Space Construction in Adaptations of *Hamlet*∗

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Abstract. *Spatial turn* has also taken place in film theory: research orientations dealing with the relationship between film and space, with the construction of cinematic space constitute a significant domain of contemporary film theory. Starting from the space constructing specificities of the Elizabethan emblematic theatre (the absence of realistic illusion, temporal and spatial relations expressed by the dramatic text itself), the study investigates cinematic space, namely the significance of horizontal and vertical space division, the creation of symbolic/stylised/abstract, realistic and simultaneous spaces, the role of scenery in expressing states of mind and in conveying ideological messages in particular adaptations of *Hamlet*, created in various moments of film history, directed, among others, by Laurence Olivier (1948), Grigori Kozintsev (1964), Tony Richardson (1969), Franco Zeffirelli (1990) and Michael Almereyda (2000). An approach to the adaptations of *Hamlet* from the viewpoint of space construction completes the existing thematic, stylistic and generic typologies and highlights those films which, through the exploration of (meta-)cinematic space as a powerful means of creating meanings in the language of the film, go beyond cinematic realism and initiate an intermedial dialogue with the spatial purport of the Shakespeare text and with the (meta-)theatrical specificities of the Renaissance *Theatrum mundi*.

Keywords: (meta-)cinematic and (meta-)theatrical space, symbolic/metaphorical, realistic and simultaneous spaces

1. Introduction. Film and space

Ever since the past decades, especially since the *spatial turn* took place in several scientific areas, a special attention has been devoted to the surrounding space, to the space created by human perception, reflected on in artworks and being in a continuous process of reconsideration and reinterpretation. Several thinkers, among them Michel Foucault, consider that we live in the age of space, and although space and time are inseparably interwoven categories, still, a greater emphasis seems to be laid on terms related to spatiality and (de-, re-)territorialization in the theoretical discourses of various scientific disciplines. Foucault starts his study entitled Of Other Spaces as follows:

> The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world. The nineteenth century found its essential mythological resources in the second principle of thermodynamics. The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. (1986, 22)

Spatial turn has also taken place in film theory: research orientations dealing with the relationship between film and space, between film space and narration constitute a significant domain of contemporary film theory. The forms of space and their narrative specificities were first pushed to the forefront of film theoretical thinking by Noël Burch in his 1973 volume entitled *Theory of Film Practice* (published in French in 1969). Following in Burch's track, several film theorists have joined the discourse around film space, among them – to mention only the most notable ones – Edward Branigan, Frederic Jameson, Jacques Aumont, Pascal Bonitzer, David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, Stephen Heath and Vivian Sobchack.

The most general research orientation is related to the way the space of action is created in film narration. In their seminal study entitled Space and Narrative in the Films of Ozu Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell argue for the modernity of Ozu Yasujiro, based on the relation between space and narration. The authors make a distinction between the space construction subordinated to the narrative and the one pushed to the fore; in the former case, which is characteristic, in general, of the classical Hollywood narrative style, the spatio-temporal structure of the film

primarily fulfills the role of pointing at the cause-effect relations of the story, whereas in the latter case the difference from the Hollywood paradigm manifests in the fact that the spatial structures are not motivated by the causal chain but rather independently of them, breaking the economy of narration. The study suggests that the two modes of space formation can be associated with the realistic vs. artistic motivation, as well as with the notions of closed vs. open space respectively (cf. Thompson and Bordwell 1976).

It is not only the space framed by the film screen that can convey meanings. In his study entitled Nana, or the Two Kinds of Space Noël Burch draws attention to the fact that the analysis of the off-screen space (for example, the space bordered by the four edges of the screen, or the space "behind the camera," that is, everything that we cannot see but we know that they must be there) can be at least as significant in particular cases as the analysis of the on-screen space (cf. Burch 1981).

The study of action space is also of interest in relation to the receiver's experience. Alexander Sesonske makes a distinction between the "screen-space," that is, the two-dimensional rectangular surface of the screen, and "action-space," that is, the three-dimensional space in which the action takes place. In his view, the major characteristic of our cinematic experience is that we experience action-space from the inside, our viewpoint is located within action-space, we enter perceptually into cinematic space (cf. Sesonske 1973, 399-409).

A further research orientation is aimed at exploring the symbolic contents, the abstract/metaphorical meanings of space. In contemporary film theoretical discourses space is approached as a mental, social, gender and/or cultural construct and discussed as such by cognitive, psychoanalytical, gender and postcolonial research trends. Further research possibilities regarding the relationship between film and space open up in the fields of cognitive film theory, focusing on the perception and cognition of film space, of film narratology, examining the connection between film space and narration; besides, a great number of studies have come to light in the past decades, dealing with urban cinescapes, architecture and film, cinema space and memory and the relationship between space and place.

The cinematic modes of space representation can also be investigated in comparison with the space constructing modalities of other artistic media (literature, theatre, painting, photography). In this respect we cannot ignore to mention the classical distinction proposed by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in his essay entitled *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*. According to Lessing, what distinguishes painting and poetry is that the former is extended in space, whereas the latter is extended in time. Similarly, as a twentieth-century response to, and a hermeneutical reconsideration of, Lessing's views, we also have to refer to the unifying viewpoint offered by Hans-Georg Gadamer, who regards the various ways of artistic expression not in terms of their differences but in accordance with the extent to which they partake of the notion of *art*.

Considering theatrical space and cinematic space, Lorne Buchman argues that the action/reaction structure specific to film creates a space distinct from theatre: in film it is possible for viewer to see what the characters see, what is more, to "travel the intimate space between those eyes" (qtd. Hatchuel 2008, 52).

In his study about theatrical space entitled Das theatralishe Raumerlebnis Max Herrmann remarks that there is a fundamental difference between theatrical and film experience, as in the film the real space and the real bodies are absent (2006, 509). On the one hand, this results in distinct modes of reception/perception: especially in the early forms of theatre, the theatrical space shared by the audience and by the spectators presupposed an intimate relationship which the film medium dissolves from the outset by creating an ontologically different space, that of the screen. On the other hand, thanks to this ontological-perceptual difference, the alienating effects of the theatre and respectively, those of the film function in distinct ways. As Sarah Hatchuel states: "Whatever a film director may do, the actors on screen and the spectators in the cinema necessarily remain apart. (...) Meta-cinema is always encountered by the primordial unreality of the movie medium and the inevitable segregation of spaces between screen and audience" (2008, 123-124).

As a consequence, and with reference to adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, several forms of meta-cinematic effects, aimed to comply with the meta-theatrical devices of the Elizabethan stage, are more likely to be swallowed up by the diegetic world of the motion picture than purely preserving their frame-breaking, unrealistic, anti-illusionistic character. It may seem paradoxical, however, that despite this ontologically distinct quality of the motion picture the movie medium has assumed the task of rendering images framed by the screen that often seem even more real than the off-screen "reality."

In his study on The Ontology of Photographic Image André Bazin celebrates photography as the accomplisher of the demand of the art of all times to render reality. By testifying its suitability to achieving an unprecedented degree of objectivity, photography "has freed the plastic arts from their obsession with likeness. Painting was forced, as it turned out, to offer us illusion and this illusion was reckoned sufficient unto art. Photography and the cinema on the other hand are discoveries that satisfy, once and for all and in its very essence, our obsession with realism" (Bazin 1960, 7). Thus, photography relieved plastic arts from under the burden of what Bazin calls "mummy-complex" and created, by carrying the synthesis of the relic and the photography similarly to the Shroud of Turin, the synthesis of the reality of the represented thing and the reality of representation. The film realizes the demand of realism of photography itself, as it is capable of "embalming" time, of recording the changes that occur in time, and in this way it gets closest to the utopia of reality. According to Bazin, what *par excellence* distinguishes the film from the other arts is that the film is capable of displaying reality in a unique and irreplaceable way. It is the medial specificity of the film that

what is seen on the screen has the value of reality to an extent no other technique of representation has ever achieved. The film is a match of showing/realism and representation/language; however, in Bazin's approach, it is the "coefficient of reality" that prevails in it. Space is the most inalienable to film; Bazin writes about space and time treatment in Orson Welles' as well as William Wyler's films that all elements of reality can be eliminated from film except the reality of space (cf. 2009, 183-214).

The utopia of reality, although it has been repeatedly overwritten by newer and newer forms of expression of the post-media age (Lev Manovich), still haunts in the spectatorial experience. In post-structuralist film theories the relationship between reality and representation meets series of critical revisions, in the light of which the term "reality" can be used merely in quotation marks (if at all!), as "reality" itself is a construct, the result of discursive operations:

> That reality, the match of film and world, is a matter of representation, and representation in turn is a matter of discourse, of the organization of the images, the definition of the 'views,' their construction. It is the discursive operations that decide the work of a film and ultimately determine the scope of the analogical incidence of images; in this sense at least, film is a series of languages, a history of codes. (Heath 1986, 384)

Cinematic space is also the result of discursive operations. The space of film is constructed space, "narrative space", "coherent and positioned space," "the fiction of space" (Heath 1986), "space exists only at twenty-four frames per second" (Branigan qtd. in Heath 1986); thus, space is created in close connection with film narration, and also, space is shaped in the process of reception, during which the spectator recreates, reconstructs the space of the story.

In his study entitled Narrative Space Stephen Heath offers a systematic synthesis of all those discursive operations which create space in film. Among them, the most significant ones are as follows: frame, camera movement, movement of characters, shot/reverse shot structure, changes of frame size, alternation of foreground and background, surface and depth, gaze and point of view. All these elements of film language contribute, in their turn, to spatial coherence and make possible for the viewer to perceive spatial continuity in film (cf. Heath 1986).

Starting from the questions in what way film narration is capable of transcending its material, in what way a world view becomes discernible in concrete spatial elements, Pál Czirják elaborates a plausible method of analysing cinematic spaces (2008, 53). So that we can examine how the world view of the film is formulated in the language of space, what elements of the poetics of space

contribute to forming the layers of meaning of the film, we have to take into account, as suggested by Czirják, the inside-outside, near-far, up and down, part-whole spatial relations as well as the relations of finite, infinite and empty spaces. In the present study I will partially apply these viewpoints, along the question – highly relevant in the case of the adaptations of Shakespeare's plays to be discussed – whether the respective film strives to offer action space also as a symbolic/metaphorical/stylised/abstract space construct and not merely as a set of realistic locations, that is, as an environment hosting the action. In the case of adaptations of *Hamlet* it deserves attention to what extent the film reflects states of mind, represents mental spaces or conveys ideological messages by means of space, and respectively, in what way the film resorts to metacinematic, self-reflexive elements in the spirit of the metatheatrical elements of the dramatic text written for the Elizabethan stage, and what effect these elements have in the context of the film as compared to literature and theatre.

2. From stage to screen, from Elizabethan theatre to cinema

Every attempt of staging or screening the Shakespearean text must necessarily start from its inherent visuality. The Shakespearean text is a complex texture of intertextuality and metatextuality; the tropes and rhetorical figures are to be understood within the context of the whole, what is more, within the context of the Shakespearean oeuvre. The characters' words simultaneously refer to the given situation and bear a wider, more general, existential reference. "Who's there?" Bernardo asks at the beginning of *Hamlet*; the question subtly suggests that the problem of identity – Who am I? – will be central to the whole play. The *double entendre* of the characters' words, especially Hamlet's wordplays, his highly rhetorical and carnivalesque way of speaking will constitute a starting point, a challenge, but above all, a recurrent trap for any staging and screening attempt. Phyllis Gorfain (1998) speaks of "tropes as traps" in *Hamlet*; it is the specificity of the Shakespearean text that what has to be reckoned with during the adaptation process and what is part of the research scope of today's studies on intermediality, namely the relationship between *words* and *images*, between the visible and the audible, is already coded in the text itself.

The world is a stage; the stage is a world – the Shakespearean metaphor works in both ways. The Elizabethan theatre was aimed at representing the whole world as a *Theatrum Mundi*, conceived in its vertical structure, summarized by Sarah Hatchuel as follows: "a roof painted above the stage represented the sky and the divine; a trapdoor under the floor evoked hell. The presentation of the plays showed a constant distancing between the sign and its meaning, as well as an absence of illusionist intention" (2008, 3). The Globe theatre was circular like an amphitheatre; the stage was a large platform without curtains and with a limited

possibility of providing visual aids, objectual scenery, in this way, the task of creating the scenery *in the mind's eye*, the setting and the proper atmosphere fell upon dramatic language itself; spatial and temporal relations were coded verbally. The bare stage of Elizabethan performances was highly flexible and adaptable to the needs of dramatic representation, but far, not only in time but also conceptually, from today's cinematic realism.

Due to the construction of the theatre, in which the stage was practically embraced by the space provided for the public, the actors and the spectators shared a common space and "were united in the same communion of entertainment and imagination" (Hatchuel 2008, 4). In order to maintain the distinct fabric of representation, the Elizabethan public was permanently reminded, by means of embedded/mise-en-abyme structures, plays-within-the-play and masques, of the frames of the space of theatrical illusion. Andrew Gurr notes that out of the main features of staging, such as stage realism, stage business and effects, properties, costumes and scenery, stage realism seems to be the most problematic:

> […] lacking any proscenium arch to separate players from audience the presentation of illusion as reality for Shakespeareans was inevitably more complicated than in modern theatres or in cinema […]. The players stood in the midst of the audience and had no facilities for presenting the pictorial aspects of illusion because they were appearing in three dimensions, not the two that proscenium-arch staging or the camera's picture frame establish. Awareness of the illusion as trickery was therefore close to the surface all the time. It was because of this that so many of the plays began with prologues and inductions openly acknowledging that the play which follows is a fiction. […] Playing is counterfeiting, a continual pretence, so the illusion had to be acknowledged openly as an illusion. From there it was only a slight further twist to develop inductions in which the players come on stage to talk about their play and in so doing actually play themselves, performing what the playwright has written for them to speak in their own personality as if reality and illusion were the same. (Gurr 2009, 221-222)

Attila Kiss argues that the *representational insufficiency* of theatre is consciously thematized by metatheatre, which permanently points to the fact that a representational experiment is going on, breaking thus the illusion of dramatic reality and attempting to create a total experience in this way (Kiss 1999, 68).

In her volume entitled *Shakespeare, from Stage to Screen*, Sarah Hatchuel draws attention to the minor common points and major differences between cinema and the Elizabethan stage:

In the cinema, as in the Renaissance theatre, scenes move on with great rapidity and fluidity. A film, like a theatre production in Shakespeare's time, can go quickly from a battle scene to a discussion behind closed doors inside a palace. Yet, cinema differs from Elizabethan public theatres in the absence of physical interaction between the actors and the audience, and in the high level of realism it can reach. Moreover, while the architecture of Elizabethan theatres allowed the spectators to see the action from different angles, cinema offers a single frontal viewpoint, and, through editing and camera moves, mandates how the action will be seen. (2008, 4-5)

3. Construction of cinematic space in adaptations of *Hamlet*

The aesthetic mode of existence of a masterpiece makes the time factor relative: timelessness also implies that every age produces its own horizon(s) of interpretation. This is especially true for *Hamlet*, the interpretations of which are layered upon one another in a palimpsest-like manner, they complete and counterpoint/undermine each other along the mainstream intellectual and ideological orientations of the successive periods of literary and cultural history. The drama is open to establish an interpretive connection with all times, as the absence of universal order, or rather, the universal absence of order which Hamlet's (speech) acts strive to restore, unveils an existential and crisis experience which is not foreign to any age.

In connection with the spatial material offered by the play itself, Anthony Davies remarks the following:

There is a castle, there are swords, there is a crown and there is poison. But much of the thematic centre of Hamlet is removed from the means of life and death into the area of their respective values and significance. With the abstract kernel of the play so concentrated in the symbolic value of the objects recounted, the film director has very little spatial material to work with. Robert Duffy […] notes the claustrophobic nature of the play and the lack of spatial variety which the action of the play affords as a major adaptive problem for film. (2000, 40)

We can group the adaptations of *Hamlet* according to several criteria. From a stylistic point of view we can make a distinction between classical adaptations of *Hamlet*, focusing on the dramatic action (e.g., Laurence Olivier [1948], Grigorij Kozintsev [1964]) and adaptations emphasizing the setting or transposing the events into other historical periods or into the present (e.g., Franco Zeffirelli [1990], Kenneth Branagh [1996], Michael Almereyda [2000]). From the viewpoint

of fidelity to the original play, we can speak about straight (direct) adaptations (e.g., Laurence Olivier [1948]) and offshoots or loose adaptations (e.g., Tony Richardson [1969]). Harry Keyshian also suggests a generic viewpoint, according to which the specific genre that the respective adaptation forms part of should be taken into account. In this respect, Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet* represents the *film noir*, Franco Zeffirelli's adaptation is an action-adventure film, while Kenneth Branagh's vision follows the cinematic model of the film epic (cf. Keyshian 2002).

The examination below of the modes of space division in particular adaptations offers an additional classification criterion of the adaptations of *Hamlet*. As follows, I will consider the selected adaptations in accordance with their – symbolic, realistic or simultaneous – use of space.

3.1. Symbolic space division. Mental spaces

3.1.1. Vertical space construction: the up and down relation

Pál Czirják notes that the mode of constructing the film's structure based on the opposition between the up and down, on the inherent hierarchical relations can operate a whole film; however, it is more characteristic that in a particular film it appears only at the level of micro-dramaturgy (cf. 2008, 50). In my view the adaptation of *Hamlet* that most innovatively explores the spatial dimension and especially the vertical space division is Laurence Olivier's monochromatic *Hamlet* (1948). Through the exploration of (meta-)cinematic space as a powerful means of creating meanings in the film language, Laurence Olivier's approach goes beyond the spheres of cinematic realism and initiates an intermedial dialogue with the spatial purport of the dramatic text.

By dissolving the boundaries between cinematic and theatrical space, by resorting to the effect of long shots, mobile camera-work and shifts of camera angle instead of editing, furthermore, by employing the *chiaroscuro* effects, the juxtaposition of light and darkness so much favoured by the *film noir*, Laurence Olivier creates a space that may rightfully be regarded as a cinematic equivalent of the Renaissance *Theatrum Mundi*. Olivier's scarcely furnished castle interior, reminding of a studio, consciously avoiding every element meant to construct a photographic reality, also bears resemblance to the bare stage of the Elizabethan theatre.

By making the most of the vertical dimension of space, the film displays a carefully elaborated moral space in which Hamlet's moral and intellectual superiority to Claudius and his court is suggested by the upper parts of the castle as well as by the upper position he occupies while discussing with Polonius, even with Ophelia. The film successfully superimposes Hamlet's (detective) story with the patterns of the *film noir*, thus, Ophelia appears not only as the victim of

Hamlet's mind-game, but also as the victimized female figure of this popular film genre. The alternation of the phallic pillars and gentle archways translate the male-female conflict so much favoured by *film noir* into the language of space.

The opposing dimensions of the up and down determine the structure of the whole film. The opening as well as the closing scene, the ghost scene, the great monologue, in other words, all the crucial moments, take place on the battlements, representing the dimension of moral value and significance.

3.1.2. Horizontal space construction

3.1.2. a) The inside-outside relation

In his volume *The Poetics of Space* Gaston Bachelard notes about the inside-outside relation that it is plausible to start from this opposition whenever we relate phenomena to space, whether in literal or metaphorical sense (1994).

As concerns film space, we can speak about the inside-outside relation in the following contexts: it can refer to the proportion and function of exteriors vs. interiors; it can refer to the fact that the "external" environment serves as the projection of the inner, mental world of the characters (cf. Czirják 2008).

In Laurence Olivier's adaptation the horizontal dimension of space is explored in both respects. On the one hand, in terms of confinement and freedom represented by the castle and the openness of nature: Ophelia is the only character associated with the outside dimension; her death, told by means of the visual paraphrase of John Everett Millais' *Ophelia's Death*, as well as her funeral, are the only episodes that take place outside the castle. On the other hand, Elsinore, with its winding staircases, pillars, corridors and archways, breathing the air of medieval Gothic scenery but also of a Kafkaesque labyrinth, becomes the objective correlative, the visual expression of Hamlet's inner, psychological architecture. By superimposing Hamlet's cerebral convolutions and the rough sea, the film touches the chords of expressionism.

The seawaves and their expressionist rendering can also be encountered in Grigori Kozintsev's 1964 adaptation. In accordance with the Russian film tradition, his *Hamlet* can be characterized by monumentality and visual expressivity: the castle, the halls, the stairs, the sea roaring behind the cliffs all become the projections of Hamlet's state of mind (cf. Király 2010, 97). Unlike Olivier's *Hamlet*, in which space is mainly structured and acquires symbolic surplus along the vertical axis, Kozintsev's adaptation primarily makes use of the horizontal dimension of space, opposing the outside (the seaside as the place of spiritual independence) and the inside (the castle interior, full of falsehood and espionage). The opening scene shows Hamlet arriving home at the news of his father's death; the opposing motion of the drawbridge and the iron grate, shown in a long shot,

becomes similar to a huge jaw swallowing the newcomer. The most poignant, the most emphatic sentence of Kozintsev's Hamlet is "Denmark is a prison," bearing overt allusions to the spirit of the post-Stalin age. In this way, the space construction of the film is meant to illustrate the spiritual confinement of the Khruschev era, Hamlet's figure standing for resistance and unsleeping conscience.

3.1.2. b) The near-far relation

We can speak of the near-far relation in terms of the dialogue between the foreground and the background. Laurence Olivier plays upon this contrast; one significant episode is highly illustrative in this respect, in which in the background the spectator can see Ophelia's figure framed by the arch, looking at Hamlet situated in the foreground of the image; in the following shot Ophelia is absent from the arch frame. The spatial distance between Hamlet and Ophelia, and Ophelia's withdrawal are proper expressions, in terms of space, of their alienation and split. Anthony Davies states: "[…] the spatial exploration of horizontal and vertical dimensions represents in a major structural sense the painful search which Hamlet has to undergo and the final resolution to which he journeys" (2000, 57).

The idea of imprisonment, confinement is also powerfully present in Tony Richardson's 1969 adaptation in the sense that the directorial concept, the "message" raised at the level of world view is expressed by resorting to spatial organization. There is no scene taking place outside the castle, all the sequences represent inside locations, castle interiors, dark and narrow passages; besides, no effort is made to create a realistic architecture.

Tony Richardson transposes an earlier stage adaptation directed by him to the screen and records the sequences in the same theatre; however, in order that the actual theatrical space should remain hidden more or less, the film avoids providing a thorough insight into action space; space compositions are limited by the bodies of the characters appearing in the foreground without revealing the actual spatial dimension of the background. Interestingly, the transformation of theatrical space into cinematic one in this manner – Tony Richardson seems to have made virtue out of necessity – acquires an additional layer of meaning: the camera, exempt from under the task of presenting the environment, can focus on the characters, on their faces, feelings, reflections and reactions, in this way a greater emphasis is laid upon acting, upon their interactions and interpersonal relations.

Figures and faces are mostly presented in close-ups. Béla Balázs regards the close-up as the most specific and the clearest means of expression of film, as the cinema, contrary to the theatre, is capable of directing the spectator's attention to tiny details of long shots, of highlighting the essence, of revealing hidden aspects and, last but not least, of evaluation. He regards the close-up, which makes possible for the reader to pay special attention to particular details, as a naturalistic, but at

the same time also poetic way of expression. Thus, the close-up constitutes a fundamental cinematic code in Béla Balázs's film aesthetics; it teaches viewers to read the score of polyphonic life, to pay attention to the voices of particular details that form the great symphony together (cf. Balázs 2010).

In Tony Richardson's adaptation the close-ups enlarge Hamlet's gaze, at the same time turning inward and being sharp, penetrating, expressive. The role of the "environment" is taken over by the characters, they become each other's "environments;" space is formed by bodies, thus, action space will be constituted by an interpersonal web. Richardson's adaptation concentrates less on the events and more on the influence that the events exercise upon the characters, on the emotional reactions reflected on their faces and on their repressed emotions. In this way the face becomes an "interface" reflecting the characters, a surface upon which the other faces and voices – and also the ghost of the old Hamlet – write their signs (the film does not display the ghost; its presence can be detected from facial reactions and light effects).

Through the avoidance of extreme long shots and through the use of close-ups (in other words, the predominance of the "near" to the detriment of the "far"), the adaptation suggests the discomfort of interpersonal spaces, the trapped existence and the lack of perspectives. Hamlet delivers the monologue "To Be Or Not To Be" in a lying position, foreshadowing the position of the dead body in the closing sequence. In this way the film screens the dilemma of action and inaction, Hamlet's process of dying (cf. Király 2010). Tony Richardson's spaces convey the current aspects of Hamlet's dilemma, the existential attitude of the post-war generation as well as the incompatibilities between the public and the private spheres, the community and individual values.

Let us mention here the relationship between the on-screen and off-screen space (cf. Bonitzer 1990, Burch 1981). Sarah Hatchuel sums up the possibilities of film to create the off-screen space:

> The off-screen space can be constructed in several ways: through the characters' entrances and exits, through a gaze, a gesture or a word addressed by a character (who is seen on the screen) to another (who is not seen but whose presence is imagined). In the cinema, the notion of 'off-screen' comes to replace the notion of 'backstage' and, unlike the latter, extends the space of representation in the spectator's imagination instead of restricting it. If the off-screen remains invisible for the spectators, it nevertheless exists in their imagination as belonging completely to the diegetic world. (2008, 70-71)

The activation of the off-screen space as the spectatorial space can be carried out by the act of the character's looking into the camera, which is in fact one of the taboos of filmmaking, since it breaks the illusionistic effect created by the motion

picture, it breaks the shell of fiction and reveals it as fiction. Tony Richardson's Hamlet (Nicol Williamson) delivers his monologues by repeatedly looking into the camera, breaking the taboo of filmmaking and establishing a direct contact with the viewer's space. This forbidden act, much favoured by early film as well as by the contemporary popular film culture, is also a favourite cinematic tool of the member of the "angry young men" of the English New Wave. In his screening of Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, directed in 1963, one source of humour is this very act of the hero's looking into the camera; at a certain point, to add to the humorous effect, Tom Jones throws his hat onto the camera. Of course, in *Hamlet* the looking into the camera does not serve as the source of humour; instead, it has the role of emphasis, increasing the dramatic effect. In Tony Richardson's cinematic oeuvre the two heroes, Tom Jones and Hamlet, although the former is a comic hero while the latter is a tragic one, are linked through their revolting, rebellious attitude and their outspoken directness.

3.2. Realistic space

In their already mentioned study Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell describe the case when space is subordinated to action, to the logic of narration, in two ways: in a negative formulation, space is presented in a way that it should not distract attention from dominant occurrences; in a positive formulation, space serves to present locations, characters and other causal factors important from the point of view of narration. In this mode of narration space serves as setting, and can fulfil the following roles: focusing attention on spatial locations serving as the scenes of the story; making it possible for the spectator to follow the events; characterisation of characters; activating film-viewing schemes. This mode of film narration in which the representation of space does not go beyond the authority of the above-mentioned functions is called by Noël Burch the zero-degree point of cinematic style (qtd. in Thompson and Bordwell 1976).

It is Franco Zeffirelli's 1990 adaptation of *Hamlet* that makes use of this type of space, in which space fulfils the role of the setting, while the camera primarily focuses on the characters, on their shot/reverse shot type interactions, on the events/actions themselves. Zeffirelli's attraction towards realistic cinema spaces already manifested in his earlier films. He chooses a medieval castle from northern Scotland as the location of his *Hamlet*; it may remind the viewer of Laurence Olivier's castle interiors; however, Zeffirelli's castle does not exceed the status of a mere setting in any moment of the film.

Mel Gibson acts Hamlet's role; he activates the film-viewing habits and attitudes of the cinematic intertexts associated with the "semiotic noise" of his person (cf. Keyshian 2002, 77). In Zeffirelli's approach Hamlet is not a meditating

philosopher, but rather an action hero driven by the thirst of revenge, who writes Shakespeare's drama back into the revenge paradigm.

3.3. Simultaneous use of space. Metacinematic procedures

I regard as simultaneous use of space that case in which space is scenery-like, realistic, but at the same time it also renders symbolic meanings. The simultaneous use of space is primarily characteristic of films transposing the story into the modern age, understandably, as in such cases it is important to create suitable modern scenery, and this is usually accompanied by the demand of also resorting to metaphoric, metacinematic ways of expression.

The timeless character of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* makes it possible for the story to appear in the most varied space constellations. Michael Almereyda's adaptation created in 2000 transposes the play into the present in a way that he chooses modern metropolitan locations as the scenes of the play adapted to the screen. The high technological environment forms the background of film narration, perceived by the viewer in its alienating effect: the images of the skyscrapers, created from a low-angle camera position, rise menacingly above the characters. At the same time, Elsinore castle appears as Elsinore Hotel in New York and Claudius appears as the leader of a multimedia association (Denmark Corporation). The key episodes of the story are presented in typical places of the urban environment: Hamlet's great monologue is performed in a media shop; a further monologue is delivered in front of the mirror of the airplane toilet; Ophelia's body is found in the water of a city fountain; the repentant King escapes from Hamlet's revenge while sitting in a car. Nevertheless, the film does not offer itself as a modern parody of Hamlet, but rather as a consistently elaborated game of transposition – supposedly not devoid of didactic purposes either. The superimposition of the modern context and the original dramatic text makes the adaptation dissonant from the outset, in an assumed way; this aspect, as well as the great number of the applied metacinematic procedures, transform Almereyda's film into an interface between the popular register and the postmodernist poetics deriving from high art.

The film also carries out a medial transposition: it systematically links to the film medium everything that is connected to theatre in the original play. As the Shakespearean hero is an enthusiast of the theatre, Almereyda's Hamlet (Ethan Hawke) is a film freak, he keeps playing back the video recordings of the happy times of his past, he also makes video recordings, and the Mousetrap, in accordance with the logic of the film, is not a play-within-the-play, but a film-within-the-film: its role is fulfiled by an amateur documentary film, a collage of heterogeneous images. Besides Hamlet's camera, surveillance cameras follow the events, Polonius makes Ophelia wear a hidden microphone; in this way, the film

approaches the phenomena of mediated identity, espionage, overhearing and misinformation as the problems of modern society.

4. Conclusion

Starting from space construction modalities of the Shakespeare text as well as from the spatial specificities of the Elizabethan stage, I have examined the space division of selected adaptations of *Hamlet* – to mention only the directors that the study has dealt with – by Laurence Olivier (1948), Grigori Kozintsev (1964), Tony Richardson (1969), Franco Zeffirelli (1990) and Michael Almereyda (2000). These films were released in various periods; their modes of narration, ways of expression and subtexts are symptomatic indications of the production principles and the ideological background of the respective film-historical moment.

The analysis of the above-mentioned selection of adaptations from the point of view of the poetics of space draws attention to the diachronic changes of space perception, to the similarities and differences of space constructing modalities in film. The research has been carried out in an open interval in the sense that the versions of space formation displayed by the selected films serve as models as concerns the examination of adaptations of *Hamlet* not included in the present study.

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