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English 3360

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April 17, 2011

*Oh Sh!T, Is That A Ghost I See Before Me?!*

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the ghost of Old Hamlet appearing to his son would not have seemed out of place to an audience that lived with superstition on a day to day basis. The idea of a ghost appearing to a sober young man on the balcony of his Manhattan apartment in 2000 is a little bit strange to me.

Michael Almereyda sets his *Hamlet* in the corrupt business world of New York City, A world full of sex, money, drugs and alcohol. Hamlet and Ophelia are art students with wealthy parents. It seemed odd to me that Almereyda has Julia Stiles and Ethan Hawke play sober well behaved people.

A university student seeing the ghost of his father might not seem odd in medieval Denmark. However, without the aid of hallucinogenic drugs, this Hamlet seeing his father is a little far-fetched. The setting of *Hamlet* is irrelevant, the words make the play. But if the director chooses to set the play in New York in the year 2000, then all of the cultural aspects should make sense. Without some chemical imbalance on his part, Hamlet seeing a ghost doesn't make sense and I don't think Almereyda emphasizes any mental anguish on the part of Hamlet.

- Why does Almereyda set this *Hamlet* in a sterilized version of corrupt Manhattan? Why doesn't he make things "rotten" or "amiss"?
- Is this sterilized impotence supposed to be in the vein of the "generation x"?