

Classic story bristles with emotion, intrigue

NEW YORK (CNS) — Mel Gibson makes a credible leap from action-movie hero to doomed Shakespearean figure as "Hamlet" (Warner Bros).

The story, of course, is familiar. A grief-stricken Hamlet is shocked by the sudden death of his father, the king (Paul Scofield); aghast by his mother's (Glenr Close) precipitous marriage to his uncle the new king (Alan Bates); and torn between suicide and revenge when a ghostly vision of his father reveals his uncle to be his father's murderer.

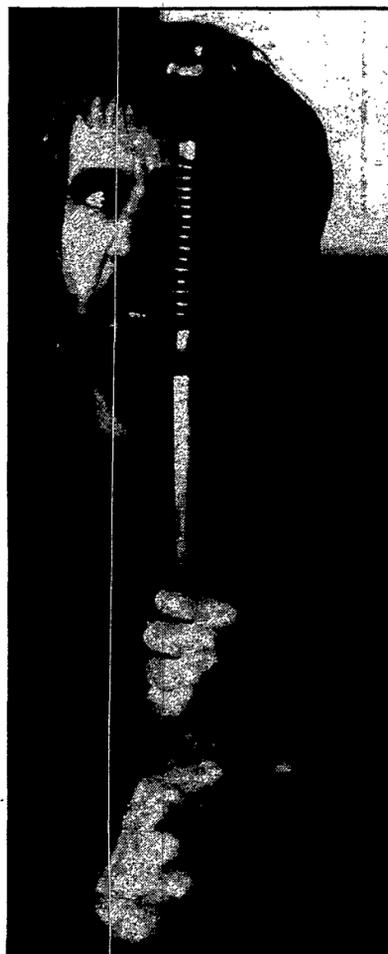
Other players include the ill-fated Polonius (Ian Holm); his daughter, Ophelia (Helena Bonham-Carter), who is driven to madness by Hamlet's actions; and her vengeful brother, Laertes (Nathaniel Parker), whose duel with Hamlet provides the deadly climax.

Franco Zeffirelli as director has brought intensity, excitement and true cinematic beauty to this rendering of Shakespeare's classic.

The picture has a seamless fluidity sweeping from white-gold vistas to darkly lit interiors that reflect the anguished prince's state of mind. The atmospheric settings are extremely pictorial and make flamboyant use of the powers of the film as opposed to the confines of the stage.

Kudos go to the entire cast. In a dramatic departure from his slick supercop and Mad Max roles, Gibson risked ridicule playing Hamlet, but does not disappoint. While no threat to Olivier's interpretation, his performance is singular and memorable.

He infuses his character with intensely felt emotion and delivers the familiar lines without sounding stale or practiced. One can fault only the extreme number of closeups, in which the camera returns time and again to tight shots of his handsome face.



Warner Bros. Hamlet (Mel Gibson) stares in disbelief at the ghost of his dead father, the late King of Denmark, in *Hamlet*, the moving adaption of William Shakespeare's play.

Close delivers another remarkable performance as the queen, gradually realizing the cost of her lust in the mounting deaths and madness all around her. She and Gibson are electric together. He taunts her with accusations, and she resorts to kissing him on the mouth to silence his invective. The queen's death scene is a moment of horrible beauty as well.

Bates and Scofield appear classical and dignified in their roles, but Bonham-Carter emotes with abandon and captures Ophelia's fall from lucidity with an ethereal grace.

The actors speak so clearly and naturally that those who normally find Shakespeare a bit daunting should have little trouble with this version.

It's a movie most worthy — visually and verbally dazzling and bristling with intrigue, anguish and mercurial rages of poetic proportions.

Because of stylized violence, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

'Kindergarten Cop'

This film may sound like a comedy with lots of juvenile appeal, but "Kindergarten Cop" (Universal) is definitely not for the kiddies.

The movie opens with a violent action sequence. Drug kingpin Cullen Crisp (Richard Tyson) has just brutally murdered someone, but his pursuer, hardened police Detective John Kimble (Arnold Schwarzenegger), who packs a pump-action sawed-off shotgun, is unable to get the goods on him.

The comedy element enters when Schwarzenegger goes undercover as a kindergarten teacher. It seems Crisp in-

tends to kidnap his young son from his ex-wife (Penelope Ann Miller), whom he has finally located in a sleepy little seaside town. Only the cop isn't sure which little boy is Crisp's son, and doesn't know how to deal with tots.

The kids, of course, create chaos until Kimble whips them into shape and determines which child is targeted for kidnap. It so happens that Kimble is dating the boy's mom, so his determination to nail Crisp becomes very personal.

Along the way, Crisp's steely mom (Carroll Baker) does her share of killing, and Crisp torches the school with all the youngsters in it to distract Kimble. But not to worry — Kimble and his partner may get injured, but as trained professionals they know how to blow away the bad guys.

Co-producer and director Ivan Reitman has taken a funny premise — a giant ill at ease among tiny tots — and given it a decidedly sinister twist.

Though marketing efforts depict the film as a side-splitting comedy, its scenes of violence and undercurrent of menace to children are disturbing. The film just doesn't work as a thriller with pint-size laughs.

It also tries to incorporate messages about child abuse and not talking to strangers, as if its audience were composed of children. But its solution to the problem — Kimble viciously slugging an abusive parent as the principal reacts with undisguised glee — is hardly the answer.

Due to recurring violence with menace to children, and brief sexual innuendo, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

Ex-Jesuit

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the Doctrine of the Faith. The letter reiterated church teachings against homosexual behavior.

"That letter was so homophobic that I could not stay silent in good conscience," McNeil told the *Courier*.

Because of his public statements, the Vatican ordered the priest to end his ministry to gay and lesbian Catholics, and leave the Society of Jesus.

Ordained in 1959, McNeil's career in-

cluded a stint as chaplain in the late 1960s and early '70s at Syracuse's LeMoyne College. He said his experience counseling homosexual students there formed part of his reason for re-examining church teachings. McNeil said many of these students were suicidal and "couldn't deal with their gayness," and he added that their struggles reflected one he had waged with his own homosexual orientation.

In his Feb. 16 talk, McNeil emphasized that when struggling for acceptance in the church, gays should use constructive tactics. Asked for his opinion of the militant protest group ACT-UP — AIDS Coalition

to Unleash Power — McNeil jokingly called them "ACT-OUT" for their dramatic tactics.

In particular, he criticized the action taken last year by one ACT-UP protester at a demonstration at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City.

During the distribution of Eucharist at the Sunday Mass, the protester in question took a consecrated host out of a priest's hand and stomped on it.

"They're filled with rage and its a legitimate rage," McNeil said. "(But) their enemy is not the sacrament. Their enemy is the political stance of the church."

Instead of attacking the church, McNeil repeatedly emphasized that gays should study the church's own teachings to affirm their sexual orientation. He noted, for example, that Dignity's name was taken from Section 16 of the Vatican II document *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*.

That section — entitled "Dignity of

Moral Conscience" — states that "deep within man's conscience, man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself, but which he must obey. ... For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God. His dignity lies in observing this law, and by it he will be judged."

McNeil argued that Christians should examine their own hearts in light of their consciences and Jesus' law of love, rather than look to external authority for approval. "This is a very mature understanding of Christianity ...," he said, later adding, "I don't know of any Catholic pulpit that preaches freedom of conscience."

The former Jesuit noted that his order taught him the value of discernment, illustrating the process by commenting that Christians should carefully examine and weigh the teachings of their pastors and then apply an equal amount of care in listening to the voice of God in their hearts.

"It's a process where in the end you have to obey what your heart is telling you," he said.

War

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urday morning vigil outside Geneva General Hospital — where abortions are reportedly performed — has remained consistent.

"I continue to be opposed to war and opposed to abortion," he said. "My consistent ethic of life belief remains firm."

In fact, the war and the attention being given to it may actually provide a boost for the pro-life movement and the consistent ethic of life, observed Judith Kiehl, a member of the Faith and Resistance Community and pastoral assistant at St. Stephen's Parish in Geneva.

"The people who are committed have become more committed to a reverence for life," Kiehl contended. "People are beginning to see an interconnectedness between issues of violence."

"I'm not seeing any less concern about abortion," Kiehl added. "It's just the enormity of the war. ... I guess everybody's caught up in that. I think they are overwhelmed."

The war also has drawn new people and attention to the Faith and Resistance Community, Bezila noted. Because such people do not espouse the consistent ethic of life, however, a separate group — the Faith-Based Action for Peace — has been form-

ed. Bezila noted that Faith and Resistance Community members have been careful to avoid advocating the consistent ethic of life to people in the new group. "We don't want to spring that agenda on them," she said.

That fact is one of the problems associated with the new direction being taken by the community, Kearney contended. "I think a few of the leaders want increased numbers, and they're afraid of losing those numbers, so they are centering on the war issue," she said. "We're consistent life. I would hope that people would open their eyes to the evil of abortion."

Nevertheless, Deacon Fuerst observed, discussion focusing on the war does present opportunities to raise the consistent ethic of life. "I think people are becoming aware of the seamless-garment approach," he said.

"The consistent ethic of life is beginning to filter down," Father Mugavero agreed.

The war, Father Mugavero noted, is simply an expression of all the life issues, and is helping to bring greater attention to that point of view.

"Sad to say, in the middle of war, there are things going on that speak of the greater possibility to talk of peace, to talk of life," Father Mugavero concluded. "It actually makes me more committed to the unborn, to life in all dimensions."

Encyclical

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ment, the pope notes that he recently wrote the following to the bishops of Asia:

"Although the church gladly acknowledges whatever is true and holy in the religious traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam as a reflection of that truth which enlightens all men, this does not lessen her duty and resolve to proclaim without fail Jesus Christ, who is 'the way and the truth and the life.'"

In a recent interview with Catholic News Service, Rabbi A. James Rudin, national interreligious director of the New York-based American Jewish Committee, said the encyclical "raises several troubling questions." The rabbi called the document's language "unfortunately reminiscent of a Christian religious triumphalism from an earlier age."

And at least one daily newspaper has published an editorial criticizing of the pope for bad timing. In an editorial published in late January, *The Milwaukee Journal* charged that the Vatican could "hardly have picked a less propitious time to release its first major statement on missionary work in 25 years."

"John Paul, of course, may preach what he wishes to his own flock. But deliberately or not, he has strayed into geopolitics with his seeming insult to the Islamic religion. ... A leader of the pope's stature ought to have one objective right now: dousing the flames in the gulf, not fanning them," the newspaper stated.

Yet, Bishop McCormack told the *Courier*, "I don't know whether the encyclical was ill-timed or whether the war is ..." He pointed out that the pope may have issued it in anticipation of two events in 1992 — a synod of African dioceses and the church's celebration of 500 years of Christianity in the New World.