have over her and their hold.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "We are forced to woo because none dare woo us."

<p>cousin, and our son.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incest and uncomfortable association 	
<p>Act 1 Scene 3: Laertes to Ophelia, warning her about Hamlet and forming the exposition for the Laertes-Ophelia-Polonius dynamic subplot.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “His greatness weighed, his will is not his own” • “On his choice depends the safety and health of this whole state...” • “Danger of desire” • Raises issues of morality and the unsuitability of Hamlet as a partner 	<p>Act 2 Scene 1: Bosola to an old lady, commenting on the impurity and disgust he derives from man and insulting the lady, aiding the characterization of himself.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Here are two of you whose win of your youth is the very patrimony of the physician...” • “Man stands amazed to see his deformity in any other creature but himself.” • “A rotten and dead body, we delight to hide it in rich tissue.” (Corruption and clandestine affairs)
<p>Act 1 Scene 3: Polonius’s advice to Laertes and words of wisdom also expound on their relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Give thy thoughts no tongue” • “Be thou familiar but by no means vulgar” • “Give every man thy ear but few thy voice” • “Rich, not gaudy” • “Neither a borrower nor a lender, boy” • “To thine own self be true” 	<p>Act 3 Scene 2: Ferdinand discusses the overarching idea of the play, of “Reputation, Love and Death”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “‘Stay,’ quoth Reputation, ‘do not forsake me, for it is my nature, if I once part from any man I meet, I am never found again.’ And so for you: you have shook hands with Reputation and made him invisible.”
<p>Act 1 Scene 3: Polonius warns Ophelia sternly to avoid Hamlet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Give me up the truth” • Wordplay on “tenders” and “fashion” • “Springes to catch woodcocks” 	<p>Act 5 Scene 1: the Doctor expounds on the disease that Ferdinand is suffering from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “In those that are possessed with’t there o’erflows such melancholy humor, they imagine themselves to be transformed into wolves...” • “Dig dead bodies up”
<p>Act 1 Scene 5: the Ghost exposes the act of murder performed on him by Claudius and enlists Hamlet to avenge his murder.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder!” • “So the whole ear of Denmark is by a forged process of my death 	<p>Act 5 Scene 5: the denouement monologue by Delio provides for a moral and practically sufficient ending.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “To establish this young hopeful gentleman in’s mother’s right.” • “Integrity of life is fame’s best friend, which nobly beyond death

<p>rankly abused"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The serpent that did sting thy father's life now wears his crown." 	<p>shall crown the end."</p>
<p>Act 2 Scene 2: Hamlet's monologue "explains" to R&G as to what his problem is.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth..." • "What pieces of work is a man" • "What is this quintessence of dust" 	
<p>Act 4 Scene 5: the King's monologue is also an exposition of the current situation in Denmark and essentially the trouble he is in.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "O, this is the poison of deep grief." • "When sorrows come they come not single spies but in battalions" • "First, her father slain; next, your son gone, and he most violent author of his own just remove; the people muddled...poor Ophelia, divided from herself and her fair judgment..." 	

Analysis (soliloquies as windows into the mind)

Hamlet	Bosola
<p>Act 1 Scene 2: the first soliloquy allows the audience to be privy to the pains of Hamlet, and understand why he has been bothered all this while.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "O that this too too sallied flesh would melt, thaw and resolve itself into a dew..." • "'Tis an unweeded garden that grows to seed, things rank and gross possess it merely" • "Hyperion to a satyr" • "Heaven and earth, must I remember?" • "—nay not so much, not two—", "And yet within a month", "Within a month" 	<p>Act 2 Scene 1: shortly after his monologue with the old lady, Bosola shares with the audience his observations on the Duchess. This confirms his role as intelligencer and entrenches opinion against him.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I observe our Duchess is sick-a-days: she pukes, her stomach seethes, the fins of her eyelids look most teeming blue...there's somewhat in't."

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Married with my uncle”, “To post with such dexterity to incestuous sheets” • “But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue” • Issues of rot, corruption and pain to the extent of entertaining thoughts of suicide • Warped sense of time—confusion between a month or two months dead • First instance of inaction when Hamlet insists he must remain quiet 	
<p>Act 1 Scene 5: the second soliloquy shows us Hamlet’s resolve and distress—shows his emotional state</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Hold, hold, my heart” • “Remember thee?” “Remember thee?” • “And thy commandment alone shall live within the book and volume or my brain...” • “O villain, villain, smiling damned villain,” 	<p>Act 2 Scene 3: Bosola’s role as intelligencer further displayed in his next soliloquy. He is displayed with a dark lantern to suggest his duty spying around the royal court in the shadows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “There’s some stratagem in the confining all our courtiers to their several wards.” <p>Later on, he discovers the piece of paper which is a “child’s nativity calculated”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Why now ‘tis most apparent. This precise fellow is the Duchess’s bawd.” • “Though Lust do mask in ne’er so strange disguise, she’s oft found witty but is never wise.”
<p>Act 2 Scene 2: the third soliloquy sees Hamlet curse himself in an increasingly volatile state as he comments on how he cannot muster up as much emotion as a player and act on the Ghost’s words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!” • “What’s Hecuba to him, or he to her,” • “Am I a coward?” • The soliloquy then takes a turn, displaying the scheming side of Hamlet to confirm the Ghost’s words beyond reasonable doubt • “The play’s the thing wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the 	<p>Act 3 Scene 3: Bosola laments his role and betrays his ambitious nature—I’ve done my time; I’ve backed the right man.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Oh, this base quality of intelligencer!” • “Now for this act I am certain to be raised—and men that paint weeds to the life are praised.”

King."	
<p>Act 3 Scene 1: "to be or not to be"; Hamlet's philosophical musings on death. Mainly once again displays his state of mind and addresses the issue of death, an overarching theme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Or to take arms against a sea of troubles" • "To die: to sleep" • "For in that sleep of death what dreams may come" • "Conscience does make cowards" 	<p>Act 4 Scene 2: Bosola's lamentations after the death of the Duchess and Ferdinand's exit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Off, my painted honor!" • "I would not change my peace of conscience for all the wealth of Europe." • "Upon thy pale lips I will melt my heart to store them with fresh color." • "Her eye opes, and heaven in it seems to ope, that late was shut, to take me up to mercy." <p>The Duchess dies knowing that Antonio is still alive; Bosola's transformation into the revenge hero is complete.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "O sacred innocence that sweetly sleeps on turtles' feathers! Whilst a guilty conscience is a black register..." • "These tears, I am very certain, never grew in my mother's milk...where were these penitent fountains while she was living?" • "I'll...deliver thy body to the reverend dispose of some good woman. That the cruel tyrant shall not deny me. Then I'll post to Milan, where somewhat I will speedily enact worth my dejection."
<p>Act 3 Scene 2: Hamlet plans to interrogate/convince Gertrude</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I will speak daggers to her but use none." 	<p>Act 5 Scene 2: Bosola's conscience weighs on him, creating audience sympathy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Well, good Antonio, I'll seek thee out, and all my care shall be to put thee into safety from the reach of these most cruel biters..." • "Methinks the Duchess haunts me." • "O penitence, let me truly taste thy cup, that throws men down, only to raise them up."
<p>Act 3 Scene 3: dramatic irony as Hamlet nearly kills Claudius but holds back as he</p>	

<p>is apparently praying. Creates tension and is the prime exhibit of why Hamlet's inaction and indecisiveness cost him.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Now I might do it." • "Why, this is base and silly, not revenge." 	
<p>Act 4 Scene 4: the last soliloquy by Hamlet, this one sees him finally resolve to become a man of action and kill Claudius.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "To my shame I see the imminent death of twenty thousand men that for a fantasy and trick of fame go to their graves like beds..." • "O, from this time forth my thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth." 	

Conclusion:

As seen in the comparison of monologues and soliloquies from both texts, monologues similarly expound on the situation at hand and provides for the forwarding of key ideas in the play, while soliloquies provide a sense of interiority with respect to Hamlet's and Bosola's thought process and the process of becoming revenge heroes—though Hamlet's involves more thought and emotionally detached philosophical reasoning and musing, while Bosola is wracked with guilt and a newfound moral compass.

Specimen Paper Q2: Plays employ various kinds of structural divisions such as prologues and epilogues, act and scene divisions, even carefully placed intermissions. Discuss the dramatic uses made of these divisions in at least two plays you have studied.

Texts used:

Hamlet (1601) by Shakespeare and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (1967) by Stoppard

Definitions:

- Prologue referring to the introductory section of a work (exposition scene, opening stage directions, narration)
- Epilogue referring to the conclusion or end of the work (denouement)

Thesis statement:

The playwrights use both the exposition scene and opening stage directions (prologue) in similar ways but for different purposes—mainly intended to highlight the key themes and ideas of the plays.

Hamlet is divided up into the conventional five-act play with varying numbers of scenes—usually a small number of longer scenes for exposition and many short scenes in high-tension parts of the play to achieve pacing, while R&G are Dead is divided up into a simple three-act play with no scenes at all; major changes in setting and subject matter accompany such changes.

They use denouements in different ways—the denouement in Hamlet sees a seamless connection and tying up of all three subplots, while the denouement in R&G are Dead sees an uneasy, unfamiliar disappearance followed by an ending straight out of the end of Hamlet.

Analysis (prologues)

Hamlet

- Act 1 Scene 1 and the first appearance of the Ghost creates foreboding and hints at the issues which will face Denmark—most notably the issue of Fortinbras
 - “This bodes some strange eruption to our state.”
 - “Young Fortinbras of unimproved mettle, hot and full, hath in the skirts of Norway here and there sharked up a list of lawless resolute...”
- Act 1 Scene 2 and the royal address after Claudius’s coronation tells the audience all they need to know while setting up the conflict between Hamlet and the royal couple
 - “Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother’s death”
 - “Th’imperial jointress to this warlike state...taken to wife.”
 - Introduces Laertes and Polonius—father-son dynamic: “my dread lord, your leave and favor to return to France...”
 - “My cousin Hamlet, and my son—”
- Soliloquy in Act 1 Scene 2 also an exposition: Hamlet’s interior thought and feeling—conflict is both external and internal; also hints at inaction as a theme
 - “To post with such dexterity to incestuous sheets”
 - “But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue.”
- Act 1 Scene 3 is an exposition of the Ophelia-Laertes-Polonius subplot—both men warn her against courting Hamlet
 - “His greatness weighed, his will is not his own.”
 - “On his choice depends the safety and health of this whole state”
 - “Tender yourself more dearly...you’ll tender me a fool”
 - “I would not...have you so slander any moment leisure as to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.”

R&G are Dead

- Act 1: stage directions are significant; the coin toss betrays a sense of absurdity/surrealism, and philosophical musings by the characters display the witty/playful nature of the play

- "Two ELIZABETHANS *passing the time in a place without any visible character.*"—devoid of purpose and aim
- "*The run of "heads" is impossible, yet ROS betrays no surprise at all...GUIL is well alive to the oddity of it...he is worried by the implications;*"
- Perhaps a hint of dramatic irony in "heads" and lack of memory/identity: "We've been spinning coins for as long as I remember." "How long is that?" "I forget."
- Hint of aimlessness or lack of focus: "We had been sent for." "We were sent for."
- Exposition of meta-theatrical commentary by the Player
 - "We do on stage the things that are supposed to happen off. Which is a kind of integrity, if you look on every exit being an entrance somewhere else."
 - "I can do you blood and love without the rhetoric, and I can do you blood and rhetoric without the love, and I can do you all three...blood is compulsory—they're all blood, you see."
- Exposition of the first clash of the worlds in the pastiche: stage directions being from Act 2 Scene 1 of Hamlet: "*doublet all unbraced, no hat upon his head, his stockings fouled, ungartered and down-gyved to his ankle...*"

Note the differences in key ideas and how these expositions fulfill their key aim. Hamlet constrained by, and obliged to fulfill conventions while postmodernism of R&G sees breaking of the fourth wall and collision of the worlds.

Analysis (mid-section)

Hamlet—the conventional five-act play; long acts with few scenes in exposition/plotting, short acts with many scenes for action and towards the climax. Divisions are clearly demarcated given the rhyming couplets at the end of scenes and actual instructions

- Act 1 sees 5 scenes: first and second sightings of the Ghost are divided by the exposition of the King's speech and the Ophelia-Laertes-Polonius subplot, perhaps to delay and also to ensure continuity of audience knowledge of the context
- Act 2 is relatively long for 2 scenes, especially scene 2: Shakespeare fits a lot of action into this scene, as it is the first onstage encounter with a mad Hamlet and provides for some comic relief in the "fishmonger"; the Tragedians and Hamlet's 3rd soliloquy and plotting take place all in this scene, dragging out the timeframe and ensuring immersion in the relatively slower pacing
- Act 3 is arguably the climax—begins with Hamlet scolding Ophelia, then the playing out of the dumb-show, then the prayer scene; somewhat normal
- Act 4 is extremely pertinent—it is in the aftermath of the panic caused by the death of Polonius and the chase for Hamlet throughout the castle, with a lot of action and tension; Shakespeare uses many short scenes to achieve a fast-paced progression of events (7 scenes!)

- Act 5 on its own as the denouement—the gravedigger scene for comic relief and finally the swordfight; nothing much of note

R&G: three acts with vastly different settings and use of props such as the coin for demarcating key divisions in the play

- Language as a divider between the two worlds: R&G speak in prose normally, but speak in blank verse with iambic meter when in the court—clear indicator of the worlds (see Act 1, page 35.)
- Act 1: in the middle of nowhere, by a road—flipping a coin, which lands on tails as soon as there is a collision with the world
 - “I say—that was lucky.” “What?” “It was tails,” before a lighting change and the appearance of Ophelia and a mad Hamlet
- Act 2: see Shakespeare Act 2, Scene 2; an explicit reference to the text itself hints at the real collision of the worlds—the setting is now definitely in the Danish royal court
 - “Anything could happen yet.” BLACKOUT here to end off on a cliffhanger before the next scene; creates tension and dramatic irony given their imminent death
- Act 3: no more collision of the worlds and is in fact an onstage representation of the event that took place offstage in Hamlet
 - “*Opens in pitch darkness. Soft sea sounds.*” Still a relatively bare opening stage direction, similar to Act 1—hark back to the idea of the sparse and lack of real constancy
 - “*Longer pause: the sound builds a little and identifies itself—the sea. Ship timbers, wind in the rigging...shouts of sailors calling obscure but inescapably nautical instructions...*”
 - “*A gaudy striped umbrella*” out of place and displays absurdity of their current setting
 - Hilarity of action: “Dear God, is it too much to expect a little sustained action?!” “*And on the word, the PIRATES attack.*”

Note how both scene divisions fulfill key ideas and obligations of the convention. Compare and contrast.

Analysis (denouement)

The denouement in Hamlet sees the tying up of all loose ends—all three subplots are fulfilled and natural order is restored to the kingdom of Denmark

- Avenges his father and kills both Laertes and Claudius, effectively ending the revenge subplot as well as the Ophelia issue
- All traces of immorality, perceived or real, are gone in the deaths of Ophelia and Gertrude
- Finishing up the issue of succession and crossed authority from the regicide:
 - “I do prophesy th’election lights on Fortinbras: he has my dying voice.”
 - “Goodnight, sweet Prince, and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.”

R&G has a denouement that fails to provide similar satisfaction like the end of Hamlet

- “Now you see me, now you—(*and disappears*)” is a cheeky sting in the tail after all the talk about proper ends and proper death that the audiences believe
- Subversive, futile attempt to “end” the Player by stabbing him—he really seems dead until he rises and “you see, it *is* the kind they do believe in—it’s what’s expected.”
- “Deaths for all ages and occasions! Deaths by suspension, convulsion, consumption, incision, execution, asphyxiation and malnutrition—! Climactic carnage, by poison and by steel—! Double deaths by duel—! Show!—” and here the tragedians act out the deaths in Hamlet
- Link back to the denouement in Hamlet: the words of the Ambassador, thus highlighting the immense inter-textuality

Note thematic concerns and once again, what the conventions ask of these two plays.

Conclusion (repetition of the thesis):

The playwrights use both the exposition scene and opening stage directions (prologue) in similar ways but for different purposes—mainly intended to highlight the key themes and ideas of the plays.

Hamlet is divided up into the conventional five-act play with varying numbers of scenes—usually a small number of longer scenes for exposition and many short scenes in high-tension parts of the play to achieve pacing, while R&G are Dead is divided up into a simple three-act play with no scenes at all; major changes in setting and subject matter accompany such changes.

They use denouements in different ways—the denouement in Hamlet sees a seamless connection and tying up of all three subplots, while the denouement in R&G are Dead sees an uneasy, unfamiliar disappearance followed by an ending straight out of the end of Hamlet.

May 2013 TZ1 Q1: Consider the means by which shifts in tempo are created, and the consequent dramatic impact of these shifts, in at least two of the plays you have studied.

Texts used:

Hamlet (1601) by Shakespeare and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (1967) by Stoppard

Thesis statement:

Though both texts share similar techniques used to cause shifts in pacing and tempo, such as transitions, onstage action and language. However, in Hamlet, the very act and scene division also adds to this, while the three-act play of R&G cannot utilize a similar technique given its structure.

Change of tempo and pace fulfills different purposes for both plays; transitions, onstage action and language in Hamlet serve to heighten tension in the conventional manner—to create dramatic irony and a sense of the frantic during the course of the revenge tragedy, while such device serve to highlight the key idea of absurdity, futility and meta-theatricality in R&G.

Analysis:

The use of language and transitions (constructed or through onstage action) serve to heighten tension or dissipate it when the situation requires for it. The play is very conventional and does not really challenge or subvert too many theatrical prerequisites.

Hamlet

- Act 1 Scene 1: the tension between Barnardo and Francisco is palpable and is only dissipated after a sarcastic remark, "you come most carefully upon your hour".
 - Entry of the ghost in this scene mid-sentence: sense of urgency and a "jumpscare": "The bell then beating one—" "*Enter GHOST*." This leads to stichomythia and urgency: "speak to it, Horatio." The repetition later on also emphasizes this in "stay, speak, speak, I charge thee speak."
 - The exit of the ghost slows down the pace yet again as the object of tension is gone; "tis gone and will not answer." This prepares the audience for the exposition of a "strange eruption" and of Fortinbras
 - Transition to Act 1 Scene 2 to slow the pace down and give the audience a break
- Act 1 Scene 2: the leaving of the royal court leaves Hamlet all alone and slows down the happy/celebratory tempo of the court's discourse, leaving Hamlet to begin his soliloquy—a monologue when he is alone
 - Regarding the Ghost, Hamlet is more interested and basically interrogates him—seen in stichomythia "Armed, say you?" "From top to toe?" "What looked he—frowningly?" "Pale, or red?"
- Act 1 Scene 4: once again, the Ghost enters midsentence—a supernatural interruption to create shock value
 - "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!"
 - Beckoning of the Ghost—a frantic moment as Hamlet fights his own brethren to follow the Ghost in "hold off your hands", a fast-paced battle
 - Break between Scene 4 and 5 creates tension and a brief cliffhanger
- More urgency in Act 1 Scene 5: more short sharp sentences between Hamlet, Horatio and Marcellus and a frightening interruption from the Ghost
 - Break between Scene 5 and Act 2 Scene 1 to dissipate tension and begin a new part of the play
- Act 2 Scene 1 is a relatively slow scene which is then interrupted by Ophelia—language and frantic delivery to create tension once again—convention of madness

- Act 3 is characterized by short, sharp scenes which contain vastly different settings and subject matter; a lot of moving around and lack of settling—fast-paced action
- Act 3 Scene 1 sees Hamlet's slow, philosophical "to be or not to be" interrupted by the entrance of Ophelia; slow buildup of tension from meeting to the nunnery remark
 - "I never gave you aught"
 - "Are you honest?" "Are you fair?" "I did love you once" "Get thee to a nunnery!"
 - Quick and rambling delivery and use of asides by Ophelia suggest Hamlet's dominance
- Act 3 Scene 2 and the dumb-show: the dumb-show in its entirety is performed with little interruption, suspending time in the moment and building suspense as Claudius is about to be found out
 - Interruption and the tension in the audience after the confirmation of the guilt: "Give o'er the play." "Lights! Lights! Lights!" and the quick exit
- Act 3 Scene 3 particularly important—the action is stretched out to heighten the dramatic irony
 - "Now I might do it..." and goes on to stretch the thought process; drags out the anticipation and sheathes the sword—Claudius's words release the tension and ends the scene
- Murder of Polonius in Scene 4: relatively quick, as Polonius speaks and is killed
 - Once again, the Ghost appears midsentence—cuts through the scene and shocks the audience again
- Act 4 Scene 5: entry of Laertes is first marked by "*a noise within*" which then is followed by "the doors are broke"; sudden, impactful entrance
 - Interrogation by Laertes: three-way stichomythia between the three
 - "Where is my father?" "Dead." "But not by him."
 - Entry of Ophelia immediately breaks the animosity; the Ophelia subplot is revived
 - "O heat, dry up my brains"
 - Birth of a new revenge hero
- Gravedigger scene in Act 5 Scene 1 to provide comic relief and somewhat brace the audience for the bloodbath in Scene 2
 - Violence between the two men as Hamlet enters: what is a solemn ceremony is marred
 - "Hamlet! Hamlet!" "Gentlemen!"
- Scene 2 and the bloodbath: tension in the fencing scene, one of high action, thus stichomythia and short sharp lines to describe the action
 - "Come on, sir." "Come, my lord." "*They play.*" "One!" "No!" "Judgment!" "A hit, a very palpable hit."
 - "Gertrude, do not drink"—moment of truth
 - Death of the Queen causes panic and coverup by Claudius
 - "Treachery! Seek it out."

- Quick succession of deaths: Queen, King, Laertes, Hamlet and the denouement after the arrival of Fortinbras relieves everything

R&G are Dead

Act 1

- Lack of action and setting, a slow aimless march
- Monotony of “heads” and philosophical musing—bored and lacking in substance
- Absurdity of the heads
- Arrival of the tragedians following the sound of the band march transits from aimless musing to actual onstage discourse with the tragedians on theatre
- Confusion and frantic/affronting conversation in the stichomythia following the offer of a performance
 - Personality of the two men
 - “It was chance, then?” “Chance?” “You found us.” “Oh yes.” “You were looking?” “Oh no.” “Chance, then.” “Or fate.” “Yours or ours?”
- “GUIL *seizes the* PLAYER *violently*” “I have influence!” Sudden action to jolt the audience; creating a sharp increase in tempo
- Transition to the “real world of Hamlet” after “it was tails”: jumps straight into Ophelia and Hamlet’s first mad encounter; collision of the worlds of a frantic, sudden nature
- Stichomythia in “home and high—dry and home—I’ll—” “It’s all over my *depth*—” “—I’ll hie you home and—” “—out of my head—” “—dry you high and—” sees the dramatic irony and wordplay lost on them due to the constant ramblings
- Playing at verbal tennis: one-word lines and rapid pace to reflect the loss of communication and confusion
- Fast pace of their discourse is interrupted by the entrance of Hamlet: pace slows and breaks for Act 2

Act 2

- Absurdity: the “licking” and hilarity of the slapstick action slows down the progress of the play and relieves tension
- Timeframes are essentially out of whack though instantaneous speed of the action is discernible
- Usage of “*pause*” and “*good pause[s]*” to give brief breaks in actions
- Sudden interruption of “Fire!” to break the fourth wall, jolt the audience and give a sudden action
- Most of the *fast-paced dialogue and short sharp* lines are used to illustrate wordplay and absurdity, such as “took the very words out of my mouth.” “You’d be *lost* for words.” “You’d be tongue-tied.” “Like a mute in a monologue.” “Like a nightingale at a Roman feast.”
 - Same example in the same act when they try to discern what is bothering Hamlet: “Hamlet, in love with the old man’s daughter, the old man thinks.”

- Long monologues interrupted by the entrance of King and Queen—the switch to blank verse “never a moment’s peace! In and out, on and off, they’re coming at us from all sides.”
- Climax of the action when the dumb-show rehearsal and the nunnery scene intertwine—followed by the deaths of R&G in the dumb-show itself
 - Confused monologue of Ros after seeing his doppelganger displays this increase in tempo as he gets more and more doubtful—identity
- Pacing is slowed down ironically when they go to find Hamlet: characterized by slapstick and vaudeville
 - “You go that way, I’ll go this way.” *“They walk towards opposite wings. ROS halts.”...“They march towards each other, cross. ROS halts.”*
 - “We ought to stick together; he might be violent.” “Well, at last we’re getting somewhere.”—irony

Act 3

- Slow pacing of the discovery of their surroundings broken by the frantic, rushed shouting of nautical instructions
- Sailor sounds and a gaudy striped umbrella following “off course”, “of course”: absurdity and sudden display
- Transition: “give us this day our daily cue” *“Beat, pause. Sit. Long pause.”*
- Faster pacing of dialogue as the two slowly reach their conclusion:
 - “His play offended the King—” “—who orders his arrest—” “—so he escapes to England—” “On the boat to which he meets—” “Guildenstern and Rosencrantz taking Hamlet—” “—who also offended the King—” “—and killed Polonius—” “—offended the King in a variety of ways—” “—to England.”
- “Action” as the cue:
 - *“And on the word, the PIRATES attack...everyone visible goes frantic...collision...collision...general panic”*
- Reading of the letter: line break to highlight the sudden shift in mood and tempo
 - Characterized also by the fast-paced stage action of grabbing the letter between each other
 - Futility: Guil’s quiet speech about a boat
- Building of the pace and tension as Guil slowly discusses death and the tension builds until:
 - “But no one gets up after *death*—there is no applause—there is only silence and some second-hand clothes, and that’s—*death*—”
- Sudden slowness of speech after the disappearance of the Players:
 - “I mean no one is going to come on and drag us off...they’ll have to wait. We’re still young...fit...we’ve got years...”
- Now you see me, now you—(*and disappears*).

Conclusion (repetition of the thesis):

Though both texts share similar techniques used to cause shifts in pacing and tempo, such as transitions, onstage action and language. However, in Hamlet, the

very act and scene division also adds to this, while the three-act play of R&G cannot utilize a similar technique given its structure.

Change of tempo and pace fulfills different purposes for both plays; transitions, onstage action and language in Hamlet serve to heighten tension in the conventional manner—to create dramatic irony and a sense of the frantic during the course of the revenge tragedy, while such device serve to highlight the key idea of absurdity, futility and meta-theatricality in R&G.

May 2013 TZ1 Q2: In everyday usage the word “theatrical” often means extravagant or is used to describe behavior that exhibits exaggerated emotions. To what extent, and in what ways, do at least two of the plays you have studied exemplify this definition of “theatrical”?

Texts used:

Hamlet (1601) by Shakespeare and The Duchess of Malfi (1614) by Webster

Definitions:

- See question

Thesis statement:

The extravagance of drama and the exaggeration of emotions in characters are portrayed using, among other things, dramatic and literary devices of props, stage lighting, and character (action and dialogue). Although both playwrights use such devices to similar practical effect, Webster uses this in Malfi to forward key conventional ideas such as that of the macabre revenge tragedy, accompanied by horror and Gothic imagery, while Stoppard uses it in R&G to illustrate key postmodern themes of absurdity, fatalism, and futility of life.

Analysis:

Characters

Characters are presented extravagantly and exaggeratedly in two key forms: onstage action, and language

Duchess

Analysis sees primarily the language of the brothers, Bosola, and Antonio, to show how the exaggeration of their emotions improves audience appreciation and knowledge and understanding of the characters

- Ferdinand's outrage after realizing the Duchess's "infidelity" seen in the violent imagery of his words in Act 2 Scene 5: "we must not now use balsamum, but fire—", "I have her hewed to pieces", "I'll find scorpions to string my whips..."
 - Change in mood after seeing her die in act 4 Scene 2: "I bade thee, when I was distracted of my wits, go kill my dearest friend, and thou hast done't." "Drew a stream of gall quite through my heart."

- Ferdinand's lycanthropia illustrated in his actions in Act 5 Scene 2: "I will throttle it! [*Throws himself on the ground.*] Fulfills the trait of madness in revenge tragedies
- Bitterness of Bosola and the regret when he actually sees the Duchess killed: Act 1 Scene 2, where he describes himself as an "impudent traitor"
 - Bitterness in language seen in its usage of Gothic imagery and rot: "Say then my corruption grew out of horse dung." And in Act 2 Scene 1: "your scurvy face-physic...deep ruts and foul sloughs", betraying his melancholy and caustic tone—"I would sooner eat a dead pigeon taken from the soles of the feet...than kiss one of you fasting."
 - Act 4 Scene 2: "I am angry with myself now that I wake." "Off, my painted honor!" "These tears, I am very certain, never grew in my mother's milk." "I will speedily enact worth my dejection."
 - Act 5 Scene 2: "There, there—'tis nothing but my melancholy. O penitence, let me truly taste thy cup, that throws men down, only to raise them up."
- Also note the emotionless stoicism of the execution of the Duchess in Act 4 Scene 2 juxtaposed with Cariola's panic: serves to paint the Duchess in a favorable, worthy light—exaggeration of absence of emotion

R&G are Dead

Stoppard depends most on slapstick, vaudeville stage actions and exaggerated spectacles to create humor and create a sense of futility—that try as they might, they cannot impact anything in this world

- The flipping of the coin: Act 1
 - "He takes out a coin, spins it high, catches it, turns it over on to the back of his other hand, studies the coin—and tosses it to ROS..."
 - "GUIL takes a third coin, spins it, catches it in his right hand, turns it over onto 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 the top of his head, where it sits..." and still turns out heads.
 - "GUIL moves down to the footlights and turns."
- The "dumb-show" of Ophelia and Hamlet of Hamlet, Act 2 Scene 1: the first mad encounter, example of pastiche
 - Encounter with the royal couple: "He raises a hand at ROS while GUIL bows to him—ROS is still straightening up from his previous bow and halfway up he bows down again. With his head down, he twists to look at GUIL, who is on the way up."
 - "ROS and GUIL move towards a downstage wing. Before they get there, POLONIUS enters. They stop and bow to him. He nods and hurries upstage to CLAUDIUS. They turn to look at him."
- Act 2: futility reflected once again in the failure to impact their world
 - "Keep out, then! I forbid anyone to enter!" "Immediately, behind him a grand procession enters..."
 - "Why can't we go by them?"

- Trying to “go by” the Queen, “ROS *marches up behind her, puts his hands over her eyes and says with a desperate frivolity.*” “Guess who?!” “Alfred!”
- In chasing Hamlet, they cannot decide which way to go and finally decide to stick in their original positions “well, at least we’re getting somewhere.”
- After holding their belts taut to capture Hamlet, Hamlet instead “*enters opposite, slowly, dragging POLONIUS’s body. He enters upstage, makes a small arc and leaves by the same side, a few feet downstage.*”
- Bringing Hamlet to the king, when Hamlet bows ostensibly seeing the king, and while R&G are bowing, Hamlet walks off in an about-turn with finesse
- Act 3: extravagance of stage directions; nautical instructions, pirates, the final dumb-show

Dumb-show

Ironically, the dumb-show was meant to skip excessive theatricality and ensure that information regarding certain events could be conveyed as easily and conveniently as possible; instead, the dumb-show itself becomes an object of extravagance and excess; the extravagance of the lack of it

Duchess

- Two-part dumb-show in Act 3 Scene 4, meant to display the banishment of Antonio and the Duchess as well as the installation of the Cardinal as a general
 - “*The CARDINAL’S instalment in the habit of a soldier performed in delivering up his cross, hat, robes and ring at the shrine, and investing him with sword, helmet, shield and spurs. Then ANTONIO, the DUCHESS, and their Children, having presented themselves at the shrine, are by a form of banishment in dumb-show expressed towards them by the Cardinal and the state of Ancona, banished. During all which ceremony, this ditty is to be sung...*”
 - Exaggerated, extravagant action of lifting up the religious objects and the investment
 - Specified ditty to be sung: adding to the theatricality
- Fulfills the idea of corruption in the Cardinal’s holiness; power over religion

R&G are Dead

- Dumb-show in R&G Act 2, where the exaggerated stage actions and emotions form a certain extravagance on their own; the commentary acknowledges the extravagance of the dumb-show, thus adding to the meta-theatrical commentary
 - “*...A very stylized reconstruction of a POLONIUS figure being stabbed behind the arras...*”
 - “*...He at last confronts his mother in a scene of provocative ambiguity—(a somewhat Oedipal embrace)...*”

- *"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..."*
- *"Show!" "The SPIES die at some length, rather well." "The light has begun to go, and it fades as they die..."*
- The *"light comes...as a sunrise"* after "Give o'er the play"
- Meta commentary: "Their talent is dying. They can die heroically, comically, ironically, slowly, suddenly, disgustingly, charmingly, or from a great height."

Props

Duchess

- The severed hand in Act 4 Scene 1 adds to the sense of the macabre and horrific—Webster's signature characteristics in the Jacobean play
 - Provides for shock value and symbolizes the marriage, given the presence of the "ring upon't [she] gave"
 - "Here's a hand, to which you have vowed much love." "I affectionately kiss it." "You are very cold." "Oh, horrible!"
 - Spectacle of the severed hand is combined with the lighting (plunged in darkness and then suddenly illuminated)
- Similarly in the same scene, shortly after, Webster uses two *"artificial figures of Antonio and his Children, appearing as if they were dead."*
 - Creates sense of dread and foreboding, and the spectacle of the wax corpses also creates shock value for the audience and sympathy for the Duchess
 - Follows the convention of Gothic and horrific images and objects
 - "Look you, here's the piece from which 'twas ta'en."

R&G are Dead

- The coin in Act 1 is a subject of much interest; the extravagance of the drama in the flipping of the coin is due to the liberties Stoppard takes with the laws of probability; the coin lands on heads 90 times
 - "A weaker man might be moved to re-examine his faith, if in nothing else at least in the law of probability."
 - Fulfills the idea of a surreal environment; reinforces idea of absurdity even this early in the play
- The *"gaudy striped umbrella"*, *"one of those huge six-foot-diameter jobs"* is another way Stoppard suspends belief and reminds the audience of the absurdity of the play's setting
 - Care taken to call it a *"gaudy striped umbrella"*; meant to ensure that the audience is aware of its surrealism and the latter part betrays a hint of irreverence

Conclusion (reiteration):

The extravagance of drama and the exaggeration of emotions in characters are portrayed using, among other things, dramatic and literary devices of props, stage lighting, and character (action and dialogue). Although both playwrights use such

devices to similar practical effect, Webster uses this in Malfi to forward key conventional ideas such as that of the macabre revenge tragedy, accompanied by horror and Gothic imagery, while Stoppard uses it in R&G to illustrate key postmodern themes of absurdity, fatalism, and futility of life.

May 2013 TZ1 Q3: "Drama is created by placing ordinary people in situations of crisis." Explore some of the methods used to create drama in this way in at least two of the plays you have studied.

Texts used:

The Duchess of Malfi (1614) by Webster and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (1967) by Stoppard

Definitions:

"Ordinary people" in the case of these two plays referring to the low-borne demographics and the "minor" or "stock" characters who may not matter as much as the main characters in the play.

Thesis statement:

Both plays use this technique of creating drama; to place "ordinary people" in situations of crisis—one could even say that drama is literally just a series of crises, which characters have to resolve.

Malfi places low-borne characters Antonio and Bosola in different crises of the clandestine marriage and the crisis of conscience and becoming a revenge hero, to illustrate the concepts of honor and virtue.

R&G are Dead places stock/minor characters in positions of "influence" as main characters, but they are constantly placed in the overarching crisis of futility, aimlessness and lack of identity, which is compounded and illustrated by the practical crises of the dumb-show and the boat—perhaps the play itself is one big crisis.

Analysis (by play, then by crisis):

Malfi: Antonio

- A low-born, "master of the household": the chief steward, who is in charge of the servants and managing finances
- In love with the Duchess and the Duchess either reciprocates or makes use of this love
- Enters a secret marriage with the Duchess in Act 1 Scene 2 where he is clueless
 - "You have parted with [the ring] now." "There is a saucy and ambitious devil dancing in this circle." "We now are man and wife, and 'tis the church that must but echo this."
 - Foreboding by Cariola at the end of this scene: "I owe her much of pity."

- Awareness of the full extent of the mortal danger he is in, heightening tension and dramatic effect
 - Act 2 Scene 3: "—this mole does undermine me.—" "—this fellow will undo me.—" "My nose bleeds. One that were superstitious would count this ominous when it merely comes by chance."
- Duchess laments the trouble they are in Act 3 Scene 2
 - "O, misery! Methinks unjust actions should wear these masks and curtains, and not we. You must instantly part hence."
- The dumb-show banishing Antonio and the Duchess is a dramatic enactment of this crisis that he is in, Act 3 Scene 4:
 - "...by a form of banishment in dumb-show expressed towards them by the Cardinal and the state of Ancona, banished."
 - "Who would have thought so great a lady would have matched herself unto so mean a person?"
- The impending crisis of the letters allowing him to return to Milan, as well as confiscation of Antonio's goods or rather the transfer to Julia by Pescara in Act 5 Scene 1
 - "...though they have sent their letters of safe conduct for your repair to Milan, they appear but nets to entrap you."
 - "How they fortify themselves with my ruin!" "It was Antonio's land, not forfeited by course of law, but ravished from his throat by the Cardinal's entreaty."
- The foreboding by the Echo in Act 5 Scene 3: is it the sound of the Duchess?
 - "Thou art a dead thing."

Malfi: Bosola

- A low-borne, "court-gall"—was hired as a mercenary by the Cardinal once and apparently killed a man for the Cardinal, leading to his imprisonment
- Is not in crisis up until the execution of the Duchess in Act 4 Scene 2, where he suffers a crisis of conscience and proceeds to convert himself into the revenge hero after also being denied payment by Ferdinand
 - "The office of justice is perverted quite when one thief hangs another." "I am angry with myself now that I wake."
 - "This is manly sorrow. These tears, I am very certain, never grew in my mother's milk. My estate is sunk below the degree of fear. Where were these penitent fountains when I was living?"
- Guilt and resolve in Act 5 Scene 2 after the death of Julia by the Bible
 - "Though nothing be so needful to thy estate as pity, yet I find nothing so dangerous. I must look to my footing."
 - "In such slippery ice-pavements, men had need to be frost-nailed well; they may break their necks and die."
 - "Still, methinks the Duchess haunts me. There, there—'tis nothing but my melancholy."
- The suggestion that Bosola too is in mortal danger by the Cardinal in his privacy, Act 5 Scene 4
 - "About this hour, I appointed Bosola [*enter BOSOLA unseen*] to fetch the body. When he hath served my turn, he dies."

- However, his quest is futile as he does not strictly enact revenge; Ferdinand's madness causes the death of the Cardinal
 - He stabs Antonio instead: "Fall right, my sword! [*Stabs Antonio.*]"
 - He accidentally kills the servant in Act 5 Scene 5

R&G: R&G

- Minor characters in the play Hamlet, sent for to do the bidding of Claudius find out the source of Hamlet's madness
- Are major characters in the play R&G are Dead
- Possible that the play itself is one big crisis for R&G, given the dramatic irony of the title itself and their inability to stay on task, maintain their identities and impact anything in the play
 - Dramatic irony—the play's title, the pastiche of the action taken from Hamlet and thus their deaths are written into the play already; the dumb-show (discussed later) exemplifies this
 - Inability to identify each other—always getting confused with each other's names, other characters are always confusing them for each other
 - Inability to identify members of the royal court—Act 2 where they are trying to find out what happened to Polonius: "The old man thinks he's in love with his daughter" "No, no, no—*he* hasn't got a daughter—the old man thinks he's in love with *his* daughter" "Hamlet, in love with the old man's daughter, the old man thinks." Note how the italics do not help at all
 - Inability to impact the story arc in any way—every effort is overridden by a trajectory towards death: "Keep out, then! I forbid anyone to enter!" "*Immediately, behind him a grand procession enters...*" "Why can't we go by *them*?" When they try to "go by" the Queen, "*ROS marches up behind her, puts his hands over her eyes and says with a desperate frivolity.*" "Guess who?!" "Alfred!"
 - They also fail to catch Hamlet in Act 2: attempt to restrain Hamlet in Act 2 is futile—" [*joining*] the two belts, and [*holding*] them taut between them" leading to Hamlet "*[entering] upstage, [making] a small arc and [leaving] by the same side, a few feet downstage.*"
 - They also fail to kill the Player in Act 3; when it seems like Guildenstern finally impacted something and we believe it, it turns out the Player was just acting
- Consider also the crisis of the dumb-show: highlights the lack of identity between each other as well as the lack of control—their deaths are so scripted there is literally a mime acting out their deaths
- Crisis of the boat: a perfect metaphor for fate and free will
 - "The boat, the night, the sense of isolation and uncertainty...all these induce a loosening of the concentration. We must not lose control."
 - "We can move, of course, change direction, rattle about, but our movement is contained within a larger one that carries us along as inexorably as the wind and current..."

- Crisis of the pirates: brings out the absurdity that action can occur on the turn of a word
 - "Dear God, is it too much to expect a little sustained action?!" *"And on the word, the PIRATES attack."*
 - "—the pirates left us home and high—dry and home—drome—*(Furiously.)* The pirates left us high and dry!"
- Crisis of the letter—the end.
 - "A letter—yes—that's true. That's something...a letter...'As England is Denmark's faithful tributary...that on the knowing of this contents, without delay of any kind, should those bearers, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, be put to sudden death—"

Conclusion:

Malfi places low-borne characters Antonio and Bosola in different crises of the clandestine marriage and the crisis of conscience and becoming a revenge hero, to illustrate the concepts of honor and virtue.

R&G are Dead places stock/minor characters in positions of "influence" as main characters, but they are constantly placed in the overarching crisis of futility, aimlessness and lack of identity, which is compounded and illustrated by the practical crises of the dumb-show and the boat—perhaps the play itself is one big crisis

May 2013 TZ2 Q1: With reference to at least two plays you have studied, compare the role of action, or lack of action, in delivering the meaning of the works.

Texts used: Hamlet (1601) by Shakespeare and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (1967) by Stoppard

Definition:

"Stage action" is pretty broad. It could refer to onstage action as well as the literal actions these characters take.

Thesis statement:

Both plays incorporate both action and inaction in both meanings as defined earlier to create drama and deliver the meaning of the words—where in Hamlet's case is the philosophical musings and morality of revenge, while in the issue of R&G is the idea of fate and free will.

Hamlet sees Shakespeare pit action against inaction; Claudius and Laertes against Hamlet; Laertes juxtaposed as the real revenge hero against the "subversive" nature of Hamlet, and Claudius as the typical Machiavellian villain.

R&G sees minor characters Rosencrantz and Guildenstern attempt to impact the world around them and fulfill their aim after being sent for by the royal court; their action or inaction does not matter in this postmodern offering—Hamlet is also presented as a man of action, both onstage and character-wise.

Analysis:

Hamlet

Hamlet as the unique revenge hero; usually conventionally rash, reckless and full of action; Hamlet in this play is still the revenge hero but spends too much time contemplating the practicality, legitimacy and even morality of exacting revenge

- Ostensible resolve to exact revenge after the call to action by the Ghost in Act 1 Scene 5:
 - "I have sworn't", but he treats it like a poisoned chalice at the end, as he laments, "O cursed spite that ever I was born to set it right!"
- The main reason for his antic disposition and the delay is to ensure that the Ghost is correct. Therefore, he has to delay and prove to himself beyond a reasonable doubt that Claudius is indeed the murderer
 - His rant-turned-plot in Act 2 Scene 2: "Yet I, a dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause, and can say nothing. No, not for a king upon whose property and most dear life a damned defeat was made. Am I a coward?"
 - "I am pigeon-livered and lack gall"
 - "I, the son of a dear murdered...must like a whore unpack my heart with words and fall a-cursing like a very drab, a stallion!"
 - "The play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King."
- Perfect instance of inaction due to moral reasoning and finding an excuse: Act 3 Scene 3, the prayer scene
 - "Now might I do it. But now 'a is a-praying...and so 'a goes to heaven...that would be scanned"
 - "A villain kills my father, and for that I, his sole son, do this same villain send to heaven."
 - But it turns out he was not praying..."my words fly up, my thoughts remain below. Words without thoughts never to heaven go."
- Awareness of his tardiness in Act 3 Scene 4
 - "Do you not come your tardy son to chide that, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by th'important acting of your dread command?"
 - The first true action he truly takes in this play is a mistake—kills Polonius
- Final resolve in Act 4 Scene 5 after encounter with the Norwegians: "my thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!"—Incidentally this is where he becomes a man of action and ruins R&G
 - Such action is illustrated in his letter to Horatio: "Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valor and in the grapple I boarded them." This action takes place offstage in this play, while it occurs onstage in R&G are Dead

Claudius as the Machiavellian plotting villain who began the events of this play in the first place (murdering Old Hamlet and marrying Gertrude) as well as making use of Laertes's anger to eliminate Hamlet through the fencing match)

- Action: the murdering of Old Hamlet and remarrying of Gertrude

- "Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole with juice of cursed hebona in a vial and in the porches of my ears did pour the leperous distilment whose effect...barked about most lazar'like with vile and loathsome crust all my smooth body." (Ghost, Act 1 Scene 5)
- Soliloquy in Act 1 Scene 2: "married with my uncle, my father's brother...within a month...she married. O most wicked speed! To post with such dexterity to incestuous sheets,"
- Action: trying to kill Hamlet using the fencing match
 - In Act 4 Scene 6 to get Laertes in his plotting: "We shall jointly labor with your soul to give it due content."
 - "Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare...can save the thing from death that is but scratched withal." (Act 4 Scene 7)
 - A cowardly weapon of poison: same scene, "I'll have preferred him a chalice for the nonce, whereon but sipping, if he by chance escape your venom'd stuck, our purpose may hold there."
- Inaction: does not prevent Gertrude from drinking the poisoned wine

Laertes as the archetypal revenge hero—rash, hot-blooded, a man of action, be it beneficial or detrimental

- Exposition of his emotional connection with his father and his sister in Act 1 Scene 3 when he advises Ophelia on Hamlet and is advised by Polonius on living in France
 - "For Hamlet and the trifling of his favor, hold it a fashion and a toy in blood, a violet in the youth of primy nature..."
 - "His greatness weighed, his will is not his own."
 - "Give thy thoughts no tongue nor any unproportioned thought his act."
 - "Be thou familiar but by no means vulgar;"
 - "Do not dull thy palm with entertainment"
 - "Give every man thy ear but few thy voice"
- Violent return upon the death of Polonius in Act 4 Scene 5
 - "impetuous haste" of "young Laertes in a riotous head"
 - "Let come what comes, only I'll be revenged most thoroughly for my father."
- Plotting in Act 4 Scene 7
 - "But my revenge will come"
 - "To cut his throat i'th' church."
 - "I bought an unction of a mountebank"
- In a way, Laertes *does* get his revenge, but at a heavy cost and is mostly used by Claudius

R&G are Dead

Their actions and attempts to impact the world around them are seen in their vaudevillian stage directions and attempts to change things

- The coin toss: Act 1
 - *"He takes out a coin, spins it high, catches it, turns it over on to the back of his other hand, studies the coin—and tosses it to ROS..."*

- "GUIL takes a third coin, spins it, catches it in his right hand, turns it over onto 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 the top of his head, where it sits..." and still turns out heads.
- "GUIL moves down to the footlights and turns.
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 - "Keep out, then! I forbid anyone to enter!" *"Immediately, behind him a grand procession enters..."*
 - "Why can't we go by them?"
 - Trying to "go by" the Queen, "ROS marches up behind her, puts his hands over her eyes and says with a desperate frivolity." "Guess who?!" "Alfred!"
 - In chasing Hamlet, they cannot decide which way to go and finally decide to stick in their original positions "well, at least we're getting somewhere."
 - After holding their belts taut to capture Hamlet, Hamlet instead *"enters opposite, slowly, dragging POLONIUS's body. He enters upstage, makes a small arc and leaves by the same side, a few feet downstage."*
 - Bringing Hamlet to the king, when Hamlet bows ostensibly seeing the king, and while R&G are bowing, Hamlet walks off in an about-turn with finesse
- Act 3: the action of Hamlet on the boat is now onstage, portraying Hamlet as the man of action in contrast to the two men
 - They do realize their actions are now truly futile when they comment that "we can move, of course, change direction, rattle about, but our movement is contained within a larger one that carries us along as inexorably as the wind and current..."
 - Attempt to murder the Player: when it seems like Guildenstern finally impacted something and we believe it, it turns out the Player was just acting
 - They do not do anything when the realization of the letter hits them—resignation

Conclusion:

Both plays incorporate both action and inaction in both meanings as defined earlier to create drama and deliver the meaning of the words—where in Hamlet's case is the philosophical musings and morality of revenge, while in the issue of R&G is the idea of fate and free will.

Hamlet sees Shakespeare pit action against inaction; Claudius and Laertes against Hamlet; Laertes juxtaposed as the real revenge hero against the "subversive" nature of Hamlet, and Claudius as the typical Machiavellian villain.

R&G sees minor characters Rosencrantz and Guildenstern attempt to impact the world around them and fulfill their aim after being sent for by the royal court; their action or inaction does not matter in this postmodern offering—Hamlet is also presented as a man of action, both onstage and character-wise.

May 2013 TZ2 Q2: In what ways can the denouement (the events after the climax of a play) be used to draw together the different threads of the play in order to enhance our understanding? Compare at least two plays you have studied.

Texts used:

Hamlet (1601) by Shakespeare and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (1967) by Stoppard

Thesis statement:

In both plays, the denouement serves as a way to seamlessly join up all the subplots in the play in addition to providing the nominal conclusion for the main plot. These different strands in the case of Hamlet involve the Norway sub-plot, the Ophelia-Laertes-Polonius sub-plot, and the main revenge plot. In the case of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, the denouement draws together the story of R&G themselves, as well as the general main plot of Hamlet, from which this play is based upon.

However, with regards to the denouement actually providing a resolution to all the sub-plots in addition to the main plot, only Hamlet achieves this. R&G are Dead sees an uneasy resolution in the portrayal of the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, but does conclude the plot of Hamlet all the same in Stoppard's play.

It is thus suggested that Stoppard has done this to highlight ideals of futility, fatalism and absurdity, while Shakespeare's denouement is conventional of an Elizabethan revenge tragedy.

Analysis:

Hamlet: the main plot

- The main plot consists of the revenge plot: Hamlet being ordered to take revenge for Claudius's murder of his father
 - Act 1 Scene 5 with the meeting of the Ghost first bestows this duty on him: "—revenge his foul and most unnatural murder!" "I find thee apt."
 - The issue in this entire main plot is the delay of Hamlet and his perpetual excuses for not doing the deed
 - His search for certainty manifests itself in the putting on of an antic disposition (Act 1 Scene 5) and staging a play which portrays the crime itself (Act 3 Scene 2—the dumb-show)
 - The delay results on one of the highest points of the play, in Act 3 Scene 3: he has the perfect opportunity to murder Claudius and yet he fails to do so because Claudius is praying—"my thoughts fly up, my words remain below. Words without thoughts never to heaven go."
 - The delay also sees him eventually start a bloodbath in his wake: the death of Polonius (Act 4 Scene 1), the madness of Ophelia (Act 4 Scene 5) and her death (Act 4 Scene 7), the death of Laertes and

Gertrude (Act 5 Scene 2), before finally dispatching with Claudius in the same scene

- Impact of the denouement
 - Provides a tragic satisfaction to end the revenge plot—Hamlet gets what he was ordered to do; the drama was in how he did it
 - "Is the union here? Follow my mother." (Act 5 Scene 2)
 - Quite a straightforward analysis
 - Fulfills the revenge tragedy conventions of madness (real and imagined), a bloodbath, a ghost

Hamlet: the Norway sub-plot

- Hamlet is also a political play—the play sees Norway threaten the sovereignty of Denmark
 - It is suggested that the aggression of the Norwegians is partly due to the lack of order and illegal succession of Claudius in Act 1 Scene 4: "something is rotten in the state of Denmark".
 - The appearance of the Ghost in Act 1 Scene 1 "bodes some strange eruption to our state", suggesting that Denmark is a precarious position—the health of the nation depended on the health of the royal court in Elizabethan times
 - "Young Fortinbras, of unimproved mettle, hot and full, hath in the skirts of Norway here and there sharked up a list of lawless resolute for food and diet to some enterprise..." (Act 1 Scene 1, displaying the real threat of Norway)
 - Claudius supposedly dealt with the threat in Act 1 Scene 2: "we have here writ to Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras—who impotent and bedrid scarcely hears of this his nephew's purpose—to suppress his further gait herein..." and Fortinbras received a rebuke from the Norwegian king in the letter described in Act 2 Scene 2: "makes vow before his uncle never more to give th'assay of arms against your majesty."
 - Reappearance in Act 4 Scene 4 is the main thing that finally turns Hamlet into a man of action: "we go to gain a little patch of ground that hath in it no profit but the name..."
- Ending: Act 5 Scene 2 where Fortinbras is finally crowned the new king of Denmark: "young Fortinbras with conquest come from Poland to th'ambassadors of England gives this warlike volley."
- Hamlet chooses Fortinbras with his dying breath (Elizabethans saw it with significance): "I do prophesy th'election lights on Fortinbras: he has my dying voice."
- Significance of the crowning of Fortinbras—restoration of order and legacy to Denmark, even if it means that a foreigner has conquered the country
- Ends the Norway subplot on a half-satisfied note

Hamlet: the Ophelia sub-plot

- Hamlet and Ophelia are lovers; Polonius her disapproving father and Laertes her loving daughter—the deaths of Polonius and Ophelia will convert Laertes into a rash revenge hero
 - He lectures, and is lectured, in Act 1 Scene 3: lectures Ophelia against being too much in love with Hamlet and is lectured by Polonius on many things
 - “To thine own self be true” in Act 1 Scene 3 and Laertes is gone for the rest of the play in France
 - Comes back with a vengeance in Act 4 Scene 5: “young Laertes in a riotous head”
 - Laertes becomes the true conventional revenge hero, juxtaposed against Hamlet: “let come what comes, only I’ll be revenged most thoroughly for my father.” Later on, Ophelia enters and further pushes Laertes over the edge
 - Claudius makes use of Laertes’s thirst for revenge and vows to “jointly labor with [his] soul to give it due content”.
 - “Where the offence is let the great axe fall”
 - Laertes’s resolve to revenge is reflected in Act 4 Scene 7: “I will be ruled the rather if you could devise it so that I might be the organ.” “To cut his throat i’t’h church.”
- The ending sees Laertes realize his own mistake and both Hamlet and himself reconcile before their deaths—an easy, satisfying yet tragic conclusion
 - “I am justly killed with mine own treachery” (Act 5 Scene 2)
 - “Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet, mine and my father’s death come not upon thee, nor thine on me. [*Dies.*]” To which Hamlet responds, “Heaven make thee free of it. I follow thee.”

R&G are Dead: the main (sub) plot

- The main plot of R&G is not even a sub-plot in Hamlet, truth be told—all of this action takes place offstage with some exceptions in Act 2 when the worlds collide
- Mainly the issue of these two men trying to figure out their aim and attempting to accomplish the task that they were setting out to do with reference to Hamlet’s madness
 - Act 1: “We were sent for.” “That’s why we’re here.”
 - “It was urgent—a matter of extreme urgency, a royal summons, his very words: official business and no questions asked—lights in the stable-yard, saddle up and off headlong and hotfoot across the land, our guides outstripped in breakneck pursuit of our duty! Fearful lest we come too late!!”
 - “Let me get it straight. Your father was king. You were his only son. Your father dies. You are of age. Your uncle becomes king.”
 - “To sum up: your father, whom you love, dies, you are his heir, you come back to find that hardly was the corpse cold before his young brother popped onto his throne and into his sheets, thereby offending both legal and natural practice.”

- "He was scoring off us all down the line" in Act 2, and that "he murdered us."
 - "Nothing to show for our progress except a memory of the smell of smoke, and a presumption that once our eyes watered."
- They never really find out for sure why, as they are too caught up in the absurdity of the world and the constant happenings of the royal court—this plot is never really answered
- Idea of futility and absurdity

R&G are Dead: the sub (main) plot

- In the world of R&G, whatever happens in the royal court is purely secondary, but it is still extremely important and is portrayed as such given the constant interruptions and the moving downstage and upstage
 - Act 1 sees the almost dumb-show-like Act 2 Scene 1 of Hamlet, where Ophelia encounters Hamlet
 - "To gather so much as from occasion you may glean, whether aught to us unknown afflicts him thus, that opened lies within our remedy."
 - Act 2: "Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain, and from his mother's closet hath he dragged him. Go seek him out; speak fair and bring the body into the chapel."
 - Act 3: "That we, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, bearing a letter from one king to another, are taking Hamlet to England."
 - Attack of the pirates
- Denouement in this case follows that of Hamlet: the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are reported by the ambassador at the end of the play and does end the plot as a whole—even then, their deaths are nothing like all the onstage deaths we have seen
 - "Now you see me, now you—"

Conclusion:

In both plays, the denouement serves as a way to seamlessly join up all the subplots in the play in addition to providing the nominal conclusion for the main plot. These different strands in the case of Hamlet involve the Norway sub-plot, the Ophelia-Laertes-Polonius sub-plot, and the main revenge plot. In the case of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, the denouement draws together the story of R&G themselves, as well as the general main plot of Hamlet, from which this play is based upon.

However, with regards to the denouement actually providing a resolution to all the sub-plots in addition to the main plot, only Hamlet achieves this. R&G are Dead sees an uneasy resolution in the portrayal of the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, but does conclude the plot of Hamlet all the same in Stoppard's play.

It is thus suggested that Stoppard has done this to highlight ideals of futility, fatalism and absurdity, while Shakespeare's denouement is conventional of an Elizabethan revenge tragedy.

May 2013 TZ2 Q3: With reference to at least two plays you have studied, explore how the playwrights' use of contrasting characters contributes to the impact of the plays.

Texts used:

Hamlet (1601) by Shakespeare and The Duchess of Malfi (1614) by Webster

Definition:

Contrasting characters refer to characters in the play who are explicitly juxtaposed against each other for the purpose of creating drama and fulfilling the conventions of a play

Introduction:

Contrasting characters are used in both Hamlet and The Duchess of Malfi to emphasize the differences between a particular persona and another. The contrasts aim to amplify the differences between the characters and to showcase what the playwright views as desirable and undesirable traits.

In Hamlet, Shakespeare juxtaposes the subverted revenge hero Hamlet against the traditional revenge hero Laertes and the Norwegian Fortinbras by comparing and contrasting different traits (e.g. action), as well as contrasting Old Hamlet and Claudius to characterize the moral ruin of Denmark.

In Malfi, Webster overturns traditional Jacobean interpretations of the significance of class and rank by contrasting the Aragonian brothers (Ferdinand and the Cardinal) against Antonio, and the Duchess against the brothers to display the corruption of the royal court.

Analysis:

Hamlet

Hamlet and Laertes to juxtapose the two revenge heroes—Hamlet is a delaying revenge hero while Laertes is hot-blooded and rash

- Hamlet has to make absolutely certain that revenge is the best course of action and is the correct thing to do before doing it. Therefore, he has to delay and prove to himself beyond a reasonable doubt that Claudius is indeed the murderer
- His rant-turned-plot in Act 2 Scene 2: "Yet I, a dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause, and can say nothing. No, not for a king upon whose property and most dear life a damned defeat was made. Am I a coward?"
 - "I am pigeon-livered and lack gall"
 - "I, the son of a dear murdered...must like a whore unpack my heart with words and fall a-cursing like a very drab, a stallion!"
 - "The play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King."
- Perfect instance of inaction due to moral reasoning and finding an excuse: Act 3 Scene 3, the prayer scene

- "Now might I do it. But now 'a is a-praying...and so 'a goes to heaven...that would be scanned"
- "A villain kills my father, and for that I, his sole son, do this same villain send to heaven."
- But it turns out he was not praying..."my words fly up, my thoughts remain below. Words without thoughts never to heaven go."
- Laertes as the archetypal revenge hero—rash, hot-blooded, a man of action, be it beneficial or detrimental
- Violent return upon the death of Polonius in Act 4 Scene 5
 - "impetuous haste" of "young Laertes in a riotous head"
 - "Let come what comes, only I'll be revenged most thoroughly for my father."
- Plotting in Act 4 Scene 7
 - "But my revenge will come"
 - "To cut his throat i'th' church."
 - "I bought an unction of a mountebank"

Hamlet and Fortinbras juxtapose the two nephews of the king—Fortinbras is a man of action while Hamlet is not

- "Young Fortinbras, of unimproved mettle, hot and full, hath in the skirts of Norway here and there sharked up a list of lawless resolute for food and diet to some enterprise..." (Act 1 Scene 1, displaying the real threat of Norway)
- Reappearance in Act 4 Scene 4 is the main thing that finally turns Hamlet into a man of action: "we go to gain a little patch of ground that hath in it no profit but the name..." The juxtaposition of the differences between them finally merges into both of them becoming men of action and leads to audience appreciation of the sub-plot

Old Hamlet and Claudius are juxtaposed by Shakespeare to display the moral crisis in Denmark and how the order of succession is abused—then restored

- Appearance of Old Hamlet "bodes some strange eruption to our state" and is referred to as a "portentous figure" (Act 1 Scene 1)
- Comparison made by Hamlet in Act 1 Scene 2: "so excellent a king, that was to this hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother..." "my father's brother (but no more like my father than I to Hercules)."
- Perception of Claudius: "O villain, villain, smiling damned villain..." in Act 1 Scene 5
- Act 3 Scene 4: the most explicit comparison of the two by Hamlet in convincing Gertrude to repent
 - "Look here upon this picture, and on this, the counterfeit presentment of two brothers: see what a grace was seated on this brow, Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself, an eye like Mars to threaten and command, a station like the herald Mercury...a combination and a form indeed where every god did seem to set his deal to give the world assurance of a man; this was your husband."
- Crisis is solved when Fortinbras takes over

Duchess of Malfi

Antonio and the Aragonian brothers are used to display the relative unimportance of rank in defining the worth of a man

- Negative characterization of the brothers: Act 1 Scene 1
 - "He and his brother are like plum trees that grow crooked over standing pools: they are rich and o'erladen with fruit, but none but crows, pies and caterpillars feed on them."
 - Act 1 Scene 2: "he did bestow bribes so largely and so impudently as if he would have carried it away without heaven's knowledge."
 - "The duke there? A most perverse and turbulent nature." "Then the law to him is like a foul black cobweb to a spider: he makes it his dwelling and a prison to entangle those shall feed him."
- Use of language to paint the evilness of the brothers
 - Obsession with fire: "We must not now use balsamum, but fire —" (2.5), "I would have their bodies burnt in a coal pit" (2.5)
 - Significance of salamander and choler in 3.3: "a very salamander lives in's eye," as well as the scorpion in 2.5: "I'll find scorpions to string my whips"
 - Associations with the devil: "take your devils" in 1.2 and "this great fellow were able to possess the greatest devil and make him worse" in 1.1
- Brothers have a cynical and dark view of sexuality—they believe Duchess is lustful
 - "You know already what man is" (1.2) and "whores by that rule are precious (1.2)
 - "These lustful pleasures, are like heavy sleeps, which do forerun man's mischief" (1.2)
 - "Women like that part which, like the lamprey, hath ne'er a bone in it...farewell, lusty widow!" (1.2)
- Positive display of Antonio, spoken by the Duchess and Bosola
 - Marriage scene in Act 1 Scene 2: "oh, you are an upright treasurer", "if you will know where breathes a complete man (I speak it without flattery) turn your eyes, and progress through yourself."
 - Duchess is averse to Count Malatesta in Act 3 Scene 1: "Fie upon him! A count? He's a mere stick of sugar candy—you may look quite through him. When I choose a husband I will marry for your honor."
 - By Bosola in Act 3 Scene 2: "let me show you what a most unvalued jewel you have in a wanton humor thrown away, to bless the man shall find him: he was an excellent courtier, and most faithful; a soldier that thought it as beastly to know his own value, too little as devilish to acknowledge it too much. Both his virtue and form deserved a far better fortune..."

Duchess and the Aragonian brothers used to display the extent of corruption in the royal court and also to display the relative lack of power of the woman

- Positive display of the Duchess: Act 1 Scene 2; "the right noble Duchess, you never fixed your eye on three fair medals cast in one figure of so different

temper." "Her days are practiced in such noble virtue that, sure, her nights—nay more, her very sleeps—are more in heaven than other ladies' shifts." "She stains the time past, lights the time to come."

- "Shall this move me?" after the brothers have told the Duchess to avoid remarrying
- Contrasting attitudes between the Duchess and the brothers regarding issues of class and status
 - Act 1 Scene 2: the symbolism of the poniard, "this was my father's poniard. Do you see? I'd be loath to see't look rusty, 'cause 'twas his."
 - Act 2 Scene 5: "shall our blood, the royal blood of Aragon and Castile, be thus attainted?"
 - The monologue of Reputation, Love and Death in Act 3 Scene 2: "And so for you: you have shook hands with Reputation and made him invisible. So fare you well. I will never see you more."
 - (Ironically even the Cardinal proceeds to disregard reputation in the final scene, Act 5 Scene 5: "and now, I pray, let me be laid by and never thought of."

Conclusion:

Contrasting characters are used in both Hamlet and The Duchess of Malfi to emphasize the differences between a particular persona and another. The contrasts aim to amplify the differences between the characters and to showcase what the playwright views as desirable and undesirable traits.

In Hamlet, Shakespeare juxtaposes the subverted revenge hero Hamlet against the traditional revenge hero Laertes and the Norwegian Fortinbras by comparing and contrasting different traits (e.g. action), as well as contrasting Old Hamlet and Claudius to characterize the moral ruin of Denmark.

In Malfi, Webster overturns traditional Jacobean interpretations of the significance of class and rank by contrasting the Aragonian brothers (Ferdinand and the Cardinal) against Antonio, and the Duchess against the brothers to display the corruption of the royal court.

November 2013 TZo Q1: With reference to at least two works you have studied, discuss how the playwrights have used props to enhance the effectiveness of the plays.

Texts used:

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (1967) by Webster and The Duchess of Malfi (1614) by Webster

Definitions:

In practical terms, a prop is considered to be anything movable or portable on a stage or a set, distinct from the actors, scenery, costumes, and electrical equipment. Consumable food items appearing in the production are also considered props.

Introduction:

Props in general are utilized by the playwright to provide realism and immerse the audience into the events of the play—some props, as in the example of The Duchess of Malfi, sees Webster fulfill his penchant for the macabre and subverting traditional views on rank and religion, while in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, Stoppard uses props to fulfill the conventions of the post-modern absurdist play through items that portray irreverence and surrealism.

Analysis (Duchess):

The poniard in Act 1 Scene 2 is a symbol of not only the lust and the depraved nature of the supposedly noble Ferdinand, but also a symbol of the corruption inherent in the court, given the fact that it is his father's

- "This was my father's poniard. Do you see? I'd be loath to see't look rusty, 'cause 'twas his."—inherited from his father; subtext on reputation due to "rust"
- Phallic symbol which intrudes upon the personal space of the Duchess and represented Ferdinand's sexual depravity
- Shock value of the poniard (a dagger in her face) and resulting in fulfillment of Webster's aim of representing the macabre

The fake bodies and the severed hand in Act 4 Scene 1 sees the twisted desire for violence and destruction displayed in the way Ferdinand is the one who uses these to psychologically torture the Duchess—has no mercy

- "Here's a hand, to which you have vowed much love. The ring upon't you gave. [*Gives her a dead man's hand.*]"
- "*Here is discovered, behind a traverse, the artificial figures of Antonio and his Children, appearing as if they were dead.*"
- Duchess's reaction furthers the lack of faith in the Catholic church: "the church enjoins fasting; I'll starve myself to death."
- Scene is conducted in darkness and the lights come on, displaying the true nature of the scene for shock value and hence sympathy

The dumb-show in Act 3 Scene 4—the props involve the cross, hat, robes and ring of the Cardinal which he exchanges for the sword, helmet, shield and spurs; Catholic skepticism of the Jacobean era

- "...the CARDINAL'S instalment in the habit of a soldier performed in delivering up his cross, hat, robes and ring at the shrine, and investing him with sword, helmet, shield and spurs."
- Displays moral bankruptcy and the nature of the Cardinal who is supposed to eschew power in favor of holiness/faith
- The combination of this with the banishment of the Duchess and Antonio who are both arguably paragons of virtue aggravates the issue

The poisoned Bible contributes to this issue of the questionable morality of the Cardinal, as he literally makes Julia kiss a poisoned Bible and murders her in Act 5 Scene 2

- "Come I will swear you to't upon this book. [*Holds up a Bible.*]"

- "Kiss it. [*She kisses the Bible.*] Now you shall never utter it. Thy curiosity hath undone thee: thou'rt poisoned with that book."
- Object of reverence and great religious/moral/ethical relevance is overturned in its use as a murder weapon
- Evokes a visceral reaction of shock and disgust from the audience
- Ultimately suggests the moral bankruptcy of the Church through a literal representation of the Church's forces being used for evil

Analysis (R&G):

The coin in Act 1 represents the absurdity of the world around R&G: betrays the psychological state of the two men (Guildenstern as the supposedly more philosophical and thinking of the two) as well as representing the surrealist state of the surroundings and also ideas of postmodernism

- "*Two ELIZABETHANS passing the time in a place without any visible character.*"—devoid of purpose and aim
- "*The run of "heads" is impossible, yet ROS betrays no surprise at all...GUIL is well alive to the oddity of it...he is worried by the implications;*"
- "*He takes out a coin, spins it high, catches it, turns it over on to the back of his other hand, studies the coin—and tosses it to ROS...*"
- "*GUIL takes a third coin, spins it, catches it in his right hand, turns it over onto 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 the top of his head, where it sits...*" and still turns out heads.
- "*GUIL moves down to the footlights and turns.*"

The boat in Act 3 as a symbol of the unforgiving hurtle towards death for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern:

- Crisis of the boat: a perfect metaphor for fate and free will
- "The boat, the night, the sense of isolation and uncertainty...all these induce a loosening of the concentration. We must not lose control."
- "We can move, of course, change direction, rattle about, but our movement is contained within a larger one that carries us along as inexorably as the wind and current..."

The "gaudy striped umbrella" on the boat in Act 3: reminds the audience of the irreverence and absurdity of the setting as well as displaying the suspension of belief

- Care taken to call it a "*gaudy striped umbrella*"; meant to ensure that the audience is aware of its surrealism and the latter part betrays a hint of irreverence

The dagger that Guildenstern uses to attempt to kill the Player in Act 3, at what some may call the climax of the play, which has a retractable dagger and in fact did not kill the Player

- "*He snatches a dagger from the PLAYER'S belt and holds the point at the PLAYER'S throat: the PLAYER backs and GUIL advances, speaking more quietly.*"

- *"And he pushes the blade in up to the hilt. The PLAYER stands with huge, terrible eyes, clutches at the wound as the blade withdraws: he makes small weeping sounds and falls to his knees, then right down."*
- *"...Then the TRAGEDIANS start to applaud with genuine admiration. The PLAYER stands up, brushing himself down."*
- Try as they might, R&G have zero control over events in the play and in their world—absurdity of the dagger having a retractable blade
- Quiet genius of Stoppard: in the stage directions, the dagger is not specified as a fake—only after the "revival" is it fulfilled, for the element of surprise

Conclusion:

Props in general are utilized by the playwright to provide realism and immerse the audience into the events of the play—some props, as in the example of The Duchess of Malfi, sees Webster fulfill his penchant for the macabre and subverting traditional views on rank and religion, while in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, Stoppard uses props to fulfill the conventions of the post-modern absurdist play through items that portray irreverence and surrealism.

November 2013 TZo Q2: How do at least two playwrights you have studied use dramatic irony in their works and to what effect?

Texts used:

Hamlet (1601) by Shakespeare and Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead (1967) by Stoppard

Definition:

Dramatic irony refers to when the audience's understanding of events or individuals in a work surpasses that of the characters in the work; will include issues such as knowing the events of a play before the characters, or even understanding the world around them more than the characters themselves

Introduction:

Both Hamlet and Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead employ the use of dramatic irony in similar ways and in similar fashion; however, the effect of dramatic irony varies with the genre and conventions of the texts.

The revenge tragedy Hamlet sees dramatic irony used as an integral part of the revenge plot and the delay of Hamlet as he muses the "correctness" of exacting revenge in an ode to philosophical musing and subversion of the conventions of the revenge tragedy, while R&G are Dead sees dramatic irony used in highlighting their imminent deaths and how easily they dance around the concept of death in wordplay and even the title of the work; brings up the issue of fatalism and lack of free will in an absurd world.

Analysis (Hamlet):

Beginning of the revenge plot: Hamlet's soliloquy in Act 1 Scene 2 betrays his unhappiness at not only his father's death, but his mother's remarriage—but Claudius and Gertrude believe it is purely because of the death

- "...to persever in obstinate condolement is a course of impious stubbornness, 'tis unmanly grief,"
- "...whose common theme is death of fathers, and who still hath cried from the first corpse till he that died today "this must be so."
- "...She married. O most wicked speed! To post with such dexterity to incestuous sheets..."
- Act 1 Scene 5 sees Hamlet decide to put on the antic disposition; will play out as a major form of dramatic irony in the following acts—"As I perchance hereafter shall think meet to put an antic disposition on)"

Antic disposition for the sole purpose of investigating the murder of his father, which is unknown to court officials and the royal couple—convention of plotting and madness

- Act 2 Scene 1: Polonius suspects that "this is the very ecstasy of love"
- Act 2 Scene 2: "something you have heard of Hamlet's transformation—so call it sith nor th'exterior nor the inward man resembles that it was."
- Later on, his 3rd soliloquy: "am I a coward" "Hum, I have heard that guilty creatures sitting at a play have by the very cunning of the scene been struck so to the soul that presently they have proclaimed their malefactions."

The confrontation with Ophelia is also another example where drama is created considering the irony of the exchange between Claudius and Polonius before the meeting and then the supposed madness of Hamlet in full view of Claudius and Polonius in Act 3 Scene 1

- "We are oft too blame in this—'tis too much proved that with devotion's visage and pious action we do sugar o'er the devil himself."
- "O, 'tis too true. [*aside*] How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!"
- "[*King and Polonius hide behind an arras.*]"
- "We are arrant knaves—believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father?"

The dumb-show serves the same function as that of R&G are Dead in displaying the events which evoke a reaction from the audience who understand the dumb-show more than the characters watching it—Act 3 Scene 2

- "The King rises." "How fare my lord?" "Give o'er the play." "Give me some light, away."
- "O good Horatio, I'll take the Ghost's word for a thousand pound. Didst perceive?"

Act 3 Scene 3: the perfect example of dramatic irony, and arguably the climax of the play—Hamlet does not kill a supposedly praying Claudius

- "Now might I do it. But now 'a is a-praying...and so 'a goes to heaven...that would be scanned"

- "A villain kills my father, and for that I, his sole son, do this same villain send to heaven."
- But it turns out he was not praying..."my words fly up, my thoughts remain below. Words without thoughts never to heaven go."

Act 4 Scene 7 sees Claudius and Laertes begin plotting to murder Hamlet during a fencing match; will ultimately backfire on the two men

- "To cut his throat i'th' church."
- "Where it draws blood no cataplasms so rare...can save the thing from death that is but scratched withal." (Act 4 Scene 7)
- A cowardly weapon of poison: "I'll have preferred him a chalice for the nonce, whereon but sipping, if he by chance escape your venomed stuck, our purpose may hold there."

Act 5 Scene 2: dramatic irony in the tension of the moment of truth when Gertrude drinks the wine—Claudius does not stop her; showcases his Machiavellian tendencies even to the last

- "It is the poisoned cup! It is too late."

Analysis (R&G are Dead):

The title itself is an example of dramatic irony, in relation to the parent text of Hamlet: no matter what happens, at the end R&G must die for the title and the parent text to be fulfilled

This issue of them dying regardless of what they do is reflected in the first part—the coin toss which also reflects absurdity and surrealism

- A hundred-long streak of "heads"

Dramatic irony in the introduction of the Players and what they perform—draws the link of meta-theatricality before explaining their roles

- "We do on stage the things that are supposed to happen off. Which is a kind of integrity, if you look on every exit being an entrance somewhere else."
- "Tragedy, sir. Deaths and disclosures, universal and particular, denouements both unexpected and inexorable, transvestite melodrama on all levels including the suggestive."

Dramatic irony in speech: errors in communication which actually mean much more than at first glance

- "home and high—dry and home", "—over my step over my head body!—I tell you it's all stopping to a death, it's boding to a depth, stepping to a head, it's all heading to a dead stop—", "...and we'll soon be home and dry—and *high* and dry..."
- Act 2, post-verbal tennis: "He *murdered* us", "I should concentrate on not losing your heads", "stark raving sane".

The dumb-show: their deaths are portrayed in a mime and yet R&G do not recognize this

- Takes place in Act 2: main function to create dramatic irony of the death of R&G and also raise idea of the confusion of identity and self-denial
- "The plot has thickened—a twist of fate and cunning has put into their hands a letter that seals their deaths!"
- "...the two SPIES are wearing coats identical to those worn by ROS and GUIL, whose coats are now covered by their cloaks."
- Before the dumb-show: "I'd prefer art to mirror life..." (2) by Guildenstern
- Are unable to recognize themselves in Act 2 during the dumb-show: "Well, if it isn't—! No, wait a minute, don't tell me—it's a long time since—where was it? Ah, this is taking me back to—when was it? I know you, don't I...no, I don't know you, do I?" Rosencrantz loses track of the where, the when, and the who.
- "You must have mistaken me for someone else"—Rosencrantz suddenly thinks it is the spy who seems to recognize him in this dumb-show

Hence, the dramatic tension is heightened at the end of Act 2 when it is said that "anything can happen yet". Act 3 sees the action on a boat, where the dialogue concerning it is representative of their predicament

- "We can move, of course, change direction, rattle about, but our movement is contained within a larger one that carries us along as inexorably as the wind and current..."
- Pirate attack was also scripted in Hamlet though it appears to be spontaneous

Ending: the worlds combine once more as the Ambassador delivers his declaration that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead—thus, this brings the entire worlds full circle and fulfills the idea of futility as "there's a logic at work—it's all done for you, don't worry. Enjoy it. Relax."

Conclusion:

Both Hamlet and Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead employ the use of dramatic irony in similar ways and in similar fashion; however, the effect of dramatic irony varies with the genre and conventions of the texts.

The revenge tragedy Hamlet sees dramatic irony used as an integral part of the revenge plot and the delay of Hamlet as he muses the "correctness" of exacting revenge in an ode to philosophical musing and subversion of the conventions of the revenge tragedy, while R&G are Dead sees dramatic irony used in highlighting their imminent deaths and how easily they dance around the concept of death in wordplay and even the title of the work; brings up the issue of fatalism and lack of free will in an absurd world.

November 2013 TZo Q3: If an audience is to be engaged by a play, the exposition must very quickly include elements that promise interesting ideas, characters or events. In what ways have at least two playwrights you have studied

ensured that the plays' opening moments are likely to engage the audience?

Texts used:

The Duchess of Malfi (1614) and Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead (1967)

Definition:

The insertion of important background information within a story; this includes setting, backstory, historical context, and plot events

Introduction:

Using exposition through setting, backstory, and characterization of the characters in each play, The Duchess of Malfi introduces the idea of Catholic skepticism and courtly corruption through the characterization of the Aragonian brothers and the juxtaposition through the duchess, in addition to juxtaposition through Antonio's description of the French court versus the Italian court.

Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead sees Stoppard elicit the issue of futility and absurdity through the opening stage directions, the lack of a backstory, and the opening action of the go-strong streak of heads accompanied by humorous vaudeville action.

Analysis (Duchess):

Description of the French Royal Court in Act 1 Scene 1

- "In seeking to reduce both state and people to a fixed order, their judicious king begins at home: quits first his royal palace of flattering sycophants, of dissolute and infamous persons—which he sweetly terms his master's masterpiece, the work of heaven—considering duly that a prince's court is like a common fountain, whence should flow pure silver drops in general."
- "If't chance some cursed example poison't near the head, 'death and diseases through the whole land spread.'"
- Seeks to set the audience up for the rude awakening Antonio is about to face in Malfi, where there is a corrupt monarchy and the religious institutions are rotten

Note how the characterizations of the characters that enter the play are explicitly written into the play; see Act 1 Scene 2, Delio: "you promised me to make me the partaker of the natures of some of your great courtiers—"; the entry of Bosola then the Cardinal in Act 1 Scene 1 is intentional

Characterization of Bosola in Act 1 Scene 1:

- "The only court-gall"
- "Indeed, he rails at those things which he wants—"
- "I fell into the galleys in your service"
- "I knew this fellow seven years in the galleys for a notorious murder, and 'twas thought the Cardinal suborned it."

- "Places in the court are but like beds in the hospital, where this man's head lies at that man's foot, and so lower and lower."
- "I have heard he's very valiant."
- Bitter, cynical in tone and almost spitting out his words
- The low-born who is subservient to the brothers

Characterization of the Cardinal in Act 1 Scene 1:

- "This great fellow were able to possess the greatest devil and make him worse."
- "He and his brother are like plum trees that grow crooked over standing pools: they are rich and o'erladen with fruit, but none but crows, pies and caterpillars feed on them."
- Supposedly valiant and brave at first sight: "they say he's a brave fellow—will play his five thousand crowns at tennis, dance, court ladies—and one that hath fought single combats."
- "But observe his inward character: he is a melancholy churchman."
- "He did bestow bribes so largely and so impudently as if he would have carried it away without heaven's knowledge."

Characterization of Ferdinand in Act 1 Scene 2:

- Concerned with rank: "this might take idle, offensive and base office from him, whereas the other deprives him of honor," in reference to whether he should go to war
- Has a view that the court sycophants have to serve their role: "why do you laugh? Methinks you that are courtiers should be my touchwood: take fire when I give fire—that is, laugh when I laugh, were the subject matter so witty."
- "The duke there? A most perverse and turbulent nature. What appears in him is merely outside...the law to him is like a foul black cobweb to a spider: he makes it his dwelling and a prison to entangle those shall feed him."

Characterization of the Duchess in Act 1 Scene 2:

- "The right noble Duchess, you never fixed your eyes on three fair medals cast in one figure of so different temper."
- "Whilst she speaks she throws upon a man so sweet a look that it were able to raise one to a gailliard that lay in a dead palsy, and to dote on that sweet countenance."
- "Her very sleeps are more in heaven than other ladies' shifts."
- "Fie, Antonia! You play the wire-drawer with her commendations."
- "I'll case the picture up. Only thus much—all her particular worth grows to this sum: she stains the time past, lights the time to come."

Note how his characterization of the Duchess also betrays some admiration and perhaps even attraction; hinting at the beginning of the marriage plot

Analysis (R&G):

Opening stage directions gives way to some mystery; lack of detail

- *"Two ELIZABETHANS passing the time in a place without any visible character. They are well-dressed—hats, cloaks, sticks and all. Each of them has a large leather money bag."*
- *"They are betting on the toss of a coin, in the following manner: GUILDENSTERN (hereafter GUIL) takes a coin out of his bag, spins it, letting it fall. ROSENCRANTZ (hereafter ROS) studies it, announces it as "heads" (as it happens) and puts it into his own bag. Then they repeat the process, they have apparently been doing this for some time."*
- *"The run of "heads" is impossible, yet ROS betrays no surprise at all—he feels none. However, he is nice enough to feel a little embarrassed at taking so much money off his friend."*
- *"GUIL is well alive to the oddity of it. He is not worried about the money, but he is worried by the implications; aware but not going to panic about it—his character note."*

The go-long run of "heads"

- Surrealism of the improbability of heads
- The dramatic irony of the fact that they will die: their "heads"
- *He takes out a coin, spins it high, catches it, turns it over on to the back of his other hand, studies the coin—and tosses it to ROS..."*
- *"GUIL takes a third coin, spins it, catches it in his right hand, turns it over onto 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 the top of his head, where it sits..."* and still turns out heads.
- *"GUIL moves down to the footlights and turns."*

No backstory: no aim, no purpose

- *"Passing the time"*
- *"We were sent for...that's why we're here. Travelling."*

Conclusion:

Using exposition through setting, backstory, and characterization of the characters in each play, The Duchess of Malfi introduces the idea of Catholic skepticism and courtly corruption through the characterization of the Aragonian brothers and the juxtaposition through the duchess, in addition to juxtaposition through Antonio's description of the French court versus the Italian court.

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May 2014 TZ1 Q1: Drama often generates levels of meaning that are not directly stated (sometimes called sub-text). Explore some examples of the presence of sub-text and its

dramatic importance in at least two of the plays you have studied.

Texts used:

The Duchess of Malfi (1614) by Webster and Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead (1967) by Shakespeare

Definitions:

"Subtext" refers to an underlying and often distinct theme in a piece of work, and can refer to anything and everything that is not explicitly stated in the play's text itself; can include everything from props to costuming and even sound and light

Introduction:

Indirect meaning to highlight the themes of the texts: for the Duchess it is the perversion of the Aragonian brothers in contrast to herself; for R&G it is the nihilist and fatalistic view of the world—this is done through unspoken means such as props, sound and light, and costuming

Analysis (props):

Duchess

- Severed hand

R&G

- Coins

Analysis (sound and light):

Duchess

- Dark lighting during the severed hand scene
- Dark lighting in prison with the madmen
- Song of the madmen
- "Mine eyes dazzle"
- The echo

R&G

- Each act begins with a brightening of the dark stage
- Each act ends with an abrupt blackout
- Transition between Act 2 and 3: the sound of the waves and nautical instructions
- "Flourish" to indicate the collision of the world and arrival of royalty

Analysis (costuming):

Duchess

- Dumb-show
- Ferdinand's costuming slowly modified in his descent
- Duchess's costuming is bright/pure

R&G

- Elizabethan garb in a post-modern absurdist world

May 2014 TZ1 Q3: In what ways and to what ends have at least two of the plays you have studied made use of either compressed or expanded time frames?

Texts used:

Hamlet (1601) by Shakespeare and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (1967) by Stoppard

Thesis statement:

Hamlet is divided up into the conventional five-act play with varying numbers of scenes—usually a small number of longer scenes for exposition and many short scenes in high-tension parts of the play to achieve pacing, while R&G are Dead is divided up into a simple three-act play with no scenes at all; major changes in setting and subject matter accompany such changes.

Analysis (mid-section)

Hamlet—the conventional five-act play; long acts with few scenes in exposition/plotting, short acts with many scenes for action and towards the climax. Divisions are clearly demarcated given the rhyming couplets at the end of scenes and actual instructions

- Act 1 sees 5 scenes: first and second sightings of the Ghost are divided by the exposition of the King's speech and the Ophelia-Laertes-Polonius subplot, perhaps to delay and also to ensure continuity of audience knowledge of the context
- Act 2 is relatively long for 2 scenes, especially scene 2: Shakespeare fits a lot of action into this scene, as it is the first onstage encounter with a mad Hamlet and provides for some comic relief in the "fishmonger"; the Tragedians and Hamlet's 3rd soliloquy and plotting take place all in this scene, dragging out the timeframe and ensuring immersion in the relatively slower pacing
- Act 3 is arguably the climax—begins with Hamlet scolding Ophelia, then the playing out of the dumb-show, then the prayer scene; somewhat normal
- Act 4 is extremely pertinent—it is in the aftermath of the panic caused by the death of Polonius and the chase for Hamlet throughout the castle, with a lot of action and tension; Shakespeare uses many short scenes to achieve a fast-paced progression of events (7 scenes!)
- Act 5 on its own as the denouement—the gravedigger scene for comic relief and finally the swordfight; nothing much of note

R&G: three acts with vastly different settings and use of props such as the coin for demarcating key divisions in the play—lack of a proper timeframe, neither compressed nor expanded

- Language as a divider between the two worlds: R&G speak in prose normally, but speak in blank verse with iambic meter when in the court—clear indicator of the worlds (see Act 1, page 35.)
- Act 1: in the middle of nowhere, by a road—flipping a coin, which lands on tails as soon as there is a collision with the world
 - “I say—that was lucky.” “What?” “It was tails,” before a lighting change and the appearance of Ophelia and a mad Hamlet
- Act 2: see Shakespeare Act 2, Scene 2; an explicit reference to the text itself hints at the real collision of the worlds—the setting is now definitely in the Danish royal court
 - “Anything could happen yet.” BLACKOUT here to end off on a cliffhanger before the next scene; creates tension and dramatic irony given their imminent death
- Act 3: no more collision of the worlds and is in fact an onstage representation of the event that took place offstage in Hamlet
 - “*Opens in pitch darkness. Soft sea sounds.*” Still a relatively bare opening stage direction, similar to Act 1—hark back to the idea of the sparse and lack of real constancy
 - “*Longer pause: the sound builds a little and identifies itself—the sea. Ship timbers, wind in the rigging...shouts of sailors calling obscure but inescapably nautical instructions...*”
 - “*A gaudy striped umbrella*” out of place and displays absurdity of their current setting
 - Hilarity of action: “Dear God, is it too much to expect a little sustained action?!” “*And on the word, the PIRATES attack.*”
- Sudden transitions and lack of awareness of their time; issues of lack of memory and surrealism in their absurd world

Conclusion:

Hamlet is divided up into the conventional five-act play with varying numbers of scenes—usually a small number of longer scenes for exposition and many short scenes in high-tension parts of the play to achieve pacing, while R&G are Dead is divided up into a simple three-act play with no scenes at all; major changes in setting and subject matter accompany such changes.

May 2016 TZ1 Q3: In drama an exciting force (a key thought, action or event) works as a catalyst to begin the central conflict. Comparing at least two of the plays you have studied, what serves as the exciting force and how is it significant to the meaning of the play?

Texts used:

The Duchess of Malfi (1614) by Stoppard and Hamlet (1601) by Shakespeare

Introduction:

Using exposition through setting, backstory, and characterization of the characters in each play, The Duchess of Malfi introduces the idea of Catholic skepticism and courtly corruption through the characterization of the Aragonian brothers and the juxtaposition through the duchess, in addition to juxtaposition through Antonio's description of the French court versus the Italian court.

Hamlet sees Shakespeare use the opening scene with the Ghost and the exposition of the threat to the state, followed by the coronation address and the 1st soliloquy to forward the issue of revenge and internal conflict with the external disorder

Analysis (Duchess):

Description of the French Royal Court in Act 1 Scene 1

- "In seeking to reduce both state and people to a fixed order, their judicious king begins at home: quits first his royal palace of flattering sycophants, of dissolute and infamous persons—which he sweetly terms his master's masterpiece, the work of heaven—considering duly that a prince's court is like a common fountain, whence should flow pure silver drops in general."
- "If't chance some cursed example poison't near the head, 'death and diseases through the whole land spread.'"
- Seeks to set the audience up for the rude awakening Antonio is about to face in Malfi, where there is a corrupt monarchy and the religious institutions are rotten

Note how the characterizations of the characters that enter the play are explicitly written into the play; see Act 1 Scene 2, Delio: "you promised me to make me the partaker of the natures of some of your great courtiers—"; the entry of Bosola then the Cardinal in Act 1 Scene 1 is intentional

Characterization of Bosola in Act 1 Scene 1:

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- "Indeed, he rails at those things which he wants—"
- "I fell into the galleys in your service"
- "I knew this fellow seven years in the galleys for a notorious murder, and 'twas thought the Cardinal suborned it."
- "Places in the court are but like beds in the hospital, where this man's head lies at that man's foot, and so lower and lower."
- "I have heard he's very valiant."
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- "He and his brother are like plum trees that grow crooked over standing pools: they are rich and o'erladen with fruit, but none but crows, pies and caterpillars feed on them."

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- “But observe his inward character: he is a melancholy churchman.”
- “He did bestow bribes so largely and so impudently as if he would have carried it away without heaven’s knowledge.”

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- “The duke there? A most perverse and turbulent nature. What appears in him is merely outside...the law to him is like a foul black cobweb to a spider: he makes it his dwelling and a prison to entangle those shall feed him.”

Characterization of the Duchess in Act 1 Scene 2:

- “The right noble Duchess, you never fixed your eyes on three fair medals cast in one figure of so different temper.”
- “Whilst she speaks she throws upon a man so sweet a look that it were able to raise one to a gailliard that lay in a dead palsy, and to dote on that sweet countenance.”
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- “Fie, Antonia! You play the wire-drawer with her commendations.”
- “I’ll case the picture up. Only thus much—all her particular worth grows to this sum: she stains the time past, lights the time to come.”

Note how his characterization of the Duchess also betrays some admiration and perhaps even attraction; hinting at the beginning of the marriage plot

Analysis (Hamlet):

The Ghost

- The appearance of the Ghost in Act 1 Scene 1 “bodes some strange eruption to our state”, suggesting that Denmark is a precarious position—the health of the nation depended on the health of the royal court in Elizabethan times
- “Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole with juice of cursed hebona in a vial and in the porches of my ears did pour the leperous distilment whose effect...barked about most lazar’like with vile and loathsome crust all my smooth body.” (Ghost, Act 1 Scene 5)
- Entry of the ghost in this scene mid-sentence: sense of urgency and a “jumpscare”: “The bell then beating one—” “Enter GHOST.” This leads to stichomythia and urgency: “speak to it, Horatio.” The repetition later on also emphasizes this in “stay, speak, speak, I charge thee speak.”

- The exit of the ghost slows down the pace yet again as the object of tension is gone; "tis gone and will not answer." This prepares the audience for the exposition of a "strange eruption" and of Fortinbras
- Transition to Act 1 Scene 2 to slow the pace down and give the audience a break

Fortinbras sub-plot

- "Young Fortinbras, of unimproved mettle, hot and full, hath in the skirts of Norway here and there sharked up a list of lawless resolute for food and diet to some enterprise..." (Act 1 Scene 1, displaying the real threat of Norway)
- It is suggested that the aggression of the Norwegians is partly due to the lack of order and illegal succession of Claudius in Act 1 Scene 4: "something is rotten in the state of Denmark".

King's royal address

- Act 1 Scene 2 and the royal address after Claudius's coronation tells the audience all they need to know while setting up the conflict between Hamlet and the royal couple
 - "Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death"
 - "Th'imperial jointress to this warlike state...taken to wife."
 - Introduces Laertes and Polonius—father-son dynamic: "my dread lord, your leave and favor to return to France..."
 - "My cousin Hamlet, and my son—"
- Claudius supposedly dealt with the threat in Act 1 Scene 2: "we have here writ to Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras—who impotent and bedrid scarcely hears of this his nephew's purpose—to suppress his further gait herein..." and Fortinbras received a rebuke from the Norwegian king in the letter described in Act 2 Scene 2: "makes vow before his uncle never more to give th'assay of arms against your majesty."

1st Soliloquy

- Soliloquy in Act 1 Scene 2 also an exposition: Hamlet's interior thought and feeling—conflict is both external and internal; also hints at inaction as a theme
 - "To post with such dexterity to incestuous sheets"
 - "But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue."
- Act 1 Scene 2: the leaving of the royal court leaves Hamlet all alone and slows down the happy/celebratory tempo of the court's discourse, leaving Hamlet to begin his soliloquy—a monologue when he is alone
 - Regarding the Ghost, Hamlet is more interested and basically interrogates him—seen in stichomythia "Armed, say you?" "From top to toe?" "What looked he—frowningly?" "Pale, or red?"

Conclusion:

Using exposition through setting, backstory, and characterization of the characters in each play, The Duchess of Malfi introduces the idea of Catholic skepticism and courtly corruption through the characterization of the Aragonian brothers and the

juxtaposition through the duchess, in addition to juxtaposition through Antonio's description of the French court versus the Italian court.

Hamlet sees Shakespeare use the opening scene with the Ghost and the exposition of the threat to the state, followed by the coronation address and the 1st soliloquy to forward the issue of revenge and internal conflict with the external disorder

May 2003 HL Q5a: In what ways does the concept "freedom of choice" inform your reading in any two or three works you have studied?

Texts used:

The Duchess of Malfi (1614) by Webster and Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead (1967) by Stoppard

Introduction:

Freedom of choice is a central idea in both plays, and usually enables reader appreciation of the work through its association to the key theme or plot of the plays—it informs our reading by enabling us to understand the problems that the Duchess and R&G face, and therefore brings up the key ideas that each playwright is trying to forward

Duchess sees the Duchess's freedom of choice being scrutinized by her brothers and the royal court, hence highlighting the issues of women's rights and issues of class and rank

Freedom of choice is a central theme in absurdist play R&G are Dead, and is mainly used through illustrations of the inability of these two "lead" characters to affect the world around them

Analysis:

Duchess

- The marriage issue—vividly displayed through the exchange between her and the brothers—the speech that "came so roundly off" in Act 1 Scene 2
- "Shall this move me?"
- "The misery of us that are born great! We woo because none dare woo us."
- Central conflict is that of class and rank; the brothers are bothered while the Duchess is not; thus fleshing out the true characters of the Aragonian brothers and by extension the court
- The dumb-show **accentuates the misery that** comes as a result of this fatal choice
- The secret marriage brings great tragedy to all—is there really freedom of choice if so many have to pay a price?

R&G

- The coin toss: Act 1
 - *"He takes out a coin, spins it high, catches it, turns it over on to the back of his other hand, studies the coin—and tosses it to ROS..."*

- "GUIL *takes a third coin, spins it, catches it in his right hand, turns it over onto 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 the top of his head, where it sits...*" and still turns out heads.
 - "GUIL *moves down to the footlights and turns.*"
- "GUIL *seizes the PLAYER violently*" "I have influence!" Sudden action to jolt the audience; creating a sharp increase in tempo
- Act 2: futility reflected once again in the failure to impact their world
 - "Keep out, then! I forbid anyone to enter!" "*Immediately, behind him a grand procession enters...*"
 - "Why can't we go by *them*?"
 - Trying to "go by" the Queen, "ROS *marches up behind her, puts his hands over her eyes and says with a desperate frivolity.*" "Guess who?!" "Alfred!"
 - In chasing Hamlet, they cannot decide which way to go and finally decide to stick in their original positions "well, at least we're getting somewhere."
 - After holding their belts taut to capture Hamlet, Hamlet instead "*enters opposite, slowly, dragging POLONIUS's body. He enters upstage, makes a small arc and leaves by the same side, a few feet downstage.*"
 - Bringing Hamlet to the king, when Hamlet bows ostensibly seeing the king, and while R&G are bowing, Hamlet walks off in an about-turn with finesse
- Act 3: the action of Hamlet on the boat is now onstage, portraying Hamlet as the man of action in contrast to the two men
 - They do realize their actions are now truly futile when they comment that "we can move, of course, change direction, rattle about, but our movement is contained within a larger one that carries us along as inexorably as the wind and current..."
 - Attempt to murder the Player: when it seems like Guildenstern finally impacted something and we believe it, it turns out the Player was just acting
 - They do not do anything when the realization of the letter hits them—resignation
- "There's a logic at work—it's all done for you, don't worry. Enjoy it. Relax."
- They also have no freedom from the task they have been set—they were "sent for"

Conclusion:

Freedom of choice is a central idea in both plays, and usually enables reader appreciation of the work through its association to the key theme or plot of the plays—it informs our reading by enabling us to understand the problems that the Duchess and R&G face, and therefore brings up the key ideas that each playwright is trying to forward

Duchess sees the Duchess's freedom of choice being scrutinized by her brothers and the royal court, hence highlighting the issues of women's rights and issues of class and rank

Freedom of choice is a central theme in absurdist play R&G are Dead, and is mainly used through illustrations of the inability of these two "lead" characters to affect the world around them

November 2004 SL Q1b: Often, members of the audience will identify or sympathize with one character in a play over others. By what means have playwrights in your study managed to draw or undermine such responses to characters from the audience?

Texts used:

Hamlet (1601) by Shakespeare and The Duchess of Malfi (1614) by Webster

Introduction:

Hamlet's unenviable position and interiority through soliloquies and Laertes's motivations through the Ophelia sub-plot and death of Polonius—contrasts with Claudius's Machiavellian tendencies and lack of mercy

Duchess's unenviable position and her ultimately fatal decision and Bosola's soliloquies as well as his emotional state and status as a pawn—contrasts with the Aragonian brothers; the madness of Ferdinand is seen as deserved

May 2005 SL Q1a: How do characters and the choices they make contribute to meaning in two or three plays you have studied?

Texts used:

Hamlet (1601) by Shakespeare and The Duchess of Malfi (1614) by Webster

Introduction:

Hamlet's inability to seek revenge is just one of the choices he makes; the choice to follow the Ghost into the woods, the choice to play the dumb-show, to spare Claudius at the prayer room, to finally resolve to revenge his father; likewise, Claudius's choice to let Gertrude drink

Duchess's marriage, Ferdinand's hiring of Bosola, the execution overseen by Ferdinand and Bosola, Bosola's turn into a revenge hero after being denied payment, the Cardinal's murder of Julia, Antonio's false hope of being able to negotiate a settlement with the brothers

May 2007 SL Q1a: With reference to two or three plays you have studied, examine the dramatic significance of failures in communication.

Texts used:

Hamlet (1601) by Shakespeare and Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead (1967)

Introduction:

Hamlet—antic disposition, scholarly usage of puns and scathing remarks

R&G—dramatic irony and absurdism through misinterpretation