

CRÍTICA PRÁCTICA DE LA LITERATURA INGLESA (35334)

QUESTIONNAIRE ON FRANCO ZEFFIRELLI'S HAMLET (1990)

Description of the class activity:

As part of the assessment activities related to the study of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, students are asked to watch in class Franco Zeffirelli's film version of *Hamlet* and answer a series of questions. As this is a cinematic adaptation which strengthens a contemporary psychoanalytic interpretation of the play, it is mandatory to have read beforehand the feminist essay "'Man and Wife Is One Flesh': *Hamlet* and the Confrontation with the Maternal Body" (1992) by Janet Adelman, included in the syllabus. Students should be familiarised with sychoanalytic concepts for the study of literature.

Learning Objectives:

The activity is designed so that students learn to apply the critical concepts and methods of some of the approaches seen in class to an adaptation of a literary text addressing also issues of intermediality.

Competencias específicas del Grado en Estudios Ingleses evaluadas en esta actividad:

- CB3 Que los estudiantes tengan la capacidad de reunir e interpretar datos relevantes (normalmente dentro de su área de estudio) para emitir juicios que incluyan una reflexión sobre temas relevantes de índole social, científica o ética.
- CE3 Desarrollar la capacidad crítica para explicar textos literarios en inglés e identificar las convenciones estéticas de movimientos, etapas, géneros, autores y obras de las literaturas en lengua inglesa y sus modos de producción.
- CE15 Conocer y aplicar las corrientes y metodologías de la teoría y crítica literarias.

Provide short, concise answers to the following questions.

1) Remember that Freud associated the predominance of the *id* with children and their need for immediate gratification (the Principle of Pleasure). Do you see any connection between such principle and the behavior exhibited by Gertrude in the film? Provide specific examples and references.

2) In the scene in which Hamlet confronts Gertrude (after the performance of "The Murder of Gonzago"), the following exchange takes place between the two characters:

QUEEN: Have you forgot me?

HAMLET: No, by the Rood, not so!

You are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife,

But – would it were not so – you are my mother.

QUEEN: Nay, then I'll set those to you that can speak.

The Queen slaps Hamlet as she says these words, to which, in the film, he responds with a scream. Considering the tension of the scene and how Zeffirelli chooses to adapt the rest of the scene, analyze Hamlet's scream following Freudian categories and conventions. What could such cry represent in terms of what is happening to Hamlet's psyche? What sort of forces does his psyche seem to be struggling with and what do the slapping and the scream reveal about both Hamlet's and Gertrude's inner impulses?

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- 3) In that same scene in Gertrude's bedchamber, the Ghost appears at a very precise moment both in terms of the script and the action. According to Freudian psychoanalysis, what would cause the Ghost to appear at that precise moment? What does his appearance say about taboos, projection and repression?
- 4) Is the political conflict alluded to in the film? Is it hinted in any way? (What is the missing important character in this regard and why would Zeffirelli have removed him from the adaptation? How does this relate to traditional and modern criticism of *Hamlet*?)
- 5) Consider the space where the "To be or not to be" soliloquy takes place in the film. Can you draw any connections with the Eros VS Thanatos drives that psychoanalysis establishes as part of the *id*?
- 6) Can Hamlet's treatment of Ophelia be regarded as a defense mechanism of the ego in the film? What does Ophelia have to do with ambivalence and projection?
- 7) Pay attention to the angling of the camera for many of Hamlet's shots (particularly close-ups). Can you interpret them from the framework of psychoanalysis?
- 8) In her essayistic analysis of the relationship between Hamlet and Gertrude, Janet Adelman makes the following observations:
- a) "We tend to see a woman [Gertrude] more muddled than actively wicked; even her famous sensuality is less apparent than her conflicted solitude both for her new husband and for her son." (259)
 - b) "Female sexuality in *Hamlet* is always maternal sexuality: Gertrude is the only sexualized female body in the play, and we experience her sexuality largely through the imagination of her son." (271)

Do you think that Zeffirelli envisions Gertrude in the same way in his adaptation? Justify your arguments through examples and descriptive comments.

