



‘Alas Poor Yorick!’: Hamlet and Kristeva’s Imaginary Father

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Abstract

Most psychological approaches interpret Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* within a Lacanian/Oedipal revenge narrative. This paper, however, explores Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* through theories of Julia Kristeva, who develops a term called ‘the imaginary father,’ which she revises from Freud’s ‘father of individual prehistory.’ The notion of an archaic/imaginary father as a hybrid locus (a mother-father amalgam) within the semiotic domain not only introduces new perspectives to consider the role of fatherhood but also the affective (and material) nature of transference/countertransference in Shakespeare’s plays. The dramatization of Hamlet’s “inner mystery” as opposed to his outer “show” has not been explored as an *intrapsychic* activity regarding an archaic father of imaginary ambivalence. Despite the scene’s brevity (5.1), considering Yorick as Hamlet’s father of individual prehistory reconfigures symbolic mastery to explore the unfolding development of Shakespearean character as a metaphorical process, a presymbolic activity rather than fixed representation, dramatizing the corporeal struggle for psychic and creative space.

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