

Student Name

Paper Proposal

Working Title: Heart of Hamlet's Darkness: Prince Hamlet, The Freudian, and Zeffirelli's Vision

Working Thesis: "The psychoanalytic dimensions of the play *Hamlet* are central to all aspects of Franco Zeffirelli's cinematic adaptation, visually and thematically manifesting themselves in various forms throughout the film."

Overarching Argument:

In my essay, I plan to write chiefly about two things: the psychoanalytic aspects of the play *Hamlet* and how Franco Zeffirelli's 1990 adaptation interprets the text within a Freudian framework. First, I will discuss the text itself. I will cite Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, the text in which the idea of an Oedipus complex is first introduced, with Prince Hamlet being the first person (though fictitious) to be diagnosed with one. After that, I plan to expand upon the Freudian elements of Shakespeare's play, with particular regard the relationship between Gertrude and Hamlet. I will use works about psychoanalytic literary criticism to assist me in writing this portion of the essay. For the other half of my essay, I will write about the 1990 adaptation, using reviews, scholarly articles, and a book about cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays to assist me.

Brode, Douglas. *Shakespeare in the Movies: From the Silent Era to Today*. Second ed. New York, New York, USA: Berkley Publishing Group, 2001. 114-50. Print.

A professor of film wrote this scholarly work. It is a book that chronicles the various adaptations of all of Shakespeare's works throughout the history of cinema. Thirty-six pages are dedicated to the various adaptations of *Hamlet*, including Franco Zeffirelli's 1990. Brode argues that Zeffirelli's Prince Hamlet has an oedipal complex, and is portrayed (dissimilarly to other cinematic adaptations) as a man of action. The author contests that this interpretation of Hamlet's character is faithful to the original source, Shakespeare's play, and that this interpretation of Hamlet's character as a man plagued by guilt for his incestuous urges was also sustained by Sigmund Freud, leading Freud to diagnosis the prince with an Oedipus complex, effectively making *Hamlet* the first work of literature to be psychoanalytically critiqued. This source is useful to my paper because it compares different adaptations and shows how different creative choices can create manifold ways of interpreting films based on the same text.

Jones, Ernest. *Hamlet and Oedipus*. New York, New York, USA: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1949. Print.

Ernest Jones was a noted psychoanalyst - the first practitioner of psychoanalysis in the English language - as well as Sigmund Freud's biographer. Jones' scholarly book *Hamlet and Oedipus* has been hailed as "this century's (the 20th) most distinctive contribution to Shakespearean criticism." In it, Jones takes a few passages from Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, expands upon them, and creates an in-depth study that would greatly impact how 20th century readers,

audiences, stage directors, and filmmakers interpreted *Hamlet*. In the book, Jones claims that the key to unlocking the mystery behind Hamlet's inability to kill Claudius until the play's final act is to psychoanalyze the Danish prince. If Hamlet has an Oedipus complex, harboring incestuous desires toward Gertrude, then Claudius, the man who slayed Hamlet's father and married Hamlet's mother, is the physical manifestation of the prince's deepest desires. Following this logic, it makes sense that Hamlet can only bring himself to avenge his father once Gertrude is dead, and he does, and rather swiftly at that, immediately after the queen's death. With the causation of Hamlet's inner turmoil gone, the prince can at last complete the task his father's ghost assigned to him. This book was very influential, so much so that the psychoanalytic interpretation of *Hamlet* is often referred to as the "Freud-Jones view." In fact, Sir Lawrence Olivier enlisted Jones as a consultant for his 1948 cinematic adaptation of the play. This source helps me because it is an in-depth analysis of the Freudian interpretation of *Hamlet*.