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“WITH TEARS AND A JOURNEY”:
RECREATING SHAKESPEARE’S LIFE ON
SCREEN

MASTER DISSERTATION

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“With tears and a journey”¹:

Recreating Shakespeare’s life on screen

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to study the film *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) from the perspective of biopics with a twofold aim. Firstly, our intention is to consider how the adaptation of a writer’s life, in Leitch’s words “of non-literary or non-fictional sourcetexts”, can “enlarge the range of adaptation studies by revealing the parochialism of theories that restrict their examples to films based on fictional texts” (2008: 67). Thus, our aim is to explore the way this film recreates Shakespeare’s life, taking into account the most recent studies about the biopic genre and the latest theories of adaptation. Secondly, with the analysis of this film we intend to contribute some ideas to Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín’s view on the arguable necessity of biopics being completely “faithful to the original story” (2010: 603). Besides, if an adaptation, either fictional, non-fictional, literary or non-literary, is according to Stam an intertextual dialogue (2000: 66), the importance of analysing the notion of intertextuality in this film is already stated. The movie not only brings Shakespeare’s life into the big screen from a 20th century perspective but it also fictionalises the Bard’s life when mixing it with his literary works. We can also trace in the film the use of different sources which may go from Shakespeare’s biographies to previous adaptations of his life and works. Moreover, it is necessary to take into account “the interpenetrative dynamics of Stoppardian intertextuality” which made Bloom apply “the ancient Roman stage trope of *contaminatio*² to Stoppard’s plays” (Meyer 1989: 106). According to Meyer, *contaminatio* is a “technique” Stoppard may use “as a contextualizing and historicizing force making a play not only a comment on another play but also what Stoppard has called a commentary on something else in life” (*Ibid.*). From our viewpoint, the same can be applied to Stoppard’s work as a screenwriter, as can be seen in his script for *Shakespeare in Love*³.

¹ This phrase is uttered by Queen Elizabeth towards the end of the film, when everybody knows about the close relationship between Viola and Shakespeare. After the performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, Lord Wessex asks the Queen: “How is this to end”, and she answers: “As stories must when love’s denied –with tears and a journey”. In fact, after they realise their love is impossible and that Viola has to leave with Lord Wessex to Virginia, they decide to briefly sketch Shakespeare’s next play, *Twelfth Night*, which deals with a shipwrecked girl called Viola.

² Harold Bloom defines *contaminatio* as a “kind of interlacing between an old play and a new one” (Bloom 1986: 1, 3; quoted in Meyer 1989: 106), and for him, Stoppard is “an unusual case of the anxiety of influence” (Bloom 1986: 1, 3; quoted in Meyer 1989: 120; endnote 4).

³ Although we make reference here only to playwright Tom Stoppard, he co-wrote the screenplay for *Shakespeare in Love* with Marc Norman.

1. INTRODUCTION

As argued by Aragay (2005: 11), “the history of adaptation” has existed for as long as “the history of cinema”. As a matter of fact, some years after the Lumière brothers screened publicly the images of some workers leaving work from a factory in Lyon on 28th December 1895 , the cinema was set as a “narrative entertainment” which regarded literature as “an already established repository of narrative fiction” (McFarlane 1996: 6)⁴. However, Gunning stated that “there was no literary adaptation in cinema before roughly 1907” (Gunning 2004: 128; quoted in Stam and Raengo 2004: 128). From his viewpoint, films in the early years borrowed the storyline or the characters “from classic or popular works” but not aiming at realising “a literary work in the new medium of film”, but only as a way of referring to well-known books (*Ibid.*). Nowadays, after over a century of film history, “adaptations are everywhere” (Hutcheon 2006: 2), and they occupy an important place in the film industry.

As observed by Desmond and Hawkes (2006: 2) and Stam and Raengo (2005a: 45), the study of adaptations may seem a “narrow” field within “cinematic theory and analysis”. Nevertheless, they all agree, this is not the case. Not only the quantity and quality of adaptations are pointed out by these scholars as relevant reasons for their being important and central within this field, but Stam and Raengo go further when they state that the source texts of adaptations can be “literary, subliterary and paraliterary” (2005a: 45). An instance, as argued by them, is “bio-pics” which “adapt biographical writing about famous historical figures” (*Ibid.*). Therefore, since adaptations play such an important role nowadays, “they deserve study” (Desmond and Hawkes 2006: 1).

⁴ According to Cartmell and Whelehan, McFarlane notes that literature and film are narrative modes of representation (MacFarlane 1996: 12; quoted in Cartmell and Whelehan 2007: 5).

What is an adaptation?

Before defining what an adaptation is, it is essential to pay briefly attention to the long path adaptation theory has covered, a long path during which “salient trajectories, developments and changes of direction” have taken place⁵ (Cardwell 2002: 43). Such improvements and transformations in adaptation studies were for a long time under the “strait-jackets” of fidelity criticism. Nevertheless, as reported by Leitch, the “pioneering work by Brian McFarlane, Deborah Cartmell, Imelda Whelehan, James Naremore and Sara Cardwell” –on the way film adaptations relate to their literary source texts– gave rise to Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo’s proposal to “reorient adaptation studies” with the aim of freeing adaptation theory from the discourse of fidelity (2008: 63). To achieve this purpose, Stam and Raengo focused on Kristeva’s intertextuality theory (“literally translating Bakhtin’s dialogism”) and “the transtextuality theory of Genette” (2005a: 8 and 2005b: 4). Thus, Stam argues that “a filmic adaptation gets caught up in the ongoing whirl of intertextual reference and transformation, of texts generating other texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation, and transmutation, with no clear point of origin” (Stam 2005b: 5), i.e. there is not a single source for any adaptation (Leitch 2008: 64). Taking all this into account, we can say that an adaptation far from being either a faithful copy of a “pre-existing work” or “a series of transcriptions or imitations” (*Ibid.*: 74) is, according to Stam, a “turn in an ongoing dialogical process” (2005b: 4). Finally, another interesting view on the topic which deserves mentioning is that by Hutcheon who defines adaptations both as “a formal entity or product”, and “as a process of creation and reception” which involve “an acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works, a creative and an interpretative act of appropriation/salvaging and an

⁵ As Cardwell argues, “three have been the paradigmatic approaches that have marked out the terrain of adaptation studies: the medium-specific approach, the comparative approach and the pluralist approach” (2002: 43).

extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work” respectively (2006: 8).

“Why adapt?”⁶

As argued above, literature was regarded by adapters as “an already established repository of narrative fiction” (McFarlane 1996: 6), however, according to Desmond and Hawkes, this is not the only reason why “short stories, novels, and plays” started to be adapted in the early stages of cinema (2006: 14). The idea of incorporating literature’s renown into this new art to appeal to a wider audience was also paramount (*Ibid.*: 15). Besides, adaptations were also seen as a “pedagogical medium” capable of recreating “the Great Books” for contemporary audiences (*Ibid.*). Apart from all this, we can point out that the most important reason why filmmakers adapt a written text nowadays is their belief that it will make profits (*Ibid.*). Thus, the idea of pillaging literary works “for source material got underway”, a process which has continued to the present time (McFarlane 1996: 6-7), and which has extended to other types of texts such as “comic strips, newspaper stories, popular songs, historical texts and biographical writing about famous historical figures” (Stam 2005b: 45), among others, giving rise to different types or subgenres within adaptations being the biopic just an instance of this extension⁷.

The biopic genre

The biopic genre uses the lives of specific people as raw material to intertwine stories, and dates back to the early stages of film-making (Carretero González, Filardo Llamas, Rodríguez Martín and Andrés Cuevas 2009: 279). As a film genre, biopics elicit critical analysis about their

⁶ This is one of the questions Hutcheon uses to organise her book –*A Theory of Adaptation* (2006)– into chapters “that explore the who, what, when, where and why of adaptation” (Leitch 2008: 74).

⁷ The biopic as a film genre may be considered a subtype or subgenre within the wider category of film adaptations, as it is a type of adaptation which employs as its source non-fictional material, namely the biographies of particular people.

historical validity, despite the fact that, as Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín observe, an adaptation about a specific person is “only tangentially about that historical person” (2012: 25-26). On her part, Hutcheon states that when narrating a famous person’s life into a reimagined fictional form an “ontological shift” can take place, meaning that the adaptation is a “paraphrase or translation of a particular other text, a particular interpretation of history”, and thus, it is not reasonable to talk about adaptation “as historically accurate or historically inaccurate in the usual sense” (2006: 18). In this manner, Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín recommend that we should consider Man’s view on biopics as being “not so much a film about a life as it is a film about competing and intersecting discourses, with the life itself being simply one of those discourses that is transformed by the work of the others” (Man 2000: vi; quoted in Carretero González, Filardo Llamas, Rodríguez Martín and Andrés Cuevas 2009: 279 and in Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín 2012: 26).

Shakespeare in Love

Shakespeare in Love (1998) was directed by John Madden and written by Tom Stoppard and Marc Norman. Classified among biopics by scholars such as Kingsley-Smith (2002), Murphy (2002), Cano López and García-Periago (2008), Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín (2010, 2012), Bingham (2013), Shachar (2013) and Higson⁸ (forthcoming), the film tries “to fill the gap of Shakespeare’s lost years in London through an intertextual narrative with *Romeo and Juliet*” (Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín 2012: 26). As Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín state, the film “fictionalises” the moment when love appears in Shakespeare’s life and how this might have influenced his writing of *Romeo and Juliet* without aiming at being a historical account of Shakespeare’s existence (2010: 596, 2012: 26). Bearing in mind

⁸ We would like to thank Professor Higson for sending us an early draft of his forthcoming chapter “Brit-lit bio-pics, 1990-2010”. For more information about this, see the *References* section.

McFarlane's opinion about the adaptation of literary sources according to which being unfaithful or "playing around" may be more beneficial and useful (McFarlane 2000: 165; quoted in Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín: 2010: 603), and Man's view on biopics, it can be said that this way of approaching the Bard's life is just one of the alternatives the genre offers to filmmakers in order "to tell a juicy story" (Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín: 2012: 26).

Taking into account all the ideas mentioned in the above paragraphs, we will introduce, in the first section of our MA thesis, some issues related to the history of adaptation studies, the notion of fidelity and the biopic genre, and the way the latter can make a contribution to the study of adaptations. Then, we will establish the theoretical framework from which this study is going to be carried out having at its base the works by Stam and Leitch, on the one hand, and the research done by Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín, and Shachar on biopics, on the other. Finally, we will focus on the intertextual elements in *Shakespeare in Love* making a classification of the different types of intertextualities in the film and on the particular recreation of Shakespeare's life and works from the perspective of "Stoppardian intertextuality" (Meyer 1989: 106). We conclude by stating that although the film is a fictionalisation of "Shakespeare's lost years", Stoppard frames this gap in Shakespeare's life within the Elizabethan stage discourse quite accurately, and this gives rise to the idea, already stated by Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín, that the source text of this film is "the whole discourse generated about his life" (2010: 602). Thus, it can be classified within the genre of biopics, insofar as this genre may be regarded as a malleable one which tells us about a specific historical person only "tangentially", and where different discourses converge –being Shakespeare's life only one of them which is modified when intersecting with the others (Carretero González, Filardo Llamas, Rodríguez Martín and Andrés Cuevas 2009: 279).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. The concept of intertextuality and its application to the study of film adaptation

As stated above, “the history of adaptation is as long as the history of cinema itself” (Aragay 2005: 11), and its theoretical framework, namely adaptation theory, was controlled until the late 1960s by source and influence studies (Brydon 1998/1999: 54), from which the concept of fidelity had evolved as a methodological criterion to judge adaptations on the basis of their fidelity to their source texts (Stam 2005b: 3). In the adaptation process the relationship between film and literature was regarded as a “binary and hierarchical one”, according to which “the literary work was (...) original” and “the film adaptation (...) a copy” (Aragay 2005: 12). However, according to Brydon, the post-colonial context was the “appropriate” environment for the intertextuality theory to develop (1998/1999: 55). As stated by Still and Worton, a text could not “exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole”, and could not “function as a closed system” (1990: 10; quoted in Brydon: 1998/1999: 55)⁹. In this way, post-colonial critics realised the necessity of taking into account intertextual references in a text¹⁰, and they made evident the importance of the writer (filmmaker) as well as the reader (viewer)¹¹ “in the process of making meaning”: the former with his/her “writing-back” and the latter with

⁹ Although, according to Brydon, Still and Worton understand a text in a “narrow sense” in *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices* (1990), we believe their view can be extrapolated to film studies, so that we can consider films and film adaptations as texts.

¹⁰ Post-colonial critics especially refer to the “social and political contexts” as “important intertexts” (Brydon 1998/1999: 55). However, when talking about films, all the discourses that are interwoven in a film must be regarded as intertextual references. In this sense, Stam argues that “film forms are an ideal site for the orchestration of different genres, narratological systems, and forms of writing” (2000: 12).

¹¹ Despite the fact that Brydon makes reference in her article to literary texts, her ideas can also be extrapolated to film studies, being this the reason why we have included filmmakers and viewers next to her writers and readers.

his/her “reading-back” (Brydon 1998/1999: 54-55). From Brydon’s viewpoint, this kind of “counter-discourse” may be better grasped “from a theory of intertextuality”, and she argues that from the post-colonial period onwards, the “reading of intertextual references” started to be understood from this perspective (*Ibid.*)¹².

As a concept, Brydon adds, intertextuality is “flexible enough” to embrace intentional quoting and “the more impersonal interweaving of intertexts” as well (1998/1999: 55). Stam also claims that intertextuality cannot be reduced to questions of “influence or sources in the old philological sense” since the intertext of a creative work may be composed of not only other works of art “in the same or comparable form, but also of all the series within which the singular text is situated” (2000: 202).

The notion of intertextuality has become an epistemological principle (Sanz Cabrerizo 1995: 341) by virtue of the various definitions and redefinitions it has undergone around the world, especially during the last century. The very idea of intertextuality was forged in the 1920s¹³; however, it was not until the 1960s when the concept was coined and issued by Julia Kristeva (*Ibid.*).

The category of intertextuality gained more strength and development in the following years in the field of film adaptation studies, and it managed to become an emblem for postmodernists after a long “fight” with the traditional criticism based mainly on the discourse of fidelity (Sanz Cabrerizo 1995: 341). George Bluestone’s 1957 *Novels into*

¹² Before the post-colonial context, it was assumed that “agency resides solely in the author”, whereas from 1960s onwards, it may be talked about “a collective agency” which involves writers/filmmakers and readers/viewers as well (see footnote 11), taking up a stance, in this way, “against the impositions of a dominant culture or dominant ideology within a culture” (Brydon 1998/1999: 54).

¹³ As Graham Allen claims in his book *Intertextuality*, the origins of this concept must be located in the work by the Russian formalists of literary theory Medvedev and Volosinov, who offered an alternative to the theory of language stated by Saussure (2011: 16).

Film is a case in point (Aragay 2005: 12). In the 1970s, film studies became a fully institutionalised theoretical field; however, literature kept its superior status over film (*Ibid.*: 16). That is the case of Geoffrey Wagner's *The Novel and the Cinema* (1975) which still followed the fidelity criterion without taking into account contextual and intertextual elements (*Ibid.*). At the end of this decade, the notion of intertextuality achieved its maturity, and although in 1979 Beja's *Film and Literature* oscillated between a seeming desire to question the supremacy of literature and of the fidelity model, he continued making reference to the "spirit of the original work" as the source text an adaptation "should be faithful to" (*Ibid.*: 17).

Nevertheless, Aragay adds that in 1979 Cohen, setting out "from a semiotic perspective", postulated that "visual and verbal elements are ... component parts of one global system of meaning" (Cohen 1979: 3; quoted in Aragay: 2005: 18), and he started to examine "the exchange of energies from the movies (...) to the modern novel" (Cohen 1979: 2; quoted in Aragay: 2005: 18). From Aragay's point of view, such an assumption made apparent the limitations of Bluestone's medium-specific approach and possibly released adaptation studies "from the formalist, binary source/adaptation straitjacket" (Aragay 2005: 18). According to her, Andrew quickly seized these ideas, and with the publication of his work "The Well-Worn Muse: Adaptation in Film History and Theory" in 1980, he opened a new line for adaptation studies, opposing in this way to Bluestone's medium-specific theory and adopting Cohen's reasoning as a starting point (*Ibid.*).

In 1982, Genette, drawing on Bakhtin's dialogism and on Kristeva's intertextuality, suggests in his work *Palimpsests* the broader denomination of "transtextuality" to refer to "all that which puts one text in relation whether manifest or secret, with other texts" (Stam 2000: 207-208; Stam and Raengo 2005a: 27-28; Stam 2005b: 4-5). Genette offers "five types of transtextual relations", being intertextuality the first of them

which he describes in a more restrictive way than Kristeva as “the effective co-presence of two texts in the form of quotation, plagiarism and allusion” (Stam 2000: 207-208). As Stam claims, hypertextuality, the fifth type of transtextuality introduced by Genette, “is rich in potential application to the cinema”, and especially to films deriving from previous texts in more definite and precise ways than those disclosed by the notion of intertextuality (2000: 209). For instance, hypertextuality makes reference to the relationship between film adaptations and their source novels which are now regarded “as hypertexts derived from pre-existing hypotexts, transformed by operations of selection, amplification, concretization, and actualization” (*Ibid.*). Stam argues that although Genette does not refer to film, “his concepts can be extrapolated for film and adaptation” (2005a: 27).

Four years after the publication of Andrew’s book, Christopher Orr asserted that fidelity criticism diminished the intertextuality of a film, since it pointed to a single source text without taking into account “other pre-texts and codes (cinematic, cultural)” which helped to understand the filmic text (Orr 1984: 72-73; quoted in Aragay: 2005: 19). From Aragay’s viewpoint, Orr “challenged the discourse of fidelity” when referring not only to “Roland Barthes’s view of the text” as “a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture” (Barthes 1988: 170; quoted in Aragay: 2005: 20), but also to Ellis’s distinction between “the marketing strategy” involved in the adaptation of literary works which encourages fidelity judgments, and the true aim of an adaptation, namely “to trade upon the memory of the novel” (Ellis 1982: 3; quoted in Aragay: 2005: 20). Consequently, the “narrow” notion of fidelity was substituted by the concept of “successful adaptation”, as the adaptation that adjusts to the widely “held-perception of the source text at a given time” (Aragay 2005: 20).

According to Aragay, the contributions to adaptation studies by Andrew, Ellis and Orr in the 1980s were the most important influencing

film as well as literary studies (2005: 21). Their ideas gave rise to the upsurge

of poststructuralist theories and critical practices, to an emphasis on intertextuality as a key to textual intelligibility and to the interdisciplinary crosspollination of both film and literary studies with methods and concepts originating in linguistics, psychoanalysis, anthropology, history, semiotics, deconstruction, materialistic theory, feminism and gender studies, or race and postcolonial theory. (Aragay 2005: 21)

To some extent, Stam claims, “the decline of the text as an object of study” in this decade went together with “the ascendance of the intertext” (2000: 201). From Stam’s viewpoint, intertextual theory far from aiming at particular films or specific genres regarded each text as connected to other texts, and therefore to an intertext (*Ibid.*).

The aforesaid “crossfertilisation” between adaptation studies and the other disciplines mentioned above was very productive in the decade of the 1990s (Aragay 2005: 24). In fact, Aragay states that Cattrysse’s “polysystems theory of translation”, applied to the analysis of film adaptations, situated this kind of studies within the frame of intertextuality (2005: 24-25). In Cattrysse’s opinion,

film adaptation had better be studied as a set of discursive (or communicational, or semiotic) practices, the production of which has been determined by various previous discursive practices and by its general historical context. (Cattrysse 1992: 62; quoted in Aragay: 2005: 25)

Aragay claims that the incorporation of adaptation to the theory of intertextuality resulted in “debuking the original/copy binary pair” which was at the base of the traditional studies on film adaptation (Aragay 2005: 25).

In 2000, Naremore published an anthology of essays entitled *Film Adaptation* where he also stressed the necessity of studying adaptations taking into account “contextual (economic, cultural, political, commercial, industrial, educational) and intertextual factors” (Naremore 2000: 10 and

12; quoted in Aragay: 2005: 25). In this collection, Aragay adds, Stam offered a very fruitful view of what an adaptation is which is the basis of the present work (2005: 25).

Stam took Bakhtin's dialogism and Kristeva's translation of Bakhtin's dialogism, namely intertextuality, as the foundation of his contributions to the field of adaptation (Stam 2000: 201-202; Stam and Raengo 2005a: 26-27; Stam 2005b: 4). Thus, he regards an adaptation as an intertextual dialogue according to which

adaptations are caught up in the ongoing whirl of intertextual reference and transformation, of texts generating other texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation and transmutation, with no clear point of origin (Stam 2000: 209-210; Stam 2005b: 5).

In sum, it can be stated that nowadays an adaptation is not conceived as "a resuscitation of an originary word" but as "a turn in an ongoing dialogical process" (Stam 2005b: 4). Inasmuch as we will follow Stam's approach to adaptation, we consider it necessary to explain his proposal in detail in the next section.

2.2. Adaptation as "intertextual dialogism": Stam's approach to adaptation

Any text that has slept with another text, (...), has necessarily slept with all the texts the other text has slept with (Stam 2000: 202).

Starting to write in 2000, Robert Stam has published many books on film theory and film history¹⁴. Our present concern, namely Stam's notion of "intertextual dialogism", is related to the former.

¹⁴ Some of the books co-edited with Alessandra Raengo, Assistant Professor of Communication at Georgia State University.

As Stam argues, the field of adaptation studies has been dominated since its beginnings by a narrow approach (2005b: 3), based on the quality of the adaptation in relation to its fidelity to “an extractable essence” present in the literary source (Stam and Raengo 2005a: 15). However, according to Stam and Raengo, such “transferable core” does not exist, since the adaptation of any literary text entails taking a myriad of decisions, on the part of the people involved in the making of the film (*Ibid.*: 15-17)¹⁵, in specific historical and social contexts and by means of the “selection, amplification, concretization, actualization, critique, extrapolation, popularization, reaccentuation, transculturalization” of the source text (*Ibid.*: 45). Besides, they refer to the indeterminacy of those aspects filmmakers have to pay attention to in order to create a worthy and faithful adaptation: do they have to be true to the plot, to the author’s purposes and/or to the portrait the author makes of the characters?¹⁶ Stam and Raengo conclude by asserting that a filmic adaptation has necessarily to diverge from the original due to the change of medium that takes place: we move from “a single-track” medium like the novel, to a “multi-track” mode such as film (2005a: 17)¹⁷. Thus, they state, it is neither worthy nor possible to be true to the source text, since depending on the choices made by a filmmaker a unique adaptation will arise, one which will be distinct from any other reading of the same source text (*Ibid.*).

¹⁵ Stam and Raengo claim that a film is a cooperative work (2005a: 17) where filmmakers work together with “cinematographers, art directors, actors, technicians, etc.” (Stam 2000: 13).

¹⁶ See Stam and Raengo 2005a, p.17, to learn about the futility and impossibility of being faithful to the literary text.

¹⁷ Stam and Raengo state that the novel is a “single-track” medium, that is, an only verbal mechanism, whereas film is a “multi-track” mode of production which puts the words in context, not only through mise-en-scène and performance, but also through images, written material, music, sound effects and gestures to convey meaning (2005a: 16-17). In fact, they claim that the issue of media specificity is decisive in the field of adaptation studies: novels and films are made by means of different modes of production, and consequently each medium can do things the other cannot (*Ibid.*).

The superiority of the literary source, from Stam and Raengo's viewpoint, was founded on a series of prejudices¹⁸, associated with the notions of origin, essence and purity (2005a: 4-8). Many of them, they believe, were overcome by the theoretical progress made by structuralists and poststructuralists (*Ibid.*: 8), although as Stam and Raengo argue, almost all of the theory and literary analysis related directly or indirectly to the notion of intertextuality (from Bakhtin's dialogism to Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence"¹⁹) are relevant to the field of film studies and film adaptation (*Ibid.*: 26). However, Stam's notion of "intertextual dialogism", as it will be seen below, focuses on Bakhtin's and Genette's assumptions (*Ibid.*).

Among the most important developments carried out by structuralists and post-structuralists which will later have an influence on adaptation studies and on Stam's notion of "intertextual dialogism", it is necessary to mention, firstly, Barthes' leveling of literary criticism and literature which gave rise to the upgrading of film adaptation status in such a way that it started to be regarded as "a form of criticism or reading of the novel" (Stam and Raengo 2005a: 8). Secondly, post-structuralists questioned the concept of the "unified subject", seen as the generator of all type of art (*Ibid.*: 9). Likewise, Bakhtin's conception of the author as well as of the character as "multi-discursive and resistant to unification" made it really difficult to continue regarding them as "stable and unitary" individuals (*Ibid.*)²⁰. Besides, Bakhtin's view of the author as "the

¹⁸ See Stam and Raengo 2005a, pp. 4-8, to read about the eight "sources of hostility to adaptation" they propose.

¹⁹ According to Stam and Raengo, Harold Bloom in *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973), regards the adaptation of a canonical work as "the Oedipal son" that metaphorically kills its father, namely the source text (2005a: 4).

²⁰ All this correlates with what has been said above about the impossibility of existence of a "transferable essence". In fact, if authors are "fissured, fragmented, multi-discursive, hardly present even to themselves", how can an adaptation convey the "spirit" or the intention of the author? (Stam and Raengo 2005a: 9).

orchestrator of pre-existing discourses” together with Foucault’s devaluation of the author in favour of a kind of pervading and anonymous discourse, led to a non-originary conception of all arts (Stam and Raengo 2005a: 9, Stam 2005b: 4). For Bakhtin, the artistic discourse is a “hybrid” composition which always blends the author’s voice with the words of others (*Ibid.*). As a result, an adaptation is viewed as “an orchestration of discourses, talents and tracks” (Stam and Raengo 2005a: 9), including, in this way, the subliterate into the literary. This is considered by Stam and Raengo as the origin of a more open-minded conception of the adaptation as a genre which has frequently been regarded as subliterate and parasitic (2005a: 9)²¹.

Apart from all that, Stam and Raengo argue that a film is at the same time a synesthetic and a synthetic art form. It is synesthetic insofar as it involves different senses, namely hearing and sight, and it is synthetic insofar as it is eager “to devour and digest and change” previous arts (2005a: 23).

As claimed above, Stam’s notion of “intertextual dialogism” draws on Bakhtin’s dialogism, later translated into Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality, as well as on the transtextuality theory of Genette. According to Stam and Raengo, Bakhtin and Genette’s concepts emphasised “the endless permutation of textualities”, which is what Stam comes to say in the quotation at the beginning of this section (Stam and Raengo 2005a: 8, Stam 2005b: 4). As Stam and Raengo state, Bakhtin’s and Genette’s conceptual notions, although conceived for the novel, can be extrapolated to the study of film and film adaptation (2005a: 26-27).

On the one hand, Stam argues that Bakhtin’s dialogism suggests that in every text different “textual surfaces” intersect with each other

²¹ Other theoretical tendencies, such as Cultural Studies, Narratology, Reception Theory and Performative Theory have also helped to “demote” the superiority of the literary text over its filmic version, reconceptualising, in this way, the idea of what an adaptation was (Stam and Raengo 2005a: 9).

(2000: 201), and they become “tissues of anonymous formulae embedded in the language, variations on those formulae, conscious and unconscious quotations, confluences and inversions of other texts” (*Ibid.*: 201-202). In the 1960s, Kristeva translated Bakhtin’s dialogism into intertextuality. Thus, “intertextual dialogism” makes reference to the endless and indefinite communicative practices in a culture with which a text necessarily establishes a series of dialogic relations, and which can be either evident in the text or implied in a more subtle way in the artistic work (*Ibid.*: 202-203). These dialogic practices include not only similar works of art but also all the communicative associations it establishes with other media and arts (*Ibid.*), either literate, illiterate, highbrow, lowbrow, verbal or non-verbal (*Ibid.*: 206). Therefore, Stam claims that the notion of intertextuality cannot be reduced to the concepts of sources or influence (*Ibid.*: 202). In fact, intertextuality is an important and useful theory that connects a specific text with other modes of representation. So valuable it is, that according to Stam in order to consider the relationship between a work and its historical context it is necessary to locate the text within its intertext and later correlate both of them, namely text and intertext, to all the pre-existing texts and discourses which are part of its context (*Ibid.*: 203).

On the other hand, Genette, drawing on Bakhtin and Kristeva’s ideas, suggested in *Palimpsestes* (1982) the concept of transtextuality to make reference to everything which relates one text with other texts, whether obvious or hidden (Stam 2000: 207). Genette postulated five categories of transtextual connections²², and he described intertextuality, his first type, in a more restrictive way than Kristeva to make reference to the “effective co-presence of two texts” which can take the form of plagiarism, allusion and quotation (*Ibid.*). As Stam says, Genette’s fifth category, namely hypertextuality, alludes to the relation between a text,

²² Genette’s five types of transtextual relations are intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, architextuality and hypertextuality (Stam 2000: 207-209).

called by Genette “hypertext”, with a pre-existing text, called “hypotext”, which is transformed, modified, elaborated or extended by the hypertext (*Ibid.*: 209). According to Stam, this notion can be productively applied to the cinema, and especially to films drawn from anterior texts in more exact and particular forms than those expressed by Genette’s intertextuality (*Ibid.*). From Stam’s viewpoint, hypertextuality emphasises “the transformative operations” which one text can exert on another: some “hypertextual films” disrespectfully diminish the greatness of a previous text while others plainly bring up to date pre-existing works highlighting certain characteristics of the source text, to give just a couple of examples (*Ibid.*: 210). Therefore, Stam and Raengo state that the production of different filmic adaptations of the same source text has to be regarded as diverse “hypertextual readings” deriving from one hypotext (2005a: 31). According to them, the “copies” increase the reputation of “the original” and all of them together come to constitute an extensive hypotext for the latest filmmaker who decides to make an adaptation of the source text (*Ibid.*). As they suggest, film adaptations “are caught up in the ongoing whirl of intertextual reference and transformation, of texts generating other texts in an endless process of recycling, transformation, and transmutation, with no clear point of origin” (Stam and Raengo 2005a: 31, Stam 2005b: 5).

Stam and Raengo claim that every film, even non-adaptations “adapt a script” and that all films are brought about by intertextuality and writing (2005a: 45). Therefore, the source texts of adaptations do not have to be always literary works since “subliterary and paraliterary” texts can also be the sources of filmic adaptations (*Ibid.*). An instance of this are biopics, which adapt a biographical source text about a particular historical person (*Ibid.*), and which are one of the concerns of the present paper. All this demonstrates the “derivative” character of each artistic creation, including of course adaptations, and, as a result, it can be observed how the study of adaptations impinges on the way all films are understood (*Ibid.*).

In sum, it can be stated that intertextual dialogism between films and other pre-existing texts, discourses and media is unavoidable and necessary. Inevitable, because as the quotation at the beginning of this section suggests, the intertext of a work of art comprises all the artworks within which the text is located (Stam 2000: 202), and necessary, because as Orson Welles hinted, if a filmmaker does not have anything distinct to say about a novel, what is the point of adapting it? (Stam and Raengo 2005a: 16).

2.3 Adaptations and the biopic: Is *Shakespeare in Love* a biopic?

Desmond and Hawkes dedicate chapter 8 of their book *Adaptation Studying Film and Literature* to examine how nonfictional literary texts, namely memoirs, journalism and biographies, are adapted “into narrative films” (2006: 188). According to them, the resulting film is not either entirely a “documentary” or totally a “fiction film”, but, as they state, it is a “hybrid” of both of them (*Ibid.*: 189). Thus, in the same way as documentaries, nonfiction films represent true people, settings and happenings, and, as fiction films do, they show actors, instead of real people, performing the actual events but normally in different places (*Ibid.*). Besides, from their viewpoint, other imaginary locations, situations and characters can be introduced in the film (*Ibid.*). Desmond and Hawkes agree with Steven Lipkin, who names this hybrid “docudrama”, when he claims that “docudrama demands a particular kind of suspension of disbelief from its audience.... We are asked to accept that, in this case, recreation is a necessary mode of representation” (Lipkin n.d.; quoted in Desmond and Hawkes 2006: 189).

This obligatory recreation Lipkin refers to is closely related to the “ontological shift” Linda Hutcheon mentions that can take place when adapting a historical episode or the life of an actual person into a

“reimagined, fictional form”²³ (Hutcheon 2006: 17). She states that the adaptation can be either “an authoritative historical rendering or a more indefinite archive” and can take different and diverse forms, such as “biopics, heritage films, television docudramas or even videogames” (*Ibid.*). As she says, in ontological shifts, it has little sense to refer to an adaptation as “historically accurate” or “inaccurate” since as she asserts, an adaptation has to be regarded as “a paraphrase or translation of a particular other text”, a specific reading of history (*Ibid.*: 18).

Leitch argues in chapter twelve of his work *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents: From Gone with the Wind to the Passion of the Christ* that docudrama and documentary critics have normally proclaimed that in cinema historical depictions are not historical accounts, despite the thorough research some filmmakers carry out before writing a script, but fictionalised representations of historical happenings (2007: 282). Nevertheless, Leitch claims that films can be historical accounts of “staging, performance, costuming, set decoration, and even of history”, insofar as we embrace the view that the adaptation of historical events cannot be more precise than the adaptation of any other source text (*Ibid.*). Therefore, Leitch places the adaptation of historical records under the same precepts as any other kind of adaptation. According to this, being faithful to the source text, in this case to historical records, is neither advisable nor desirable (McFarlane 2000: 165; quoted in Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín 2010: 603), since such a constraint does nothing other than “limit the scope and originality of new contributions” (Leitch 2008: 65). What Leitch is trying to do is to free adaptations built on non-fictional or non-literary source texts from what Shachar refers to as

²³ As stated on page 3, Hutcheon defines an adaptation as a three-fold structure, namely as a formal entity or product, as a process of creation and as a process of reception. As a formal entity or product, the adaptation is seen as “a transposition of a particular work or works” which may involve a change of medium, of genre, of frame and therefore of context, or a shift “from a historical account or biography to a fictionalised narrative or drama”. This last type of variation is what she refers to as “a shift in ontology” (2006: 7-8).

“a conservative ideology of history, identity and historical representation”, advocating for a “postmodern historical consciousness” which recognises the “discursive” nature of history (Shachar 2013: 201-202). From Shachar’s viewpoint, postmodernist discourse examines the way we “understand, represent, receive, and interpret history in the present”, and it also deconstructs the notion of “objective truth and data” in historical research to try to recover “lost and untold histories” and to show that history is a narrative based on particular historical circumstances (*Ibid.*: 202).

As argued before, Stam and Raengo observe that the source texts of adaptations can be “literary, subliterary and paraliterary”, being biopics just an example which “adapt biographical writing about famous historical figures” (2005a: 45). In this sense, Cartmell and Whelehan state that “screening the author” is an instance of “writing back”, and that the increasing interest in this issue is related to the revived concern English Studies have in the writer and his/her biography²⁴ (2007: 8), but, what do we understand as a biography?

Donna Lee Brien claims in her article “Disclosure in Biographically-Based Fiction: The Challenges of Writing Narratives Based on True Life Stories” that a biography is “by definition an accurate account of a real person’s life” (Brien 2009)²⁵. Here, nonetheless, Rosenstone claims that a biography, as a literary genre, is not a mere account of data, and as he points out, it is difficult to establish the elements that help to bring about “a good biography”, as well as to settle the aims and purposes of this genre, due mainly to the changes the categories related to the goals and

²⁴ Cartmell and Whelehan give us as examples of biopics *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), *Adaptation* (2002) and *Finding Neverland* (2004) (2007: 8).

²⁵ Following MLA Style Manual when an online source does not provide page numbers, we will cite this source writing only the author’s name followed by the publication date, and it will be in the References where we will mention that this text have no page numbers by means of the abbreviation n. pag. Retrieved from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/08/>

objectives of biography have undergone for over two thousand years (Rosenstone 2007: 12-13). He comes to conclude that there are no rigid rules concerning this genre, and that the best solution from his point of view is to always regard biography as an act of interpretation which inexorably involves fictional elements²⁶ (*Ibid.*). As Rosenstone says, “fiction” is understood from its original sense in Latin, i.e. meaning “formed”. However, he observes that biography can also be regarded as an imaginative construction, from a more current perspective, and as such, it includes fictional elements (*Ibid.*: 13). Rosenstone makes reference to three important scholars on this issue to maintain his view. Firstly, he mentions Barthes who defined biography as “the fiction that dare not speak its name” (Barthes 1971: 89; quoted in Rosenstone 2007: 13). Secondly, he refers to Heilbrun who drawing on Barthes’ definition of biography inquires: “Who can write a biography without inventing a life?” (Heilbrun 1993: 297; quoted in Rosenstone 2007: 13). According to him, Heilbrun argues that “the biographer as the writer of fiction, imposes a pattern upon events, invents a protagonist, and discovers the patterns of his life” (*Ibid.*). Finally, he alludes to Bacscheider who developing Heilbrun’s insights claims that:

The best biographers know that they are inventing through their selection and arrangements of materials; they are establishing cause-effect and other relationships, and they are determining what was most formative and important for someone else, someone they do not know. They must choose what to include, leave out, emphasize, and subordinate, and when they do, they have constructed a narrative that, whether they are aware of it or not, partakes of cultural stories with expectations for resolutions and interpretations built in... (Bacscheider 2000: 18; quoted in Rosenstone 2007: 13)²⁷

²⁶ This is similar to what Desmond and Hawkes claim about the adaptation of nonfictional literary texts into “narrative films” (2006: 188-189). See p. 18 of this paper.

²⁷ Nowadays, scholars such as Dennis Bingham prefer not to use the word “fiction” when talking about the biopic, in order to avoid the misleading interpretation of “something made up” or “something that didn’t happen”, and advocate for the different forms of the term “drama”, understood as “the recreating of figures of the past and present, the acting out of the actual personage as character” (Bingham 2013: 248).

As it can be observed, this shows resemblance to what we have stated so far about the adaptation of a literary source text, and one can dare say of any source text.

Although it may appear astounding to mention fictional elements when talking about biographies, Rosenstone agrees with Nadel, both a theoretician and a biographer, when the latter points out that “often biographers depart from facts or bend them in order to create a particular atmosphere or mood or a more consistent figure of a historical person” (Nadel 1984: 6; quoted in Rosenstone 2007: 13). From Rosenstone’s viewpoint, when there is “too much fact” and there are “too many details” in a biography the patterns of interpretation which help us to comprehend “a life” will be suppressed and this will condemn the biography to failure (Rosenstone 2007: 13).

As Rosenstone claims, all these elements which characterise biographical writing, namely “the imposed fiction of a story, the creative use of fact, the translation necessary to make a life comprehensible and interesting”, seem also to be part of biographical films or biopics at present (2007: 14). Thus, he adds, the resulting film draws less on “the raw data” than on the information the biographer or filmmaker have introduced by means of their personal perception of the “raw data” and of their personal abilities in writing or filming (*Ibid.*). However, he states, the big difference between both genres, that is, the shift from a “single-track” to a multi-track medium, together with the changes and additions that normally take place when a literary biography is transformed into “a dramatic production”, helps us to see this category of films as a new kind of biography (*Ibid.*: 15).

Biographical films or biopics have been present in the movie industry almost since its inception²⁸, and have been used to depict “the

²⁸ According to Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín, if we agree that the biopic focuses on the protagonist’s life rather than on the historical time the person lived, the first biopic, as Landy also points out, is the “documentary-like” film belonging to the silent era *The Execution of Mary*,

lives of political and religious leaders, artists, writers, sportspeople, criminals or martyrs” (Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín 2012: 21)²⁹. As they state, the biopic genre reached its peak in the 1950s, although it became a minor genre in the following decade when it limited itself to the small screen (*Ibid.*: 23). However, in the 1990s, the number of biopics released was just a sign of the popularity of the genre, not only among viewers but also among actors and actresses (Carretero González, Filardo Llamas, Rodríguez Martín and Andrés Cuevas 2009: 279). Despite the fame of biopics, Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín complain, in the same way as Anderson and Man did in 1988 and 2000 respectively, that there is not much academic research on this genre (2012: 21). From Bingham’s point of view, biopics denote drama instead of documentaries, and thus, they tend to overlap with other film genres³⁰ (2013: 247). Accordingly, Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín agree with Man when they state that biopics are “so much a part of other film genres that they inevitably serve more as illustrations for those other kind of movies” (Man 2000: v; quoted in Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín 2012: 22). On his part, Higson claims when discussing the formalities of the “Brit-lit biopic”, that almost all these films are costume dramas, period investigations of iconic British figures and heritage films which exploit “the national literary canon” (forthcoming chapter). Certainly, Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín agree with Landy when stating that the boundaries between the biopic and other filmic genres must be “fluid” so that the biopic can embrace “historical film, costume drama, musical melodrama, western, crime film, social problem film, documentary, and so

Queen of Scots in 1895, a film which only lasted 18 seconds and which was directed by Alfred Clark (Landy 2008; quoted in Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín 2012: 22).

²⁹ For a detailed study of the evolution the genre has gone through see the article by Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín “Life through a Lens: Writers and the Biopics”, 2012, pp. 22-25.

³⁰ Bingham states that there exist “musical biopics, sports biopics, ganster biopics, biopic thrillers, literary biopics, artist biopics, and historical biopics” (2013: 247).

on” (Landy 2008; quoted in Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín 2012: 22).

Due to the fact that biopics impersonate a real-life figure, this genre has frequently evoked direct and indirect forms of criticism in relation to its degree of accuracy when portraying the “chosen” person (Carretero González, Filardo Llamas, Rodríguez Martín and Andrés Cuevas 2009: 279; Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín 2012: 25). However, in the same way as Landy states that the authenticity of the biopic is based on research –“written histories of a period, biographies, diaries, journals, paintings, architecture, fashion” (Landy 2008; quoted in Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín 2012: 25)–, Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín claim that some accuracy on historical issues is required in a biopic, although not strict fidelity (2012: 25). From their view point, this has to be taken into account when studying the genre as well as Man’s definition of a biopic as a film where different discourses compete and intersect, being the discourse of the life itself only one of them which is modified by the others (Man 2000: vi; quoted in Carretero González, Filardo Llamas, Rodríguez Martín and Andrés Cuevas 2009: 279 and in Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín 2012: 26).

In addition, Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín think that another dilemma screenwriters have to face when shaping a life on film is what Anderson refers to as “the difficult task of turning people whose fame is based on their written word into people who make compelling drama” (Anderson 1988: 339; quoted in Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín 2012: 26), since, as they state, such iconic writers have normally led quiet “private lives” (2012: 26). As a result, they agree, if screenwriters want “to tell a juicy story”, one that appeals the audience, they have to “push an already hybrid genre to its limits” (*Ibid.*), and one possible way of doing it, is adopting a romantic approach to specific crucial moments in the artist’s life, aiming at throwing some light either on the creative process or on the

source of the work created by the writer in question, or both (Higson, forthcoming)³¹.

Thus, in the same way as literary criticism regards the “figure of the author” as fundamental to discussions on “history, identity, genre, sexuality, class, and nationality”, “screening the author” in current cinema, according to Shachar, has become a trend in our culture, linked with different “cultural, political, ideological, and national concepts of identity and subjectivity” (2013: 203-204). Shachar regards this present cinematic emphasis on the author as a “distinct branch of contemporary historical consciousness worked out in often complex ways”. An example, he adds, is the “postmodernist strategy” of building up “micro-narratives” related to “the construction of the authorial persona, namely the feminine muse”; *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) and *Becoming Jane* (2007) are just two cases in point (*Ibid.*). As Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín argue, the two films are linked by the way the screenwriters of both films decide “to fictionalise” a crucial moment in the writers’ lives –their writing of *Romeo and Juliet* and *First Impressions*, an early version of *Pride and Prejudice*, respectively (Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín 2010: 596, 2012: 26). Neither *Shakespeare in Love* nor *Becoming Jane*, they add, aim at showing “a historically accurate portrayal of Shakespeare or Jane Austen” but “a fictionalisation”³² of the influence that might have had on “their writing careers” the advent of love in their lives (*Ibid.*)³³.

³¹ This idea is also mentioned by Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín (2010: 596).

³² Fictionalisation is understood, as argued before, from its original Latin sense, i.e. “formed”, but also from a more current perspective, conforming to which it includes non-real elements (Rosenstone 2007: 13). At the same time, fictionalisation has to be grasped from the view of the “postmodern historical consciousness” mentioned on page 20 above. According to this, history is “understood, represented, received and interpreted as a narrative based on particular historical circumstances”, and as such, it represents a way of recovering “lost and untold histories” (Shachar 2013: 202).

³³ This idea also appears in the article by Cano López and García-Periago “Becoming Shakespeare and Jane Austen in Love: An Intertextual Dialogue between Two Biopics” *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal On-line* 29.1 (Winter 2008).

As Higson states, many British and American films shooting the life stories of important British writers were filmed in the 1990s and 2000s (forthcoming). Higson calls them Brit-lit biopics, and he claims that romance is “the fountainhead of the creative process” (forthcoming). Accordingly, Murphy argues that filmmakers have discovered the writing life of authors as “a potentially fruitful source field” (2002: 68). From her viewpoint, the artist’s work is central to his/her life and that is the reason why literary biopics have to depict the life itself as well as the way “the life gets into the work” (*Ibid.*).

Bearing in mind all that has been said so far about biographies and biofilms³⁴, it is now the right time to give an answer to two questions which are the focus of all this writing.

Firstly, we can ask ourselves whether *Shakespeare in Love* can be considered a biopic or not.

Until now we have been trying to settle the basis of the cinematic and literary biopic aiming to claim that *Shakespeare in Love* is a biopic, and different insights can be offered to support this view. On the one hand, it is not only that many scholars such as Bingham, Cano López and García-Periago, Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín, Higson, Kingsley-Smith, Murphy, and Shachar, among others, label this film as such, but we can also mention professor Robert Miltner from Kent University who taught a course on literary biopics in 2010 and he included this film as an example of this genre³⁵. Besides, as Cano López and García-Periago state, Kenneth Rothwell and Richard Burt, two experts on Shakespearan films, have claimed that the film is a “milestone in the history of Shakespaeran adaptation” (2008). It is equally interesting to

³⁴ Rosenstone, in his article “In Praise of the Biopic” (2007), makes use of the term biofilm to refer to biographical films or biopics as well.

³⁵ The blog archive can be visited on <http://literarybiopic.blogspot.com.es/p/shakespeare-in-love.html>

make reference to the fact that although it dates back from 1998, nowadays it continues being mentioned by scholars. A very recent instance is Hila Shachar's article "Authorial Histories: The Historical Film and the Literary Biopic", published in the book *A Companion to the Historical Film* in 2013, which refers to this film as an example of a literary biopic that offers "a new form of biography" (2013: 200). According to her, this is a film which follows what Sandoff claims about heritage films from the 1990s, that is, that they must be studied from the postmodernist "historical consciousness" (Sadoff 2010: xi; quoted in Shachar 2013: 201); i.e. from "a process of deconstruction of the idea of objective truth and data in historical inquiry" focusing on the figure of the author (Shachar 2013: 202). She agrees that the film does not offer us a realistic representation of Shakespeare but by means of the "postmodern strategies of quotation and parody", it is a film that tries to reveal the way "history is itself a construction" (*Ibid.*). This view is closely related to what Polaschek states in the abstract of her PhD dissertation about the postfeminist biopic³⁶. According to her this sub-genre, namely the postfeminist biopic, can be studied from a "self-reflexive and deconstructive" view, insofar as the biopic will be regarded as a "subjective act of historical reconstruction", and the author as an "anti-essentialist construction" (Polaschek 2011). As we can see, these insights are in line with what Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín claim, in agreement with Man, about the fact that biopics cannot be completely faithful to history because they are a subjective recreation (2010: 603).

However, if we browse through the Rotten Tomatoes.com links³⁷ for the film, we will find that there is only one review in which, although

³⁶ Polaschek, B. (2011), *The Postfeminist Biopic: Narrating the lives of Plath, Kahlo, Woolf and Austen* (Thesis, Doctor of Philosophy). University of Otago. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10523/1712>

³⁷ Rotten Tomatoes is a website which includes film reviews published in newspapers and magazines. It can be visited at <<http://www.rottentomatoes.com/>>

referring to Shakespeare in Love as a biopic, its writer thinks this is not accurate at all:

Wastes no time setting itself up as a rowdy, colloquial piece of popular entertainment –the furthest thing from a fussy biopic of the Bard (Gonsalves, R. September 23, 2007).

Nonetheless, as stated above, can a biopic be an accurate portrayal of an author's life? Is this what we expect to find when watching a biopic? No, we would say, if we take into account all that has been said so far. Besides, we must not forget that this film deals with Shakespeare's lost years in London, and thus, what Stoppard and Norman do is to use history and Shakespeare's works to fill this gap, creating a subjective reconstruction of history. And this is exactly what Professor Park Honan did when writing *Shakespeare: A Life* (1998). In an interview with Bill Goldstein, editor of *The New York Times* on the Web on February 23, 1999, Honan stated that he had "to bridge" the gap between what he knew about the society and Shakespeare in order to fill such lack of information. As he asserts in his profile from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Leeds webpage³⁸ and on the interview mentioned above, he was "testing out" new approaches to biography³⁹. Nevertheless, we could claim, he could not avoid, as Lee Brien (2009) argues about many biographers, to feel tied to facts in a way scriptwriters or novelists do not. Although Honan believed that *Shakespeare in Love* was not "very faithful to its time" (Goldstein 1999), it can be classified as a biopic, for all the things mentioned above.

Finally, we can briefly mention the "conventions" Higson (forthcoming) establishes for the Brit-lit biopic, to support the inclusion of *Shakespeare in Love* in the biopic genre. According to him, Brit-lit biopics:

³⁸http://www.leeds.ac.uk/arts/people/20040/school_of_english/person/1133/park_honan

³⁹ According to him, he has devoted much of his time to write "contextualized biographies attentive to feeling as well as to ideas, objective and yet close, rooted in an "historical present", alive to childhood, creativity, growth, and above all painstakingly accurate and not self-indulgent" (Retrieved from the webpage in Footnote 38).

- “adopt the conventions of romantic drama, costume drama and heritage cinema”,
- “rarely deal with a whole life”,
- “personalise and individualise the historical project organising the representation of the past around desire and romance”,
- “are always about dramatising a life, (...) there is always a tension in such films, between biographical depth and historical substance, on the one hand, and, on the other, the need to create a compelling cinematic drama” (forthcoming).

Besides, in Brit-lit biopis:

- the writer protagonist is regarded from “an idea of young love”,
- “the course of true love is rarely smooth”,
- “scenes of writing often appear in such films, but they are rarely sustained; the creative process is more likely to be dramatised, with overt literary quotations, familiar sentence constructions, characters or scenarios from the author’s fictions played out as social drama”,
- “the relationship between creativity and desire, is almost invariably tied to (...) the discourse of historical authenticity. (Higson, forthcoming)

Therefore, although the film is a fictionalisation of Shakespeare’s lost years in London, the scriptwriters, Tom Stoppard and Marc Norman, frame this gap in Shakespeare’s life within the Elizabethan stage discourse quite accurately, which gives rise to the idea already proposed by Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín that the source text of the film is “the whole discourse generated about his life” (2010: 602).

Our second question is taken from the 15 issue Leitch suggests in his review article “Adaptation Studies at a Crossroads” (2008), according

to which a selection of essays are classified depending on the “question they raise” (2008: 65). He inquires: “How do adaptations based on non-literary or non-fictional sourcetexts similarly enlarge the range of adaptation studies by revealing the parochialism of theories that restrict their examples to films based on fictional texts?” (*Ibid.*: 67).

Thus, we can state that in the same way as a literary work can give rise to different “adaptational readings, which are inevitably partial, personal, conjectural and interested” (Stam and Raengo 2005a: 25), the scattered information about Shakespeare’s lost years in London offers the possibility of different interpretations of the data available. Thus, considering how such facts are translated into the semiotic system of the cinema by Stoppard and Norman, being the former an expert on the adaptation and transformation of the work of Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot, Wilde and Beckett, among others, will contribute important clues to the study of adaptations, such as⁴⁰

- The adaptation of historical events cannot be more precise than the adaptation of any other source text (Leitch 2007: 282).
- Being faithful to the source text does nothing but “limit the scope and originality of new contributions” (Leitch 2008: 65).
- Adaptations of non-fictional or non-literary source texts have to be freed from “the conservative ideology of history, identity and historical representation” in favour of a “postmodern historical consciousness” which recognises the “discursive” nature of history and deconstructs the notion of “objective truth and data” in historical research, in order to recover “lost and untold histories” and to show that history is a narrative based on particular historical circumstances (Shachar 2013: 201-202).

⁴⁰ What follows is a summary of everything we have been discussing in this section.

- A biopic as well as a biography has to be regarded as an act of interpretation which involves fictional elements (Rosenstone 2007: 12-13).
- The screenwriter and the biographer both “impose a pattern upon events, invent a protagonist, and discover the patterns of his life” (Rosenstone 2007: 13).
- Biopics tend to overlap with other genres, serving in this way “as illustrations for those other kind of movies” (Man 2000: v; quoted in Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín 2012: 22).
- The boundaries between the biopic and other filmic genres must be “fluid”, so that the biopic can embrace other genres (Landy 2008; quoted in Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín 2012: 22).
- A biopic is “a film about competing and intersecting discourses, with the life itself being simply one of those discourses that is transformed by the work of the others” (Man 2000: vi; quoted in Carretero González Filardo Llamas, Rodríguez Martín and Andrés Cuevas 2009: 279 and in Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín 2012: 26).

Summing up, adaptation studies cannot limit themselves to the study of films whose source texts are fictional ones, since the adaptations based on non-literary or non fictional source texts have much to say, as we have just seen. Biopics are just an example, and they, as Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín claim, “are here to stay, mutate, and overall, entertain” (2012: 27).

3. INTERTEXTUALITY IN *SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE*

In this section, we are going to apply Stam's notion of "intertextual dialogism" to analyse the film *Shakespeare in Love*⁴¹. There are two main reasons why we have chosen his model. Firstly, because we believe it to be the most appropriate to study a film where the concept of intertextuality plays such an important role, especially if it is in Stoppard's hands, and where the intertextual dialogue between different kinds of sources is a constant. Secondly, because this film goes beyond fidelity judgments and regards history as a narrative, based on specific historical circumstances, which intersects with other discourses in an intertextual dialogue where such discourses are transformed and re-interpreted.

3.1 Synopsis

In *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), we find a young Shakespeare suffering from a writer's block which prevents him from starting his new play which should already be finished. When he meets and falls in love with Viola De Lesseps, a beautiful young aristocrat who loves theatre, he finds in her his muse and inspiration for the writing of *Romeo and Juliet*. However, in the same way as the main characters in this tragedy are star-crossed, their love will find insurmountable obstacles of social and economic nature⁴².

⁴¹ Stam's notion of "intertextual dialogism" has also been used by other authors for the analysis of adaptations, among which we can mention Rodríguez Martín (2003, 2005, 2013).

⁴² See Appendix 1 for the film credits.

As O'Connor claims, this is a film "inspired by love" where "Shakespeare's creative powers are unleashed as his great love story, *Romeo and Juliet* is brought to life for the first time" (O'Connor, n.d.)⁴³.

3.2 The script and its source text

The screenplay for *Shakespeare in Love* was co-written by Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard. The former was both the person from whom the "story idea" originated, namely dealing with a young Shakespeare who was just beginning his career as a playwright, and the man who realised that the script was perfect for the "entertainment business" (Elisberg, n.d.). The latter, a well-known playwright who "has made his name by playing with Shakespeare"⁴⁴, among others, has been credited by many film critics and viewers for the film's playwriting intertextuality and for the film's wit, exploited by the director, John Madden, to "its comic end" (Henderson, n.d.), although he always bore in mind the importance of the romantic narrative in the film (Patches, 2012). This cooperative work about Shakespeare made Henderson state that the three should be regarded as "collaborators with Shakespeare" being their relationship a productive one (Henderson, n.d.).

In this film, the source text is Shakespeare's own life, that is, "the whole discourse generated about his life" (Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín 2010: 602). However, it portrays a period of his life about which there is not much bibliographical evidence⁴⁵. As a result,

⁴³ Following the instructions for citing online sources of MLA (Modern Language Association) Style Manual, for those online references which do not provide a publication date, we will use the abbreviation n.d. Retrieved from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/08/>

⁴⁴ As Meyer states, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967), *Dogg's Hamlet*, *Cahoot's Macbeth* (1979) are some examples of Stoppard's re-contextualization and transformation of Shakespeare's words (1989: 105).

⁴⁵ From the late 1580's to the early 1590's, "after he left Stratford and became fully established in the London theatre world" (Henderson, n.d.).

Norman and Stoppard decided to frame the “story idea” within a contextual situation any professional writer suffers at some point in his writing career: Stoppard states that “the young writer was just like us when we were young writers... he has our problems”⁴⁶. Starting from the idea already suggested by Cano López and García-Periago (2008) and Carretero González and Rodríguez Martín (2010), according to which an artist’s life is revealed in his work, Norman and Stoppard make us believe that *Romeo and Juliet* was inspired by the impossible love affair between Shakespeare and Viola. However, as Honan states (1998: 117, 207), this play was based on Arthur Brooke’s poem *Romeus and Juliet* (1562), a story Shakespeare knew well. In this sense, Zurek (n.d) argues that autobiographical facts and events in the film do not have the direct role they claim in the writing of Shakespeare’s plays. Nevertheless, Zurek adds, we can point out several aspects in the film which are considered to be true from a historical viewpoint.

3.3 Biographical intertexts

Although it is improbable that Norman and Stoppard used Park Honan’s biography about Shakespeare, *Shakespeare: A Life*, since both the film and the book came out in the same year, it is very likely that for the writing of the script they read some of the materials available about Shakespeare’s life listed in Honan’s book⁴⁷.

⁴⁶ From the documentary included with the deluxe DVD, “*Shakespeare in Love and on Film*” (1999, USA) which contains the commentaries of Marc Norman, Tom Stoppard and John Madden among others.

⁴⁷ Honan points to the first formal sketch of Shakespeare in 1662 by Thomas Fuller’s *The History of the Worthies of England*, however many of them followed in the subsequent centuries, making use in many instances of the work of their predecessors. In the late 20th century, Honan asserts, a new approach to history and biography appeared according to which “documentary facts” had to be studied from the social context they were part (1998: 415-424).

We all know that Shakespeare came to London as a young man leaving behind his wife, Ann Hathaway, and his three children. According to Honan, he did it to enhance his and his family social status which had been badly damaged by Shakespeare's father's offenses to the "brethren's council" and by his "own choices" (1998: 128). Besides, Honan states, Shakespeare needed money to assist his family, and Stratford was not the place from which a "public mercenary actor" could rise (*Ibid.*). The film neither makes reference to this possibility nor to his probable start in London as a "hireling of other actors" (*Ibid.*: 106 and 113), or even as an actor himself (*Ibid.*: 205), before becoming the Bard. However, his having a family in Stratford is mentioned twice in the film, although both instances are fictionalised: the first time is when Shakespeare is talking to the "psychoanalyst" looking for the reason why he has lost his gift, and the other is when Viola (dressed as Thomas Kent) is at a tavern with Will and the rest of the actors, and she discovers that he has a family in Stratford.

We can also mention the fact that there exist various signatures of Shakespeare with some differences in spelling and abbreviation (Holland 1999), and this is due to the fact that at that time "few standardized spellings existed" (Graham 1999)⁴⁸. This is shown in the film at the very beginning: after a series of images of *The Rose*⁴⁹, and a shot of Henslowe⁵⁰,

⁴⁸ This information is taken from a review by Trey Graham in *USA Today* (1999) to which Hardy M. Cook refers to in his email from a discussion list about Shakespeare: Cook, Hardy M. "Re: Shakespeare in Love" 14 Jan. 1999. E-mail. Retrieved from http://cla.calpoly.edu/~smarx/Shakespeare/Shak_inLove/DiscussShLove.html

The aforementioned review –Graham, T (1999) "Finding Laughs between the Lines", *USA Today*, Monday January 11, 1999– can also be found in the following web page <http://pre.docdat.com/docs/index-160106.html?page=12#1915040>

⁴⁹ This London theatre, as Honan argues, can be considered "one birthplace of Elizabethan tragedy", since certainly all plays by Marlowe and *The Spanish Tragedy* by Kyd must have been performed there (1998: 104). In his book, Honan offers a beautiful description of *The Rose* (*Ibid.*).

⁵⁰ According to Honan, Henslow was the most important "theatrical landlord" who owned and managed *The Rose* (1998: 103).

being tortured by two of Fennyman's⁵¹ "frighteners", we can see Shakespeare writing at his desk⁵² (Holland 1999). He is scribbling his name using diverse spellings.

In addition, this movie portrays in a rather accurate way the following historical aspects⁵³:

- Elizabethan times and theatre (Holland 1999).
- London streets: with its "unsanitary" inner city and suburbs, on the one hand, and with the wealthier areas around the Thames, on the other (Honan 1998: 95, 97-98)⁵⁴.
- As for the elaboration of the costumes, Sandy Powell stated that she made use of those paintings, pictures and reading materials which "supposedly" were considered "historically accurate", as Madden wanted the people in his film to wear the clothes people at Shakespeare's time wore every morning, depending, of course, of their social status (Reference in Footnote 46).
- The two important theatres at the moment: The Rose, built by Philip Henslowe, and The Curtain, built by Henry Lanman (Honan 1998: 102-103).

⁵¹ Fennyman, a moneylender, wants Henslow to give him back his money.

⁵² As Cano López and García-Periago argue (2008), this image of Shakespeare at his desk at the beginning of the film suffering from a "creative block" and his "writing trash" is similar to what we will later find in the biopic about Jane Austen, *Becoming Jane* (2007).

⁵³ Although Geoffrey Rush, Henslow in the film, does not make reference to each of the following aspects which are going to be mentioned, he claims, in an interview with Joe Leydon in 1998 entitled "Geoffrey Rush brushes up his Shakespeare" where they talk about his role in the film, that the script "celebrates, deconstructs, demystifies the great period of, the language, the 16th Golden Age show-biz". Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdbn6lQj3H4>

⁵⁴ Accordingly, Holland states that the film depicts Elizabethan street life "quite accurately", with "the horsetroughs and costermongers and slops on the unpaved streets" (Holland 1999).

- How plays were written, rehearsed and played. As Honan says, “companies hungered for scripts” because they performed a play on each working day (1998: 110-111), thus the writing of a play was made hurriedly. An instance of this in the film is when Shakespeare pours sand on the “still-wet parchment to set the ink” (Murphy 2002: 70). In the documentary, Norman notes that at that time plays were rehearsed for three days and then were performed for another three days (Reference in Footnote 46). In addition, as Zurek (n.d.) claims, “scenery” was not used in the Elizabethan stage; however, costumes worn by actors were very important and were made from exquisite materials, such as satin, velvet or taffan.
- What the audience and the acting company were like. According to Holland, the audience at Shakespeare’s time was not a “vague shape as in modern theatre”, but “actual faces and clothes” whose “oohs, aahs and boos, and tears” mixed with the actors’ words, due to the closeness between the stage and the audience (Holland 1999). This can be observed in the film as well as the fact that actors in a company had “their special customs and hierarchies” (Honan 1998: 108). An instance of this is seen when actors are rehearsing *Romeo and Juliet* or when they go together to have a drink to a cheap tavern.
- The two important companies of actors at the time: The Lord Chamberlain’s Men and The Admiral’s Men (Zurek, n.d.).
- Shakespeare’s main competitor at that time, Christopher Marlowe (Honan 1998: 123-127), although as Honan states, Marlowe’s plays influenced Shakespeare’s (*Ibid.*: 26). In the film, his figure is fictionalised and he is presented as “Will’s collaborator”: he helps him to make improvements on his play (Henderson, n.d.). His death, also fictionalised, opened the way to Shakespeare. In Honan’s records, as well as in the film, Shakespeare realises the great loss his death means (1998: 126).

- The power of censorship through *The Master of the Revels* (Reference in Footnote 46).
- The closure of the theatres because of the Plague⁵⁵ (Reference in Footnote 46).
- The strategic construction of *The Globe*⁵⁶ outside the city limits to avoid many restrictions: Honan refers to these areas as “liberties” (Honan 1998: 97 and 100).
- The way Puritans regarded playgoing at that time (Honan 1998: 100).
- The Elizabethan practice according to which women could not perform (Holland 1999).

3.4 Historical figures

Some historical figures are presented in the film although their roles in the film are fictionalised:

- Christopher Marlowe: he was the most famous playwright at Shakespeare’s time (Honan 1998: 123-127), and this is implicitly made clear when in the audition all the actors, except Thomas Kent (Lady Viola), quote his *Dr. Faustus*. His death is fictionalised, though not the year; however, it actually shows the fact that

⁵⁵ At Shakespeare’s time, theatres could be closed by the Privy Council because of the plague (Zurek n.d.). In the midsummer of 1592, “official notice was taken of plague in the city, and, (...), the theatres were shut (...) for twenty months” (Honan 1998: 151). As Honan states this was “the worst plague since the Bard’s birth” (*Ibid.*: 145).

⁵⁶ In 1576, the Theater, in the north of the city, was built by John Brayne and his brother-in-law James Burbage “in such a way that it could be dismantled in a crisis” (Honan 1998: 101). Actually, after some problems between them, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men “disassembled” the Theater and took it to the south part of the Thames, where they “reassembled” it and gave it a new name, the Globe (Zurek n.d.).

Marlowe's disappearance "opened up the scene for Shakespeare" (Zurek, n.d.).

- John Webster: he is presented in the film as a boy who likes blood scenes in plays. Eventually, he will become a well-known playwright whose tragedies will be in the line of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (Zurek, n.d.).
- Philip Henslow and Richard Burbage: The former managed The Admiral's Men who normally performed at The Rose. The latter was the most important actor of The Curtain, and he, together with his two sons, will later create another company of actors, The Chamberlain's Men (Reference in Footnote 46 and Honan 1998: 101-104).
- Ned Alleyn: he was a very famous actor who belonged to The Admiral's Men and who played Dr. Faustus and Tamburlaine in Marlowe's plays, as he himself states in the film (Reference in Footnote 46).
- William Kempe: an actor playing almost exclusively in comic roles at Shakespeare's time.
- Queen Elizabeth I: she was the patron of the theatre (Honan 1998: 109) and she loved plays. We can see this in the movie when she is talking to Lady Viola: the latter says that she likes plays being acted for her and the Queen quickly replies that they are acted not for Lady Viola but for her (Reference in Footnote 46).

3.5 Literary intertexts

- According to Cano López and García-Periago the film is a "dialogue with" some of Shakespeare's plays (2008), especially with *Romeo*

and *Juliet*⁵⁷. Actually, Norman and Stoppard use the topic of “star-crossed” lovers to describe Will and Viola’s love. Besides we find the balcony scene and the clever nurse who helps Viola in her love affair, and as Donner claims (2008), the screenwriters include many of the best lines of the play “before, during and after the love-making scenes”.

- A few scenes of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* are also shown in the film, as a play commanded by the Queen. The monologue by Valentine in the first scene of Act III, “What light is light, if Silvia be not seen”, will be later used by Lady Viola in the audition (Donner 2008).
- Donner argues that there is also a “Hamletesque moment” in the church when Lord Wessex thinks he is seeing Marlowe’s (Shakespeare’s) ghost and he rushes away in an attack of madness (Donner 2008).
- *Twelfth Night* emerges almost at the end of the film when the Queen asks Shakespeare to create “something more cheerful next time... for twelfth night”. After that, Viola and Will together compose a sketch of the play “which, incidentally, has been constructing itself over the course of the film” (Donner 2008).

We can also find in the film certain lines or scenes which are part of his plays:

- When a puritan⁵⁸ is trying to prevent people from going to the theatre he says: “The Rose smells thusly rank, by any name! I say a plague on both their houses!” Both sentences appear in *Romeo and*

⁵⁷ We have used Stanley Wells et al.’s edition of *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works* to determine all the intertextual aspects that we are going to mention throughout this section, as well as the references to Shakespeare’s works in the present paper.

⁵⁸ The puritan embodies the purity of the soul, and as Donner (2008) states, he is preaching to people about how dreadful going to the theatre can be for the soul.

Juliet. As Graham (1999) states, with these sentences Stoppard and Norman start to display how “their Shakespeare makes art of the stuff of life”, the main idea in the film. Moreover, there is a Rosaline as much in the play as in the film, though in both instances she is forgotten instantly when Romeo sees Juliet and when Shakespeare sees Viola (*Ibid.*).

- At the very beginning, Shakespeare says to Henslow the following lines from *Hamlet* “Doubt thou the stars are fire, /Doubt that the sun doth move” to assure him he is going to write his play (Holland 1999). In addition, there is a moment in the film when Shakespeare sees William Kempe looking at a skull which makes us remember the famous Hamlet’s scene. Moreover, Shakespeare in the film utters the following words “It needs no wife come from Stratford to tell you that” to refer to the fact that he knows he cannot marry Viola De Lesseps. This line is similar to the one Horatio says to Hamlet when he states that Denmark is full of villains and knaves: “There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave to tell us this” (Graham 1999).
- Viola is the name of the main character in *Twelfth Night*, and she also dresses as a man to be near the man she loves. At the end of the film, Shakespeare imagines Viola’s shipwreck which will inspire one of the scenes in this play (Donner 2008).
- After Viola acknowledges that Shakespeare is married and she runs away because she feels betrayed, Will orders a sedative in the tavern in the same way as the Egyptian queen did in *Antony and Cleopatra*: “Give me to drink mandragora” (Graham 1999).
- Shakespeare pens sonnet 18 (“Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?”) to Viola at the beginning of their affair (Cano López and García-Periago 2008). Besides, when Shakespeare and Viola, as Thomas Kent, are in the boat and she asks him to describe his

lady's beauty he says "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun", which is the opening of sonnet 130.

Finally, we can state that there are other elements in the film such as the ghost, the cross-gender dressing, the disguising of the Queen, the theme of betrayal, the sword fight and the play within a play, which are typical of Shakespeare's plays. Actually, as Holland (1999) argues, *Shakespeare in Love* follows the formula of the Bard's love stories.

3.6 Visual Intertexts

As Lanier puts it, Shakespeare's appearance in films has "a long history" (2007: 61). According to him, some of the ideas in *Shakespeare in Love* emerge from Meliès's *La Morte de Jules César* (1907), namely, the scene of Shakespeare composing, his suffering from a writer's block and the dreamy scene⁵⁹. As he states, both films emphasise the conception of Shakespeare as "a popular artist" (*Ibid.*: 62).

Kingsley-Smith claims that *Shakespeare in Love* has to be understood in relation to two previous British productions: *The Immortal Gentleman* (1935) and *Time Flies* (1944) (2002: 158). As she argues, each film answers to "an authorial absence created by adaptation"⁶⁰ and share the following themes or scenes:

→ A Shakespeare seating at his desk with serious problems at writing can be seen in *Time Flies* and *Shakespeare in Love* (Kingsley-Smith 2002: 159).

⁵⁹ In the 1907 film Shakespeare falls asleep and dreams of the assassination scene from *Julius Caesar*, whereas in *Shakespeare in Love*, he imagines the drowning of Lord Wessex (Lanier 2007: 61).

⁶⁰ According to Kingsley-Smith each film responds to "a wave of popular film adaptation of Shakespeare's works". To this respect see Endnote 1 in Kingsley-Smith essay (2002: 163).

- The view that “frustration anticipates ideas of invention” (Kingsley-Smith 2002: 159).
- A revision of the authorship debate, although, as she states, each film works in a different way: *The Immortal Gentleman* tries to validate Shakespeare as “the author of his work”, *Time Flies* uses the topic as a “metonym for the German threat to Britain national identity”, and *Shakespeare in Love* individualises the figure of Shakespeare’s rival, Marlowe, and it presents a total solution to this question with Marlowe’s death (*Ibid.*).
- The three films show Shakespeare’s work as “collaborative” questioning in this way his creativity although in each case he upsurges “as an original genius” (*Ibid.*: 158).
- Actually, Kingsley-Smith seems to suggest, the presence of a book on Shakespeare’s desk in *Time Flies* and *Shakespeare in Love* while writing his *Romeo and Juliet* echoes the fact that Shakespeare used other literary sources to plot his plays. Although the idea of “an intertextual Shakespeare” is neither hinted nor referred in the films, Kingsley-Smith believes this is a deliberate action⁶¹, especially in *Shakespeare in Love*⁶², where other props are also used with this intertextual aim, namely the skull or the Stratford mug⁶³ (*Ibid.*: 161).

⁶¹ As Kingsley-Smith seems to suggest this book could represent the source text which inspired Shakespeare in his writing of *Romeo and Juliet*, i.e. Arthur Brooke’s *Romeus and Juliet* (1562), although the book is not identified (2002: 161).

⁶² According to her, the book on Shakespeare’s desk in *Time Flies* does not have that intertextual nuance as in *Shakespeare in Love*, but it simply “sets the scene” (2002: 161).

⁶³ The ochre mug Shakespeare has in his room where it can be read “A present from Stratford-upon-Avon” is one of the anachronisms included in the film. An anachronism is “something that is placed in the wrong period of history” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, New 8th Edition, 2011), and it is a funny and witty way of telling viewers about The Bard’s hometown.

As for the elaboration of the costumes the actors wore in the scenes of *Romeo and Juliet* in the film, Sandy Powell, the costume designer, states she took as her main reference Franco Zeffirelli's version of the play (1968), as she considers it to be the best one among all the existing adaptations of the play (Reference in Footnote 46).

3.7 Stoppard's script: *contaminatio* and his particular recreation of Shakespeare's life and work

As stated above, the screenplay for *Shakespeare in Love* was co-written by Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard. However, in this final section the focus of our study is going to be only the latter, who has been described by Bloom as an "almost obsessive contaminator", a writer who longs for influence in an effort to avert "involuntary influx" (Bloom 2005: 273-274).

Bloom defines the antique "Roman stage trope of *contaminatio*" as a type of interweaving between "an old play and a new one", and states that Stoppard is the most pre-eminent dramatist regarding his reliance on "the trope of interlacing" (2005: 273) in the composition of his own works⁶⁴. In this sense, Meyer claims that Stoppard's "Life, Times: Fragments" (1964) is an obvious example of "artistic recycling" where "dramatic allusions, intertextuality, parody and travesty" are as unavoidable as indispensable (1989: 105).

García Guerrero argues in her PhD dissertation that it is not possible to debate about cinema, television or theatre without taking into account the notion of interpretation (1998: 22). Stoppard is for her the

⁶⁴ According to Bloom, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967) contaminates Hamlet, Prince of Denmark with *Waiting for Godot*; *Jumpers* (1972) interlaces Shaw and Robert Dhery, among others; and *Travesties*, (1974) interweaves Shakespeare with Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, with the persons of Tristan Tzara, Joyce and Lenin (2005: 273).

adaptor or mediator between the *printed text* and the *performance text*⁶⁵ who tries to make sense of the cinematographic act in an effort to adapt to his audience all that is not part of their social context, otherwise the message could not be grasped (*Ibid.*: 92-93). Sometimes, as García Guerrero asserts, he cuts down many fragments from the source text and adds other original ones in order to boost the play humor, thus bringing it closer to our culture and social reality (1998: 93). Other times he extracts the basic content, transforms it and organises it in a different way (*Ibid.*: 416).

According to Meyer, Stoppard's *contaminatio* is presented as a "contextualizing and historicizing force", transforming a play not only in an interplay dialogue but in a political, philosophical and theatrical act of communication between the audience and past actions (1989: 106). The effectiveness of this dialogue will depend on the audience's "possibilities of entering into ... collaborative worlds of play" (Whitaker 1983: 7-8; quoted in Meyer 1989: 106).

Thus, Stoppard's treatment of *contaminatio* in *Shakespeare in Love* lets him not only "present or re-present" Shakespeare's times and works, but also play with all these facts "in the structured world of performance" (Meyer: 1989: 106-107), in order to "frame deeply personal considerations of human actions, its motives and limitations and values" (Gruber 1981-82: 296; quoted in Meyer 1989: 106). His aim is to create a film which is interesting and entertaining for a varied and different audience (Higson, forthcoming), and in the same line as in *Rosencrantz and Guidenstern Are Dead*, Gussow (1999) claims, the film is "Stoppardian and Shakespearean", i.e. is both "an antic original and respectful of its source".

⁶⁵ García Guerrero draws on Hilton (1993) who distinguishes between *printed text* (or *texto de la representación*) and *performance text* (or *texto de la interpretación*), and she extends this approach to cinematographic and TV creations (1998: 24-25).

To end section 3, we would like to add that, given the ability and the concept Stoppard has of the notion of intertextuality, it is impossible to list here all the intertextual references in the film, however, we have tried to include at least those we believe most Stoppardian.

4. CONCLUSION

To include *Shakespeare in Love* within the biopic genre may evoke direct and indirect forms of criticism regarding its degree of accuracy to its source text, namely Shakespeare's life. However, if we take into account the most recent studies about biopics, we will see this is not such a controversial task.

- If Tom Stoppard and Marc Norman had followed fidelity discourse as their guideline when writing the script of this movie, they would not have produced such an original contribution to adaptation studies where different discourses compete and intersect with each other.
- If an adaptation is regarded as an act of interpretation of a source text, biopics, as adaptations proper, have to be understood from this perspective, being their source text the life of a specific person, or rather part of it. Thus, what Stoppard and Norman do is to provide a particular pattern to the historical events and persons involved. This derives from their own analysis of the existing data, and such a reading includes fictional elements, in the same way as the writing of a biography does.
- In the composition of their script, Stoppard and Norman follow a new approach to history, according to which the notion of "objective truth and data" is deconstructed. In the film, they do not consider history from a conservative perspective, but, on the contrary, they perceive it as a narrative based on particular historical circumstances, and what they try to do is to bring history, namely

Shakespeare's life and works, closer to a 20th century audience. In order to win the audience's favour, they intersect Shakespeare's life with other discourses, such as the Elizabethan theatre or how love may have influenced the writing of his plays, with fictional elements and with several anachronisms in an attempt to call the attention of different types of audiences.

As stated above, Stam's notion of "intertextual dialogism" has been applied to the study of this movie because of the paramount role it plays in the writing and understanding of the film. *Shakespeare in Love* incorporates many direct and subtle references to other texts, literary or non-literary, among which an intertextual dialogue takes place. Being Stoppard one of the screenwriters, this is something we must expect. Bloom described him as an "almost obsessive contaminator" and applied to his plays the Roman stage trope of *contaminatio* (2005: 273). Thus, his plays can be considered as intricate acts of communication between the audience and past actions, and as we have just seen, the same can be said about his scripts in general and certainly about this film. The effectiveness of this dialogue will depend on the audience's skills. Actually, *Shakespeare in Love* not only includes a romantic love story but also different types of biographical, historical, literary and visual intertexts aiming at appealing to a wide range of audiences.

Stoppard's ability to play with the words of others lets him present and re-create Shakespeare's times and works in the world of performance, framing in this way a film that dramatises Shakespeare's life and which includes all the conventions of the Brit-lit biopics.

We would like to finish saying that it is necessary to continue researching on the possibilities this genre offers with respect to the different types of biopics that exist. The fluid boundaries between the biopic and other filmic genres, together with the malleability of this genre, which allow us to take the genre to its limits to narrate a good story, suggest interesting ideas for future research.

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APPENDIX 1: FILM CREDITS⁶⁶

Shakespeare in Love (1998):

- **Directed by** John Madden.
- **Written by** Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard.
- **Cast:** Joseph Fiennes, Gwyneth Paltrow, Ben Affleck, Geoffrey Rush, Colin Firth, Rupert Everett and Judi Dench.
- **Costume Designer:** Sandy Powell.
- **Music by** Stephen Warbeck.
- **Editing by** David Gamble.
- **Distributed by** Miramax Films (US), Alliance Atlantis (CAN) and Universal Studios (Worldwide).
- **Release Date:** 3 December 1998 (USA) and 29 January 1999 (UK).
- **Produced by** David Parfitt, Donna Gigliotti, Harvey Weinstein, Edward Zwick and Marc Norman.
- **Running Time:** 123 minutes.
- **Country:** United Kingdom and United States.
- **Language:** English.

⁶⁶ Information retrieved from the cover of the film and IMDb (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0138097/?ref_=sr_1).