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Subject

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Hamlet play

Laurence Oliver's film Hamlet (1948) exhibit striking differences when compared to Shakespeare's original play. The deviation from the original playwright evoked criticism from the filmmakers and directors. The reason for incorporating changes is to present a shorter version of the play. The differences in the time period have also influenced Oliver to use techniques that could serve the need of contemporary viewers. Excessive reliance on the camera and technology resulted in transmitting powerful settings that underscore the power of script.

The castle of Claudius fails to establish resemblance with the colossal labyrinth as portrayed by Shakespeare in the play. Oliver captures the space in a way that depicts that it is the metaphorical representation of the prince's imagination. To add vividness Oliver has used deep shadows with black and white photography. The fog illustrates the murky, rain-soaked streets that fit the film noir, not the play. The director has used high ceiling rooms and endless walls for transmitting the themes of German expressionism. The work of Oliver indicates that he has not mirrored the events as created by Shakespeare but incorporate changes for including future perspectives. The use of camera techniques makes it look like a film rather than the play (Olivier). The camera captures the restless spectre of the castle and tracks astonishing shots for capturing craft and sophistication.

In comparison to the original play that developed a sense of scale and grandeur, the film explores the nature of Hamlet through style and atmosphere. This is discernible in the scene where Hamlet encounters the ghost of his father. The ghost emerges as a shadowy monster who appears with the hellish mask and shrouded in the mist. Oliver used deep sonorous voices for reflecting darkest pit. This seems to be against Shakespeare’s idea because the film makes the scene more horrific (Shakespeare). This is due to the dependence on cinematic and camera techniques. Another scene that brings tremendous energy to the themes of fate is when Oliver uses the sweeping camera for displaying Hamlet and Laertes. The speed of duelists has allowed the director to add more power to the scene. The technology has also made young Peter overlook the duel (Carroll).

More focus in sensuality remains another striking difference between the film and play. Oliver cast Eileen Herlie as Gertrude that adds unnerving frisson between mother and the son. This portrayal has added a real edge to the narrative by casting reactions of Hamlet towards the marriage of his mother in a different way. The version of Hamlet created by Oliver is extremely brave and capable of talking overtly sexual approach to mother-son relationship. The character analysis of Gertrude in the film version indicates that she was happy with the marriage and had no regret over the loss of his former husband (Olivier). The criticism also reveals that feminine characters like Gertrude and Laertes didn't wear their robes appropriately. The costumes are low-cut that suggests sexuality.

Oliver has missed many important parts of the play that reflects the flaws of the film. There is no mention of the fact that the country was brought at the brisk of war by Hamlet's father. It also eliminates the information about Claudius who was attempting to broker peace. The character of Claudius exhibits ambiguity because the film has stressed more on the themes of sensuality. The reason for excessive focus on sexuality is to add attraction for the audience. While the motive for removing the useful facts like the war with the neighboring country is time management (Carroll). Oliver has tried to cover different aspects of play that could be showcased in the duration of the film. Because adding all information was not possible, he excluded the less important things.

Hamlet’s version in the film aims at portraying him as a hero by neglecting the fact that he is also spiteful and undergoing destruction. In the film, Oliver stresses on the fate of the prince rather than Denmark. Hamlet in most of the parts is portrayed as a tragic hero who overthinks. This conveys the themes of melancholy, anger and demise of Hamlet. The character appears as a troubled one who continues to struggle and wonder. The music used by Oliver does not express action and characterization as Shakespeare did in the play.

Oliver has edited most of the content for the play. The comparison of the play with the film depicts that Shakespeare had not used extensive scenery except for a few props. Contrary to that, Oliver has emphasized on the enormous buildings, great architecture and the scenery. Shakespeare’s focus was more in the magical creation of the universe (Shakespeare). Oliver's production relied more on scenery, décor, staging and the camerawork. Such techniques have stirred with the original idea of Shakespeare to evoke imagination. The camerawork has manipulated the scenes that make the play part of the contemporary period rather than the time framed by Shakespeare.

The comparison of the film with play depicts that Oliver has used cinematic techniques that make the film a transformed version of the original playwright. To add vividness Oliver has used deep shadows with black and white photography. The emphasis on feminism and sensuality makes Gertrude different and more selfish. The version of Hamlet created by Oliver appears to be extremely brave but the one who is lacking clarity. His melancholy is greater than his purpose.

Work Cited

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