

1. Which important change from the narrative point of view does Zeffirelli make in the first scenes of the film?

In Zeffirelli's adaptation of *Hamlet* there are several cuts and postponements compared to the literary text by Shakespeare. These changes produce some effects on the entire narrative plot.

The film starts with four fades-in, that lead the film-goer to the castle, main setting of the tragedy.

The colour blue and the feeble light of the initial scene suggest, from the very beginning, the sensation of melancholy and sadness that pervades the whole work.

The film adaptation opens with the scene of the king's funeral while the original drama starts with the scene in which two sentries, Bernardo and Francisco, are speaking about the apparition of a ghost.

Zeffirelli cuts this first scene and the apparition of the ghost is communicated to Hamlet by the two sentries and then by his friend, Horatio.

The first shot of the film focuses on Hamlet's hand pressing the earth under which his father is buried. From this image, the camera moves on Hamlet's face and, subsequently, on the other characters. So, Zeffirelli chooses to begin the film in "medias res". This free choice is very successful because, in this way, during the funeral scene, he already introduces all the characters and, in particular, the relationships between them. He prefers to explain the relationships between the different characters of the tragedy before introducing the main themes of the tragedy.

In this scene there is an exchange of looks between the characters, with the use of an extreme close-up shot, which describes the dynamics between the main characters, and introduces the suspect of murder.

The director represents the complexity of the relationship and of the personalities of the characters in an effective way.

In this part, Zeffirelli uses close-ups and subjective shots to involve the audience into the protagonist's thoughts.

Zeffirelli, from the beginning, works together on a stage and on an interior dimension, which give the film-goer a deep sense of tragedy.

2. Which solution does the film director adopt in the first part of the film to highlight Hamlet's solitude and isolation?

From the very beginning, the film is pervaded by a deep melancholy and the director uses special strategies to make the audience perceive this feeling around Hamlet's figure.

Hamlet, in the first part of the film, is represented as a very complex character, analysed in his isolation and solitude.

From the scene of his father's funeral, the audience perceives Hamlet's isolation as he appears secluded from the other characters; he goes away from this place very soon and we see him alone, in the darkness.

He is often described in various scenes on the background of a dark setting whereas a warm and beautiful light illuminates the other characters.

Zeffirelli uses a suffused and cold light to underline Hamlet's feelings of sadness and to evidence his deep thoughts. In this part, the shot is taken by a high angle that shows the dramatic sense of the events: Hamlet's tragic figure is in an isolated position.

Hamlet watches the reality from a high position and from a high angle; this place suggests his solitude as in the scene of Claudius and Gertrude's dinner.

Here, Zeffirelli, once again, uses a bluish light to characterise the protagonist and his feeling of disgust for the party/dinner whereas the king and the queen appear surrounded by a reddish colour that, in this case, is the symbol of lust.

The opposition between light and darkness is one of the main strategies used by the director, and it represents a recurrent theme in the whole film.

Hamlet is always in a high position in comparison with the other characters. An example is the scene of the dialogue with Polonius, where Hamlet is sitting on a balcony with his legs suspended in the air. This image reveals Hamlet's unbalanced situation, uncertain between life and suicide.

3) Highlight the evolution of the character of Hamlet in the film, finding out the changes in his soul and in his vision of the world.

Zeffirelli creates a figure of Hamlet different from Shakespeare's tragic hero. Shakespeare's Hamlet is weak and pale; Zeffirelli, on the contrary, chooses an athletic and strong figure that contrasts with his tormented soul.

In the first scene of the film, Hamlet appears with wide-open eyes: he seems to be astonished, amazed and mad. The images highlight his strange personality and suspicious behaviour that is also underlined by the description the other characters give about him.

This lucky choice of the director contributes to create the idea of Hamlet's character.

Sometimes we can see Hamlet sad, melancholic, thoughtful and reflexive, for example at the beginning when he is described in his room completely dark.

His vision of life is very pessimistic and he is resigned to man's fate.

The protagonist, in some scenes, seems to be breathless, excited and restless, as, for example, in the scene of the play within the play, when he is in his mother's bedroom and appears very nervous and almost hysteric.

Often, Hamlet shows an ironic and sarcastic behaviour, in particular towards his mother and towards Ophelia; this aspect of his personality shows his intelligence, but also his disgust and his disappointment for women.

Since the first scenes of the film, he seems to be mad because he uses a lot of strange expressions, many metaphors and complex concepts. His words apparently have not a meaning or a clear sense. But, during the film, we understand that Hamlet is not really mad, but he plays a role, and his words have a deeper meaning. He tells the truth, but his code is wrong and appears very strange, so we get the impression that he is as stupid as he appears to the other characters. He is perfectly conscious of what is going on around him. In the monologue, which Zeffirelli postpones, Hamlet is described in all his deep sensibility, not as a common man, but as a great man who asks himself about the meaning of life and of human destiny.

Here he reveals all his deep and complex personality.

Hamlet's soul changes when he knows his important task, after the meeting with his father's ghost. From this moment on he becomes a tragic hero. Also in the scene of the meeting with Rosencranz and Guildenstern, Hamlet is represented as a spiritual man who reflects about the greatness of man and nature. The beauty of nature is admired by Hamlet in all his magnificence, but he is unable to be happy because his life is dominated by a difficult and unlucky destiny. This part, set in a beautiful landscape, moves the audience and describes Hamlet's spiritual greatness and noble honesty.

He is an introspective character, he is doubtful about the decision to act or not to act, to fulfil or not his destiny.

Sometimes he seems to be unable to act, unselfconfident and this element contributes to explain his intimate complexity.

This is the main theme of the tragedy: the contrast between reality and appearance, between "to be" or to appear.

In the final scene of the duel, we can see Hamlet's definite change after his mental development: here he becomes a very tragic hero. In this moment, the drawing of destiny is definitely sealed and Hamlet accepts his fate.

The scene of the duel has a function of purification because all the characters are contaminated by evil and only death can purify their souls.

In this final image there is an important use of the movements of the camera that clearly explains the relationship between the characters.

The film ends with a panoramic shot, which shows an immobile situation, fixed in an eternal time.