

# Alas, Poor Hamlet: Film Popularizers and the Prince of Denmark

By Ace G. Pilkington

Hamlet asks the Player King to speak a speech from a play that “pleased not the million; ‘twas caviary to the general” (2.2.446–7)<sup>1</sup>, and the result of this unpopularity was, we are told, that the play was never acted or was acted only once. Many directors seem to have felt that Shakespeare in general (and *Hamlet* in particular) was caviar which would not please the untrained tastes of the millions of filmgoers they hoped to attract, and they set out to make the plays more palatable, blander, easier to digest, and therefore considerably more bankable. The Olivier and Zeffirelli Hamlets are especially good (or bad) examples of this process, but Kevin Kline, Michael Almereyda, and even Kenneth Branagh in his complete text version are also among the guilty.

Olivier’s co-screenwriter, Alan Dent, is typical. He justified the heavy cutting and the rewriting of lines in their version by saying, “One has to choose between making the meaning clear to 2,000,000 cinemagoers and causing 2,000 Shakespearean experts to wince.”<sup>2</sup> Zeffirelli’s vision of his audience is equally unflattering. He says in the short HBO film *The Making of Hamlet*, “Think of it, nobody knows anything about *Hamlet*, about Shakespeare, they don’t know anything. They go there, in a dark room, and they see something on the screen and that’s what?” Here, Zeffirelli rolls his eyes upward in an expression of vapid idiocy.<sup>3</sup> Almereyda’s assessment is also disquieting. He describes himself as “just one more blind man fumbling his way around this particularly spectacular elephant.”<sup>4</sup> At least, however, he has some idea of the splendor of the animal, and he knows its name.

The denigration from directors such as Olivier and Zeffirelli is two-fold: the audience is too unintelligent or too uninformed to grasp the meaning of a classic, and the author is too unskillful or too uninteresting to convey that meaning or compel the audience to work it out. In a short film titled *Mel Gibson Goes Back to School*, Mel Gibson asks a number of young students for their reaction to *Hamlet*. The word he gets and repeats with relish is “Boring.”<sup>5</sup>

Since all performance is a species of criticism—and Olivier, in fact, once called his film “An Essay in *Hamlet*”<sup>6</sup> this particular attitude might be compared to various contemporary critical theories. It is, for example, like a type of deconstruction which threads the labyrinth of complexity, not to reach the center of ambiguity but the ultimate in simplicity, reducing the play to a body without a head, supposedly a filmic mirror for the audience. Or it might be seen as an exercise in hermeneutics where the whole is intuited as impossibly complex and the parts are then rearranged and simplified, making at last an entity which can be grasped in its small entirety. But the modern critical theory which most closely approaches what is happening here is reception aesthetics. However, what I call the audience-author contempt theory postulates incredibly narrow horizons, minimal current knowledge, and

almost no connection between past and present. All texts are regarded as closed books, closed not only by readers' illiteracy but also by writers' illegibility.

I do not wish to suggest that the *Hamlets* I am discussing are without merit or that all or even most of their artistic choices were dictated by contempt for the audience and the author. I certainly would not condemn even the freest of Shakespearean adaptations, and I have great admiration for Olivier's own *Henry V* and for Orson Welles's *Chimes at Midnight*, perhaps the most complete restructuring of Shakespeare ever to retain a Shakespearean shape.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, some elements of the Kline and Branagh films and the overall forms of the Olivier, Zeffirelli, and Almereyda films were the result of an attitude that essentially changes and limits the nature of the original work.

At nearly three hours, Kevin Kline's *Hamlet* is the longest of these films (except, of course, for Branagh's) and the truest to the text, but it, too, finds means to sweeten Shakespeare's supposedly bitter medicine, from contemporary costumes to misreadings for the sake of humor. John Simon writes, "Modern dress is fine, but not if it has Horatio wear a sport coat and heavy wool shirt at a court function. And not if Hamlet and Laertes, at different times, appear in mod shirts and tapered pants like waiters in our trendier restaurants."<sup>8</sup>

And not, I might add, if Claudius looks like a survival from the days of the British Raj while Laertes seems a strange cross between a yuppie and a wise guy.

The costuming serves no clear function except perhaps to help the despised audience feel more at home. The same may be said for much of the cutting. Kevin Kline's *Hamlet* began as part of Joseph Papp's thirty-six play Shakespeare marathon, a star-studded enterprise which prompted David Blum to ask "Is there a reason—other than ticket sales—to hire Hollywood stars to play roles for which they may be ill suited?"<sup>9</sup> In the film incarnation, Kline became co-director<sup>10</sup> as well as star, though the cutting retains both a theatrical and populist flavor.

The politics in the play is almost excised. Gone is Horatio's disquisition on the unquiet Danish state and with it the second appearance of the Ghost to Horatio and Marcellus. Claudius's political response to Fortinbras is eliminated; instead, "So much for him" (1.2.25) is misread as a joke with Claudius crumpling a letter as a visual illustration of his supposed contempt. Even though Fortinbras's army makes its march across Denmark to cue the "All occasions do inform against me" soliloquy, his reappearance at the end of the play and his claiming the Danish throne seem, in terms of the text we have been given, inexplicable and shocking. Cornelius and Voltemand, of course, lose their lines and function, even though Voltemand is still listed in the credits.

A similar, if less severe, fate awaits Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Their meeting with the king and queen to receive their instructions at 2.2.1–39 and their report to their employers after their questioning of Hamlet at 3.1.1–28 are cut. Also eliminated is Hamlet's forecast of how he will defeat his two schoolfellows at 3.4.203–11. And perhaps the most unkindest cut of all, at least for R and G themselves and possibly for Tom Stoppard, is 5.2.372—"That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead."

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The tension between the mighty opposites of king and prince is lessened by omitting Claudius's first confession of guilt at 3.1.49–54. Historical perspective on the nature of honor and political struggle vanishes along with most of Hamlet's speculations about Alexander and all of his ruminations on Julius Caesar (5.1.205–18).

Lest the audience should be troubled by cultural references outside their experience, the curtain is drawn on the war of the theatres, and no one need be shocked by a boy actor as Player Queen, since all lines referring to transvestitism have been cut and a woman cast in the role.<sup>11</sup> Troublesome lines such as "He is fat and scant of breath" (5.2.288) simply disappear. Nevertheless, by comparison with the Olivier, Zeffirelli, and Almereyda *Hamlets*, the Kline version is a model of responsible Shakespearean production.

In Olivier's film no trace of politics is left: Cornelius and Voltemand, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and even Fortinbras are entirely eliminated. As Donald Skoller points out, "Olivier cut his film adaptation to 155 minutes,<sup>12</sup> and in doing so he reduced the original 3,777 lines of dialogue to less than 1,500."<sup>13</sup> Not content with cutting more than half the play, Olivier has rearranged scenes, rewritten lines, and changed a number of words to protect the ignorant. For example, the "To be or not to be" soliloquy comes after Hamlet's confrontation with Ophelia, not before, and his intimate praise of Horatio precedes the duel rather than the play within the play.

Perhaps nothing else in the production is as annoying as the words that were changed to make the meaning clear for the poor, stupid, yet numerous cinemagoers. "Persist," for instance, replaces "persever" (1.2.92); "mocked" is substituted for "taxed" (1.4.18); "reputation" for "addition" (1.4.20); "quiet" for "secure" (1.5.61); "stay" for "keep" (3.1.151); "stain" for "tinct" (3.4.92); "sensitive" for "capable" (3.4.128); and "madness" for "ecstasy" (3.4.140).

If these changes seem pointless, what is one to think of substituting "think fit" for "think meet" at 1.5.171, but using "'Tis meet" with no change at 3.3.31? Has the audience enlarged its vocabulary in the interval? If the audience cannot grasp these simple words without help, how can they ever be expected to catch the meaning of the play?

One of Olivier/Dent's more notorious changes, "I'll make a ghost of him that hinders me" rather than "of him that lets me" (1.4.85), demonstrates part of the difficulty. It is hard to take seriously Shakespearean Bowdlerizers who are not well-versed enough in the scanning<sup>14</sup> of poetry to realize that "lets" is a word of one syllable, while "hinders" has two. The Elizabethan word "stops," with which most twentieth century audiences are familiar, might have been a better choice. When the defining duo really get into their stride, the effect is something like Mel Brooks's "I hear the handsome young Prince coming" in *To Be or Not to Be*. "In the same figure like the king that's dead" (1.1.41) becomes "In the same figure like the dead King Hamlet." "Recks not his own rede" (1.3.51) turns into "minds not his own creed." "A more horrid hent" (3.3.88) changes to "a more dark intent"; and "I do doubt the hatch and the disclose / Will be some danger" (3.1.169–170) becomes "I do fear the unheeded consequence will be some danger."

Still, however irritating these changes may be, they are not as bad as the cuts, amounting to nothing less than the evisceration of the play. Olivier's voiceover, "This is the tragedy of a man who could not make up his mind," which he says he took from the Gary Cooper film *Souls at Sea*,<sup>15</sup> might more appropriately have been, "This is the tragedy of *Hamlet* made simple-minded." With the play's political complexities eliminated, Hamlet becomes an immobile young man troubled by the twin demons of indecision and incest. Olivier begins his film with the lines from 1.4.23–36, which are often used by critics who find tragic flaws in Shakespeare's heroes, written on the screen. Olivier omits lines and changes "Or by some habit that too much o'erleavens" (29) into "Or by some habit grown too much." He reads the words for the benefit of the illiterate and then adds the line from the Cooper film for the unintelligent.

In this cut-up, cut-down *Hamlet*, the Prince cannot act until he resolves his feelings for his mother and his girlfriend and determines they are not one and the same. As Bernice Kliman says, "Hamlet's feelings about Gertrude and Ophelia are the centers of his motivation. The notorious Freudian interpretation, carried over from the 1937 Old Vic production, is muted because Ophelia in the film has become as important to Hamlet as is his mother."<sup>16</sup>

The elimination of all the politics and much of the poetry has resulted in a production that ignores the complications of policy and the fiery dynamic of revenge tragedy. Hamlet's circumstances have been so altered that it is no longer clear as Fredson Thayer Bowers writes in *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy* that "Hamlet, despite his firm purpose, is actually helpless except for the contrivance of the play to reveal the king's guilt."<sup>17</sup> Instead, he is, as the *Life* photo essay on Olivier's *Hamlet* put it, "racked by his indecision."<sup>18</sup> Michael Almercyda's slacker *Hamlet* makes essentially the same cuts and puts Ethan Hawke into the same situation, though his problem, as one would expect, is inaction rather than indecision.

In exchange for the words and motivations he has deleted, Olivier has provided pictures—dumbshows for an audience that cannot quite grasp the words. The ghost's account of the murder is accompanied by a flashback, Hamlet comes to Ophelia's closet in disarray, the pirate ship attacks as Horatio hears the story, and Ophelia floats ridiculously downstream just before she drowns. Much of Olivier's production philosophy is summed up in his cutting the play-within-the-play and keeping the dumbshow.

Ultimately, Olivier's *Hamlet* is informed by a nineteenth century staginess, equally ill-suited for film and Shakespeare. Barbara Everett calls it, "now of course very dated, but in this respect representative of a whole surviving nineteenth century vision still shaping otherwise good stage productions and critical essays."<sup>19</sup> In James M. Welsh's words, "Olivier has been considered an actor's actor, and the stage is and has been his proper medium. Other British actors have made smoother and more complete transitions to the screen. . . . Nicol Williamson's Hamlet is splendid on film, arguably more plausible than Olivier's."<sup>20</sup>

And Bernice Kliman sums up, "Olivier's *Hamlet* is not Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. It fails, then, to be a substitute for or even an illustration of Shakespeare's text."<sup>21</sup>

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Perhaps, to do a bit of Freudian analysis of my own, Olivier, when faced with the complexities and uncertainties of *Hamlet* retreated to the place where he felt safest—the stage—and to that stage milieu where he was subconsciously most secure—the nineteenth century. And perhaps his *Henry V* is more successful because in that film he had greater faith in Shakespeare, more trust in his audience, and a truer estimate of his own powers.

At two hours and fifteen minutes, Zeffirelli's film seems short for a *Hamlet* until one compares it to 112 minutes for Almereyda's. Still, most of the politics is gone, while sex and violence are foregrounded; Zeffirelli has given us *Hamlet* as thriller. In addition, he does his best to get the attention of the headless multitude, using big-name movie stars instead of Shakespearean actors for his main roles.<sup>22</sup> And to hold that attention once he has it, he breaks one stage scene into many filmed ones, simultaneously simplifying and illustrating the material, stretching the visuals to keep the audience watching.

One of the best examples of Zeffirelli's technique comes at the beginning of the movie. He eliminates the first scene, ghost and all, removes both the politics and the Hamlet/Claudius opposition from the second scene, and films it in eight different parts. Zeffirelli's first scene is in a royal mausoleum at the burial of Hamlet's father. The first words are spoken by Claudius: "Hamlet, think of us / As of a father . . ." (2.2.107–108). The scene shifts to the court for the announcement of the wedding of Claudius and Gertrude, then shifts again to a library/book bindery for the business with Laertes. Zeffirelli's fourth scene is the exterior of the castle for a wordless conference between Claudius and Gertrude, and scene five takes us inside to still another room, where Hamlet, who has been offscreen since the court scene, discusses his college plans with his aunt/mother and uncle/father and then, after Gertrude signals Claudius to leave, with his mother alone. To conclude this segment of the action without the new king, Gertrude has been given some of his lines. Scene six features Gertrude running downstairs and skipping off with two ladies-in-waiting, and we next return to Hamlet and his interior room for scene seven, the "O that this too too sullied flesh would melt" soliloquy, which also contains scene eight when Hamlet looks out a window and sees Claudius on horseback with Gertrude reaching up to kiss him. One is left with the impression that this court is not only equestrian but also peripatetic. Unfortunately, all the tension which Shakespeare has built in is dissipated by the shifting of sets and the tracking of cameras.

Zeffirelli was clearly influenced by Olivier, one might almost say blinded. Brad Darrach, in a *Life* article revealingly titled, "Mad Max Plays Hamlet," quotes Zeffirelli as saying, "I wanted a new kind of Hamlet. We haven't had one on the screen since Larry Olivier played him in 1948."<sup>23</sup> Even giving Zeffirelli the benefit of the doubt and assuming he means the big screen, that is an extraordinary statement; apparently, he ignores films of *Hamlet* with the same gusto that he cuts lines from the script. A further example of the impact of the Olivier version comes from Glenn Close in *The Making of Hamlet*: "The first day of shooting he [Mel Gibson] was given by one of the producers the actual shirt that Olivier wore in his famous

*Hamlet*." And Gibson tells of making "sure that I was in the hotel room by myself, with the lights out, and I tried this shirt on. Gradually I got the courage to turn the lights on, and I found that it was probably a little too small, but it fit well enough."

In fact, the relationship between the two films is rather like Mel Gibson's experience with Olivier's shirt: the Zeffirelli version may deal with slightly larger issues and include more characters, but the fabric of the interpretation fits both well enough. The similarities come not as single spies but in battalions. Just as in the Olivier, Laertes' leavetaking at 1.3 is interchanged with 1.2, Horatio and Marcellus' report to Hamlet on their ghostly encounter. Hamlet comes to Ophelia's closet in disarray in this film too, but here Polonius spies on them, and Ophelia's report is unnecessary. Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy follows his confrontation with Ophelia as does his meeting with the players, though Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are (briefly) alive here. Hamlet is shown on shipboard as he journeys toward England; we see him changing the letters, but the pirates do not appear. We also, as in the Olivier, see Ophelia's drowning while Gertrude does a voice over.

Perhaps the most unfortunate similarity between the two films is the Freudian interpretation of the relationship between Hamlet and Gertrude. Partly this is the fault of Glenn Close's refusal to act her age or even anything close to it. She says in *The Making of Hamlet*, "My Gertrude is very alive. I think she had Hamlet at a very early age, married a much older man. And all her sensuality, all her kind of physical comfort, she got from her son. . . . She's very athletic, she's vital, she's a stunning person, she's a kind of woman that three men are revolving around."<sup>24</sup>

Franco Zeffirelli comments that Hamlet is "mad about this creature, this mother. He's jealous of the wind that touches her cheeks," and Mel Gibson's version of the same sentiment is "When she abandons him and runs off with his uncle. . . . He's lost his gal, in a way" (*The Making of Hamlet*). The result of this wrongheadedness, this misinterpretation that no Elizabethan audience would have swallowed,<sup>25</sup> is a bed scene where Hamlet's wrestling with his mother, his movements mimicking the sex act, and the passionate kiss Gertrude gives him prompted some of my Shakespeare students to conclude that the Ghost entered not to hurry Hamlet on to his revenge or to chide him for being too rough with his mother, but to prevent him from having sex with her.

It is Zeffirelli's contention that he is "using a language that will make clear and accessible every single word of William Shakespeare."<sup>26</sup> He has, in fact, committed sins of omission and commission, of reduction and distortion. He says, "The poetry of the original language, the original poetical language of Shakespeare, is not what makes it internationally unbettable, with no peers."<sup>27</sup> And since he does not value the poetry, he has no qualms about jettisoning it.<sup>28</sup> But the words are the meaning of the play, and without them that meaning can become something very different, the play itself something smaller. In spite of the beauty of Zeffirelli's visual images, in spite of Mel Gibson's gritty, believable Hamlet, in spite of the fact that the film betters the Olivier version it imitates, I think it has lost too much because it has demanded too little of itself and its audience and taken too little from William Shakespeare.

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Some of Zeffirell's problems come, of course, from using stars instead of actors. This can, in the current climate of moviemaking, be nearly unavoidable as when Fox approved Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* "only when Luhrmann showed them video extracts of DiCaprio as Romeo" (Rosenthal 2000, 133). Even most critics who like that film have had major reservations about DiCaprio's performance, and ironically, the studio had been "more inclined to greenlight another director's version of the play, with Ethan Hawke as Romeo."<sup>29</sup> Branagh has similar difficulties in his *Hamlet*, where, in the words of Daniel Rosenthal, "Misguided casting is" the "greatest flaw" (Rosenthal 2000, 33), and "engrossing performances . . . have to fight against star cameos" (32). Branagh also adds a relentless sound track to help out the inferior music of Shakespeare's verse and a certain amount of sensationalism seasoned with nudity such as a flashback showing Hamlet and Ophelia making love.

Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet* is, in many ways, the natural result of the wrong-headed versions of the play that preceded it. Ethan Hawke's "prince becomes a variation on the self-pitying "slacker" he first played in *Reality Bites*"<sup>30</sup> just as Mel Gibson's prince is a variation of his violent and suicidal character from *Lethal Weapon*. In such films, Shakespeare's text is pruned into whatever peculiar topiary shape is required by the latest fashion. For Almereyda, Hamlet, who finds himself in modern-day New York, is almost entirely disconnected from reality. When he speaks, he either whispers or mumbles—sometimes he manages both. Much of his communication comes secondhand, and he leaves important speeches on answering machines or literally phones in his lines. "There is gadgetry in virtually every scene" (Rosenthal 2000, 35), and the play-within-the-play turns into an experimental film. Hamlet speaks "To be or not to be" in the action movie section of a Blockbuster video store. Both Hamlet and Ophelia seem obsessed by photographs and unable to connect with reality. Direct confrontations between Hamlet and the other characters have been eliminated wherever possible, and where those confrontations remain, Hamlet is usually a victim. Claudius, for instance, slugs Hamlet in the stomach in order to make him tell where he has hidden the body of Polonius. His position as prince of slackers is reinforced by a group of similarly scruffy, equally purposeless friends and acquaintances, including Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

It is, I think, legitimate to ask why Hamlet should be moved to New York, transformed into the heir of the Denmark Corporation, and made to wear a Peruvian woollen hat. If the answer is in order to illuminate the nature and meaning of the play, to show Shakespeare's universality, and to make a clear connection with the modern world, then the experiment will have been justified. If, however, as seems to be the case here, the purpose was to make an unintelligible classic available to the uneducated and unintelligent by turning it into something simpler and trendier, then the experiment will not only be a failure in itself, but also the breeding ground for other and larger failures.

Though each of the films I have discussed has strengths, they illustrate, on one level, an ever-present danger in Shakespearean production, the danger that popularizing will become trivializing, that filmmakers caught between the imagined Scylla of Shakespeare's complexity and the feared Charybdis of their audience's incapacity

will drown all possibility of an authentic connection between Shakespeare's text and modern filmgoers. They also illustrate the ever-increasing danger that such attitudes will become the norm and that Shakespearean films will become little more than bits and pieces of shattered texts, twisted by sensationalism and stunts, and populated by inept but well-known performers.

### Notes

1. All act, scene, and line references to *Hamlet* are to *The Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare*, Ed. Sylvan Barnet (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972).
2. Cited in Joan Ellen Silber, "Cinematic Techniques and Interpretations in Film and Television Adaptations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*," Diss. (University of Michigan, 1973), 255.
3. *Classic Mel Gibson: the Making of Hamlet*, narr. Mel Gibson (HBO, 1991).
4. Daniel Rosenthal, *Shakespeare on Screen* (London: Hamlyn, 2000), 35.
5. *Mel Gibson Goes Back to School* (Warner Brothers, 1991).
6. Laurence Olivier, *On Acting* (London: Scepter, 1987), 180.
7. See my *Screening Shakespeare from Richard II to Henry V* (Newark, New Jersey: University of Delaware Press, 1991).
8. John Simon, "Hamlet Loves Hamlet," *New York*, 21 May 1990: 78-9.
9. David Blum, "Hollywood Shakespeare: Joe Papp Sprinkles Stardust on Twelfth Night," *New York*, 19 June 1989: 28-35.
10. Kirk Browning was co-director for the film.
11. The credits list Tanny McDonald as Player Queen/Lady-in-Waiting. Edith Oliver credits Susan Gabriel with the role, but perhaps she has been confused because Susan Gabriel also plays a lady-in-waiting. Edith Oliver, "Sweet Prince," *The New Yorker*, 21 May 1990: 69.
12. Kenneth Rothwell gives the time as 152 minutes. Kenneth Rothwell and Annabelle Henkin Melzer, *Shakespeare on Screen* (London: Mansell, 1990), 62.
13. Donald S. Skoller, "Problems of Transformation in the Adaptation of Shakespeare's Tragedies from Play-Script to Cinema," Diss. (New York University, 1968), 283. For a scene-by-scene analysis of Olivier's cuts, changes, and transpositions, see Sandra Sugarman Singer's unpublished doctoral dissertations, "Laurence Olivier Directs Shakespeare: A Study in Film Authorship (Northwestern University, 1979), 100-118.
14. Indeed Olivier does seem to see the word as difficult. "That would be scanned" (3.3.75) is changed to "that would be thought on."
15. Olivier, 177.
16. Bernice W. Kliman, *Hamlet: Film, Television, and Audio Performance* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1988), 29.
17. Fredson Thayer Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy: 1587-1642* (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1959), 99.
18. "The Tragedy of *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare: Scenes from the Olivier Film Production," *Life*, 15 March 1948: 117-27.
19. Barbara Everett, *Young Hamlet: Essays on Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Oxford:

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Clarendon Press, 1989), 6. Kliman too says Olivier "is out of date, such tableaux having gone out of style after Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree abandoned His Majesty's Theatre before World War I" (30).

20. James M. Welsh, "Interview: Kevin Kline, From Stage to Screen," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 14.4 (1986): 238-40.

21. Bernice W. Kliman, "Olivier's Hamlet: A Film-Infused Play," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 5.4 (Fall 1977): 305-14.

22. Helena Bonham-Carter, who plays Ophelia, says, "I personally was quite terrified, too, because it was, I hadn't done Shakespeare, although I wasn't playing Hamlet, but I was exposed" (*The Making of Hamlet*). She is apparently forgetting her role as Miranda in a February 1987 Oxford Playhouse production of *The Tempest*. The production and the performance were certainly forgettable.

23. Brad Darrach, "Mad Max Plays Hamlet," *Life*, Feb. 1991: 36-46.

24. Nor is this all in Glenn Close's glorification of herself as Gertrude, "Even though this character doesn't have that much to say, you know, as Franco says, her perfume permeates the halls of the castle. She's just a woman who kind of gets the molecules going a little faster when she enters a room" (*The Making of Hamlet*). There is, I think, altogether too much protesting here about youth. Eileen Herlie, Olivier's Gertrude, was almost twenty years younger when she played the role at the age of twenty-seven (Silber, 260).

25. For the Elizabethan antipathy to incest, see, for example, R. M. Frye's *The Renaissance Hamlet* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 77-82.

26. *The Making of Hamlet*.

27. *The Making of Hamlet*.

28. In Zefirelli's defense, I will say that though there is not much of the text left, at least what there is is in Shakespeare's own words. This Hamlet even says, "I'll make a ghost of him that lets me."

29. Rosenthal, 133.

30. Rosenthal, 34.

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