

## **Inter-Semiotic Translation: Shakespeare on Screen**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays have been an important part of the history of cinema from its earliest days. The volume of research dealing with these adaptations is immense and keeps growing. The present article attempts to approach the subject from a translation studies perspective. Starting with Jakobson's conception of "inter-semiotic translation", it draws on Even-Zohar's transfer theory and Holmes' assumptions regarding the translation of texts created in the past. Combining research dealing with the relations between cinema and theatre in general and cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in particular, it offers a framework for dealing with two questions: (a) How do cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays manoeuvre between the theatre and the cinema, two distinct media which use different semiotic languages and rely on different repertoires? (b) How do they handle the gap between the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the time of their production?

### **KEYWORDS**

inter-semiotic translation, cinema, theatre, model, repertoire.

### **1. Introduction**

In his classical article (1988a, first published in 1972) James S. Holmes referred to the relations between translation studies and other disciplines. He considered two possibilities: translation studies as a branch of other disciplines using their concepts, models and paradigms, and as an autonomous discipline relying on its own resources. Following in the footsteps of former researchers (e.g., Cattrysse 1992), this article considers another possibility: translation studies as a discipline that – due to its capacity to encompass inter-semiotic translation as one of its objects – can give a unique perspective on topics which are usually dealt with in the framework of other disciplines, such as literature, theatre and film studies.

The starting point for this line of thought is an argument made by the semiotician Roman Jakobson (1987, first published in 1959). Jakobson claimed that the meaning of a sign is its translation into another sign or sequence of signs in the same language, in another language or in another semiotic (e.g., visual) language. Following Jakobson, Itamar Even-Zohar (1990a, 1997) elaborated a theory of transfer, which applies to all variations of the following phenomenon: a text which was created in a cultural system A is re-created in a cultural system B.<sup>1</sup> Even-Zohar's theory of transfer, rooted in his polysystem theory, has been used in research dealing with transfer within one language (Shavit 1986) and from literature to the cinema (Cattrysse 1992; Remael 2000). An attempt

to map the forms of transfer implied by his theory has been made by Weissbrod (2004). The present article applies the ideas of Jakobson and Even-Zohar to an analysis of the cinematic adaptation of plays originally written for the theatre specifically – Shakespeare's plays.

The cinema has been interested in Shakespeare since its earliest days (Rothwell 1999). Screen adaptations of his plays have served various purposes: proving the relevance of the Bard to our times, manifesting the ability of the cinema to cope with works originally written for the Elizabethan theatre and obtaining what Bourdieu called "cultural capital" (Cartmell 1999). To analyse these adaptations, the following discussion also draws on theories which have been developed outside translation studies and deal specifically with the relations between the cinema and the theatre. The use of such theories in combination with Even-Zohar's transfer theory is in line with his claim (1990a: 74) that it is only in the framework of a general theory of transfer that particular procedures pertaining to a specific form of transfer can be discovered. The present article relies on the classic works of Nicoll (1936) and Beja (1979). To examine how modern filmmakers deal with the antiquity of the Shakespearean source, a reference is made to Holmes' assumptions regarding the translation of texts created in the past (1988b, first published in 1971). Rather than indulging in literary, theatrical and cinematic issues as such, the focus is therefore on cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays as a case of inter-semiotic and inter-temporal translation.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Theory of Transfer

The concepts which are basic to Even-Zohar's transfer theory (1990a, 1997) are "system", "repertoire" and "model". A "system" is conceived as a network of relations between cultural phenomena which occupy different positions vis-à-vis each other. A culture tends to function as a macro-system comprising many partly overlapping systems (e.g., the theater, the cinema). The system's products (e.g., theatrical plays, films) are created with the help of the system's repertoire. The repertoire supplies the producer with single elements as well as models – "ready-made" combinations of elements and the rules of combining them. The use of existing models makes both the creation and consumption of products easier. A model serves as a "recipe" for the creation of the complete product. If the product is a text, the model at its base determines the genre to which it belongs. However, the term also applies to certain aspects of a text, e.g., the photography or lighting when the text under study is a film. A change in the model is brought about by adding/removing one or more elements and by combining models.

The use of the repertoire (e.g., preferring some models to others) is determined mainly by norms (Toury 1995: 53-69) – instructions for actual behavior which reflect the values and ideologies prevalent in a cultural system or some part of it. In the case of transfer – the re-creation in a system B of a text originating in a system A – the norms guide the producer to reconstruct the source closely, adapt it to the existing repertoire of the target system or make some compromise between these two extremes.

Shakespeare's plays originated in a specific cultural system: 16<sup>th</sup>-century English theatre. While the playwright used contemporaneous models, he generally deviated from them and introduced additional complexity. In *Hamlet*, for example, he transformed the then common play of vengeance into what we now call a "Shakespearean tragedy". This article discusses the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays to other systems, remote in many respects: English, American and Japanese cinema of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. It also refers to television adaptations, specifically those made for the BBC.

## 2.2 Cinema and Theatre

Since translation studies and Even-Zohar's transfer theory do not deal specifically with the relations between the cinema and the theatre, an additional theoretical framework is needed. The present article relies on the works of Nicoll (1936) and Beja (1979) which seem to retain their validity despite the time that elapsed since their first publication.

In performing a play, either Shakespearean or other, the starting point for both the theatre director and the filmmaker is the original written text. One turns it into a stage performance, and the other – into a film. Every performance, theatrical or cinematic, implies an interpretation of the play. The very fact that living actors read the dialogue, using intonation and body language, involves interpretation – theirs or the director's – even if the script used is very close to the original play. Following Even-Zohar's and Toury's line of thinking, the interpretation probably involves models and norms pertaining to the target system. The cinematic performance is bound to differ from the theatrical one because the two rely on different repertoires. The question which arises is whether there are any essential differences between the two media, or art forms, which give rise to the different models and norms. According to Nicoll and Beja, such differences do exist.

The cinema shares two important constituents with the theatre – the *mise en scène* (the term referring to everything situated in front of the audience or camera – setting, actors, costumes, etc.) and sound (dialogue, music, various noises). However, it differs from the theatre in its use of photography, including shooting from low, high or diagonal angles, from short or long distance; moving the camera from place to

place; combining black and white with colour and so on. In the process of editing, it is possible to affect the final product by manipulating the order of the shots and how they are combined (Giannetti 2005).

The theatre has other capacities. As every performance is a live and one-time occurrence, the actors can improvise and communicate with the audience. However, the most significant difference between the cinema and the theatre according to Nicoll is in how they depict reality. A film can create an effective illusion of a real world. The camera can be taken to real places. It can photograph masses of people (e.g., an army) and large objects (a ship, a plane) or magnify very small things (an ant crawling, a tear being shed from an eye). Moreover, the picture can show everything in detail. Therefore, the cinema can make even an imaginary world look real.

In the theatre it is more difficult to create an illusion of a real world. Reality cannot be brought to the stage. As a consequence, reality in the theatre is often presented artificially and schematically: a forest is represented by a tree made of cardboard; a fluttering sheet symbolises a stormy sea and so on. The most extreme manifestation of artificiality is the use of masks to substitute human facial expressions, which cannot be discerned from a distance. According to Nicoll, the greatness of the theatre lies in this "limitation". The characters are easily understood as types, and the events as allegorical. Not hindered by the concrete and specific, the theatre can give expression to the most abstract and general ideas. For example, *King Lear* can be performed as a play about old age and ingratitude. In the cinema, realism may easily shift the focus to questions such as who was Lear, where and when did he live, and so on.

While dealing with Shakespeare's plays, it should be taken into consideration that they were originally intended for the Elizabethan theatre. This means that the theatrical models used were very different from contemporary ones (Astington 2001). The use of settings and decorations was minimal. The spoken words were supposed to activate the imagination of the audience. All performances took place during the day, and if the enacted events were set at night or in a dark place, the darkness had to be imagined. Women were not allowed to act on stage, and their roles were performed by young boys whose voices had not changed yet. The spectators were physically close to the stage, and since they did not sit in the dark as they do today, the actors could easily communicate with them. From the point of view of a modern spectator, in this theatre and in contemporary performances which try to simulate it, the lack of realism – which is not necessarily a disadvantage according to Nicoll – was at its extreme.<sup>22</sup>

However, even an essentialist approach such as Nicoll's does not deny the possibility that each of the media transcend its "nature" and mimic the other. Nicoll, in 1936, was afraid lest the theatre would try to share in the

new medium's success by striving for realism. And, indeed, the theatre can attempt to create an illusion of a real world by e.g. using detailed settings or screening filmed material. Conversely, the cinema can use an artificial setting so as to undermine realism and give the plot an allegorical dimension (as in Lars von Trier's *Dogville*, 2003). In the field of translation, a literal translation bearing the imprints of a foreign language was often idealized. Goethe regarded it as a means to enrich the target language. Walter Benjamin thought it would advance the ideal of "a pure language" (Chesterman 1997). It is possible to apply this approach to the cinema and the theatre, in fact to all artistic media, and claim that the very attempt to transcend their own limits may lead them to new achievements. In the terminology of Even-Zohar, they can enlarge their repertoire by borrowing from a foreign one and (in a more critical vein) benefit from it.

### 2.3 From the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries

A discussion of cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays must take into account not just the transformation of a play written for the theatre into a film, and (often) the shift from English culture to other cultures, but also the time that has elapsed since the creation of the source text. Cinema is a young art which began developing in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (for its history see Nowell-Smith 1996). This means that even a film made in the early days of cinema is quite remote from the play lying at its basis.

To deal with this question, this article relies on Holmes' assumptions regarding the translation of texts written in the past (Holmes 1988b). According to Holmes, the antiquity of a text – from a modern reader's point of view – is apparent on three levels: the linguistic (what language is used, how ancient it is); the literary or poetic (Holmes refers here to constituents of the text beyond the language used, such as rhythm and rhyme); and the socio-cultural (the reality reflected in the text, and one might add – the beliefs and world views involved).

The translator can try to reconstruct the antiquity of the text on all three levels, modernise it on all of them or compromise: preserve the antiquity on one or more levels and modernize the other one or two. Holmes assumes, however, that translators will generally prefer a compromise. This is so because preserving the antiquity on all three levels will distance the text drastically from the modern reader, while modernising it on all levels will distance it drastically from the source. A small-scale descriptive study, in which Holmes examined contemporary English translations of a French poem from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, confirmed his hypotheses.

In research dealing with cinematic adaptations, it is very common to map them by their general affinity to or deviation from the source (see for instance Jorgens 1976; Andrew 1984). The advantage of Holmes' theory is that it enables the researcher to be more precise and discover, on various

levels, how the adaptation relates to its source. However, Holmes' distinction between three levels must be changed slightly to integrate more smoothly with Even-Zohar's transfer theory and fit the type of transfer under discussion. The study therefore poses the following questions: Do the adaptations actually use Shakespeare's text, or do they rewrite it in contemporary language? Is the socio-cultural reality updated? What models (cinematic and other) are used, and do they have a modernising effect?

### 3. Cinematic Adaptations of Shakespeare's Plays

#### 3.1 From the Theatre to the Cinema

In its first years, the cinema simulated theatre since it lacked a repertoire of its own. The first adaptations of Shakespeare were made by a static camera that shot from the angle of a spectator sitting in the middle of one of the first rows (Rothwell 1999). Already in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, filmmakers became aware of the possibilities inherent in the new medium and realised them in increasingly sophisticated ways. The range of possibilities grew with the move from silent to talking films and from black-and-white to colour photography. Despite these developments, cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare to this day often retain elements of theatrical models; i.e., they intentionally rely on a foreign repertoire. This may be motivated by the filmmakers' respect for the source, their desire to share the high status of the theatre, or their acceptance of the ideas expressed by Nicoll.

Kurosawa's *Ran* (1985), which is based on *King Lear*, is a case in point. The film is considered a great cinematic achievement. It actualises potential unique to the cinema, such as showing entire armies racing to battle and using the natural landscape as a metaphor for the human condition. However, Kurosawa also combined elements pertaining to Noh theatre. They include the stately and formal style of acting, the gorgeous costumes and the make-up, which causes the actors' faces to look like masks. The most outstanding representative of Noh in the film is Lady Kaede, the vengeful daughter-in-law of Hidetora (The Japanese Lear). When she moves, the rustle of her dresses sounds like a threat. The plaintive flute played by one of the figures is also typical of Noh (Richie 1998).

The use of elements pertaining to a most formal and stylised theatre has enabled Kurosawa to give the film the allegoric dimension which, according to Nicoll, is so easily lost in the cinema. Hidetora is a concept made visible rather than a believable person. The drastic changes in his appearance, particularly the whitening of his face and hair to reflect his deterioration, help to create this impression. Moreover, the use of the Noh model is part of Kurosawa's attempt to relocate the Shakespearean play into Japanese culture. Together with the references to real figures and

events from the history of Japan and the merging of Buddhist ideas, they enable the director to show the relevance of Shakespeare to a culture so remote from the original one.

### 3.2 Historicising and Modernising Adaptations

Kurosawa's use of the Noh model serves an additional purpose: it plants the story in an ancient cultural context, though one which is remote from Shakespeare's world. However, in keeping with Holmes' assumptions, filmmakers adapting Shakespeare to the screen often choose other options: partial updating (resulting in anachronism and sometimes giving the impression of timelessness) and total modernisation. It is reasonable to assume that in this respect the cinema relied on the elder and more highly regarded theatre. In the theatre, norms allowing anachronism and timelessness in performing Shakespeare developed in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and were evident in the work of such directors as Harley Granville Barker, Tyrone Guthrie and Peter Brook (Smallwood 2002). The fact that many film directors who adapted Shakespeare to the screen came from the theatre (Lawrence Olivier, Orson Welles and others) supports this assumption. In the following sections, some of the approaches to the antiquity of the Shakespearean source will be discussed and exemplified.

#### 3.2.1 Reconstructing the Antiquity of the Source on All Levels

The adaptation of Shakespeare's plays for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is characterised by creating the impression of antiquity on all levels. The grandiose project of televising the entire Shakespeare canon took place between 1978 and 1985. The producer and fund-raiser was Cedric Messina. Directed by several directors and diverse in their styles, all the adaptations nevertheless abided by the same basic norms: "wild" experimentalism was discouraged; the plays were to be set in Shakespeare's own time or in the historical period of the events (Willis 1991: 10-11). The affinity to the source was also manifested in the decision not to abridge the original plays, as cinema directors usually do. This line of action was in accord with the role played by the BBC – as a public, respectable and educational institution – in British culture. At the same time, the conservative approach reflects the peripheral position of television in general in British and other cultures at that time (see Even-Zohar, 1990b on how the position in the polysystem affects translation norms).

One of the major directors working for the BBC, who helped to consolidate the norms for the series, was Jonathan Miller. In his autobiography he wrote that the past was a foreign country not to be meddled with (Miller 1986: 119). However, since each performance implies an interpretation, and Miller is not an Elizabethan after all, even his adaptation of

Shakespeare reflects a modern world view – a finding which puts in question the very ability to preserve the antiquity totally, on all levels.

A case in point is *The Taming of the Shrew*, adapted by Miller in 1980. This early comedy by Shakespeare embarrasses modern producers and audiences because it celebrates the taming of a disobedient woman. Confirming the Elizabethan belief in order and hierarchy (Elton 1997), it contradicts contemporary values. Modern adaptations of the play which refrain from altering the original text cope with the problem in two ways (described by Thompson 2003). One way is to hint that Katherine, the shrew, only pretends to have changed and make her final speech of obedience sound ironic. In a 1929 film (directed by Sam Taylor) the actress, Mary Pickford, winked when she made the speech. In fact, the possibility that Katherine is pretending is inherent in the original play itself. *The Taming of the Shrew* is a play within a play, and pretence is the theme of the outer play; the filmmakers only had to realise a potential that had been there in the first place. The other way of coping with the problem is to turn Shakespeare's comedy into a play about love at first sight: Katherine is so much in love with Petruchio that she is willing to do anything to get him. According to Thompson (ibid.), this makes the play more tolerable for a modern audience.

Miller refrained from irony, but he did emphasise Katherine's love for Petruchio. When Petruchio forces her to kiss him in public, the manner she kisses him contradicts her former protest. When she makes the speech of obedience at the end of the play, she is practically glowing with love. Although the setting and costumes reflect the past (according to Willis 1991: 111, Miller was influenced by Vermeer's paintings), the adaptation is not devoid of a modern touch.

Making the film appear to reflect the past on all levels and yet retain its relevance for a contemporary audience is easier to achieve when the filmmaker does not refrain from manipulating the original written text. A fitting example is Lawrence Olivier's *Henry V* (1944) which offered the English people a model of worthy leadership in the harsh times of The Second World War. To achieve this end, Henry's less admirable qualities (such as his aggressiveness and cruelty) had to be toned down. They were restored, however, in Kenneth Branagh's 1989 film which was free from the need to inspire patriotism and serve as propaganda (Jackson 2001).

### 3.2.2 Partial Updating

Today, Shakespeare's greatness is generally attributed to the sophistication and artistic value of his language. This may explain the production of adaptations which modernise the socio-cultural reality and/or use contemporary cinematic models, but preserve the Shakespearean text (often cut and reorganised).

An adaptation which exemplifies this approach and illustrates the type of experimentalism rejected by the producers of the BBC series is Derek Jarman's *The Tempest* (1979; see O'Pray 1996). Set in a gloomy castle lit by candles, the story is retold in a manner that makes it echo a model rarely used in filming Shakespeare – that of horror films. Caliban sweeping the stairs and cursing his master looks like the monstrous creature created by Frankenstein. Ariel in white clothes looks like a ghost and his sudden appearances and disappearances contribute to this impression. Other elements of the model, such as eerie shadows and suspicious noises, are present as well. Jarman's relationship with horror films is highlighted by his alluding to specific films representing the model. For instance, when the shipwreck survivors are brought to Prospero spellbound, their position and costumes evoke the picture of Vincent Price enchanted by a sorcerer in Roger Corman's *The Raven* (1963). The very use of a cinematic model identified with popular culture is meaningful: Jarman thus liberates Shakespeare from the bondage of "high art" (though his own film is far removed from a "standard" horror film).

The uniqueness of Jarman's interpretation also lies in his decision to portray Prospero, Ariel and Caliban as young men. This is one of the techniques he uses to hint at the homosexual nature of their relations (another hint is Ariel peeping at Ferdinand Prince of Naples coming out of the sea in the nude, like a male Venus).<sup>3</sup> The use of contemporary models serves this end, too. The celebration of peace and reunion towards the end includes a dance by sailors from the wrecked ship. Their dance is a parody on Hollywood musicals, which mocks the original by supplying every sailor with a partner who is a sailor himself.

Adaptations which preserve the Shakespearean dialogue but update the play on other levels shatter the illusion of a real world (it is unreasonable for a young American to use Hamlet's words as in Michael Almereyda's film of 2000). This may explain why such adaptations have become normative in the post-modern era, namely in the second half of the twentieth century. One of the characteristics of post-modernism is disbelief in the ability of any art to create a realist impression by using well-established models. The disbelief is manifested by fusing models and intentionally creating discrepancies and anachronism (Jameson 1984). Post-modernist thinking thus encourages the use of a Shakespearean dialogue in a contemporary world filtered through modern models (such as the model of an MTV clip in Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet*, 1996). Another consideration in favour of such fusion is that by modernizing Shakespeare's plays it is possible to make them more attractive to the young generation. Giving the main roles to popular stars such as Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes in Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet* and Ethan Hawke in Almereyda's *Hamlet* is a means of ensuring the success of the films.

The post-modern fusion begs the question of what are the implications on the original model, submerged in the Shakespearean text itself. In a film such as Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet*, for instance, the question is what has remained of the Shakespearean tragedy in the camp atmosphere surrounding the Californian youngsters. One possible way to approach this question is to view the film in the light of the elements of tragedy as described by e.g. Krook-Gilead (1969). Some of the elements which she regards as central to a Shakespearean tragedy are the magnitude of the heroes, their suffering and the catharsis experienced by the spectators.<sup>4</sup> Their presence in the film – which depends on one's interpretation and emotional response to it – can be interpreted as evidence that the Shakespearean tragedy can survive the fusion with other models. But if the viewer no longer perceives a tragedy, in as much as the protagonists do not grow to be heroic, their suffering does not seem real and the film arouses bewilderment rather than leading to catharsis, this response may strengthen the post-modernist claim that old-established models have lost their validity and no longer belong in our world.

### 3.2.3 Updating Shakespeare's Plays on All Levels

In contrast with Holmes' finding in his research, cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare frequently modernise the source on all levels, either because the transfer to another medium encourages drastic deviation from the source, or due to economic considerations: modernisation can enhance the film's appeal to a contemporary audience. The totally modernised adaptations preserve only the plot with some of the meanings and messages imbued in it. In fact, the plot itself generally changes to fit contemporary values and ideas. This strategy allows the filmmakers to interpret the past in light of the present and examine what has changed since Shakespeare's time on the backdrop of what has not changed. A recent example is *10 Things I Hate About You* (directed by Gil Junger, 1999) which is based on *The Taming of the Shrew*. The Elizabethan hierarchy placing men above women is replaced in this film by a new order: the modern Petruchio accepts Katherine as she is and does not try to tame her. It is interesting to compare this film with an earlier one based on the same play: *Kiss Me Kate* (directed by George Sidney, 1953). In the latter, *The Taming of the Shrew* is modeled as a musical performed by actors, who in their "real life" are variations of Petruchio and Katherine. Each of them needs to be and gets tamed.

To complete the discussion of modernising adaptations, a reference will be made to a film which not only updates a Shakespearean play on all levels, but posits it in the future: *Forbidden Planet* (directed by Fred M. Wilcox, 1956), which is based on *The Tempest*. The cinematic model underlying the film is that of science fiction, and Prospero's island has accordingly been replaced by a planet far away from Earth. In this new context, ideas already present in the original play are further developed. *The Tempest* is often understood as a play dealing with colonialism (Cartmell 2000).

Shakespeare's approach to the subject is ambivalent: on the one hand, Prospero liberates the island, and "the creature of darkness", Caliban, indeed needs to be civilised. On the other hand, Prospero can be easily understood as a tyrant (Derek Jarman portrays him as one), and civilisation corrupts – as the alcohol brought to the island by the shipwreck survivors proves. In the film, traditional colonialism has been replaced by a new version, whose megalomaniac goal is to rule the universe. The time of production hints that this new version of colonialism, which involves the desire to rule outer space, reflects the anxieties and apprehensions aroused by the Cold War. Another idea developed in the film concerns human pretension and its disastrous results. Prospero is at least partially responsible for his fate because he is immersed in his magic, neglecting the more earthly obligations of a ruler. In the film, Morbius (the new Prospero) desires to possess the achievements of the Krel civilisation which had dominated the planet long before people from Earth set foot on it. The Krels developed a machine which improved the mind. They did not realise however, that while they developed their intellectual capacities they also strengthened the unconscious, primitive part of the mind – the Id. The strengthened Id incarnated itself as a monster – Caliban. In contrast with Shakespeare's happy ending, here the destruction of the planet and its inhabitants was inevitable.

The Elizabethan understanding of the human personality was very different from modern psychology (Elton 1997). Introducing the Freudian concept of "Id" into the film serves as a hint that modern psychology is present in Shakespeare's plays and only needs to be discovered. Thus the filmmaker makes the distance between past and present appear smaller and increases the film's appeal to a contemporary audience.

#### 4. Conclusion

Cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays have been an important part of the history of cinema from its earliest days and have attracted researchers from various disciplines. The present article approaches the subject from a translation studies perspective. The adaptations surveyed on this basis have been found to vary in how they manoeuvre between the cinema and the theatre, two distinct media which use different semiotic languages and rely on different repertoires; and in how they handle the span of time between the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the present.

Though the purpose of this article is to offer a framework for dealing with cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays as an inter-semiotic translation rather than to provide an exhaustive history of Shakespeare on screen, some historical insights have been gained which may be further examined in future research. It seems that in past decades, directors who adapted Shakespeare to the screen preferred to either reconstruct the antiquity of the source on all levels or modernise it on all of them. Thus they achieved coherence that contributed to the realism and believability

of the adaptations, even if the cinematic model itself was one that could hardly be referred to as “realistic” (e.g., a musical). Due to the influence of the more established and centrally positioned theatre, and (recently) the emergence of a post-modern norm, adaptations which “dare” to give up this coherence, introduce anachronisms and give the impression of timelessness, are becoming the rule rather than the exception. Though it is hard to prove this intuition quantitatively, it gains some validity from comparing the reaction to Jarman’s *The Tempest* (usually considered an avant-garde, controversial creation) with the acceptance of more recent films which followed in Jarman’s footsteps.

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**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Even-Zohar (1990a, 1997) also regards as “transfer” the production of texts in a system B according to models imported from a system A. The import of models with no mediation of individual texts has been discussed by Weissbrod (2004).

2. Shakespeare himself parodied the lack of (what we now call) realism in the play-within-a-play which takes place in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In this performance, a bearded man is chosen to play the role of a woman, a person holding a lantern represents the moon, and another actor plays a wall.

3. Jarman's interpretation is triggered by hints of homosexual love in the Elizabethan theatre: all the actors, including those playing lovers, were actually men. In the plays themselves, heterosexual love was often undermined by women disguised as men (as in *As You Like It*). Some of the sonnets, too, encourage such an interpretation.

4. Aristotle's term “catharsis” refers to the purging of pity and fear aroused by the tragic action.