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Hamlet, the Ghost and the Model Reader:

The Problems of the Reception and a Concept of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

Doctoral Thesis

In a comprehensive study of *Hamlet* and its reception, this dissertation offers a concept and interpretation of Shakespeare's work as a complex literary work and play for the theatre. It is argued that the play, through a series of ambiguities, implies two main levels of meaning, which complement each other in a truly dramatic contrast, exploring the main theme of *Hamlet* and dramatic art in general: seeming and being, or illusion and reality. On the surface, which has been usually maintained since the Restoration, Hamlet seems to be a moral hero, who "sets it right" by punishing the evil villain, the usurper King Claudius, following the miraculous return of the murdered King Hamlet from the dead.

At a deeper level, exploring the Christian context including King James's *Daemonologie* (1597), the Ghost demanding revenge is, in fact, a disguised devil, exploiting the tragic flaw of the protagonist, who wishes the damnation of his enemy. Fortinbras, who comes from the north like King James and renounces revenge, is rewarded with the kingdom after the avengers, Hamlet and Laertes, kill each other and virtually the entire Danish court is wiped out through Hamlet's quest of total revenge, pursuing both body and soul.

The aesthetic identity of *Hamlet* is also examined. In addition to the mainly philological and historical analysis of the text, the play, some adaptations and the critical reception, theoretical concerns are also included. Epistemology and semiotics, in particular Kuhn's notion of paradigm and Eco's notion of the Model Reader, are applied to enhance the understanding of the two levels of meaning of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, as well as the problems of the reception. The main purpose is to restore and explain Shakespeare's work, so that it can be fully appreciated, again in its original complexity.