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ENGL 305

Essay 6: Deconstruction

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Topic: God is an authority, but not as authoritative as he might seem. He is not an Author God; not an active character/force in the play, and doesn't directly influence anything. The people who are really in charge are the people themselves.

I. Introduction

A. Barthes' argument of the death of the Author lends itself well to understanding the role of God in Hamlet. Like an Author God, God seems to dictate the actions and motivations of the characters, but upon further inspection, specifically the words and language used regarding God and His mandates, it is clear that the human characters have the true power. They are not under the control of and Author God, but are free to act how they will.

II. Method Paragraph: "Death of the Author" Barthes

A. Barthes deconstructs the relationship of the Author and the Reader. Traditionally the role of the Author has been that of the Author God. He/she is the sole creator of the work with a defined intention, leaving no room for the Reader's imagination. However, Barthes suggests that the world has now seen the death of the Author. In their place is the Modern Scriptor who exits with the work, but they are not an active player, they cannot mandate a set of rules for interpretation. This makes way for the birth of the Reader; the Reader is now in charge and has the power to elicit a multiplicity of meanings from the text.

- III. Characters illustrate a belief in God and His power
 - A. Claudius example: he feels compelled to pray and confess his sins to God.
 - B. Hamlet example: demonstrates a belief in the power of reconciliation and its ability to cleanse the soul and send one to heaven
- IV. Gravedigger scene discussing the questionability of Ophelia's Christian burial calls explicit attention to the characters' ability to defy the "mandates" of God.
 - A. Quotes of Gravediggers and also the minister/Laertes
- V. The Gravedigger scene invites us to reevaluate the previous moments where the characters acknowledge God's power. The language used actually demonstrates that He is not the totalizing authority that they make him out to be.
 - A. Take a second look at the same Hamlet and Claudius themes, show the words and language that put the true power in the hands of themselves.
- VI. Conclusion