MICHAEL ALMEREYDA'S *HAMLET* – AN ATTEMPT AT HAMLET

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Michael Almereyda's film adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a unique combination of two approaches: commenting on both the play's stage/screen existence and its place in the global culture of today, and discovering such aspects of the play that have not been shown, or at least highlighted, before. On the one hand, Almereyda seems to be too aware of Shakespeare's position as a cultural icon and of the play's history of criticism and performance to believe that he can create an entirely new film version of *Hamlet*. Therefore, he chooses to acknowledge the achievements of his predecessors and refers not only to the iconography of Shakespeare on stage and screen but to various other cultural influences, from ancient sculpture and classical painting to popular cinema and high technology.

Yet, on the other hand, the film attempts to update the play for our times and take on an original and innovative interpretation. Almereyda centres the film around Hamlet more clearly and intensely than any other recent film director, brings out the father-son relationship and focuses on father figures (old Hamlet and Polonius), and casts a comparatively young actor for the role. Moreover, moving the action of the film to New York 2000, he saturates the film with media and technology, thus creating alternative worlds that enable him to develop the plot on various levels of cinematic reality. In my paper, I will discuss one of the most vital

points distinguishing Almereyda's film from earlier screen productions, that is the way he focuses on Hamlet as a character, especially by exploring and externalising Hamlet's personality through the use of his video diary, and through defining his room and outfit.

Previous directors made various interpretative choices in their general rendition of *Hamlet* on screen. In Zeffirelli's version it was Gertrude, the mother/son relationship and the family business tainted with Oedipal undertones. In Branagh's film it was the epic scope of the tragedy at Elsinore, the saga-like approach to the play with its familial, political, military, psychological, comical and many other dimensions. Almereyda, coming close, in a sense, to Lawrence Olivier's approach, chooses to concentrate entirely on the title hero – Hamlet. Elizabeth Hollander claims quite otherwise saying that while

> most versions of *Hamlet* centre on the guy (natch) and make the whole revenge thing a father-son trauma . . . in Almereyda's *Hamlet*, it's all about the generation gap. It's not just one guy who goes crazy because he has one evil uncle – it's a whole generation usurped, hijacked, jerked around by the parents and the corrupt corporate power with which they rule the world.[1]

One may also argue that Almereyda's focus on Hamlet is still very balanced in comparison to Branagh's film where the narcissistic actor/director Kenneth Branagh fills the camera with his blond Hamlet.

Neither view, however, seems to be quite right. As far as Branagh is concerned, he might be accused of megalomania and directorial egotism clearly visible in his *Hamlet*, and even more so in *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, but it is Kenneth Branagh – the artist – who is the shining star of the productions ruling tyrannically the cinematic space, not his Hamlet – the character – who is taking

over the tragic lead in the film. Justice must be done to Branagh – his Hamlet is an element of a larger composition and the dramatic weight of this character does not disturb the balance of the epic story, even if Kenneth Branagh's acting energy occasionally does. As far as Almereyda's film is concerned, on the other hand, Hamlet's individuality and centrality is clearly established by both the cover poster and the director's choice for the opening scene. From the very beginning of the film it is predicated that we are not only watching primarily Hamlet but also that we are watching the cinematic reality with his eyes and from his perspective.

In the era of media culture and intertextuality, the poster advertising a film plays a significant role in reception of the film itself. It shapes the audience's initial expectations; trying to grasp the atmosphere of the film it becomes its integral part; and it is a metonymic device meant to capture the quintessence of interpretation. The poster for Zeffirelli's film illustrates the power games and sexual tension between the film characters. The poster for Branagh's film establishes the right perspective – a cold and distant view on the Prince's isolated ego. Almereyda's film is advertised by a poster showing Hamlet's face in a close-up, his eyes looking attentively ahead. It is a clear statement of Hamlet's centrality in this adaptation, but its significance goes deeper. The poster focuses on Ethan Hawke's eyes as if alluding to the belief that ones eyes are the mirror of the soul. The poster, therefore, seems to promise that we will be allowed to look closer into Hamlet's mind and see his "naked soul". Moreover, Ethan Hawke's eyes recall the idea of Orwell's Big Brother, which nowadays, in the age of reality shows, is a reference more immediate and understandable than ever. It not only accentuates the voyeuristic atmosphere of Elsinore but also implies that it is Hamlet who is watching and letting the audience watch with him.

Hamlet's eyes in close-up become almost an iterative motif in the film. During the "too too solid flesh" soliloquy Hamlet watches his video diary of family life and twice the scene cuts into an extreme

close-up of his eyes staring at the TV set. Later in the film, when he is about to edit the "Mousetrap" film, there is another close-up of his eye. Similarly, when after the murder of Polonius, Hamlet is sitting in the laundrette washing his shirt the camera again captures a close-up of his eye staring into the tumble dryer. Finally, after the duel scene the dying Hamlet is again framed in a close-up and shots of his eye are intercut with black and white fragments from the master narrative that summarise the 'cause' Horatio is to report. Hamlet's hypnotising gaze from the poster invites the viewers to enter his world, but the obtrusive close-ups of his eyes during the film remind us of our own voyeurism, similar to that of Lotte (Cameron Diaz) and Craig (John Cusack) in *Being John Malkovich*. The frame of Hamlet's gaze reduces us to the position of passive observers who were allowed to see a lot but are reminded that it was not their perspective. Hamlet has lured us into his reality but only he can interpret it. The selection of images we see together with the dying Prince is his account of his life, his story to be told to others, while we can make no judgements but can only passively indulge in the scopophylic feast.[2]

As in the case of other *Hamlet* film adaptations, the opening scene is of particular importance because it is a manifestation of the whole film's interpretative approach and, like the poster, the introduction to the thematic focus of the film. In Zeffirelli's version of *Hamlet*, the added scene of old Hamlet's funeral establishes the triangularity of family relationships, stresses the emotional and sexual tensions between Hamlet and Gertrude and Claudius and Gertrude, and takes a new – more human and familiar – look on the Ghost.[3] In Branagh's film the opening scene first of all reflects the faithfulness to Shakespeare's full text, but also through long-shot views on the castle of Elsinore signals that places, characters and events will be grand and they will be looked upon and shot from a broad and epic-like perspective. In Almereyda's film, on the other hand, the choice of the opening scene stresses Hamlet's exceptional centrality. Not only is the guard scene I. i. omitted but even, more

unconventionally, the film does not start with Claudius' court speech from scene I. ii. either. Instead, there is a shot of the city establishing the setting of New York 2000 with captions explaining the initial circumstances – the death of the CEO of Denmark Corporation and the marriage of the widow with the new CEO, the deceased Hamlet's brother. The city is shown at night and is defined by skyscrapers, Elsinore – a luxurious hotel – being one of them, and huge electronic Panasonic displays advertising Denmark Co. The opening scene proper starts with Hamlet's speech from II. ii. In the play it is when he confesses to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern "I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth"[4]. In the film, however, this is not a part of Hamlet's conversation with his friends but is shown as the first of a series of Hamlet's video recordings that he keeps viewing and editing – his amateur black and white video diary.

The scene is indicative of several important issues. Thus, the first character introduced in the film is Hamlet and not the guards, Horatio and the Ghost, as in the case of Branagh's film, or Gertrude and Claudius in Zeffirelli's version. Moreover, Hamlet is not shown directly but in a video recording within the film. This device creates a metacinematic level of reality where Hamlet is the director, the screenwriter, the camera operator, the narrator and the leading actor at the same time.[5] Hamlet's multiple centrality in his video films is, therefore, partly transposed into the master narrative.

The choice of the scene for the first fragment of Hamlet's film diary is his monologue about the disillusionment with the human kind and its place in the world. This speech, said directly into his PXL2000 camera[6] and intercut with various images illustrating the speech, functions as a prologue to the film and, similarly to the opening scenes in Zeffirelli's and Branagh's films, defines the main point of Almereyda's interpretation. In Hamlet's first speech, the director specifies his understanding of "what's eating" Hamlet, which, according to him, is not, primarily, his father's death and his mother's hasty marriage with his uncle, but existential dilemmas about the meaning of life and our place on earth. As Michael

Almereyda himself explains: even if Hamlet's father hadn't appeared to him, Hamlet would still be in bad shape. Even if his father hadn't been killed, there's something in him that's full of turmoil and doubts, and would always be looking around corners and re-examining what a lot of people take for granted.[7]

Ethan Hawke similarly understands his character's state of mind, as that of "somebody that's been seeking some kind of peace, some kind of authenticity, and not being able to find it".[8]

The role of Hamlet's video diary, so strongly indicated in the opening scene, actually gives shape to the whole film and brings Hamlet much closer to us than in any other screen or stage version. We get to know him in interactions with other characters and in soliloquies, which sometimes, by the use of video diary, in the film become very intimate dialogues, as it were, with himself. In Almereyda's film Hamlet is shown as a filmmaker and as every artist he displays exhibitionist traces. Recording himself and watching himself recorded he shows us more of the character than other Hamlets did. There are a few examples of such artistic exhibitionism, the first video recording being one of them. Contrary to the play, where Hamlet talks about his doubts to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, in the film Almereyda makes Hamlet talk to his camera, that is to himself, and lets us see his artistic comments to his own thoughts: the clips included in the recording.

Another interesting example is a short scene in which Hamlet watches a recording of himself while contemplating suicide. The recording shows Hamlet putting a gun to his temple, then into his mouth, then up his throat and again to his temple, then saying "to be or not to be" and smiling. Watching the fragment, Hamlet stops the tape at that point, rewinds a part of it, plays it again, rewinds, and plays it again. Primarily, this sequence functions as a premonition of the "to be or not to be" soliloquy. More interestingly, however, it shows Hamlet watching himself exhibiting and relishing the thought of death, and can be interpreted from the perspective of yet another aspect of voyeurism – the narcissistic pleasure of watching ones

image and recognising it as an ideal ego.[9] On the screen, Hamlet sees himself hesitating, decided to use the gun but unsure of how to do it. The scene thus not only brings out the quintessence of his doubt and hesitation, developed later in the full soliloquy, but also a projection of his will and visualisation of the desired future. In this short sequence Hamlet reveals much more of his state of mind than through the soliloquy because he shares with the audience not only the pain of his troubled soul but also the pleasure of contemplating the pain and exhibiting the wound.

The following scene in the film wonderfully complements the above mentioned implications and shows the impact of Hamlet's dialogues with his own recorded self. Hamlet enters the office building of Denmark Co., rushes through the corridors with a gun (or rather *the* gun from the video recording), and breaks into Claudius' office pulling out the gun and ready to shoot. Possibly spurred by the watching of the video, he is determined to act, but his determination is annulled by the absence of the victim-to-be.

On the way to Claudius' office, as he walks along the corridors, Hamlet is still watching his recordings on his camera. This time it is himself again in the monologue on faults in men ("So, oft it chances in particular men" I. iv. 23-36), but is disrupted by Polonius, of whom he quickly gets rid and hurries away to do what he has come for. The scene is a continuation of the previous one in several ways. It shows Hamlet watching yet another of his recorded soliloquies as if looking for confirmation of his action in his own reflections, only objectivised and detached by the medium of camera. It makes Hamlet's decision to kill Claudius seem a natural consequence of his contemplations on the sense of life and the nature of man. Finally, it forms a complete circle of Hamlet's thought and action but trying to show what is happening in Hamlet's mind and stress the relation between what he thinks and does. Moreover, by showing Hamlet watching the recordings of his soliloquies, Almereyda stresses the repetitive aspect of Hamlet's contemplations. He must have first recorded what he watches, so what we see with him for the first

time is for him only a repetition of the thing said, and possibly watched, before. In this way Almereyda might be trying to imply that Hamlet is entangled in the world of his thought, that he has always been involved in the process of analysing and reanalysing himself. Hamlet's filmmaking aspirations reflect his analytical and retrospective nature[10], which invites us to dissociate his hesitance from external circumstances and associate it with his personality.

There is one more instance in the film worth considering in this context. During the "O what a rogue and peasant slave am I" soliloquy (II. ii. 502) Hamlet is lying on the bed in his room watching James Dean in *Rebel Without A Cause*. While speaking he reaches for his camera and starts recording the film, focusing on a close-up of James Dean's face. He frames the actor in the same way as he frames himself in his video diary, thus clearly identifying himself with the character of Jim Stark. The picture of James Dean becomes a reflection of Hamlet, or a personification of his idealised ego viewed on a TV screen and recorded in his diary.

As the film develops, one may get the impression that Hamlet can hardly think without verbalising his thoughts and recording them. Each monologue is either evoked by the watching of his video recordings ("too too solid flesh", "O what a rogue") or partially or fully recorded ("I have of late", "to be or not to be"). Seemingly, the only exception is when Hamlet says "How all occasions do inform against me" (IV. iv. 32-66) while on the plane on his way to England. He rises from his seat and walks along the aisle to the toilette. The beginning of the soliloquy is in voiceover but half way through the aisle he begins speaking aloud. Then he enters the toilette and finishes the speech talking to his reflection in the mirror. In this scene Hamlet, deprived of his inseparable recording equipment, substitutes it with a mirror and again, not only thinks aloud but, at the same time, watches himself speaking, as if seeking confirmation of his thoughts in the reflected image. It confirms what Samuel Crowl observed that Hamlet "seems to be able to find himself only on the screen, in reflection".[11]

Hamlet's video diary brings us closer to him also through showing us more about his life outside of the play, especially about his family and Ophelia. An excellent example is the already mentioned scene in the film of Hamlet's "too too solid flesh" soliloquy. Hamlet is sitting at his desk watching what seems to be a family video recording. Shot possibly by Hamlet himself, it shows his parents ice-skating. They seem a happy couple enjoying their day off, with Gertrude leaning on old Hamlet and him holding her affectionately. The film constitutes an excellent illustration to the soliloquy as it depicts a perfect relationship between two people who clearly love each other. Then the recording cuts into a scene in old Hamlet's study and shows him lighting a cigarette, turning to the camera and covering the lens with his hand. Then the film cuts again into the ice-skating rink, but Hamlet starts fast-forwarding this fragment until the film shows Ophelia lying on a bed and reading a book. The recording lingers on her face and shows her in a close-up until she puts the book away and looks into the camera.

Similarly to Branagh's use of flashbacks in his film, Almereyda uses Hamlet's video diary to interpret the issues of Hamlet's personal and family life from the past that are not specified in Shakespeare's play. Again, like Branagh, he decides to clarify two issues – that of Hamlet's relationship with Ophelia and that of the quality of his parent's marriage. The video narrative establishes the relationship of Hamlet and Ophelia as long-lasting, although Almereyda makes no judgement on the sexual aspect of it. Hamlet has videotaped Ophelia alongside with his father and mother, thus making her a part of his very personal life. His camera scrutinises her in the same way as he scrutinises himself so that it seems to present her as another reflection of Hamlet, his "other half", clearly implying spiritual closeness of the two. This particular fragment of Hamlet's video recordings in a subtle but evident way defines Ophelia as a person belonging to the little intimate world of the past that Hamlet immortalises on tape and seems to cherish more than the "real" one by watching it repeatedly, as if wanting to relive the past more

than live the present. Ophelia's special status in Hamlet's life is restated in yet another past recording medium: photographs, as several photographs of her hang over his desk.

As far as the portrayal of family life is concerned, Almereyda shows it as almost idyllic in the video diary, unlike Branagh, who in the flashbacks seems to suggest an affair between Gertrude and Claudius when Hamlet was still a child. The sequence of Gertrude and old Hamlet ice-skating shows their childlike joy and non-pretended affection. Gertrude literally leans on her husband and looks at him with teenage adoration. He holds her with care and embraces lovingly. They make an impression of a couple that is still in love with each other and their feelings seem fresh and spontaneous. There is no implication whatsoever that there were any flaws in their marriage. It must be remembered, however, that the picture of their marriage is purely subjective – it is how they were seen from their son's perspective. Still, Hamlet's vision of their parents' relationship is consistent as he re-establishes the image of a happy family in his "Mousetrap" film, where he includes clips of 50's or 60's American television series picturing the bliss of family life. The 'Mousetrap' also suggests that before the "mischief" the mother, father and their little son lived happily, which confirms and reinforces the impression of Gertrude/King Hamlet relationship portrayed in Hamlet's video recording. Hamlet's video diary, therefore, functions as a source of extra knowledge giving an insight into the past or rather into Hamlet's memory.

Therefore, the sequence of black and white clips from the film that flash in front of Hamlet's eyes at the moment of his death must be treated in the same way. Although formally it is not a video recording from Hamlet's collection, it is a record of a certain period in his life in the same way as his video diary was. It is, as I said before, Hamlet's selection of the most important fragments of his very recent past, or rather it is the present summing up the whole film and so becoming the past. What the dying Hamlet sees, then,

are: a shot of the Ghost standing in the balcony seen as if from Hamlet's room, a shot of the Ghost in Hamlet's room, Hamlet and Laertes fighting in the graveyard, Claudius hitting Hamlet in the laundrette, and, interwoven amongst those, three shots of Hamlet kissing Ophelia from the "nunnery scene".

The sequence thus pinpoints the essence of Hamlet's life and turns out to take up the motifs from previously shown video fragments. The events in Hamlet's mind recorded and recollected at the moment of death centre around two persons – his father and Ophelia. Gertrude is shown only once but it seems that by including also one shot of Claudius they are both matched and marked as the odd ones out. It is the father, appearing twice, and Ophelia, appearing three times and additionally reminded of in the graveyard scene, that dominate Hamlet's memories and force the spectators to share the same memories with him.

There is yet another factor creating a sense of intimacy between Hamlet and the audience. While the video diary invades Hamlet's inside, the film proper defines his immediate outside environment – his room. Surprisingly perhaps, Almereyda is the first director who clearly and in detail defines Hamlet's private space. Other film versions (Olivier's, BBC, Richardson's, Zeffirelli's, Branagh's) usually treat the castle of Elsinore as nobody's land - the domain of conflict belonging to none of the parties. Even if there is a vaguely marked area standing for Hamlet's study, it is neither personal nor authentic, unlike, for example, Gertrude's closet or Ophelia's sewing room. Therefore, Almereyda's choice to specify Hamlet's domain and make it his own, special and individual, asks for treating Hamlet's room as yet another reflection of his personality.

Hamlet occupies an apartment in the Elsinore hotel but all his stuff is cramped in one room. The central place in it is the desk with his computer and the VCR equipment. The desk overflows with sheets of paper, books and all sorts of stationery. The general impression is that of creative mess, stressed even more by the fact that the wall over the desk is decorated with a chaotic composition

of photographs, posters, postcards and pictures. There is also a bed in the room, which is never neatly made, a few stylish armchairs and a sofa, a coffee table also loaded with books and paper sheets, and two more TV sets always turned on. Messy is a severe understatement to describe the general impression of the room. The floor, like the desk, is almost invisible under heaps of unidentified papers. To make things worse, there are Hamlet's clothes scattered everywhere – on the floor, on the bed, on the sofa, on the armchairs. One more striking characteristic feature of the room's *décor* are lamps. Even during the day the room is lit by several standing lamps, placed randomly all over the room.

Assuming that ones room reflects ones personality, one immediate thought comes to mind – that Hamlet is a mess and has not really sorted himself out yet. It may sound like cheap psychoanalysis but it is hard not to perceive Hamlet's personality in the context of his private space, especially that, as I mentioned before, Almereyda is the first director to portray it in detail. They way he sees Hamlet's room only supports his earlier quoted notion of Hamlet as a person who has always had existential problems, who has been seeking his place in life, and questioning all established values, who has basically been a mess long before his family life got so complicated.

Hamlet's room can also be seen in terms of his attempts to locate himself in the reality of corporate Denmark and to either adapt to the external conditions or adjust those conditions to his own liking. Without Hamlet's personal things the room would be a typical apartment in the Elsinore hotel – a spacious and bright place with white walls, big windows and elegant stylised furniture. What Hamlet has done, then, is the most natural thing everyone does moving into a new place – he has domesticated the impersonal space. However, the unusual thing is that domesticating his territory he virtually littered it with all sort of necessary belongings and unnecessary rubbish. Stressing this aspect of Hamlet's immediate surrounding Almereyda may be trying to suggest how insecure

Hamlet feels in the posh world of Denmark Co. and how the neat and rich surrounding pushes him to another extreme.

It is not only Hamlet's room but also the way he dresses that provokes such interpretation. Hamlet, like his father and his uncle, always wears a suit, or at least a jacket, in this way partly complying with the rules of the CEO (or a CEO to be) style. Unlike them, however, he never looks smart, because he tames the elegance with overtly scruffy hairstyle, hardly ever shaved face, ridiculous "Peruvian knit cap"[12] or sunglasses, and shirts or sloppy Joe type of jumpers that do not fit the suit. The moment that perhaps best captures the effect of Hamlet's attempts to defy the CEO style is the scene in the launderette where he is washing the shirt stained with Polonius' blood. He is wearing suit trousers and a baggy sweatshirt over a slack T-shirt whose fragments stick out from under the top. He looks disgustingly scruffy even by the standards of grunge fashion. Yet, what he wears on the top is a suit jacket, which Claudius puts on him after he has finished questioning his nephew on the whereabouts of Polonius' body and informed him about the trip to England.

Interestingly enough, other young characters in the film do not display a similar clash of styles in their clothing. The hip Ophelia[13] "dresses club-kid style, in huge-wide jeans and cute little tops"[14] the way she did in Gil Junger's 1999 *10 Things I Hate About You*. Laertes wears either jeans, checked shirts and a denim jacket, or a nicely fitting suit, apparently feeling at ease in both. Horatio, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and Marcella, on the other hand, blur in the uniform style of pop street-wear. Hamlet, however, finally reaches the uniformity of wear style and defying the formal elegance of Denmark Co. joins his peers in their grunge informality. The change takes place on his return from England. On the plane to England he is still imprisoned in a suit but when he leaves the airport gates having flown back he has freed himself from it. Instead of the unfitting jacket he is wearing a hooded jumper and a leather jacket, matching Horatio who is expecting him in front of the airport and

wearing overalls. The change in Hamlet's outfit seems to suggest the change in his mind. Hamlet came back from the voyage a different person. He seems to have found his own identity, defined his attitude to the lifestyle of Denmark Co., made up his mind about his place in its corporate structures and in life.

The devices I have discussed, that is Hamlet's video diary serving as a mirror to his state of mind and a crucial source of information about his parents and Ophelia, and the significance of Hamlet's personalised private space and dress style, are Almereyda attempts to define Hamlet's personality in ways that previous film directors have not explored. He has invented new means of approaching Hamlet, which let him take an innovative interpretative approach to Shakespeare's play based on this character's extraordinary centrality. The film's focus on Hamlet is achieved by the director's scrutinising him both internally and externally.

Almereyda discloses Hamlet internally in his video diary – a history of the world existing "in his mind's eye". Like Hamlet's eyes, it frames the cinematic reality we are watching and makes us constantly aware of Hamlet's point of view. In other words, due to the fact that Hamlet focuses and directs the audience's attention by means of his camera and his gaze, he himself becomes the focal point of the master narrative and is present in our consciousness even when he is not present on the screen. Moreover, the video diary is Hamlet's internal dialogue with himself and with the audience. Owing to it, Almereyda reinforces the function of soliloquies or internal monologues by visualising them and therefore helping him to put his thoughts into action. Like a soliloquy, the video diary displays Hamlet's state of mind but its nature is fundamentally different. A thought is spontaneous, singular and momentary. A video recording is in itself repetitive because it replays an action performed earlier on. Thus, by the use of the video diary Almereyda points to a new aspect of Hamlet's indecisiveness resulting from his obsession with formulating, reformulating, recording, replaying and rethinking his memories,

thoughts and ideas.

Finally, Almereyda is trying to capture Hamlet's personality externally by localising him the in the particular time and place. He specifies not only the general setting as New York 2000, but also other external factors: Hamlet's room, his occupation, his interests, and clothes. By defining those details Almereyda deprives Hamlet of the universality that Shakespeare furnished him with and, instead, provides him with immediacy and intimacy that may help a modern viewer to identify or, at least, empathise with the Prince of Denmark (Co.). Most importantly, however, Hamlet's room and style reflect his state of mind as clearly as his video recordings. Emphasising the young man's quest for his individuality, these elements serve as yet another factor centring the film on the issue of Hamlet's troubled self.

Ethan Hawke himself said that he saw this character as a "a bright young man struggling deeply with his identity".[15] It seems to me, however, that Almereyda managed to capture an even more subtle aspect of this complicated personality – the paradoxical combination of two contradictory features. Hamlet is both decisive and hesitant, both active and passive. This clash is almost literally illustrated in the stylistic clash of Hamlet's personal space, and symbolically exemplified in Almereyda's use of Hamlet's video diary, which, on the one hand, helps Hamlet to put his thoughts into words and eventually into action, but, on the other hand, traps him in the endless process of reflection and reconsideration.

Notes

1. Elizabeth Hollander *The New Ophelia*, http://cgi.snowball.com/x/fwd.cgi?u = entertainment.chickclick.com/articles/3901p1.html, accessed on 12.08.2001.

2. Anthony Easthope *Contemporary Film Theory* (London and New York: Longman 1993), p. 15.

3. discussed in detail in my unpublished study.

4. William Shakespeare *Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), II. ii. 280-290. All references in the text will be to this edition.

5. Agnieszka Rasmus "Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet*: The Film is the Thing…? Metatheatre vs. Metacinema", unpublished lecture given at the 3rd British Graduate Conference in Stratford upon Avon, June 2001.

6. www.fishbucket.com/film/pxl2000.html, accessed on 10.02.2002.

7. Cynthia Fuchs *Looking around corners*, http://popmatters.com/film/reviews/h/hamlet2.html, accessed on 22.08.2001.

8. Sean Nelson *Interview with Star and Director of New Hamlet Film*, http://www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID = 9369, accessed on 28.08.2001.

9. Laura Mulvey "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in *Literary Theory: an anthology* ed. Rivkin and Ryan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1998), p. 588.

10. Agnieszka Rasmus, op. cit.

11. Samuel Crowl "The Prince of Manhattan: Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet*", unpublished lecture given at The Shakespeare Institute on 8 February 2001.

12. Anthony Quinn "Alas poor Yorick, he didn't make the final cut" in *The Independent*, 15 December 2000, p. 10.

13. Elizabeth Hollander, op. cit.

14. *Too Too Solid Flesh*, http://popmatters.com/film/reviews/h/hamlet2.html, accessed on 28.08.2001.

15. Michael Almereyda *Screenplay adaptation of William Shakespeare's Hamlet*, (London: Faber, 2000), p. xiii-xiv.

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