

**“I COULD A TALE UNFOLD...” FROM  
METATHEATRE TO METACINEMA: FILMS WITHIN  
THE FILMS IN SHAKESPEARE ON SCREEN**

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In the theatre the pretence of the fourth wall may be broken by metatheatrical devices. The film medium, however, which prides itself on its realism, rarely discloses its own enunciation and tends to deliberately ignore the spectators, permitting them to indulge in their voyeuristic fantasy. Mulvey calls it “a hermetically sealed world which unwinds magically, indifferent to the presence of the audience”.<sup>1</sup> The Hollywood aesthetics, as exemplified in the names of the studios, such as *DreamWorks*, is based on the presumption that the experience of watching a movie is similar to the state of dreaming. Does it mean, however, that the audience should always be kept at a safe distance and the illusion of the film world protected? Can they be awakened from “the dream” earlier on than in the final credits? Is metatheatre transferable to the new medium?

It seems that the Brechtian revolution has to some extent reached the screen as well, and contemporary Shakespeare directors make use of distancing devices. They may want to direct a film pointing to its self-referential character or choose to ignore it and attempt a more realistic representation. In adapting Shakespeare to screen, the filmmaker must, therefore, respond to the plays’ metatheatricity by either rejecting alienating devices or finding a cinematic counterpart to the theatre’s self-reflexivity.

Laurence Olivier's role in introducing metatheatres to screen cannot be disregarded. One might trace the evidence of metatheatrical elements already in his *Henry V* (1944) opening in the Shakespeare's Globe seconds before the performance of the play. We see actors making final preparations before entering the stage. It is only with the first speech by the Chorus that we are transported outside of the Globe to a universe that is neither theatre nor cinema, somewhere in between with its artificial, fairytale-like landscapes on the one hand, and open space battle scenes shot on location in Spain, on the other. Later in his *Hamlet* (1947), the motif of a passage from one medium to the other is continued with a director's chair marking a curious journey from stage to screen. It serves as a self-referential device pointing at Hamlet's role-playing, as it is he who occupies the aforementioned chair and directs the Mousetrap. Moreover, it develops into a metacinematic figure standing for the film director's chair- Olivier's, which it resembles in its bare, cross-legged wooden outline.<sup>2</sup> The notion that soliloquy could not work in the more "realistic" world of the cinema where characters must not look at us and, consequently, announce the existence of the medium was questioned again by Olivier in his *Richard III* (1955). He uses the camera as a confidant, which creates the sense of complicity between actor and audience and intensifies the audience's moral responses.

Meanwhile, another film director who at the time came nowhere close to Olivier in terms of box office success, fame or universal admiration, demonstrated his profound interest in Shakespeare despite constant criticism from film circles. While being regarded by Hollywood as a wild, uncontrollable madman, whose film projects gave little guarantee of financial success, Orson Welles was at the same time cherished in Europe, which saw him as the ultimate embodiment of *auteur*.<sup>3</sup> His role in translating metatheatres to screen is of major significance. His *Macbeth* (1948), *Othello* (1952) and *Chimes at Midnight* (1966) respect the naturalistic convention, but at the same time reveal the cinematic enunciation

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through awkward camera angles, powerful camera presence and montage which, in a Brechtian mode, ensures that the audience's emotional involvement is tempered with moments of rational evaluation.<sup>4</sup>

Amongst the aforementioned strategies applied by adapters in order to recreate the plays' metatheatricity, there are, however, other metacinematic devices that reveal the very mechanics of filming, namely - films within the film. The paper analyses this cinematic figure on the basis of Branagh's *Hamlet* (1996) and Almereyda's *Hamlet* (2000). The choice of these particular filmmakers is by no means accidental: Kenneth Branagh seems to be forever "haunted" by the "ghost" of "great Larry", while Almereyda's movie is clearly marked by the hidden presence of the spirit of Orson Welles. In my discussion, I divide film within the film into two categories: (1) illustrations and (2) representations of the past. The first occurs when characters' words are supported by images on screen. They may either spring from the speaker's imagination / memory or function as a directorial insert which relieves the tension from an actor who would otherwise have to sustain the audience's interest through a long speech. Shakespeare's monologues are, therefore, intercut with illustrations which facilitate the understanding of his language for the contemporary audience. Illustrating the words self-consciously comments on the medium's predominantly visual nature. The second category of film within the film opens a possibility for the viewer to observe the action from before the opening of the main narrative. It might clear some of the play's ambiguities and serve as a commentary on the present action.

Throughout his prolific career, Kenneth Branagh has become to be widely recognized as one of the greatest popularisers of the Bard's works. This acclaimed Shakespearean actor, director, screenwriter, playwright and producer seems to be an alter ego of Laurence Olivier himself. Just like Olivier, Branagh's career began on stage, but in recent years appears to be focused on film; like

Olivier, Branagh directs and produces his own films with himself in the main role. For his first cinematic endeavour he chooses *Henry V* (1989), which immediately asks for comparisons with his great predecessor.

When asked why he made *Hamlet*, Branagh often replies that the answer can be found in *In the Bleak Midwinter* (1995).<sup>5</sup> As Stephen M. Buhler believes in both, *Midwinter* and *Hamlet*, “Branagh takes considerable pains both to acknowledge Olivier as formidable – and in some ways disabling – predecessor and to attempt an exorcism of his theatrical forebear’s ghost”.<sup>6</sup> Although he does not act in the movie, the main protagonist, an actor turned director, provides a jovial self-commentary on Branagh’s long lasting fascination with *Hamlet*. References to Olivier’s work are numerous: one actor imitates his impersonation of *Richard III*, while another bitterly acknowledges that he had “no chance of the tights and fluffy white shirts”<sup>7</sup> – an all too clear allusion to Sir Laurence’s portrayal of Hamlet. Visually, similarly to Olivier’s film, Branagh chooses to shoot in black and white. The play is performed in a desolate village church that resembles Olivier’s monumental Elsinore.

With *In the Bleak Midwinter* and *Hamlet* Branagh takes up the recurrent motif of a passage from stage to screen, although this time it takes place across two different films. Firstly, Branagh explores all the possible angles of *Hamlet* as a play within the film, and then turns it into a fully-fledged movie. His low-budget *Midwinter* becomes a prologue to his *Hamlet*.<sup>8</sup> Whereas the former is claustrophobic, bleak and modest, the latter strikes with flamboyance, colour, light, boundless space and an unbelievable number of extras, which gives it an epic dimension.

On first viewing, Branagh’s *Hamlet* seems to comply with Hollywood modes of realistic cinematography; it fits nicely with such Hollywood classics as *Dr Zhivago*, *War and Peace*<sup>9</sup> or *Gone with the Wind*. Yet, although Branagh does not subvert Hollywood ideology, his movie may still be regarded as a self-referential

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commentary on the passage from stage to screen, a constant discussion on their respective conventions.<sup>10</sup> As Anny Crunelle observes, casting actors who are stage legends, such as Judi Dench and John Gielgud, and screen ones, Jack Lemmon or Charlton Heston, shows Branagh's attempt to blend theatre and cinema.<sup>11</sup> In the case of the first, Branagh pays homage to their contribution to the history of Shakespeare in performance and a tradition they have transmitted to his own generation.<sup>12</sup> Lemmon and Heston, on the other hand, remind one of Hollywood blockbusters, such as *Some Like it Hot*, *Spartacus* and *Ben Hur*.

Elizabethans went to "hear" a play; contemporary audience goes to "see" a movie. Realizing that the cinema is primarily a visual medium, Branagh provides the "oral" with the "aural". When on Hamlet's request the First Player delivers his speech on Priam's slaughter, Branagh inserts a film that illustrates his words. The screenplay reads, "Exterior/TROY Night. Cut to ... the distracted and hysterical HECUBA running among the debris ... We track into her face as she sees the savage murder of her husband. She opens her mouth to scream. No sound emerges. Just empty, aching grief."<sup>13</sup> It is interesting that Judi Dench (Hecuba) and John Gielgud (Priam), both famous for their delivery of Shakespearean verse, are silenced here and become actors in a dumb show. Instead, we hear Charlton Heston, who takes over from Branagh, a cinema actor substituting for a theatre one.<sup>14</sup> The piece he acts, however, quickly turns into a movie, marking a passage from the metadramatic to the metacinematic.

This short film within the film is clearly distinguishable from the main narrative by its silence. On the one hand, by invading the film's narrative such an illustration creates an awareness that we are watching a movie. The film within the film doubles the cinematic illusion reminding us of the fictionality of our experience, which is further reinforced by the casting of two stars bringing about its own intertextual associations. On the other hand, however, the insertion of the slaughter of Priam may render the main action of the movie

more “real”, as compared to the less “real” film it encloses.

Another instance of a silent film within the film is one that should bear the title of “Fortinbras” or, as suggested by Robert F. Willson, “The Revenge of Fortinbras”.<sup>15</sup> This silent film reminds one of Polanski’s *Macbeth*, which embeds a silent movie about Ross within the talking picture of *Macbeth*.<sup>16</sup> Willson even argues that Branagh’s Fortinbras acquires far more significance in the movie than he does in the play, and virtually shifts emphasis in the final scene from Hamlet’s tragedy to Fortinbras’s victory.<sup>17</sup> With his mounting the throne, the statue of Old Hamlet is torn down, which symbolises a new beginning under a new ruler and at the same time a renunciation of the past. Therefore, Horatio’s promise to tell Hamlet’s story runs counter to the images on screen – the process of erasing the memory. As Willson concludes, “By privileging Fortinbras’s figure and fortune, Branagh’s *Hamlet* becomes not the story of the prince’s tragedy but the heroic tale of Fortinbras’s rise to power”.<sup>18</sup>

According to film theorists flashbacks are films within the films due to their partial autonomy.<sup>19</sup> While the story proper is assumed to take place in the present, flashbacks are meant to reveal key episodes in the development of the problem to highlight or contrast specific points in the story. While some may spring, as it were, from the characters’ mind, usually indicated by the close-up of their face, others function as directorial inserts that transport the viewer to an earlier time to enhance his/her experience. On the one hand, flashbacks might seem to impede the narrative as fiction because they are “holes” in the surface narrative and create the feeling of detachment. On the other, they appear to draw us deeper into the surface narrative by aligning us with the point of view of one of the characters. Kenneth Branagh adds many flashbacks to his *Hamlet*, some of them serving as illustrations, others as representations of the past.

One of the most controversial flashbacks in Branagh’s *Hamlet* is the lovemaking scene between Hamlet and Ophelia, which clears one of the mysteries of the play about the nature of their relationship.

It also becomes a strong interpretative statement about a possible reason for Ophelia's madness. The first one is the flashback inserted in Act 1, scene 3, when Polonius interrogates Ophelia about Hamlet and forbids her to see him. He does not believe in Hamlet's honourable intentions towards his daughter. When Kate Winslet's Ophelia reacts with "rising panic",<sup>20</sup> "He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders / Of his affection to me", he cruelly mocks her naïveté, "You speak like a green girl ... Do you believe his 'tenders' as you call them?" The first flashback is a reaction to her embarrassment when she answers in confusion, "I do not know my lord, what I should think". Polonius continues lecturing, while she is trying to defend her standpoint almost crying in despair, holding to the last hope that her father is mistaken, "My lord, he hath importuned me with love in honourable fashion ... hath given countenance to his speech, my lord, / With all the vows of heaven", her father's harsh words prompt her to recollect her lovemaking with the Prince. The images attack her mind with rapid flashes and last quite briefly, enough, however, for the audience to understand and see her humiliation and fear of an impending rejection by her lover. She lies to her father. According to Carol Chillington Rutter, "This Ophelia is not 'honest': neither virgin nor candid. Sexually practised, and a practised liar who, *post mortem*, makes a credulous ninny of her brother who buries her as a virgin, she ceases to represent any value alternative to Gertrude's".<sup>21</sup> However, if this Ophelia is such an experienced court courtesan and a callous liar, why does she fall into madness and in a moment of sanity, as shown in the film, decide to commit suicide to regain some of her dignity? Winslet's Ophelia is not a calculating, heartless young woman of the world. Seeing her as such would diminish and ridicule her immense personal tragedy, as shown by Branagh. In his interpretation she is just a girl who did not think twice and whose family's advice comes tragically too late.

The reflexivity of film within the film figure in Branagh may be caused by the repetition of the same flashback throughout the main

narrative. While in the previous scene it seems to be triggered by Ophelia's memory, the source of the next one is more ambiguous and questionable. For example, in Act 2, scene 2, Branagh's Polonius makes Ophelia read the letter written to her by Hamlet in front of the King and Queen, reinforcing her humiliation and despair. She cannot finish, however, and runs away unable to control her emotions or confront the past reality expressed in the lines of the poem, so in opposition to the present status quo. The moment she leaves, Polonius finishes the letter which is intercut by a flashback transporting us to that memorable night in Ophelia's room. It is difficult to establish from whose point of view the affair is presented. Since Ophelia is absent, it cannot be her flashback. Is it Polonius's fantasy then? The last instance when we see the same flashback is in Ophelia's mad scene. On the line "Young men will do't if they come to it, / By Cock, they are to blame..." (4.5.60-61), she flings herself to the floor and simulates sex while the flashback appears on the screen. This time, it seems to spring from Ophelia's mind.

Branagh makes a clear interpretative statement. To him one of the reasons for Ophelia's madness is the sudden loss of the tangible happiness she might have found in her relationship with Hamlet. We observe her confusion and embarrassment when both her brother and father warn her against something she has already committed, a secret she cannot share, a stain on her reputation that she is slowly beginning to understand. Branagh justifies his choice of the flashback as psychologically plausible despite the accusation that it deprives the text of its ambiguities or mysteries and does the thinking for the spectator. In his opinion, Hamlet indulges in an affair with Ophelia as a result of the trauma and grief he experiences after his father's unexpected death. He seeks comfort in her bedchamber.<sup>22</sup> Introducing these flashbacks, Branagh clears the story line and explains the characters' psychology, whose behaviour could otherwise seem extreme or phoney for the contemporary viewer.

However, due to the ambiguous point of view of the above mentioned flashbacks, there seems to be room left for interpretation.



It cannot pass unnoticed that while the first and the last are triggered by Ophelia's memory and her trauma, the one in Act 2, scene 2 should logically belong to Polonius, which makes little sense. Interestingly, Branagh never uses the same inserts to motivate the Prince's behaviour, not even during the funeral scene when he says, "I loved Ophelia". (5.1.266) Perhaps Ophelia fantasises, suggests David Kennedy Sauer.<sup>23</sup> I believe that since nothing distinguishes them from the main body of the movie in terms of their montage or camera work, the audience is meant to accept them for an objective illustration of the past reality, whether they spring from Ophelia's deranged mind or serve as a directorial insert shown from the perspective of the master camera, as in Act 2, scene 2. They are not Ophelia's wishful thinking or fantasies, but her true history, just as in the case of the miniature history of Fortinbras embedded in the main body of the movie

In defence of another flashback that occurs in Act 1, scene 5 Branagh said, "Because the Ghost's narrative is so long, it simply cried out for illustration".<sup>24</sup> The Ghost's account of his murder in flashback performs two functions: illustration and representation of the past. He "unfolds a tale", which begins with a cue: "Sleeping in my orchard...". In several flashbacks, shot in slow motion to differentiate them from the main narrative, we are shown Old Hamlet sleeping outdoors, the royal family playing curling, Claudius glancing at Gertrude with desire, Hamlet indulging in a conversation with his father. Finding the visual representation for the Ghost's words, Branagh even films Claudius giving Gertrude presents and their ensuing embrace. Then, in faster motion, we are shown the undoing of a corset, which seems to imply their adulterous relationship. With the next flashback the Ghost's narrative transports us to the orchard scene where we witness Claudius pour poison into the King Hamlet's ear.

While the Ghost tells his story, the flashbacks are intercut with Hamlet staring into the distance as if seeing them unfold in front of him. In the final part of his narration, Hamlet's and the Ghost's

eyes are shown in a quick exchange of close-ups. While the beginning of the story was an apparent visualization of the events from Old Hamlet's perspective, as the flashbacks are intercut by the close-up of his eyes, the latter clearly belongs to Hamlet. It seems that the moment they stare into each other's eyes, they establish a link, a strong spiritual connection that enables them to see not only in their "mind's eye", but also in each other's "mind's eye". Their eyes become passages to the past. It is through them that the history unfolds for the spectator who is supposed to take it for granted and accept as true.

That the Ghost's film within the film is an objective account of the past is further exemplified during the Mousetrap, which brings about the same images - the murder scene, but this time from Claudius's point of view. The moment Lucianus enters the stage and begins his speech, Hamlet grabs the poison from him and turns to Claudius. The camera tracks faster towards Hamlet and the King. The close-up of Claudius's paralysed face staring into the distance is intercut by a number of flashbacks from the poisoning scene, making it obvious for the viewer that they belong to his memory. Another instance is the prayer scene, during which Hamlet is contemplating murder. He is looking into the distance bringing about pictures from the start of the movie, including the murder scene, but one image he appears to see is strange - Claudius and Polonius hiding behind the door in the nunnery scene, which must be shown from the perspective of the master camera.

Merging the apparently subjective memories from the past with objective ones shot from the perspective of the master camera appears to suggest that they are both meant to be taken for true depiction of the past since they do not differ from one another in terms of camera angles or montage. They are of crucial importance for the viewer's interpretation of the film's reality. In Branagh they are all "true" versions. As such, the reflexivity born from these devices does not jeopardize diegesis itself, but rather participates in its development.<sup>25</sup>

In his Preface to "*Screenplay adaptation of William Shakespeare's Hamlet*" Michael Almereyda observes, "Wells describes his film as "a rough charcoal sketch" of the play, and this remark, alongside the finished picture, provoked in me a sharp suspicion that you don't need lavish production values to make a Shakespearean movie that's accessible and alive".<sup>26</sup> Almereyda's *Hamlet* is not only a modest adaptation compared to Branagh's, but also a statement about his legacy as a film director. As Samuel Crowl notices, "His ragged, jagged inventive film is haunted by the substantial shadow of Orson Welles, oddly missing in the current revival of the Shakespeare film genre".<sup>27</sup> Similarly to Welles's *Macbeth*, Almereyda shot his film "fast and cheap" giving it certain spontaneity, urgency and intimacy that is characteristic of Welles's filmmaking.<sup>28</sup> Almereyda acknowledges that his movie is "an attempt at Hamlet", "a patchwork of intuitions, images, ideas".<sup>29</sup> His statement about not intending to "illustrate the text" seems to define his film in opposition to Branagh's.<sup>30</sup>

Almereyda's adaptation of *Hamlet* substitutes metatheatre for metacinema. It tries to translate most of the play's self-referential quality to the new medium. No longer play-like, this film is overtly cinematic, translating its theatrical metaphor into a cinematic one. Its main protagonist is an amateur filmmaker and actor. He is obsessed with the camera and the cinematic answering to Shakespeare's Hamlet's obsession with the stage and the theatrical. He is the author of the Mousetrap, which in this movie is not longer a play within the film, but a film within the film. He also videotapes everything he sees with his Pixel camera. The tapes become a video diary full of memories from the past but also his reflection upon the present.

In fact, one of the most important characters in the movie apart from the main protagonist is the camera. First of all, it becomes an intermediary with the audience since it takes on Horatio's function from the play in that it serves as a prologue and epilogue and fills in the gaps for the audience. In that respect, Hamlet's video diary

performs a function similar to flashbacks. It allows us to see the Elsinore from before the opening of the play, something rarely done, only in Svend Gade's *Hamlet* (1920) and Kenneth Branagh's.

However, as compared to the use of flashbacks in Branagh, Almereyda's *Hamlet's* diary is much more personal and increases the intimacy of the projection. He decides when to switch his monitor on and bring the memories of the past back to life. To distinguish it from the main body of the movie, his diary is shot in black and white. It is a private video diary, a family album full of memories and old photographs of a deceased relative. Since it dominates the first half of the movie, the images from the video diary seep into the spectator's memory, creating what might be called a "collective memory of the past".

That *Hamlet* is a play to do with remembering has been discussed by critics<sup>31</sup> but has never been so clearly pinpointed by any of the previous *Hamlet* movies. Malgorzata Sugiera observes that approximately to the end of the 70s the wave of interpretation of *Hamlet* moved towards the importance played by memory and the process of forgetting. *Hamlet* seems to be discussed no longer in the light of revenge drama since the focus is on what and why the characters remember.<sup>32</sup> Marjorie Garber writes that memory does not facilitate action but actually blocks it and the process of remembering events and people becomes so obsessive that it turns the people and things remembered into a kind of fetish from which an individual cannot escape.<sup>33</sup> For most of the first half of the movie, Hawke's *Hamlet* sits slouched in his flat in front of a computer screen, reminiscing and recollecting, unable to free himself from memories and move on. In Act 1, scene 5 the Ghost says, "Adieu, adieu, Hamlet. Remember me", to which *Hamlet* responds:

Remember thee?  
 Yea, from the table of my memory  
 I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,  
 All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,

That youth and observation copied there,  
And thy commandment all alone shall live  
Within the book and volume of my brain  
Unmixed with baser matter. (97-104)

In Almereyda's adaptation, Hamlet's long response is cut. This Hamlet does not need to "wipe away all trivial fond records" to remember since he has never really forgotten. In fact, the Ghost's words: "Remember me", which are meant to prompt Hamlet into action, result in his even greater entrapment in the past as he constantly ruminates over the history preserved on his tapes.

*Hamlet* becomes a story of memories. Hawke's Hamlet is very much immersed in the world of the past and refuses to accept the present status quo. However, in a morbid kind of way, his obsession with the past realises itself on many different levels. It is worth noting that contrary to the other characters in the film, it is difficult to call him up to date or fashionable. He looks casual despite wearing suits and his flat is a strange clash of hi-tech equipment and stylised furniture. He seems uneasy in the media saturated world and despite the fact that he is himself a filmmaker, the camera he has is a toy one, which sets him in opposition to Denmark Corporation and the values it represents.

Hamlet not only makes his own film diary, but he is a cinephile who likes watching them, too. This, however, again links him with the past as he seems to feel nostalgia for both the black and white '50s talkies and early silent movies. His fascination with old movies becomes evident in his choice of fragments for his *Mousetrap*, which is a collage of a number of various films. Most of them are fragments from black and white American family series and silent period movies. The clips on his TV screen also bring us back to the past. He never watches any contemporary fiction. He feels more at home with James Dean's brooding melancholic and John Gielgud's lyrical Prince. Both of them, however, are the ghosts from the past and they only come alive on screen.

However, Hamlet's screen is not only occupied by the ghosts of famous actors or old movies, but other literally and metaphorically dead people. The black and white images of his film are striking compared to the bright colours of the main narrative. There is a sense of decay in its lack of colour, but also a sense of history. His film is full of ghostly figures from before the opening of the play who are now the shadows of their former selves: his now deceased father, his now stained mother and his now disloyal Ophelia. The fact that he records a family album is both structurally useful to contrast the past with the present but also in terms of its link with the past. The sense of aging and decay is further intensified by Ophelia reading a book whose cover shows an old wrinkled man, a probable allusion to Hamlet's words (199-202) in Act 2, scene 2. Moreover, however much "the moving pictures" Hamlet's diary is, and movement is associated with life and energy, he often freezes some of the images, which turns them into still photographs. It deprives them of the inherent characteristic of the medium and self-referentially comments on the origin of the movies. Seeing Ophelia's face frozen on the computer screen also foreshadows her imminent death and creates another link with the world of the dead. On the other hand, when he speeds the pictures, the figures inhabiting his screen appear ridiculous, cartoon-like and unreal.

What is significant, however, is that apart from refreshing memories and bringing people back to life, the inner film, from perspective, encloses the characters soon to be dead. Gertrude, Ophelia and Hamlet all join the ghostly world for real. They no longer walk in this ghostly parade on his small laptop screen. In the end of the movie, when Hamlet is dying, the close-up of his face shows his eyes moving swiftly in a horizontal manner as if watching a film. He is not looking at Horatio bending over him, but into the distance where in his "mind's eye" he sees various events and people from his life. The pictures passing in front of his eyes at the moment of death are without colour. It seems to suggest that he has already stepped into the world of the dead. It may also indicate,

however, that Hamlet's sight was always "colourless", and that this is the reason why his personal family album is black and white. Throughout the whole movie his strong link with the past has been thoroughly and persistently established. Perhaps already in the first scene of the movie, when we see him on the screen of his laptop, he is a walking ghost who stares into his camera so closely as if wanting it to swallow him.

Although pertaining to different cinematic traditions and claiming different legacies, both Kenneth Branagh and Michael Almereyda to some extent translate *Hamlet's* metatheatricity to screen. Branagh's numerous silent flashbacks are not mere illustrations. They are his cinematic equivalent to Shakespeare's metadramatic inserts. Embedded in the main narrative, one finds silent movies, personal stories of usually neglected characters whose lines are often cut, for instance Ophelia, or who often do not even appear in the movie at all, for example Fortinbras. By investing them with stories and lives of their own, Branagh brings them into spotlight. As a result, we watch Hamlet's revenge tragedy along with Ophelia's personal melodrama and Fortinbras's war movie. Knowing the contemporary marketing strategies, Branagh seems to give us a few stories at the price of one. Michael Almereyda's version is much more personal and Hamlet-oriented. The film within the film doubles the cinematic illusion and creates a strong metalinguistic awareness that we are watching a movie. In this respect, it seems to duplicate the play's metatheatrical aspect. Furthermore, the idea of Hamlet as an internal filmmaker has created an opportunity to explore the themes of memory and entrapment within the world of the past. It is a form of mourning, masochistic torture and a kind of alternative reality for Hamlet, unable to live in the present.

## Notes

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28. Ibid.
29. Michael Almereyda, Preface to his *Screenplay Adaptation of William Shakespeare's "Hamlet"*, p. vii.
30. Ibid.
31. See R. Helgerson, *What Hamlet Remembers, Shakespeare Studies* (1977); E. Pechter, *Remembering "Hamlet" Or, How it Feels to Go like a Crab Backwards, Shakespeare Survey* 39 (CUP, 1987); K. Cartwright, "Remembering *Hamlet*", *Tragedy and Its Double: The Rhythms of Audience Response* (University Park, 1991).
32. Ma<sup>3</sup>gorzata Sugiera, *Wariacje Szekspirowskie w powojennym dramacie europejskim* (Kraków: Universitas, 1997), pp. 20-22
33. Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality* (New York; London: Methuen, 1987), in Ma<sup>3</sup>gorzata Sugiera, *Wariacje Szekspirowskie w powojennym dramacie europejskim* (Kraków: Universitas, 1997), pp. 20-22.

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*Hamlet* (Germany, 1920). Dir. Svend Gade

*Hamlet* (UK, 1948). Dir. Laurence Olivier

*Hamlet* (UK, 1996). Dir. Kenneth Branagh

*Hamlet* (USA, 2000). Dir. Michael Almereyda

*Henry V* (UK, 1944). Dir. Laurence Olivier

*Henry V* (UK, 1989). Dir. Kenneth Branagh

*In the Bleak Midwinter* (UK, 1996). Dir. Kenneth Branagh

*Macbeth* (USA, 1948). Dir. Orson Welles

*Macbeth* (UK, 1971). Dir. Roman Polanski

*Othello* (Morocco/Italy, 1952). Dir. Orson Welles

*Richard III* (UK, 1955). Dir. Laurence Olivier