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ALL SOCIAL MEDIA ARE STAGES: AN INTERMEDIA PERSPECTIVE ON LITERATURE-TO-SOCIAL-MEDIA ADAPTATIONS

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Tese intitulada *All Social Media are Stages: An Intermedia Perspective on Literature-to-Social-Media Adaptations*, de autoria da Doutoranda CLARA MATHEUS NOGUEIRA, apresentada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras: Estudos Literários da Faculdade de Letras da UFMG, como requisito parcial à obtenção do título de Doutor em Letras: Estudos Literários.

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Many of the following pages were written during a live stream.
This dissertation is dedicated to every person that remotely studied with me, during the dire times of COVID-19.
For all the hope we shared.

ABSTRACT

Social media platforms continue to overtake an ever-greater share of our social, cultural, and artistic lives. As concerns literature specifically, more and more authors have begun to experiment in electing works from the literary canon (along with their characters, themes, symbols, and settings) as source media, transmediating them to social media, thereby inaugurating an entirely novel form of media product. The current paucity of research on the topic of literature-to-social-media adaptations provides an opportunity to fill a conspicuous gap in the fields of Literary, Adaptation and Intermedial Studies as they currently stand. In the present study, I apply the insights and theoretical framework of Intermedial and Adaptation Studies to this still-evolving phenomenon. A diachronic perspective on performances dealing with virtuality indicates that literature-to-social-media performances belong to a decades-long tradition. The corpus of adaptations investigated here restricts itself to literary sources in English, given that it is the *lingua franca* of the digital environment, transposed to social media within the period of 2010 to 2016. Although the period of 2010–2016 is a recent one, within the context of social media platforms it may in fact be considered an "early stage", one which offers a glimpse at some of the very first attempts at literature-to-social-media adaptation. These early works include *Such Tweet Sorrow*, from 2010, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, from 2012, and *#ShakespeareNoFilter*, from 2016. Following a description of each of these productions, there is a plot summary, an explanation of the social media platform that works as the main stage for each performance, and an analysis of how other media were involved. Adaptations from literature to social media bear similarities to a canonized literary genre: that of the epistolary novel. Epistolary novels were a popular genre in the 18th century, and are fictional works mostly made up of written correspondence. For specific audiences, in a world where communicating via electronic correspondence is habitual, reading a story that develops through an exchange of emails, tweets, or watching it through a vlog may feel similar to reading a novel of letters once felt for eighteenth-century readers. Following Lars Elleström's model for intermedial relations, this dissertation understands literature-to-social-media adaptations as a qualified media type. A synchronic perspective on *Such Tweet Sorrow*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, and *#ShakespeareNoFilter* reveals similarities in terms of media modalities. The most striking findings are related to the spatiotemporal modality. A thematic affinity is also identified: literature-to-social-media adaptations inspire critical perspectives on social media platforms.

Keywords: intermediality; adaptation; social media; Shakespeare.

RESUMO

As plataformas de mídia social continuam a tomar uma parcela cada vez maior de nossas vidas, em termos sociais, culturais e artísticos. No que diz respeito à literatura, cada vez mais autores começam a tomar obras da literatura canônica (juntamente com seus personagens, temas, símbolos e cenários) como mídia fonte, transmidiando-as para redes socias, inaugurando uma forma inteiramente nova de produtos de mídia. A atual escassez de pesquisas sobre o tema das adaptações para redes sociais proporciona uma oportunidade para preencher uma lacuna evidente no campo dos Estudos Literários, Adaptação e Intermidialidade, tal como estes se apresentam atualmente. No presente estudo, eu aplico a base teórica dos Estudos da Intermidialidade e da Adaptação a este fenômeno ainda em evolução. Uma perspectiva diacrônica sobre performances que lidam com a virtualidade indica que performances da literatura para as mídias sociais pertencem a uma tradição de décadas. O corpus aqui apresentado compreende obras literárias em inglês, dado que se trata da *lingua franca* do ambiente digital, transpostas para as redes sociais no período de 2010 a 2016. Embora se trate de um período ainda recente, dentro do contexto das plataformas de mídia social se trata de um "estágio inicial", oferecendo um vislumbre de algumas das primeiras tentativas de adaptação da literatura para redes sociais. Estes primeiros trabalhos incluem *Such Tweet Sorrow*, de 2010, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, de 2012, e *#ShakespeareNoFilter*, de 2016. Após a descrição dessas adaptações, para cada uma delas são apresentados um resumo da trama, uma explicação da plataforma de mídia social que funciona como palco principal para cada performance, e uma análise de como outras mídias foram envolvidas. As adaptações da literatura para as mídias sociais têm semelhanças com um gênero literário canônico: o romance epistolar. Os romances epistolares foram um gênero bastante popular no século XVIII, e são obras ficcionais compostas principalmente por correspondência escrita. Para determinados públicos, em uma época quando a comunicação via correspondência eletrônica é comum, ler uma história se desenvolvendo através de uma troca de e-mails, *tweets*, ou assisti-la através de um *vlog* pode parecer tão verossímil quanto a leitura de um romance de cartas outrora sentido para os leitores do século XVIII. Seguindo o modelo para relações intermidiáticas de Lars Elleström, esta tese compreende as adaptações da literatura para mídias sociais como um tipo de mídia qualificada. Uma perspectiva sincrônica sobre *Such Tweet Sorrow, The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* e *#ShakespeareNoFilter* revela similaridades em termos de modalidades da mídia. Os achados mais notáveis são relacionados à modalidade espaçotemporal. Uma afinidade temática também é identificada:

adaptações da literatura para mídias sociais inspiram uma perspectiva crítica sobre as plataformas de redes sociais.

Palavras-chave: intermidialidade; adaptação; redes sociais; Shakespeare.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, as social media platforms continue to overtake an ever-greater share of our social lives, they have begun – perhaps inevitably – to dominate our cultural and artistic lives as well. As concerns literature specifically, more and more authors have begun to experiment with taking literary sources (along with their characters, themes, symbols, and settings) and transposing them into social media environments, thereby inaugurating an entirely novel mode of adaptation. This form differs greatly from the cinematic adaptations that dominated the twentieth century, and on which the field of Adaptation Studies has tended to focus. In the present study, by contrast, I attempt to apply the insights and critical framework of Intermedial Studies and Adaptation Studies to this still-evolving phenomenon. In terms of the study's potential for original contribution, the current paucity of research on the topic of literature-to-social-media adaptations provides an opportunity to fill a conspicuous gap in the fields of Intermedial, Adaptation, and Literary Studies as they currently stand. By focusing on digital media rather than film, I hope to add to our understanding of literary adaptation in the twenty-first century, a century of silicon rather than celluloid.

In this dissertation, I demonstrate that literature-to-social-media adaptations share numerous media traits. Through a diachronic approach, I review how experimental artists and companies have explored the potentialities of digital environments as stages for their performances, decades before the COVID-19 pandemic. Social distancing has brought unprecedented attention to digital performances, but those who first recognized the internet's potential for performance remain neglected. Following, a synchronic investigation of a corpus of literature-to-social-media adaptations is conducted; their media modalities are scrutinized, in order to determine the similarities in these productions. This analysis follows Lars Elleström's framework, as detailed in *Beyond Media Borders* (2021). The central thesis for this dissertation is that literature-to-social-media adaptations constitute a media genre, or "qualified media type", in Elleström's terminology.

The first step in this investigation has been to compile a corpus of representative literature-to-social-media adaptations. The corpus presented here restricts itself to literary sources in English transposed to social media from 2010 to 2016. This period was chosen for its ability to provide a longitudinal perspective of the genesis of these platforms as they evolved from their initial stages to their current, more widespread use. Instagram[1], for

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[1] Instagram was released as a social media focused on photo-sharing. It currently also supports video formats.

instance, was launched in 2010, the first year covered by this investigation. Slightly older platforms like Facebook[2], YouTube[3], and Twitter[4] were launched in 2004, 2005, and 2006, respectively. Therefore, although the period of 2010–2016 is a recent one, within the context of social media platforms it may be considered an "early stage", one which offers a glimpse at some of the very first attempts at literature-to-social-media adaptation. These early works include *Such Tweet Sorrow*, from 2010, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, from 2012, and *#ShakespeareNoFilter*, from 2016. The choice of working with productions in English is due to the language's role as the *lingua franca* of the digital environment[5].

Such Tweet Sorrow was possibly the first literature-to-social-media adaptation. Produced in 2010 by the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), it brought *Romeo and Juliet* to various social media platforms, although Twitter served as its main stage. Next, the literary source for *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, produced in 2012, is Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. It was Pemberley Digital's first and most notable adaptation, with YouTube at its core. Finally, *#ShakespeareNoFilter* was a project launched by the British Council in 2016 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the death of Shakespeare, for which it brought the plays *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, and *Romeo and Juliet* to Instagram.

From the intermedia perspective adopted in this research, it is of central importance to consider that the digital platforms employed in each of these productions possess distinctive media traits. While Twitter is a microblogging platform based on written text, YouTube is an online video-sharing hub, and Instagram was lauched as a photo-sharing social media. A variety of platforms and media configurations was central when compiling the *corpus* of this research, aiming at a comprehensive analysis of this type of transmediation, and at finding common ground between these productions. The aim of an intermedia perspective is to present clear and unambiguous claims when describing this type of production. This perspective necessitates a clear delimitation of the concepts used when different media are compared, which makes this discussion relevant not only to the three media products discussed but also to media that share the same media traits.

There are two defining characteristics of social media platforms and the digital environment that have been shaping this research. First, these media are fragmentary. Each media product shared on a social media platform constitutes a "post". Posts can be discussed

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[2] Facebook is a social media platform, focused on social networking.
[3] YouTube is a video-sharing and social media platform.
[4] Twitter is a microblogging social media, primarily based on written text. In 2023, the platform's name was changed to "X".
[5] See for example @*Eva.Stories*, an Instagram-based adaptation of *The Diary of Éva Hayman*, a Hungarian work on the Holocaust which was translated into English for its production in 2019 by an Israeli company.

and analyzed individually, or alongside other social media posts. Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas (Brazilian Association of Technical Standards), as a documentation style, was not conceived to accommodate citations from social media, even though the latest updates make it possible to cite these platforms. In order to not compromise the readability of this dissertation, considering that a vast number of posts on Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram are discussed, in-text citations are mostly substituted by footnotes, except for those posts that are directly quoted. Further, this dissertation was written for a graduate program in Literature, and terminology related to social media platforms and other digital media is unusual in the field, thus every time a platform or an internet jargon is mentioned for the first time, a short description is offered as a footnote. Additionally, this dissertation includes an appended glossary.

Another defining characteristic of digital media that impacts this research is their ephemerality. As some productions under investigation are older than ten years, many web pages discussed are currently offline. Under these circumstances, the Internet Archive's *Wayback Machine* has been an indispensable resource, and the web addresses informed in the footnotes and Works Cited list are for archived pages. Further, due to copyright, photographs or video stills could not be reproduced in this work. Hence, descriptions of pertinent visual configurations are provided.

On a personal note, this dissertation is my second graduate-level research on literature-to-social-media adaptations. In 2017, I presented a master's thesis, *Shakespeare in the Timeline* (NOGUEIRA, 2017), in which *Such Tweet Sorrow* and *#Dream40* two adaptations by the RSC to social media are discussed. At that time, these adaptations fascinated me, despite the fact that I was not familiar with social media platforms. Although I investigated social media, I have not had any personal experience with these platforms. Having in mind that I would be pursuing my interest in the traits of literature-to-social-media adaptations on a doctoral-level degree, I decided to commit myself to exploring the potentialities of these media, not only as a researcher but also as an active participant. In 2017, along with two partners, I founded *mimimidias*, a science communication project, focused on digital culture, literature and media studies. Since then, *mimimidias* has grown beyond expectations. Our YouTube videos have been watched over seven million times, and our podcast has been listened to more than four hundred thousand times. That is, as I wrote the following chapters, I have also been investigating social media platforms from inward. Although my personal experiences are not the object of the following investigation, the

transparency about my own experiences as a social media content creator is due, as it shapes my scholarly considerations.

As for structure and content, this dissertation includes an introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion. As anticipated, the introduction outlines and justifies the theme, includes a delimitation of the corpus, and presents the dissertation's thesis statement. The first chapter combines Intermedial and Adaptation Studies and is divided into five sections. The first section indicates central concepts from Intermedial Studies that pervade the research (e.g. media product, intermediality, media transformation, and transmediation), according to Lars Elleström's model for understanding intermedial relations (ELLESTRÖM, 2021). The second section presents a literature review for Adaptation Studies, in which some definitions of adaptation are presented and discussed (HUTCHEON, 2006; SANDERS, 2006; CORRIGAN, 2017 and ELLIOTT, 2020). The third section dwells on media specificity, and the fourth section focuses on the fidelity myth – both debates have been central for Adaptation Studies. Last, it is argued that the combination of Intermedial and Adaptation Studies can be mutually beneficial.

A diachronic approach to literature-to-social-media adaptations is undertaken in the second chapter, which is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on precursors and early exponents, such as Lynn Hershman Leeson's *Roberta Breitmore*, the Hamnet Players' *Hamnet* and Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs). The second is a literature review, describing some leading terms for performances in the digital environment – "cyberformance" (JAMIESON, 2008), "virtual theater" (GIANNACHI, 2004), "digital performance" (DIXON, 2007), and "postorganic performance" (CAUSEY, 1999). The last section introduces this dissertation's primary corpus.

Further, the third chapter features a description and analysis of *Such Tweet Sorrow*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* and *#ShakespeareNoFilter* as literature-to-social-media adaptations based on written text, online video, and digital photography. Each production is described in a different section, and each section is divided into subsections dedicated to a plot summary, a description of the social media platform that works as the main stage for the production, an analysis of how other media are involved in each production, and an investigation of how some themes and modes of narration from the literary sources were transferred and transformed for the environment of social media.

Finally, the fourth chapter comprises a synchronic investigation of *Such Tweet Sorrow*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, and *#ShakespeareNoFilter*. On contrasting and comparing these productions, the aim is to provide insight into the ways of literature-to-social-media

adaptations. The hypothesis that literature-to-social-media adaptations constitute a qualified media type is tested, as the three productions are compared in terms of media modalities, technical media of display, and themes. Altogether, this dissertation constitutes an original contribution and addresses a conspicuous shortcoming in the fields of Intermedial, Adaptation, and Literary Studies in relation to literature-to-social-media adaptations.

2 COMBINING INTERMEDIAL AND ADAPTATION STUDIES

In the early twenty-first century, adaptations are part of our cultural landscape. As these processes and products become ubiquitous, Intermedial Studies offer a framework that affords approaching adaptations with a media-conscious perspective. This chapter is divided into five sections and introduces the concepts, theories, and central debates that pertain to this dissertation. In the first section, some of the central concepts in Intermedial Studies (i.e. media product, intermediality, media transformation, and transmediation) are indicated. The second section offers a literature review of Adaptation Studies, alongside a concise presentation of definitions of adaptation, which demonstrates that defining adaptation is a theoretical challenge. The third and fourth sections dwell on two central debates on Adaptation Studies: media specificity and fidelity, respectively. Lastly, the fifth section argues for the combination of Intermedial and Adaptation Studies, commenting on the differences and similarities of these fields and how they both can benefit from this amalgamation.

2.1 A Model for Understanding Media Relations

An intermedia perspective on adaptations puts the relationship between different media at the center of such processes. In *Beyond Media Borders* (2021), Lars Elleström presents an expanded version of his model for understanding media relations, originally published in 2010. Elleström noted,

> [a]lthough advanced terminology and theoretical sophistication are not lacking, many researchers still use largely undefined and deeply ambiguous layman's terms, such as 'text' and 'image', to describe the nature of media. Although such terms are indispensable for everyday use, and valuable for preliminary scholarly categorisations, they refer to notoriously vague concepts, which causes misunderstanding and confusion to become standard features of academic discussions. (2021, p. 6)

That is, although the debate about media interrelations is vast and sophisticated, media scholars lack a shared language. The ambiguity of terms such as "text" and "image" has led to miscomprehension. Academic dialogues have been curtailed, and the development of the field has been impaired by vagueness. Hence, Elleström developed a framework that allows for a consistent discussion on intermedial processes and their characteristics. Some concepts that are made less ambiguous and are valuable for the following analyses are "media product", "intermediality", "media transformation", and "transmediation".

Elleström's approach to defining media products – which in everyday discourse are often called "medium" or "media" – is to develop a model of communication. Thus, media products are defined through a demonstration of what they *do*, rather than what they *are*. In such a medium-centered model of communication, media products are what make possible the transfer of cognitive import among communicating minds. That is, if a person points to an empty glass to communicate to a waiter their desire for more beer, the glass, in combination with a body, is being used to realize a media product (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 35). In this radical example, the waiter and the customer are the communicating minds, and the cognitive import that is transferred is the wish for the beverage. Even though dusty glasses in a bar's cabinet are not media products, a glass can assume the role of a media product if used for transmitting a piece of information. Because media products are entities and phenomena that enable human communication (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 8), notes, public speeches, and advertisements, for example, function as media products. Individual aesthetic media products – e.g. a novel, a painting, a social media post – also constitute a transfer of cognitive import between communicating minds, hence, these function as media products as well.

Furthermore, according to Elleström, "intermediality must be understood as a bridge between media differences that is founded on media similarities" (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 5). That is, a novel-to-film adaptation is an intermedia process, it is through media similarities that films adapt the contents of a novel. Intermediality is an "analytical angle" (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 4), a perspective for investigating the various ways in which media interrelate. Thus, a film adaptation of a novel can be analyzed as a media product that entails intermediality.

Following Elleström, during the process of adaptation a transmediation occurs, that is, "media characteristics are represented again by another form of medium" (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 81). Thus, a novel-to-film adaptation is a transmediation, which is a specific form of media transformation – an intermedial type of transformation. For decades, films and novels have been compared; mostly, this has been done through case studies. Frequently, these studies highlight how the previous media product was transformed, the changes that occurred, and which characteristics remained identical. Case studies can be insightful, however, not many theoretical principles are blossoming from this approach, and the field is not as fruitful as it could be (LEITCH, 2003, p. 150). Through an intermedia perspective, adaptations/transmediations can be investigated as processes that shed light on media differences and similarities, and the focus can change from individual media products to a constellation of media products. Transmediations are exemplary of what Elleström

characterizes as intermediality in a narrow sense, which "regards relations among (media products belonging to) dissimilar basic media types" (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 71).

According to this framework, non-exhaustive examples of basic media could be "text" – a media type based on verbal symbols – and "image" – a media type primarily based on icons (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 56). That is, borrowing Charles S. Peirce's typology of signs, Elleström turns the terms he describes as "notoriously vague" into concepts that are significantly less ambiguous. This works as an example of how Elleström approaches media, which is providing common ground on which media can be compared – as every medium is semiotic, the difference between media could be observed and explained through their difference in relation to their semiotic modes. The four fundamental characteristics of every media product are called modalities.

> I have argued that there are four media modalities, four types of basic media modes. For something to acquire the function of a media product, it must be material in some way, understood as a physical matter or phenomenon. Such a physical existence must be present in space and/or time for it to exist; it needs to have some sort of spatiotemporal extension. It must also be perceptible to at least one of our senses, which is to say that a media product has to be sensorial. Finally, it must create meaning through signs; it must be semiotic. This adds up to the material, spatiotemporal, sensorial and semiotic modalities. (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 46).

Through close and individual analyses, every media product can be described via these four media modalities. Hence, the material, spatiotemporal, sensorial, and semiotic modalities are common to all media, but different media products may be realized through different modes. As Elleström puts it,

> [a] certain media product must be realised through at least one material mode (as, say, a solid or non-solid object), at least one spatiotemporal mode (as three-dimensionally spatial and/or temporal), at least one sensorial mode (as visual, auditory or audiovisual) and at least one semiotic mode (as mainly iconic, indexical or symbolic) (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 46).

In other words, "solid" or "non-solid" are material modes of existence of media, related to the material modality. In the same way, "visual", "auditory" or "audiovisual" are sensorial modes, related to the sensorial modality. When descriptions of the modes involved in the realization of two different media are put side by side, the media differences and similarities of these two media products become evident. For example, in terms of modalities, a printed novel can be briefly described as solid, sequential (but not temporal), visual, and mainly symbolic. Whereas a film exhibited in a movie theater could be described as non-solid, sequential and

temporal, audiovisual, and mainly iconic but also symbolic. There are other media traits that close inspections of these media's modalities would evidentiate. For now, this simplified example demonstrates how Elleström's framework provides common ground for media comparison. For instance, an analysis of novel and film modalities indicates differences in spatiotemporal modes: even though both media are sequential, only films are temporal – meaning that through the course of their duration, films actually change in time. Further, novels and films are both visual, but only films are audible. Certainly, novels and films are vastly researched media, and this brief analysis only highlights well-known distinctions. However, in *Em busca da experiência expandida: revisitando a adaptação por meio da franquia transmidiática* (2016), Camila Figueiredo combines Adaptation and Intermedial Studies to investigate transmedia franchises. Through this methodology, Figueiredo compares *Watchmen*, *Cheias de Charme*, and *Sherlock*, yielding unique insights into these processes of transmediation. Therefore, Elleström's model for understanding intermedial relations enables the description and comparison of newer and less studied media types and even allows for original contributions.

As novels and films are realized through different media modes, when a film adaptation of a specific novel is produced, change is entailed. As aforementioned, adaptations are transmediations, a sort of media transformation that is intermedial, because it involves dissimilar media types. Novel-to-screen adaptations have been assiduously investigated.

> The question of transmediation has primarily been explored in the field of adaptation studies. Probably the most well-known examples of transmediation, and definitely the one that has been most thoroughly researched and theorized, are novel-to-screen adaptations (competing with studies of text-to-stage and theatre-to-film adaptations, see Elliott 2020) (BRUHN; GUTOWSKA; TORNBOR; KNUST, 2022, p. 139)

Hence, especially when novel-to-film adaptations are considered, the field of adaptation has an abundant body of scholarship, which sheds a light in recurrent debates regarding such products and processes. It has been noted that the study of adaptations requires special attention to how the relationship between media is described. For instance, the tendency of hierarchizing media products, privileging the chronologically first, has been observed. These hierarchies must be resisted, and the word choice must be careful. For example, referring to any adapted media as "original" is not coherent in this context, "[b]y their very existence, adaptations remind us there is no such thing as an autonomous text or an original genius that can transcend history, either public or private" (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 111). That is, adaptation is a process that challenges the concept of originality. For instance, to call *Romeo*

and Juliet an "original" is highly disputable, as it is well-known that Shakespeare borrowed from various sources for this play. Thus, the expressions "source medium/media" and "target medium/media" are preferred, considering that it puts the media products involved in a horizontal relationship. This terminology is respectful of media differences, and a conscious attempt at liberating the discussion of a loaded and disputable concept such as "original". Evidently, when adaptations are under scrutiny, a theoretical framework that provides common ground for understanding a variety of media relations benefits from being complemented with adaptation theories.

2.2 Defining Adaptation

The definition of adaptation is not a settled matter. For instance, influential scholars in the field advocate for an understanding of adaptation that is more comprehensive than the aforementioned approach from the intermediality field of studies (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 81). Linda Hutcheon (2006, p. 8-9), Julie Sanders (2006, p.18-19), Timothy Corrigan (2017, p. 23), and Kamilla Elliott (2020, p. 198-199) comprehend adaptation as a sort of transposition that not necessarily involves dissimilar media types. Historically, transpositions from a target medium to a source medium of the same media type have been considered adaptations. As the concept of adaptation has been adapted to suit different historical contexts, theorists have struggled to define this process.

Intermediality scholars frequently regard adaptation as a process that crosses media borders. In her tripartite taxonomy of intermediality, Irina Rajewsky considers film adaptations an intermedial transformation process, a subcategory called "medial transposition" (2005, p. 51). In "Ekphrasis and Adaptation", Claus Clüver presents the following definition: "[a]daptation, when limited to processes concerning the verbal medium, is the concept covering either the transfer of verbal texts to other media or the transposition to the verbal of configurations, usually narrative, in other media" (2017, p. 474).

In the film industry, adaptations are both critically acclaimed and successful at the box office. Even though the novel-to-film adaptations are the most celebrated example of media transformation, theorists such as Linda Hutcheon and Kamilla Elliott endorse that similar processes involving different media can also be thought of as adaptations – such as the media transformation from Shakespeare's plays or Jane Austen's novels to social media performances. However, it is especially revealing that, unlike theorists from intermedial studies, adaptation theorists do not put media transformations at the center of the debate. On

the contrary, most celebrated definitions of adaptation do not mention media transformation as a requirement for adaptation. In *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), Hutcheon comes with an influential definition.

> • An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works
> • A creative and an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging
> • An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work
> Therefore, an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing. (2006, p. 8-9)

Thus, Hutcheon's definition is threefold: first, the process of transposition involved must be confirmed and evident; second, in an adaptation, the act of appropriating from a source must be inventive; and last, the engagement between both media products must be comprehensive – more than a quote, character or theme is needed for the target media product to be considered an adaptation of the prior media product. Also noticeable is that it does not mention the media difference as a determining aspect. The book in which this definition was introduced has become the most cited publication in Adaptation Studies (ELLIOTT, 2020, p.146).

In the same year, Julie Sanders' *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006) offers a hesitant definition of adaptation. Here, it becomes noticeable that strategies used when defining this concept evidentiate its undetermined aspect. In a paragraph, Julie Sanders lists alternatives of what adaptations *can* be, rather than stating what they *are*.

> Adaptation can be a transpositional practice, casting a specific genre into another generic mode, an act of re-vision in itself. It can parallel editorial practice in some respects, indulging in the exercise of trimming and pruning; yet it can also be an amplificatory procedure engaged in addition, expansion, accretion, and interpolation (compare, for example, Deppman et al. 2004 on 'genetic criticism'). Adaptation is frequently involved in offering commentary on a sourcetext. This is achieved most often by offering a revised point of view from the 'original', adding hypothetical motivation, or voicing the silenced and marginalized. Yet adaptation can also constitute a simpler attempt to make texts 'relevant' or easily comprehensible to new audiences and readerships via the processes of proximation and updating. This can be seen as an artistic drive in many adaptations of so-called 'classic' novels or drama for television and cinema. Shakespeare has been a particular focus, a beneficiary even, of these 'proximations' or updatings. (SANDERS, 2006, p. 18-19)

The choice of "can" is not the only mark of hesitancy. In the concluding sentence, Sanders sidetracks to the specific example of Shakespeare adaptations, making evident the inconclusiveness of her definition paragraph. It is interesting to notice that, according to Sanders, adaptations can be a transpositional practice, but also an attempt to make literature accessible to different audiences. This approach considers that novels, for instance, can be adaptations of other novels. Then, the crossing of a media border would not be mandatory.

Following, other scholars have also demonstrated how defining adaptation is a challenging undertaking.

In "Defining Adaptation" (2017), Timothy Corrigan also does not offer a conclusive definition of adaptation, rather, discusses the history of adaptation acquiring different meanings through time. Starting with the broadest sense of the word, Corrigan refers to adaptation as adjustments that are made in ways of surviving, advancing, and changing. Not restricted to cultural practices, this broad sense of adaptation applies to biological adjustments as well (2017, p. 25). In consonance with Michel Foucault, Corrigan attributes a transformation in the practices and understanding of adaptations to a "shift in textual reading and interpretive practices" (2017, p. 26) during the early modern period. As reading becomes more active and critical, adaptation comes to be associated with practices in which "one rhetorical or representational frame adapts another" (2017, p. 26). Corrigan organizes approaches to define adaptation into three distinct perspectives.

> Definitions of adaptation tend to move between or concentrate on three perspectives. As a process, adaptation often describes how one or more entities are reconfigured or adjusted through their engagement with or relationship to one or more other texts or objects. As a product, an adaptation can designate the entity that results from that engagement or the synthesized result of a relationship between two or more activities. With the first, an adaptation might refer to the omissions and additions made in representing, for instance, a particular historical event in a novel, or the adjustments necessary for an individual to move from one culture to another. With the second, an adaptation would describe the product produced by that process, such as the compositional blend of historical and fictional elements in a novel, or the modified habits or personal traits and identity resulting from an individual's changed environment. More recent definitions have offered a third perspective: adaptation as an act of reception in which the reading or viewing of that work is actively adapted as a specific form of enjoyment and understanding. From this angle, readers may understand that different works operate differently for different readers depending on their background, while a community may assimilate or not assimilate a new member of that culture in different ways. (CORRIGAN, 2017, p. 23)

That is, this concept usually has three different connotations. First is the engagement of two different media products and the adjustments this relationship entails. Second, the media product resulted from these reconfigurations. Lastly, the act of reception of a media product, when the audience may recognize that a product is engaged with a source medium. The media-crossing aspect of adaptations is not even mentioned. At the end of the chapter, Corrigan comes to a conclusion, "[b]ecause its activities and perspectives continue to evolve rapidly, there cannot be any single or stable definition of adaptation" (CORRIGAN, 2017, p. 34). That is, he not only refuses to define this process and its products but also declares the impossibility of a single and finite definition of adaptation.

More recently, in *Theorizing Adaptation* (2020)*,* when defining adaptation, Kamilla Elliott also hesitates. Elliott confesses, "I hesitate to offer a definition of adaptation by way of conclusion, fearing that it will be both cited as definitive and critiqued for definitive lack by scholars who remain committed to defining adaptation definitively, as theorization dictates" (2020, p.198). Defining adaptation is a daunting task, Elliott simultaneously dreads that her definition will be taken as definitive and criticized for not being finite. Further, the author asks that every citation of her definition must be accompanied by a proviso: "This adaptive definition of adaptation has been adapted from prior scholarship and is subject to further adaptation" (2020, p.198). Elliott's definition is extensive:

> Adaptation is an interactive, relational process that changes entities to suit new environments; it is also a term describing an entity thus changed.
> Adaptation is therefore double-faceted in several ways: it is both process and product (Cardwell 2002); it adapts both from and to (Leitch 2005); it encompasses both entities and environments, texts and contexts (Geraghty 2008).
> Adaptation's adaptive mechanisms prioritize repetition with variation and continuity with discontinuity. Adaptation is not purely differential, but incorporates sameness; it is not purely progressive, but also engages in return (Corrigan 2017).
> Adaptations incorporate multiple texts and inhabit multiple environments (Hutcheon 2006). These include not only historical, geographical, social, cultural, ideological, political, aesthetic, economic, industrial, media, and technological environments but also academic, disciplinary, and theoretical environments.
> Adaptations are determined not only by artists but also by critics and theorists (Marsden 1995), politics and other cultural ideologies (Hassler-Forrest and Nicklas 2015), censorship (Berger 2010) and copyright laws (Nissen 2018), technologies (Sanders [2006] 2017, 32), industries and economics (Murray 2012a; 2012b).
> Adaptation adapts the textual and contextual borders that it crosses as well as the texts and contexts it adapts.
> Adaptation extends from processes of production and products to processes of consumption and consumers (Hutcheon 2006). Different consumers respond to adaptations differently across time, nations, classes, genders, and ideologies. Individuals change perceptions of an adaptation over time as we ourselves change.
> Joining multiple processes of production and consumption, humanities adaptation occurs on all levels from the macroscopic to the microscopic.
> The adaptation of a novel to a film is not simply a matter of narratological and ideological transfer— of plots, characters, points of view, and themes from page to screen. It is also at work in the tiniest pieces of lines on surfaces, which may have no narrative, ideological, or symbolic significance in themselves (Elliott 2003a, 72–73); it resides in the smallest bytes of digital technologies. In the midrange, it inhabits nonverbal modes of representation which may inform, but do not reduce to linguistic analyses.
> Adaptation can be deliberate (as in the selective breeding of animals or an acknowledged adaptation of a prior aesthetic work) or unintentional and unconscious (Hayton 2011); that said, even intentional adaptations involve processes and outcomes that exceed and elude intentionality.
> Adaptation cannot be traced to an origin, nor will it ever reach a final destination.
> Adaptation adapts the industries and individuals who produce and consume it, including the scholars who study it and the theories that we use.

There is no place outside of adaptation to survey adaptation transcendently or objectively.
The process of adaptation itself adapts over time.
So too do definitions of adaptation. (2020, p. 198-199)

Elliott starts her definition by asserting that adaptation is both process and product, giving emphasis to its double-faceted characteristic. Some other aspects involved in this definition of adaptation are difference and similarity, its interdisciplinarity, and the multiple agents it involves. The author also highlights the role played by consumers and their varied responses to adaptations. Intermedial adaptations are mentioned, drawing attention to nonverbal modes of representation in novel-to-film transfers. According to Elliott, intentionality is not imperative for this process. Lastly, the undetermined aspect of adaptation is emphasized: its origin is unknown, and the individuals who produce, consume, think, or write about it are susceptible to undergoing adaptations; even the process and its definitions are constantly adapting. Similar to the aforementioned scholars, intermediality is not considered a fundamental aspect of adaptation. As Elliott cites a dozen of authors, including herself – her definition is polyvocal. More than her personal perspective, this definition assesses how the field of Adaptation Studies has perceived its object of study. As explicitly announced, it is not to be taken as finite, but as an approach that considers adaptation as an ever-changing phenomenon that resists definitions.

Complexifying further, in *Expanding Adaptation Network* (2017), Kate Newell argues for an enlarged concept of adaptation. Newell observes how some reputable definitions, such as Hutcheon's, fail when restricting the concept as "from one to one". Thus, the concept of an "adaptation network" designates the process when "a single source can inspire so many subsequent adaptations across media that it becomes a cultural phenomenon with wide-ranging impact." (2017, p. 2). That is, the process of adaptation frequently involves more than a single source medium, and many target media can be transformations of the same source. Analyzing the "adaptation network" of L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Newell comes to conclude, "[p]erhaps more than identifying 'a particular work of art', 'an originating text', or an 'original' to revisit, what the range of Oz texts suggests is that there is no definitive Oz text to adapt" (2017, p. 4). For instance, one of the most recognizable icons from Oz was not created by Baum, but by costume designer Gilbert Adrian, who conceived the ruby slippers worn by Judy Garland in the film adaptation (NEWELL, 2017, p. 198). Dorothy's ruby slippers became instantly recognizable, appearing in many adaptations that followed. The adaptation network is "the broad inventory of narrative moments, reference

points, and iconography that comes to be associated with a particular work through successive acts of adaptation" (2017, p.8). That is, adaptations of Oz are a network of interconnected media products – a reference to ruby slippers is not only a reference to Baum's novel, but also a reference to MGM's adaptation as well. Newell recognizes that defining adaptation is a challenge, and instead of answering the question of what is an adaptation, her work illuminates that aspect of adaptation that was frequently overseen by those who attempted to define this process and products – the connections forged by different media products, through adaptation (2017, p.197). It must also be noted that Newell also does not restrict adaptation to intermedial practices – for instance, she refers to Gregory Maguire's novel, *Wicked*, as a "print adaptation" of Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

Possibly due to the prominence of novel-to-film productions, adaptations are frequently regarded as a process that involves two different media. However, the scholarship on adaptations does not recognize it as a necessarily intermedial process. That is, not every adaptation is produced through intermedial transformation. Intermediality is a category of adaptation as much as adaptation is a category of intermediality. Although Lars Elleström's framework provides solid ground for discussions of intermedial relations, there is not a unified and unambiguous theory of adaptation. Kamilla Elliott embraces the mutable and undefinable quality of adaptations, advocating for "adaptative definitions of adaptation" (2020, p.198). However, the undefinition of this concept has also been regarded as problematic. It has been considered that the lack of a unifying theory or a "presiding poetics", has condemned the scholars to unproductive case studies about individual works, with no connection with each other (RAY, 2000, p. 44). The reputation of adaptation as a process, category of media products, and especially as an object of research has been hurt. Elliott argues that Adaptation Studies have been subjected to widespread skepticism in academia, and adaptation has been regarded as a bad theoretical object. Withal, definitions are far from the only unsettled matter in the field. If Adaptation Studies has been struggling with a negative reputation, media-specificity theories are also partly responsible.

2.3 The Media-Specificity Debate

The media-specificity debate has also been casting a shadow in the field of adaptation studies. Among the reasons for such skepticism is the perspective of a theorist who has been nominated "father" of the field: George Bluestone. In *Novels into Film* (1966), in a chapter

that is an accurate reflection of its title, "The Limits of the Novel and the Limits of the Film", Bluestone lists the differences between novels and films, coming to the conclusion that,

> [a]t the farthest remove, novel and film, like all exemplary art, have, within the conventions that make them comprehensible to a given audience, made maximum use of their materials. At this remove, what is peculiarly filmic and what is peculiarly novelistic cannot be converted without destroying an integral part of each. This is why Proust and Joyce would seem as absurd on film as Chaplin would in print. And that is why the great innovators of the twentieth century, in film and novel both, have had so little to do with each other, have gone their ways alone, always keeping a firm but respectful distance (BLUESTONE, 1966, p.63).

Thus, he asserts that media differences should be respected, and crossings of media borders, such as adaptations, are undesirable. Elliott considers that Bluestone was vastly misinterpreted: although he was viewed as a "champion of fidelity", his writing rejected adaptation altogether (2020, p. 112). Hence, she sees *Novels into Film* as an attempted "obituary" for the field, and considers that if this text is regarded as the founding document of Adaptations Studies, the "birth of the field, then, was actually an attempted abortion of it" (2020, p. 112). Such a birth is partly responsible for the scholarly cynicism of adaptation, both as practice and field. Bluestone comes from a centuries-long critical tradition of describing the supposed limits of media. Adaptations and other intermedial practices insistently cross the media borders insistently raised by theorists.

During the German Enlightenment, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing wrote an influential essay named after the sculpture he discusses, the statue of *Laocoon and His Sons*, in comparison to Virgil's verses. In *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, originally published in 1766, Lessing defends that the differences between the verbal and visual arts must be better comprehended by critics, in order to be properly respected by artists. He states that the critics of his time "have drawn the most ill-digested conclusions imaginable from this correspondence between painting and poetry" (1962, p. 4). Among the differences, Lessing considers that the visual arts have narrower domains than the verbal arts. However, he argues that the critics have constrained poetry into the confines of painting while granting painting the liberty to expand into a wider realm. He accuses his contemporaries of regarding the arts' differences as errors, which has been misleading the artists themselves,

> [i]n poetry it has engendered a mania for description and in painting a mania for allegory, by attempting to make the former a speaking picture, without actually knowing what it could and ought to paint, and the latter a silent poem, without having considered to what degree it is able to express general ideas without denying its true function and degenerating into a purely arbitrary means of expression. (1962, p. 5)

Thus, the aim of his essay is to restore the arts to their true functions, and "to counteract this false taste and these unfounded judgments" (1962, p. 5). According to Lessing, the most prominent difference between these two art forms is that "succession of time is the province of the poet just as space is that of the painter" (1962, p. 91). Truly, *Laocoon* is constantly remembered as a foundational work in the distinction of the arts between temporal and spatial.

An aspect of *Laocoon* that is equally prominent is that Lessing was not only concerned with describing the modes of representation of the arts but also instructing painters and poets on what they should and should not do. For instance, he states,

> [i]t is an intrusion of the painter into the domain of the poet, which good taste can never sanction, when the painter combines in one and the same picture two points necessarily separate in time, as does Fra Mazzuoli when he introduces the rape of the Sabine women and the reconciliation effected by them between their husbands and relations, or as Titian does when he presents the entire history of the prodigal son, his dissolute life, his misery, and his repentance. (LESSING, 1962, p. 91)

Thus, Lessing acknowledges that there are paintings that represent two or more points in time. However, he considers that the combination of individual episodes in a single painting is more than an infiltration into the realm of poetry, but a breach of good taste. Similarly, he considers that the poet is trespassing into the domain of painting when, "in order to give the reader an idea of the whole, the poet enumerates one by one several parts or things which I must necessarily survey at one glance in nature if they are to give the effect of a whole" (1962, p. 91). He argues that poets must not provide detailed descriptions of the various parts of a single object or scene. Lessing concedes that a poet could provide their readers with detailed descriptions through poetry, however, it would be "a squandering of much imagination to no purpose" (1962, p. 91). Considering the portrayal of the visual aspect of objects, he believes painting to be "superior to poetry" (1962, p. 99). In contrast, the "peculiar advantage" of poetry, as an "art of time", is providing information about what happened in the time period before and after a scene represented in a painting (1962, p. 99). That is, the artist must adhere to the characteristics of the chosen medium – media products that crossed the media borders were a breach of good taste.

During the eighteenth century, painting and poetry were regularly referred to as "sister arts". As described by John Dryden, "[a]s Painting and Poesy are two Sisters, which are so like in all things, that they mutually lend to each other both their Name and Office. One is call'd a dumb Poesy, and the other a speaking Picture" (1989, p. 84). The idea of sister arts highlights the similarities and exchanges between both representational strategies, even when pointing out their differences. Lessing, however, considers that painting has not been a good sister for poetry, "[i]f painting claims to be the younger sister of poetry, at least she should not be a jealous sister and should not deny the older one all those ornaments unbecoming to herself". (1962, p. 54). Being that so, Lessing proposes a different sort of relationship for the arts, that are not to be perceived as siblings, and not even as housemates, but as neighbors.

> [A]s two equitable and friendly neighbors do not permit the one to take unbecoming liberties in the heart of the other's domain, yet on their extreme frontiers practice a mutual forbearance by which both sides make peaceful compensation for those slight aggressions which, in haste and from force of circumstance, the one finds himself compelled to make on the other's privilege: so also with painting and poetry. (1962, p. 91).

Lessing houses the arts in the same neighborhood but in different homes, in a way that their domains are kept separate, but close enough to allow for some interchange. Like Bluestone, many followed Lessing's steps in theories that single out differences between media. Theories such as these are often put under the umbrella term "medium specificity theory". W. T. Mitchell, a foundational author in the field of word and image studies, argues for one aspect of Lessing's policing of media borders; that is, critical efforts toward the total dissolution of the differences between word and image frequently entail that "vision and visual images are completely reducible to language" (1996, p. 53). The word "text" being used as a master term for a variety of media configurations is exemplary of language's attempt to overrule image, through a dissolution of media differences. For this reason, Mitchell considers that "the maintenance or even policing of this border is a useful task when it is conducted in a spirit of respect for difference" (1996, p. 53). Thus, medium-specificity theories would protect visual media from being overruled by verbal media. However, Mitchell considers that the border that separates "word" and "image" is an "improvised boundary" (1996, p. 53). On a similar note, Kamilla Elliott is skeptical of such theories and asserts that the reason why "medium specificity persists has more to do with institutional territoriality than with theoretical difficulties" (2020, p. 161). She adds that these theories are not "difficult to refute" and supports her argument with a list of many epistemologies via which adaptation scholars

challenged medium specificity (2020, p. 162). Mitchell and Elliott agree that these theories only resist in academia due to scholars' defensiveness of their own disciplines. Both authors acknowledge that media have insistently resisted the limits that academia and theorists have delineated.

Currently, media-specificity theories often use the noun "affordances" to name "the possibilities and limitations of media". (BRUHN; SCHIRRMACHER, 2022, p. 12) As a noun, affordance was first coined by psychologist James Jerome Gibson in *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, originally published in 1979. Gibson states,

> [t]he verb to afford is found in the dictionary, but the noun affordance is not. I have made it up. I mean by it something that refers to both the environment and the animal in a way that no existing term does. It implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment. (1986, p. 119)

Thus, affordances are introduced in the context of how animals relate to their environments. Gibson regards how animals perceive and interact with substances, surfaces, layouts, places, objects, and other animals. Going back to how this concept was introduced illuminates the reason why it has been considered useful and was appropriated by different fields.

> Substances have biochemical offerings and afford manufacture. Surfaces afford posture, locomotion, collision, manipulation, and in general behavior. Special forms of layout afford shelter and concealment. Fires afford warming and burning. Detached objects — tools, utensils, weapons — afford special types of behavior to primates and humans. The other animal and the other person provide mutual and reciprocal affordances at extremely high levels of behavioral complexity. At the highest level, when vocalization becomes speech and manufactured displays become images, pictures, and writing, the affordances of human behavior are staggering. No more of that will be considered at this stage except to point out that speech, pictures, and writing still have to be perceived. (GIBSON, 1986, p. 128 - 129)

Gibson adapted the verb afford to a noun that means what it is that different elements that surround an animal can do, and what could be done with each different material. His brief excursion into human communication suits the discussion on media specificity particularly well. Referring to verbal and visual media, through the evolution of vocalization into human speech and displays into images, Gibson is staggered by the affordances of human behavior – but does not delve deeper. Thus, scholars have been borrowing Gibson's concept of affordances in their investigations of the possibilities and limitations of speech, pictures, writing, and other media.

As a process of media transformation, the study of adaptation is tied to the media-specificity debate. For instance, due to media differences, literary sources frequently

undergo similar processes of adjustment when adapted to cinema. In *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents* (2007), Thomas Leitch calls "adjustment strategies" the means employed when "a promising earlier text is rendered more suitable for filming by one or more of a wide variety of strategies" (2007, p. 98). He names and describes some types of changes that are recurrent in the process of adapting the media characteristics of a source medium to a target medium. Three out of five are directly related to a difference in media traits. Two, compression and expansion, are specifically related to length. Leitch defines compression as "a great deal of systematic elision and omission" (LEITCH, 2007, p. 99), and expansion as an opposite tendency, that can be frequently observed in "films that have been fashioned from short stories" and is still more extreme in feature-length films that have songs as their source media (LEITCH, 2007, p. 99). That is, as novels are usually longer, they are compressed to fit the average length of a film, conversely, short stories and songs are expanded when adapted into movies. The other adjustment strategy, related to an element of film production, is superimposition. It refers to adaptations that involve superimposing "more or less explicitly identified coauthors on the material it borrows from literary sources" (2007, p. 100). The film industry is known for its multiple authorship; ultimately, films are collaborative works. Thus, superimposition refers to the influence of these many authors on adaptation processes. For instance, producers, directors, screenwriters, cast members, and more, may exert their coauthorship and shape the adapted product in ways that can be subtle or evident. Initially, it may appear that Leitch's arrangement of adjustments strategies into explicit categories gives strength to media-specificity theories. Nevertheless, upon closer inspection, his categories reveal that these adjustments are often related to media conventions rather than limitations.

While it is true that dramas and novels are often abridged when adapted, creative choices have led to a breach of this convention. Leitch names Kenneth Branagh's attempted fidelity to Shakespeare as an example.

> Curatorial adaptations subordinate whatever specific resources they find in cinema to the attempt to preserve their original texts as faithfully as possible. One well-known example is Kenneth Branagh's Hamlet (1996), whose four-hour length bespeaks its determination to avoid the usual cuts in the play. (2007, p. 96)

That is, films can have a runtime of four hours to fit Shakespeare's plays in their entirety. The duration of a film is not subject to a strict media limit. However, as in every media type, there are conventions regarding the way films are usually produced and consumed. When adapting Shakespeare, it is conventional to compress the play. In relation to superimposition, as

technology advances and cameras become lighter and cheaper, there is an increase in the number of films produced, shot, directed, and even starred by one-person crews, especially when online videos are concerned. Online videos will be discussed in detail when analyzing *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. Accordingly, Leitch does not attribute the adjustment strategies to unnegotiable media specificities. Instead, he defines the adjustment strategies as "many different ways for the film industry to adjust its literary sources to the requirements of different audiences, institutions, and conventions in hopes of increasing its profits" (LEITCH, 2007, p. 103). That is, more than intrinsic media characteristics, the adjustments are related to creative choices and commercial strategies. Correction and updating, which are the two other adjustment strategies Leitch identifies, are even more related to stylistic and marketing decisions. Correction happens when "films correct what they take to be the flaws of their originals". An example is the casting of women for female roles in Shakespeare adaptations, going against Elizabethan stagings. Hollywood "providing improbably happy endings" to their literary sources is an example as well (2007, p. 100). Lastly, updating is "to transpose the setting of a canonical classic to the present in order to show its universality while guaranteeing its relevance to the more immediate concerns of the target audience" (2007, p. 100). That is, to update a source medium is to bring it closer in time to the target medium's audience. These last adjustment strategies are not media-specific at all. Correction and updating are as pertinent to the adaptation of a film to a novel as vice-versa. Given that adaptation usually involves two media products created by different authors at different moments in history, the correction and updating are more particular to the process and circumstances of adaptation, which usually involve different artistic visions, and may involve meaningful cultural differences. Leitch's categories are helpful when describing the product of an adaptation in relation to its source medium, and go further than the conventional novel to film adaptations.

> The adjustment strategies can be applied to describe the transformation process of film adaptations but also to other artistic media products. However, if we want to analyse transmediation not only as an adjustment, we have to address how ideas can be transferred by transformation: We then have to investigate the interplay between medium specificity and transmediality. (BRUHN; GUTOWSKA; TORNBORG; KNUST, 2022, p. 140)

Nonetheless, it is critical to evidentiate that adaptations are more than simple adjustments, as they are processes that involve more than adequation to the specificities of the target media. Adaptations are complex processes of media transformation that necessitate change – and as

Leitch's adjustment strategies indicate, these changes are frequently associated with media conventions, artistic vision, or marketing choices. Alongside the indefinition of adaptation as a concept, and the media-specificity debates, scholars have considered the fidelity and infidelity debates a cornerstone of Adaptation Studies (CORRIGAN, 2017, p.24).

2.4 The Fidelity Debate

The discourse on whether the product of an adaptation owns fidelity to its source medium is extensive. However, the pervasiveness of the "fidelity myth" among adaptation critics may have been described in an exaggerated manner. For instance, Linda Hutcheon argues that fidelity must not be the sole focus of analysis within the field of adaptation, but affirms that "[f]or a long time, 'fidelity criticism,' as it came to be known, was the critical orthodoxy in adaptation studies" (2006, p. 6-7). At the time of her writing, many adaptation scholars have been writing about fidelity, and how it should not be a unit of measurement for adaptations.

> Fidelity to its source text—whether it is conceived as success in re-creating specific textual details or the effect of the whole—is a hopelessly fallacious measure of a given adaptation's value because it is unattainable, undesirable, and theoretically possible only in a trivial sense. Like translations to a new language, adaptations will always reveal their sources' superiority because whatever their faults, the source texts will always be better at being themselves. (LEITCH, 2003, p. 161)

Thus, fidelity – a strict exactness when transferring a given media product from source media – would not only be unattainable but also undesirable. Therefore, the "fidelity criticism" is a sort of analysis and judgment of adaptations that is biased, as it strives for fidelity, and adaptations can not (and should not) be faithful. It became a well-spread thesis that fidelity criticism has been a critical orthodoxy in Adaptation Studies, and that it should be defied.

Nonetheless, in *Theorizing Adaptation,* Kamilla Elliott puts the prominence of "fidelity criticism" into question. Elliott calls the "fidelity myth" a belief that critics and adaptation scholars have privileged fidelity. According to her archeology of Adaptation Studies,

> [a] history of theorizing adaptation makes clear that, while some adaptation scholars have certainly championed this notion of fidelity (. . .) and while many have engaged in comparative criticism to assess degrees of fidelity between adapted and adapting works, the vast majority of adaptation scholars have opposed strict fidelity to source texts and championed infidelity (ELLIOTT, 2020, p. 16)

Thus, as reported by Elliott, fidelity critics have been a minority in the history of adaptation. Further adding, "publications advocating fidelity and opposing infidelity constitute a minority of adaptation scholarship, that many more promote infidelity than fidelity, and that quite a few studies are unconcerned with either" (2020, p. 17). Through a diachronic perspective, Elliott presents evidence that, even more than fidelity, infidelity has been praised and promoted for centuries. For instance, during the seventeenth century adaptation was accepted as a good practice through which prior works could be "improved" – alterations were welcomed, and modern writers could demonstrate their excellence when "improving" their predecessors (2020, p. 44). Further, Richard Hooker, who wrote in 1636 on biblical translations, states that the Christian church has always favored a plain delivery of meaning over literal translation or freer paraphrasing (2020, p. 39). Nor even the gospel was considered, by the church, beyond alteration's reach. According to Elliott, during the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the discourses of adaptation were "diverse, complex, nuanced, contested and often ingenious" (2020, p. 86), and "the fidelity of adaptation to new cultural contexts was prized more highly than the fidelity of adaptation to earlier texts" (2020, p. 86). In the early twentieth century, the "infidelities" became a selling point for adaptations. The differences in the source media were perceived as a reason for people who have read the book to buy a ticket and watch the film. As Elliott puts it, "medium specificity was used to sell film adaptations" (2020, p. 104), and she adds, "people need to see the film precisely because it is not the same experience as reading the book" (2020, p.104). The same reasoning was behind the increased sales of the source media product: after watching the film adaptation, people would buy and read the book because the reading was promoted as a different experience. That is, when an adaptation is shown in theaters, medium specificity sells movie tickets and books.

Kamilla Elliott's archeology of adaptation theories shows that the scholarship on adaptations is far from monolithic and obsessed with fidelity, even though it was frequently described as such. Elliott stands by the belief that the "fidelity myth" must be challenged, for the reason that it "has done extensive damage to adaptation studies, presenting our field and our scholarship as myopic, pedantic, outmoded, uncreative, and puerile, right up to the present time" (ELLIOTT, 2020, p. 18). Therefore, the myth that the academic discourse on adaptation has been solely concerned with fidelity is a misrepresentation that disenfranchises the field. Furthermore, it has misled critics to praise differences over similarities,

> [a]s adaptation scholars charge each other with theoretically incorrect attention to fidelity (repetition) in adaptation, we have been overwhelmingly and disproportionately concerned with valorizing infidelity (variation) in adaptation, out of fidelity to humanities theories that fetishize difference. (ELLIOTT, 2020, p. 273)

In other words, to compensate for a fixation on fidelity that may never have truly existed in the field, theorists grew to celebrate the changes that resulted from the process of adaptation. Elliott comes to conclude that such preference for difference – the so-called infidelities – mirrors the history of humanities theorization.

> My history of theorizing adaptation identifies a transhistorical, transtheoretical dynamic in which humanities theorization has for centuries celebrated difference and castigated similarity across a variety of otherwise opposed theories, from neoclassical medium specificity to Romantic originality to modernist existentialism, from New Critical unique organic unity to structuralist binary opposition to poststructuralist différance, from Marxist dialectics to Bakhtinian dialogics to postmodern pluralism, from textual studies to intertextual studies to multimedial studies, from bourgeois individualism to modernist existentialism to postmodern diversity to post- humanist hybridity. The principles and cultural values vary, but the value for difference in opposition to similarity repeats. Similarity has been devalued as aesthetically inferior, perceptually naïve, philosophically false, and politically oppressive, while difference has been valorized as aesthetically superior, perceptually sophisticated, philosophically true, and politically liberating. (2020, p. 274)

Through a list of schools of thought and their chief concepts, Elliott highlights a preference for difference that permeates the humanities. However, this tendency is also untruthful to adaptation as a process, in which similarity plays an equally indispensable part.

In relation to what makes adaptations appealing, Linda Hutcheon has written, "[p]art of this pleasure, I want to argue, comes simply from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise" (2006, p. 4). Hence, Hutcheon's theory highlights the importance of changes making adaptations attractive but also posits the importance of repetition and recognition. Still, Elliott considers that Hutcheon's definition conforms adaptation to Theory.

> Equally detrimental to adaptation studies, it neglects adaptation's similarities while fetishizing its differences, distorting study of adaptation as a process combining repetition with variation (Hutcheon 2006, 4). When adaptation is defined as repetition with variation, a transtheoretical insistence on difference and opposition to sameness in adaptation represents not only a demand that adaptation should conform to theorization, as all subject matter must, but also a demand that it repress or denigrate half of its very identity. (2020, p. 20)

Indeed, Hutcheon's definition puts emphasis on difference. More precisely, to say that adaptation is "repetition with variation" is to place the variations as the quintessential aspect

of adaptations. Variation turns repetitions into adaptations. However, it is controversial whether Hutcheon overvalues differences in relation to similarities. Following this definition, she states, "[r]ecognition and remembrance are part of the pleasure (and risk) of experiencing an adaptation; so too is change" (2006, p. 4). That is, Elliott and Hutcheon both consider that similarities (recognition and remembrance) and differences (change) play indispensable parts in adaptation.

2.5 Differences and Similarities

An effort to combine Intermedial and Adaptation Studies brings forth their differences and similarities. For instance, through the lenses of intermediality, adaptation is perceived as a sort of process that can be defined as a transfer between media products with different media traits – which could be also called medial transposition (RAJEWSKY, 2005, p. 51) or transmediation (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 81). Contrarily, adaptation scholars usually advocate for much broader definitions, encompassing the engagement of media products with similar characteristics, involving similar basic media types. Novels that transfer media characteristics from previous novels are included in these broader definitions of adaptation. There is a difference in scope. Mostly, adaptations interest intermediality when they cross media borders. Differently, as anticipated, adaptation studies are concerned with the many sorts of adaptation, which have proven to be so many and varied that outlining a comprehensive definition is a challenge. When it comes to the media products that are investigated in the following chapters, which resulted from intermedial transfers between literature and social media, this difference is easily reconciled: these are the sort of adaptations that also belong to the subcategory of intermediality called medial transposition. Thus, it falls within the purview of intermediality and adaptation both.

For centuries, theorists have insisted on delineating borders between media. Nonetheless, media have insistently crossed every barrier theorists attempt to raise. Likewise, the study of adaptation is always a study of processes of border crossing. Although it does not always refer to the border that separates different media types, adaptation necessarily refers to a breach of the borders that circumscribe unitary media products. In that case, adaptations are products that establish a relationship of contiguity with at least one more product. In that sense, even when referring to two novels, the engagement of a source medium and its target medium is always a transgression of boundaries.

The combination of Adaptation and Intermedial Studies is the foundation of this research. The media specificity and fidelity debates, two of the central debates from adaptation scholarship, are predominantly about differences and similarities. The first is concerned with media types – how the characteristics of a source medium must be adapted when transferred to target media, and whether some characteristics are fit or unfit for certain media. The latter concerns media products, and the changes entailed by processes of adaptation, assessing whether the differences are essential or undesirable signs of infidelity. On that account, intermediality provides a framework proper for the investigation of differences and similarities between media types and media products.

This inquiry sheds light on an understudied sort of transmediation and adaptation – the transfer of media characteristics from literature to social media platforms. As such, an analysis of these adaptations illuminates the source and target media, revealing not only the storytelling potential of social media but also singling out some characteristics of literature. Both Intermedial and Adaptation Studies benefit from an analysis of these productions, as the scholarship on this subject is scarce. Although individual case studies about adaptations of this sort have been conducted, literature-to-social-media transformations are yet to be recognized as a specific type of adaptation. In order to survey this phenomenon as a genre, a diversified corpus representing this range of media products must be investigated through lenses that establish unambiguous grounds for comparison and contrast. Even theorists who argue that adaptation refuses unified and stable theories concede that "a shared language can help develop adaptation as a field" (ELLIOTT, 2020, p. 266). That is the reason why Intermedial and Adaptation Studies can be combined. Currently, intermediality has a "shared language" to lend. Elleström's framework plays an important part in this dissertation; through it, the following chapters use a clearcut language that is shared with a number of other researchers investigating similar intermedial relations.

Ultimately, transmediation and adaptation are not synonyms. As demonstrated, transmediation designates a specific form of media transformation, which necessarily includes different forms of media. Thus, transposing the media characteristics from a literary source to a social media platform is a transmediation. Adaptation is a broader concept. As a literature review of Adaptation Studies indicates, an adaptation does not require crossing media borders. For instance, a film that has a different film as its source medium is an adaptation, but it is not considered a transmediation. The three productions that constitute the primary corpus for this investigation are transmediations and are also adaptations. Hence, this dissertation has named them literature-to-social-media adaptations, a category that combines

Intermedial and Adaptation Studies. The first part, "literature-to-social media", emphasizes the intermedial aspect of these media products, and the different forms of media involved. The last part, "adaptation", accentuates that *Such Tweet Sorrow*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, and *#ShakespeareNoFilter* combine the comfort of repetition with the liveliness of variation.

3 PERFORMING PRECURSORS

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, transposing the plot, characters, and other narrative elements from literary sources is a process that has been named both transmediation and adaptation. As anticipated, considering the increasing relevance of digital platforms in contemporary life, experimental artists have been using new media technology for aesthetic media products. Due to the crescent interest in the affordances of digital platforms, an archaeology of media products dealing with virtuality is more relevant than ever, and this lineage goes back decades. In this chapter, a brief genealogy of these endeavors and their precursors is delineated, which includes Lynn Hershman Leeson's *Roberta Breitmore*, the Hamnet Players' *Hamnet,* and Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs). Lastly, in reference to Bolter and Grusin's *Remediation* (1999), this discussion focuses on how new media remediates performance and epistolary literature.

3.1 Performing Virtuality

The social distancing policies instituted to contain the coronavirus global crisis led the creative industry towards the internet. Due to material conditions, many artists and companies resorted to the web. Among the virtual performances, some were advertised as pioneers, antagonizing those who were exploring the artistic affordances of the digital environment for decades[6]. The digital artist Helen Jamieson, in 2000, coined the term "cyberformance" to name a "live performance that utilises internet technologies to bring remote performers together in real time, for remote and/or proximal audiences" (JAMIESON, 2008, p. 34). In 2020, she expressed her discontent with such claims of "first":

> Thanks to the Covid19 pandemic, the mainstream world has suddenly woken up to the potential of the internet as a site for live theatre and performance. The performing arts have been particularly hard-hit by lockdowns and limits on gatherings, and turning to the internet has been a natural survival strategy. For many, streaming and video conferencing has been the obvious way to get their offline work out to a locked-down audience; but others have risen to the challenge of exploring further into what theatre could be in the online environment. This has led to a great many claims of "firsts" and declarations of "ground-breaking pioneers" of live performance on the internet. Of course it's wonderful, but unfortunately the media attention given to these mainstream newcomers is simultaneously erasing three decades of work in the field by experimental artists who are the true pioneers of online performance. (JAMIESON, 2020a)

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[6] See "BEFORE THE FIRST": <https://vimeo.com/503467731>

Therefore, even though the COVID-19 pandemic inspired experimentation with performance and digital media, this sort of aesthetic endeavor already had a rich and complex history before 2020. In fact, cyberformance is only one of the terms coined for this genre of productions using the internet for theatrical productions. For instance, virtual theater (GIANNACHI, 2004), digital performance (DIXON, 2007), and postorganic performance (CAUSEY, 1999) are other expressions employed in heterogeneous contexts that were used to describe this phenomenon – more than a decade before the coronavirus pandemic.

Singling out precursors is no light task. On Franz Kafka's precursors, Jorge Luis Borges famously writes,

> [i]f I am not mistaken, the heterogenous pieces I have listed resemble Kafka; if I am not mistaken, not all of them resemble each other. This last fact is what is most significant. Kafka's idiosyncracy is present in each of these writings, to a greater or lesser degree, but if Kafka had not written, we would not perceive it; that is to say, it would not exist. The poem "Fears and Scruples" by Robert Browning prophesies the work of Kafka, but our reading of Kafka noticeably refines and diverts our reading of the poem. Browning did not read it as we read it now. The word "precursor" is indispensable to the vocabulary of criticism, but one must try to purify it from any connotation of polemic or rivalry. (BORGES, 1999 [1951], p.365)

Thus, according to Borges, Kafka's literature changes the reading of a poem written decades earlier. Through his writing, Kafka also wrote his precursors. With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to recognize some precursors for literature-to-social-media and other genres of digital adaptations. Cyberformance's elected precursor is *The Hamnet Players*, from 1993 – a production that is unequivocally important for this archeology and will be described later. Nonetheless, Gabriella Giannachi brought up some earlier exponents in her *Virtual Theatres*, such as *Roberta Breitmore*, a performance by the American artist Lynn Hershman Leeson, which started as early as 1973. Yet, it is possible to go backward in time, for instance, in *Digital Performance*, Steve Dixon's genealogical research of digital performance highlights Bauhaus' artist Oskar Schlemmer as a forerunner, specifically his "light plays" works[7] from the 1920s (DIXON, 2007, p. 38). However, *Roberta Braitmore* is a precursor when performing virtuality is concerned: a woman who never lived, but whose existence is simulated. In *Roberta Breitmore*, the artist performed a fictional identity for five years, from

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[7] "Schlemmer took narrative, spatial, and choreographic abstraction to new heights during the 1920s. He designed robotic costumes for the Futurist dance *The Triadic Ballet* (1922); utilized mechanical devices to move flat, metallic figures rapidly around the stage on wires; and enclosed a female performer's head and hands in science-fiction-style silver spheres for *Metal Dance* (1929), staged within a corrugated tin-plate set. Schlemmer also prefigured ideas of avatars and artificially intelligent robots in his plans to create an artificial figure (*Kunstfigur*) without wires. This would be remote controlled, or even self-propelled: 'almost free of human intervention' and permitting 'any kind of movement and any kind of position for as long a time as desired'." (DIXON, 2007, p. 39)

1973 to 1978, in which she dressed up as "Roberta Breitmore", put on specific make-up, changed gestures, and body language. She lived as Roberta. She made her acquaintances through a newspaper ad, answered dozens of letters sent in response to her ad, and even met with people who were unaware of her performance. Furthermore, Roberta interacted with the world, leaving behind a trail of documents that "prove" her existence, she had a driver's license, attended Weight Watchers, and consulted with a psychiatrist – these documents, alongside various souvenirs of Roberta's (mis)adventures, have been curated into an exhibition shown around the world. As the American art scholar Peggy Phelan noted, "the *Roberta Breitmore* series has been folded into art history, even though it may belong more fully to the history of literary adaption [*sic*] and alchemy." (2016, p. 107). The reference to alchemy is due to the "transmutation" aspect of this performance, acknowledging how the artist lived as another person, transformed her body, and performed a fictional identity, but is *Roberta Breitmore*'s proximity with literary adaptations that makes this production a befitting precursor for literature-to-social-media adaptations.

Lynn Hershman Leeson brings to light an intermedial relationship between *Roberta Breitmore* and a literary source. The artist announces, "Roberta Breitmore's name derived from a Joyce Carol Oates short story about a woman who tracks celebrities through letters she places in a newspaper. She is like a black hole, a burned-out star" (HERSHMAN, 2005, p. 33), referring to "Passions and Meditations" (OATES, 1975), an epistolary short story composed of seven letters. In this short story, the protagonist's pseudonym is Roberta Bright, who writes to Keith Lurie, an up-and-coming composer, asking for an interview. The first letters are friendly and professional, but "Roberta" soon demonstrates a romantic interest in Keith. He does not correspond to her affection, and the letters are never answered, "[s]he then begins stalking him, and her subsequent threats gain force because, while she can see him, he lacks the ability to recognize her. It is her vagueness and nonspecificity that make her powerful and threatening." (PHELAN, 2016, p. 104). Thus, by the end of the story, the addresser proved to be a dangerous stalker, as the seemingly innocent letters descend into threats.

There is more from "Passions and Meditations" in *Roberta Breitmore* than an eponym. In particular, it is the theme of disdain that further connects both works and artists,

> [i]n addition to borrowing the first name and a sound-alike last name from Oates's protagonist, Hershman adopted much of the story's plot and psychological intrigue for her series. Oates's brilliant ventriloquism of Brightmore's [*sic*] voice also must have appealed to Hershman, who was worried that her work would not be seen and that she, like Brightmore, would not receive a response. (PHELAN, 2016, p. 104)

The fact that the protagonist never heard back from Keith Lurie is a major plot point in this story of unrequited love. Likewise, in 1994, Hershman Leeson addressed the fear (and the hard reality) of having her artistic production dismissed, "I was told that media was not art and did not belong in a museum" (HERSHMAN LEESON, 1994). In a talk at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, she recalls how, in response to her art being ignored, she created pseudonyms and surreptitiously wrote about her own work, to achieve some validity as an artist.

> Because my work was ignored because there was no critical language or context for it, I was forced to write about it myself, both to historify and explain its content. I wrote under 3 names, Prudence Juris, Herbert Good and Gay Abandon. They published these texts internationally, one had a weekly column. I would show the articles in order to obtain exhibitions, because the articles gave the work credibility. (HERSHMAN LEESON, 1994)

Thus, Roberta Breitmore is not the only fabricated identity she performed during her career as an artist. According to Lynn Hershman, to be considered worthy of museums, galleries, and exhibitions, the artist herself created a group of fictional critics who were interested in writing about her art, and performed as her own critics. Through these personas, she sanctioned her own work. Anecdotally, as of June 2021, when looking for *Lynn Hershman Leeson: Civic Radar* – a volume published in 2016, featuring selected criticism of Hershman Leeson's works, compiled in collaboration with the artist – one may find that an account named "lynn hershman" is the sole reviewer for *Civic Radar* at Amazon. It may be that the artist once again performed the role of her own critic, by referring to the book on her work as "Essential"[8]. Differently from Hershman as a newcomer artist, and her namesake from Oates' short story, Breitmore did receive answers to her ads. She corresponded through letters with some people, and even met some of her penpals in the flash.

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[8] See: LYNN Hershman Leeson: Civic Radar. Website. *Amazon*. Available at: <https://www.amazon.com/Lynn -Hershman -Leeson-Civic-Radar/dp/377574102X>. Accessed: 20 Feb. 2022.

> Extending the logic of Oates's scenario in "Passages and Meditations," Breitmore placed personal ads in newspapers, inviting response and companionship. Unlike Oates's fictional protagonist, Breitmore received genuine replies, usually from men who were even lonelier than she. Notably, the ensuing social interactions were repeatedly marked with sexual danger. Breitmore was asked to join a prostitution ring and was subject to a wide variety of heterosexual come-ons. (PHELAN, 2016, p. 104)

The atmosphere of danger that surrounds "Passages and Meditations" is also part of *Roberta Breitmore*; not receiving an answer is far from a woman's worst nightmare. When Hershman Leeson lent her body to Roberta Breitmore and attended dates with unknown men, who were unaware of the performance in which they took part, she found herself in many threatening situations. However, the artist found out that the darkness of this performance could be found not only on the outside, "Roberta represented part of me as surely as we all have within us an underside—a dark, shadowy cadaver that is the gnawing decay of our bodies, the sustaining growth of death that we try with pathetic illusion to camouflage." (HERSHMAN, 2005, p. 33). The "negative spiral" of this performance became unbearable, leading to a "ritualistic exorcism", "I hoped not only to liberate Roberta from oppression, but metaphorically to free other wounded women who suffered as deeply as Roberta. 'Metaphor' derives from the Greek word for 'to move on'" (HERSHMAN, 2005, p. 34). In 1978, Roberta was exorcized in a museum of modern art, which was constructed over Lucrezia Borgia's crypt.

Evidently, Hershman did not use digital media in *Roberta Breitmore*, but her performance was nevertheless an experiment with virtuality. Some similarities to literature-to-social-media adaptations, discussed in the next chapters, are the fact that it was a durational performance, sustained for a longer period of time, involving direct interaction with people and using diverse media. In fact, "[w]hen Hershman Leeson discusses the series today, she describes Breitmore as a 'simulated person who interacts with real life in real time'" (PHELAN, 2016, p. 104). As Gabriella Giannachi states,

> Roberta was 'at once artificial and real. She had a history which continually wrote itself anew, registering and documenting real experience, and leaving tangible traces of its existence' (Rotzer in Schwarz and Shaw 1996: 136). In Roberta Breitmore, Hershman herself became Roberta, thus creating a persona who had an identity, a physical embodiment... (2004, p. 141)

The clash between an individual's real identity and her virtual identity is a theme particularly befitting for our contemporary times. As such, an updated version of *Roberta Breitmore*, performed through the digital media may at first glance appear great, but due to the internet's intrinsic virtuality its development encounters an insurmountable difficulty, "in the Internet

version of the piece Hershman's 'performance' was curiously invisible, since on the Internet everybody, not just Roberta, embraces character and adopts one or multiple personae" (GIANNACHI, 2004, p. 142). What makes Hershman Leeson's art non-updatable also makes it fascinating: an excursion into virtuality (and its consequences) before such excursions became overspread. As aforementioned, Borges famously notes that Kafka's novels and short stories changed the way his precursors are read. Similarly, if the productions analyzed in the following sections had not existed, Hershman Leeson's *Roberta Breitmore* would most likely not be perceived in the light cast by Giannachi's *Virtual Theatres*. Likewise, had it not been for literature-to-social-media adaptations, Hershman Leeson's performance would not be the same.

3.2 Performing on Digital Platforms

In 1993, years before the dawn of social media platforms, *Hamnet* was performed live on IRC[9], inaugurating what would be known as "cyber theater" or "cyberformance". *Hamnet* was produced by the Hamnet Players, a group founded by Stuart Harris, who was a professional actor and writer of a technical manual on IRC (DANET et al., 1995). The name of this production plays with the word "ham", which stands for an exaggerated actor, and "net" – as an abbreviation of "internet", but also alludes to the name of William Shakespeare's son and, evidently, his play.

Far from Shakespeare's gloomy play script, the Hamnet Players' production is genre-bending, subverting its source medium through humor and playfulness, presenting to its digital audience not a tragedy but a comedy.

> The main source of humor in Hamnet scripts and performances derives, as it does in most humor, from the unexpected juxtaposition of incongruous materials (Charney, 1978; Hutcheon, 1985; Test, 1991; Oring, 1992; Palmer, 1994) – in this case, the juxtaposition of canonical Shakespearean characters, plots and language with computer jargon and other components of contemporary popular culture. (DANET et al., 1995)

The media transposition is itself a source of humor. The choice of incorporating internet slang, transforming Prince Hamlet's memorable soliloquy into a single line "2b or not 2b..." (HAMNET, 1993) is exemplary of the irreverence assumed towards the source medium.

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[9] IRC (Internet Relay Chat) works as an instant messaging application, based on written text. Although it supports private one-to-one communication, its main feature is the many-to-many communication in discussion forums. The platform still exists, but its popularity has been decreasing since the early 2000s.

Furthermore, the incorporation of IRC commands into the performance is also humorous, but restricted the audience of *Hamnet* to those knowledgeable not only of Shakespeare's play but also the digital environment of this production.

> To appreciate fully the clever humor in this, and the other scripts, and in participants' often virtuoso improvisations on them, one must have an excellent command of both of these two very different cultural codes. One must not only know Shakespeare quite well, but also have a good command of computer, and especially IRC jargon and culture. (DANET et al., 1995)

For instance, lines such as "Oph: suggest u /JOIN #nunnery" (HAMNET, 1993) demanded familiarity with IRC and *Hamlet* to be comprehended. Those familiar with IRC will understand that in this line Prince Hamlet indicates the existence of an IRC channel named "nunnery", but only those who are also familiar with the source medium will recognize the contrast between such playfulness and the tragic passage of *Hamlet* that is been transmediated, and may find this comparison humorous.

Similar to the literature-to-social-media adaptations this research investigates, *Hamnet* was performed by an entire cast of actors. There are seventeen roles to be cast in this play script, which comprise both traditional roles, such as Hamlet, Ophelia, Gertrude, and Claudius (as Queen and King), but also unconventional parts, like "Prologue", "Enter", and "Exit" – the reason for such unconventionally named roles is to exploit a feature from IRC and improvise stage directions.

> If your nickname is Cyberlad and you enter the command /ME has to go now, this will be seen by everybody else in the channel as * Cyberlad has to go now. This feature of the IRC software has an important use in contributing stage directions: If you want the direction Exit Hamlet, gloomily to appear on screen, all you need to do is arrange for a character with the nickname "Exit" to enter the command /ME Hamlet, gloomily. (HARRIS, 1995, p. 500)

Thus, the Hamnet Players used roles named as stage directions, to produce an online performance of *Hamlet* that read as if it were a conventionally written drama printed on a page. Some of the seventeen roles of *Hamnet* are minor, such as Polonius, whose only line in the play is "[a]rrrghhhh! ! !" (HARRIS, 1995, p. 503), and could be performed by anyone with access to IRC, but the casting for major roles was taken seriously. The greatest achievement in casting was "a genuine Shakespearean actor, Mr. Ian Taylor of the Royal Shakespeare Company in London" (HARRIS, 1995, p. 509). Harries comments that although an "accomplished performer", Taylor was not "computer-adept": the producer had to provide him the computer and access to the internet. This casting anecdote illustrates the challenges

involved in transmediations: it goes beyond media affordances, it also requires adaptation from people.

In 1999, in *Cyberspace Textuality*, organized by Marie-Laure Ryan, Matthew Causey already considered that "[p]erformances on the World Wide Web are now commonplace" (CAUSEY, 1999, p. 184). Causey refers to digital theater as "postorganic performance".

> The adjective "postorganic," for the purposes of my model for performance, reflects the transition from the privileging of presence, the authentic aura, the immediacy of the live to the exploration of issues surrounding the circulation of representations through a medium capable of temporal, spatial, and subjective manipulation (1999, p. 185)

Departing from an epigraph by Peggy Phelan[10], in which liveness is put as performance's precondition, Causey demonstrates how performance theory fails virtual performance – thus, these productions call for an expanded theory, better suited to performance mediated by digital media. However, he argues that virtual performance also supposedly fails performance theory, and may "void itself of the capacity to realize the appearance of theater, the presence of the fleshy other" (CAUSEY, 1999, p. 185). Through an idealized perspective, the virtual could free individuals of social oppressions, "[w]ithin the virtual environment, the spectator is transposed into a digital space in which culturally based identities such as ethnicity, class, and gender are volatile, not fixed categories" (CAUSEY, 1999, p. 190), thus, the absence of the body is taken as a sort of political freedom. Unfortunately, the virtual is not as democratic as Causey presupposed it would be. When access to the internet is concerned, class is still a highly significant category: more than two decades later the digitally excluded still amount to 37% of the world population (ITU, 2021). Causey is concerned with how performances in virtual environments could no longer adhere to "liveness", "performance is not what it was once theorized, a time-dependent disappearing act, for it no longer resides solely in the present moment of the theater, screen, or text" (CAUSEY, 1999, p. 186). Despite Causey claiming that virtual theaters were "commonplace" by the end of the twentieth century, that was in fact the decade when the experiments with digital theater were first conducted, and as Causey himself realized, he was writing from a moment in which "[t]he theory has passed the possibilities", and aside from the Perry Hoberman's *Bar Code Hotel*, Causey's essay is less an analysis of what he calls "postorganic performance" and more a contemplation of what performances in virtuality could turn out to be. For instance, in contradiction to his

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[10] "Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance". (PHELAN, 2016, p. 146).

expectations, virtual performances that allow for real-time interaction between performers and audiences are still time-dependent, as they may require synchronous communication, which is a characteristic shared among many social media productions. Furthermore, the major platforms have since embraced ephemerality, implementing tools that set expiring dates for digital content – social media has become a "disappearing act".

As aforementioned, in 2000, the term cyberformance was coined by digital artist Helen Jamieson to designate this genre of performances, simultaneously avoiding recurrent polarizations in new media studies – such as "real" and "virtual"[11]. Jamieson defines cyberformance as "live performance by remote players using internet technologies" (2008, p. ii), which is precisely how the *Hamnet Players*, for example, used IRC to reenact *Hamlet*.

In 2001, scholars Barry Smith and Steve Dixon chose the expression "digital performance" when they made their *Digital Performance Archive* (DPA) available: a collection that extends for over twelve boxes and is composed of CD-ROMs, digital and printed material and is housed at the University of Bristol.

> While the level of such activity was high at that time, its recording and documentation was uncoordinated and sporadic, and the DPA sought to retain for posterity some traces of this work. During the years 1999 and 2000, the Archive recorded all activity it could find within the field, and provided an extensive online database of individual works, with data fields including date, venue, credits, types of technologies employed, summaries of the works, photographs, artists' statements, biographies, and website links (many artists' websites were also cloned by the Archive to ensure their longevity). (DIXON, 2007, p. IX)

Thus, the DPA's mission is to preserve the history of digital performance against the ephemerality of virtual media, more specifically archiving opportune information regarding works produced during the turn of the millennium. In 2007, Dixon, with the contributions of Smith, published *Digital Performance* in which he traces "digital performance's historical lineage back to earlier conjunctions of performance and technology, particularly since the early twentieth century" (DIXON, 2007, p. X). The author's definition of digital performance is broad, including "all performance works where computer technologies play a key role rather than a subsidiary one" in the fields of live theater, dance, performance art, installations, cybertheater, and computer games, but overtly does not include the fields of music, cinema, television or video (DIXON, 2007, p. 3) – for the authors avowedly lacked space and "expert subject knowledge". Interestingly, the authors themselves consider the expression "digital performance" doubtful.

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[11] For a discussion on cyberformance, see section 3.1.

> "Digital" has become a loose and generic term applied to any and all applications that incorporate a silicon chip; and the term "performance" has acquired wide-ranging applications and different nuances both within and outside the performance arts. Indeed, over the past forty years understandings of the word "performance" have been so stretched and reconfigured that it has become a paleonymic term: one that has retained its name but has transformed its fundamental signification and terms of reference. (DIXON, 2017, p. X)

Thus, it is from the first uses of "digital performance" that critics are aware that both "digital" and "performance" are terms that have been employed in such an indiscriminate manner that turned vague. However, the expression has somehow survived the test of time and is still vastly used to designate this sort of production.

In 2003, in the *Oxford Encyclopaedia of Theatre and Performance*, Matthew Causey – who had earlier coined "postorganic performance" – defines "cyber theatre". According to Causey, the concept regards performances "created with the aid of new media and computer technologies," and he adds,

> [t]he technologies of virtual and electronic performativity challenge the most fundamental beliefs concerning performance, including the claims to liveness, immediacy, and presence. The ubiquitous presence of the televisual in contemporary theatre, and the advent of computer-aided performativity, establish a discrete aesthetic category wherein the immediacy of performance and the digital alterability of time and space through technology converge (CAUSEY, 2003, p. 397)

Furthermore, the author lists some uses of technology by theater productions such as "digital scenography", in which live actors interact with virtual objects; "telepresent performance", which is the use of video conference by theater companies to perform remotely – a technique largely explored during the COVID-19 pandemic; "interactive access", the remote visitations in installations and performances that may affect the objects in exhibitions, as made popular by bio artist Eduardo Kac, alongside with "virtual reality" and "augmented reality". Lastly, Causey also lists "performance within virtual environments", referring to digital platforms that were developed for role-playing games (RPG) and were popular at the turn of the century among theater communities. The Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs) are digital environments based on written verbal text, developed during the 1980s, mainly focused on online gaming. Usually, people would join these online environments to play games inspired by the *Dungeons and Dragons* books,

MUDs were first developed by Richard Bartle and Roy Trubshaw (who coined the term) at Essex University in 1983 (although they did not become widespread until 1989), and have become popularly regarded as a borderland of identity, performance, and community. Early examples tended toward adventure-game paradigms, particularly Dungeons and Dragons fantasy-adventure environments peopled by wizards and monsters (hence the original term, "Multi-User Dungeon"). (DIXON, 2007, p. 470)

What intrigued theater communities regarding MUDs was the role-playing aspect of these platforms. In MUDs, the users "carefully and consciously establish themselves as fictional beings: putting on masks, often crossing gender, and engaging in improvisational performances" (DIXON, 2007, p. 470). Through textual descriptions and interactions with other players, the gamers developed online personas and took part in narratives. Many multi-user environments specialized in theater were created during the 1990's. Juli Burk, who was vice president of the U. S. Association for Theater in Higher Education (ATHE) created ATHEMOO in 1995 (CHATZICHRISTODOULOU, 2014, p. 24). The server was created to host lecturers and students associated with the ATHE and featured numerous rooms, including "seminar areas, a library, a courtyard, a hotel, an improv room, the Theatre of Dionysus, and the Schweller Theater, a traditional theater space with stage and wings" (DIXON, 2007, p. 490), and housed many collaborative productions. Among the many platforms built specifically for virtual theater is UpStage, a "browser-based venue for live online performance". Upstage is an open-source platform launched in 2004 by *Avatar Body Collision* – an online troupe of four women who had never met in person: above-mentioned Helen Jamieson, Karla Ptacek, Leena Saarinen, and Vicki Smith. They performed ten cyberformances between 2002 and 2007. Before UpStage, their performances used free chat software. In 2021, due to the rising interest in digital theater, inspired by the coronavirus pandemic, the platform was completely updated, focusing on audience members and players who use mobile devices. As an artist, one can create a stage, set avatars to deliver lines, move props and draw in real time directly on the virtual stage, and even control a virtual curtain. Entering the platform, as a spectator, one can choose which stage to access. The spectators may use a personalized nickname or enter as a guest, and interact with other people in the chat, sending written text messages or reactions.

There is a multiplicity of theatrical productions using virtuality as there are a number of labels to these productions. In *Virtual Theatres*, published in 2004, Gabriella Giannachi recognizes the plurality of theatrical performances in virtual spaces – which she designates as "virtual theatres", "[t]here is not one virtual theatre, but many. This is not only because of the variety of virtual art forms that can claim a certain degree of theatricality, but because the

medium of virtuality itself acts as a theatre, a viewing point of the real" (2004, p. 151). *Virtual Theatres'* central line of reasoning is virtuality's intrinsic potential for theater – the author understands the space of virtual reality as a viewpoint from where "the real can be seen inside out" (2004, p. 159). According to Giannachi, these plural works "share the characteristic of being open works in which the viewer is variously participating in the work of art from within it. This is why, in the world of virtual theatre, the work of art and the viewer are mediated" (2004, p. 4). Furthermore, she adds, "virtual theatre consists of a performative component, which is unique in time, and a remediated component, which is more or less permanent. This means that virtual theatre takes place through the viewer's 'performance' of the work and its disappearance into memory (of both the viewer and, on occasion, the work itself)" (2004, p. 6). Thus, going against Matthew Causey's predictions, the ephemeral aspect would still be a defining characteristic of performance, even when virtual theater is concerned.

In fact, liveness is a notion that pervades every definition and theory regarding digital performance, and Causey's "postorganic performance" is an exception. As Maria Chatzichristodoulou puts it, "liveness is one of the vital characteristics of theatre and performance art. It seems to me that it remains a central focus also for practices that evolve online" (2014, p. 23). She adds that liveness defines the ontology of theater and performance, and "it means that the performance is created through a process of disappearance. Its being 'live' entails that performance 'dies' with its own enactment" (CHATZICHRISTODOULOU, 2014, p. 23). Liveness has in fact been agreed as fundamental: a digital practice that is not live is not a performance. In a field with little unanimity, consensus must be held in high esteem, especially with a concept such as "performance", when the all-inclusive applications have been stretching the word thin (DIXON, 2007, p. X).

3.3 Performing on Social Media

Moreover, in the last decades the conceptualization of performance has been stretched further: the internet has been understood as an enormous stage, in which all users are performers, "[t]he World Wide Web is a site of therapeutic catharsis-overload, and it constitutes the largest theater in the world, offering everyone fifteen megabytes of fame" (DIXON, 2007, p. 4). However, most online performances on platforms not designed for virtual theater, such as various social media, are not carried with aesthetic intention. In 2004 Facebook was launched turning common people's private lives into a spectacle of sorts. As Reinaldo Marques asks, "in contemporary society, with the biographical and the

autobiographical made into a spectacle, due to social media, to what extent does an anonymous individual not become an Internet public figure?" (2014, p. 28, translation[12]). Thus, the once well-established borders between public figures and anonymous individuals became blurred, and discussions around privacy are complexified in the light of this new paradigm. In what concerns literature as a market, it has been observed how the spectacularization of the self in social media brings changes to what it means to be an "author".

> A role that is currently undergoing intricate processes of transformation, either because the writer plays other roles in society, such as representing a point of view, the interests of a certain audience, than abstract and totalizing categories such as people and nation; whether because of the new technologies and extensions of memory, such as electronic archives, the internet, social media; whether due to the expansion and hegemony of publishing markets' interests in a globalized economy, demanding media exposure of the writer, which are now transformed into a pop intellectual, as book fairs and literary festivals seem to show. (MARQUES, 2014, p. 22, my trans.[13])

Therefore, some social roles, such as the roles of "author", and "artist" in general, seem to invite not only the regular use of social media tools, but to be seen and heard is such an imperative that artists may feel compelled to create an extravaganza out of their private lives.

> Moreover, in the sphere of aesthetics, a wholly new relationship has grown up between the artist, the work of art and the spectator. The work loses its materiality, and becomes simply an effect or an event; the artist loses his halo and becomes a researcher; the spectator leaves the domain of cultural conditioning and himself becomes active and creative. (CHATZICHRISTODOULOU, 2014, p. 20)

Because the artist and the spectator – or writer and reader – both share the same virtual stage, they are prone to listen and to be listened to: social media may produce pretend intimacy, which is more evident in some genres, such as the vlog[14], which will be discussed in the next chapter.

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[12] "Na sociedade contemporânea, com a espetacularização do biográfico e do autobiográfico, proporcionada pelas redes sociais, até que ponto o indivíduo anônimo não se transforma em figura pública na internet?" (MARQUES, 2014, p. 28)

[13] "Figura que, na atualidade, experimenta intrincados processos de mutação, seja em função de o escritor desempenhar outros papéis na sociedade, como o de representar mais um ponto de vista, os interesses de certa audiência, do que categorias abstratas e totalizantes como povo e nação; seja em razão das novas tecnologias e extensões da memória, como os arquivos eletrônicos, a internet, as redes sociais; seja ainda em decorrência da expansão e hegemonia dos interesses de mercados editoriais numa economia globalizada, exigindo exposição midiática do escritor, transformado em intelectual pop, como parecem mostrar as feiras de livros e as festas literárias". (MARQUES, 2014, p. 22)

[14] Vlog is short for video blog. Generally, vlogs are diary-style online videos, based on personal experiences and opinions.

On social media, the public and the private are blended. Diaries, traditionally personal and private, are now often transmediated to public platforms, such as Twitter. The refashioning of diaries into microblogging platforms will be addressed later in this chapter. Meanwhile, it is relevant to notice that many long-established genres are being remediated, "social media entertainment is very often characterized by an extreme level of transmediation of pre-existing media content together with the representation of 'old' media types and genres in a new context" (JENSEN; MOUSAVI; TORNBORG, 2022, p. 287), and this refashioning of analog media by new digital media is frequently thematized by literature-to-social-media adaptations.

When bringing literary sources to social media, transmediations have usually followed a pattern. They are clearly acknowledged as transpositions of recognizable literary works and constitute creative and interpretive acts of appropriation with an extended intertextual engagement with the works they adapt. They are, thus, consistent with Linda Hutcheon's now widely accepted definition of adaptation (2006, p. 8). Even if not yet broadly accepted as a category of adaptation, these cultural products are indeed adaptations. Recurrently, the production and reception of literature-to-social-media adaptations unfold over extensive periods – from weekends to an entire year –, broadcasting fictional events in real time: that is, in their full fictional duration, a feat impossible to achieve for their theatrical or novelistic sources. Additionally, these adaptations embrace the interactive aspect of social media: some messages sent by the audience were answered by performers enacting the characters of these stories. Even though these productions may encompass various social media, they usually have a main stage, a core that concentrates posts from other platforms. Characters' posts on different platforms may be compiled into a cohesive and chronologically organized timeline after the end of the performance. In this way, some choices of presentation and disposition of content are recurrent and were made in adaptations produced not only by established companies, such as the RSC, but also by newcomers, such as Pemberley Digital, which produced *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

Marie-Laure Ryan defines genre as "genuine rules specified by humans," rules that are not directly "dictated by their material substance and mode of encoding" (2005, p. 290). Therefore, these recurrent choices suggest the existence of a narrative genre within social media, embodying "genuine rules" – which Ryan considers imperative to the constitution of a genre. As a matter of fact, to consider the collected posts on social media as narrative is compatible with current definitions of "narrative", including Mieke Bal's all-encompassing definition: "a narrative text is a text in which a narrative agent tells a story" (2009, p. 15). Or,

as Monika Fludernik elaborates, narrative is "a representation of a possible world in a linguistic and/or visual medium, at whose center there are one or several protagonists of an anthropomorphic nature who are existentially anchored in a temporal and spatial sense and who (mostly) perform goal-directed actions (action and plot structure)" (2009, p. 6). Bal's and Fludernik's perspectives suit the purpose of this research, as they contribute to the argument that adaptations from literary works to social media platforms constitute a brand-new storytelling type. Ultimately, in this dissertation's last chapter, following Lars Ellestrom's model for understanding media relations, it is argued that literature-to-social-media adaptations constitute a qualified media type.

Literature-to-social-media adaptations bear similarities to a canonized storytelling paradigm: that of the epistolary novel. More specifically, in line with Grusin's and Bolter's (1999) arguments, these adaptations work as "remediations" of the epistolary genre. Epistolary novels, also called novels of letters, were a popular genre in the eighteenth century, and are fictional works mostly made of written correspondence. Added to the diary and to casual conversation, letters exemplify what Mikhail Bakhtin characterizes as "purely everyday genres", providing insight into the "intimate relations between people and into the internal life of the individual person" (1981, p. 396); allegedly, the epistolary method allows an immediate simulation of a character's consciousness. It has been argued that the letters would enhance the sense of veracity in a story, as it "makes us feel that we are in contact not with literature but with the raw materials of life itself as they are momentarily reflected in the minds of the protagonists" (WATT, 1957, p. 192). Furthermore, epistolary novels were frequently prefaced by truth claims. For instance, the preface for *Robinson Crusoe* (2007 [1719]) reads:

> The Editor believes the thing to be a just History of Fact; neither is there any Appearance of Fiction in it: And however thinks, because all such things are dispatch'd, that the Improvement of it, as well to the Diversion, as to the Instruction of the Reader, will be the same; and as such, he thinks, without farther Compliment to the World, he does them a great Service in the Publication. (DEFOE, 2007, p. 3)

Thus, Daniel Defoe presents a story to his readers that he claims not to be fictional, but an instructive fact. Similarly, Samuel Richardson introduces *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (2001 [1740]) as truthful. The title page announces,

> [a] Narrative which has its Foundation in TRUTH and NATURE; and at the same time that it agreeably entertains, by a Variety of curious and affecting INCIDENTS, is intirely divested of all those Images, which, in too many Pieces calculated for Amusement only, tend to inflame the Minds they should instruct. (RICHARDSON, 2001, emphasis in original)

Again, the author of an epistolary novel presents his narrative as truthful and highlights the book's moral purpose. The authors enhanced the verisimilitude of their novels framing them as not fictional. Moreover, as Richardson claims, epistolary novels may be better at preserving the emotions conveyed.

> The method which the Author has pursued in the History of Clarissa, is the same as in the Life of Pamela: Both are related in familiar Letters by the parties themselves, at the very time in which the events happened: And this method has given the author great advantages, which he could not have drawn from any other species of narration. The minute particulars of events, the sentiments and conversation of the parties, are, upon this plan, exhibited with all the warmth and spirit, that the passion supposed to be predominant at the very time, could produce, and with all the distinguishing characteristics which memory can supply in a History of recent transactions. (RICHARDSON, 1964, p. 366)

According to Richardson, an epistolary account of events would enable the reader to achieve a more immediate experience. Although the literary sources for the media products discussed in this dissertation are not epistolary, the target media represent the "raw materials" of digital life. *Such Tweet Sorrow* uses Twitter, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* tells a story through vlogs, and the chosen social media for *#ShakespeareNoFilter* is Instagram posts. Thus, these transmediations do not tell stories by means of letters in the traditional sense, that is, as a popular modality of handwritten communication, sent in an envelope, from one person to another, by mail. Accordingly, some authors of contemporary novels have brought the genre up to date, with the inclusion of digital media. For instance, a chapter of Jennifer Egan's *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (2011) consists of a PowerPoint presentation, and the young adult bestseller *Illuminae* (2015), by Amie Kaufman and Jay Kristoff, is an epistolary novel composed of digital genres, such as emails and online encyclopedia entries. For specific audiences, in a world where communicating via electronic correspondence is common, reading the development of a relationship happening through an exchange of emails, tweets, or watching it through a vlog may feel similar to what reading a novel of letters once felt for eighteenth-century readers. According to Bolter and Grusin, "remediation," "a defining characteristic of the new digital media", is "the formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms" and promises to offer "a more immediate or authentic experience" (1999, p. 45, 273, 19). Therefore, the aforementioned adaptations could be considered a remediation

of traditional epistolary novels, as they are works of fiction composed by the "purely everyday genres" of contemporary communication. If the novel first consolidated itself as a genre through compilations of letters and diaries, these compilations of social media posts are definitely revealing about the ways literature is being mediated at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Such Tweet Sorrow was possibly the first transmediation of this sort. Produced in 2010 by the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), it brought *Romeo and Juliet* to Twitter, a microblogging platform, primarily based on written text. Before addressing the specificities of microblogging, one must step back to the origins of blogging. The first blog was created in 1997 by Jorn Barger, but by that time he called it a "weblog", a combination of the words "web" and "log" (CROSS, 2011, p. x), meaning precisely what the words indicate: a diary made available through the internet. However, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, the word "blog" had already become widespread and vastly used to designate the practice of regular and personal writing made public over the internet. Phillippe Lejeune has investigated blogs, as a media form, from their dawn:

> From October 1999 to October 2000 I did a study of a phenomenon that was just beginning to appear in the French-speaking world: online diaries. Today, in 2008, given the explosion of blogs, it is hard to believe that in November 1999, after a month of systematic searching on the Internet, I had found only sixty-nine diaries. (LEJEUNE, 2009, p. 299)

According to Lejeune, the difference between a traditional diary and a blog is not only a matter of public or private, as many journalists have had their private writings made public during their lifetimes. "In terms of personal writing, beginning in the 1880s it gradually became customary in France for people to publish, if not an entire diary, then at least a significant and careful selection in one volume during the writer's lifetime (Edmond de Goncourt did this in 1887, Léon Bloy in 1896, and so on)" (LEJEUNE, 2009, p. 300). Lejeune also mentions André Gide, Charles du Bos and Julien Green, indicating that the practice survived during the twentieth century. The essayist calls special attention to the *différance* between the time of writing and the time of publishing.

> The Internet is revolutionary in that it allows anyone to publish instantly and as often as they like (working "online" means going live); to attain virtual worldwide publication (although actual distribution is still a thorny issue: how do you publicize your site and bring in more visitors?); and to have potential interactivity (through reader feedback). A person can either be thrilled by the possibilities, or realize, on second thought, that they are the total opposite of the conditions that led to the development of the personal diary, which is based on a different notion of time (delay, maturation, and accumulation) and of communication (deferred or exclusive, that is, based on secrecy). With the Internet we face the paradox of writing without "différance," writing that is almost as instantaneous as speech, and privacy with no inside, since everything seems to be outside immediately. (LEJEUNE, 2009, p. 301).

In fact, this "instantaneous" characteristic of electronic writing was fully embraced by the producers of *Such Tweet Sorrow*. The production and reception of this adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* unfolded over five weeks, broadcasting fictional events in real-time: that is, in their full fictional duration. The audience learned of Romeo and Juliet first meeting, and the murder of Mercutio and Tybalt, for example, simultaneously and in the same duration in which these fictional events supposedly happened.

Twitter, the microblogging platform, was launched in 2006 (CROSS, 2011, p. xi), the possibility to broadcast live events to large audiences was one of its selling points. Tweets are a one-to-many genre of written communication. Oftentimes, Twitter posts are of public interest, working as "open letters", written by politicians, artists, or journalists, for example. Twitter can also be used as a public diary – in the manner of the characters from *Such Tweet Sorrow*. What makes Twitter different from a regular blogging platform is a restriction of characters per tweet. Until 2017, Twitter had a character limit of 140 characters (including space and punctuation): brevity is key to any microblogging platform, and was one of the challenges to be surmounted by the Royal Shakespeare Company when bringing *Romeo and Juliet* to this environment.

The choice of *Romeo and Juliet* as the source medium for this adaptation is highly significant when an epistolary approach to this production is concerned. Shakespeare's play thematizes asynchrony and dislocation, but also letter writing, a thesis presented by Jacques Derrida in "Aphorism Countertime",

> Romeo and Juliet, the conjunction of two desires which are aphoristic but held together, maintained in the dislocated now of a love or a promise. A promise in their name, but across and beyond their given name, the promise of another name [. . .] The and of this conjunction, the theater of this "and," has often been presented, represented as the scene of fortuitous contretemps, of aleatory anachrony: the failed rendezvous, the unfortunate accident, the letter which does not arrive at its destination, the time of the detour prolonged for a purloined letter, the remedy which transforms itself into poison when the stratagem of a third party, a brother, Friar Laurence, proposes simultaneously the remedy and the letter (DERRIDA, 1992, p. 419)

Nicholas Royle, who translated "Aphorism Countertime" from French to English notes how in the original version of this essay the words "purloined letter" appear in English, as a reference to Edgar Allan Poe's short story, entitled "The Purloined Letter," and also to Jacques Lacan's "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'". According to the translator, Derrida chooses to use English because "'Aphorism Countertime' follows Shakespeare's play in focusing on the (tragic, comic, ironic, and above all necessary) possibility that a letter can always not reach its destination" (apud DERRIDA, 1992, p. 419). In *Romeo and Juliet* the letter not reaching its recipient was fatal for Romeo and Juliet both, as it was due to Friar Lawrence's letter's detour that Romeo does not receive the information that Juliet was not dead, but temporarily poisoned while waiting for his arrival in Verona.

However, it is not only due to thematization of letters in *Romeo and Juliet* that it is fruitful to discuss *Such Tweet Sorrow* under the light of epistolary studies, but also because as aforementioned this adaptation brings *Romeo and Juliet* to a microblogging platform, that is by itself a refashioning – or remediation – of diaries. Even though published in a public manner, tweets are one among the "purely everyday genres" of the twenty-first century, alongside emails, vlogs, Instagram posts, SMS and others. Tweets are the raw, but public, materials of life itself in the contemporary world. Furthermore, writing a diary on a blog, or on Twitter, for instance, should not be regarded as less "natural" (or raw, for that matter) than writing on paper.

> Writing for oneself in a notebook is not a "natural" situation that is somehow changed by the advent of new media. The computer is no more artificial than the notebook. It merely changes the relationship with writing. And the Internet opens up a new mode of communication that removes all the distinctions we had become accustomed to with paper, so much so that we are afraid we may lose our souls in it. We feel so passionately about these things! So compelled to exclude people who do things differently! (LEJEUNE, 2009, p. 310)

Even if one is convinced that not being "natural" is not an exclusivity of digital writing, one may argue that this shift in communication paradigm must be condemned as it puts privacy

down, since electronic diaries, such as blogs and microblogs, are mostly public. However, Lejeune argues for a different approach, "[u]nless we live on a desert island or in a cell, our private lives include other people. They are never entirely our own private property, but are always a sort of jointly held property" (2009, p. 311). The notion of being "private property" can be questioned: is there ever such a thing as unblemished privacy?

Without further ado, literature-to-social-media adaptations are a new frontier. There are affordances and limitations yet to be discovered and explored by those who are targeting these media for their literary sources, such as adaptation and intermediality scholars. It is "indisputable that many early novels were in letters" (BRAY, 2003, p. 1). Therefore, if the novel first consolidated itself as a genre through compilations of letters and diaries, stories performed through social media must not be ignored. In fact, it is increasingly hard to be oblivious to these productions.

> Digital performance, cybertheaters, cyberformance or whatever you might want to call it, one thing is clear: the genre is alive and kicking in terms of creative outputs; it is becoming increasingly well established in its reach; and it continues to innovate in dramaturgical, aesthetic, conceptual and also social terms. (CHATZICHRISTODOULOU 2014, p. 30)

As demonstrated, not only artists and companies have been experimenting with virtuality and digital platforms for decades, but scholars have, also for decades, investigated this phenomenon. The importance of tracing a genealogy of performances in digital environments was renewed when, due to COVID-19 and social distancing policies, there was a spike in interest in these practices. More recently, a performative aspect has been attributed to social media platforms, in which the borders between the public and the private are eroding. In this context, literary sources are being brought to social media, and a new media type has been inaugurated. *Such Tweet Sorrow*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* and *#ShakespeareNoFilter* provide us with a panorama of literature-to-social-media adaptations.

4 LITERATURE-TO-SOCIAL-MEDIA ADAPTATIONS

This chapter is split into three sections, each dedicated to a different literature-to-social-media adaptation, arranged in chronological order. The first section discusses *Such Tweet Sorrow*, an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* to Twitter, a social media based on written text. The second production is *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* to YouTube, a social media based on online video. Lastly, the third section focuses on *#ShakespeareNoFilter,* an adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, and *Romeo and Juliet* to Instagram, a social media based on videos and photographs. Each section has five subsections: a description of the production under discussion, a plot summary, an analysis of its chosen main stage, an examination of how other platforms or media were involved in each production, and an investigation of how transmedial aspects of these media products, such as themes and modes of narration, were transferred and transformed.

For this chapter, considering that these adaptations cannot be accessed as performance, but only as archive[15], social media fragments – diverse in terms of basic media – were transmediated into coherent and linear verbal written texts, in order to represent the narrative of each production. For instance, when only the fragments published on their main social media stage are considered, *Such Tweet Sorrow* is composed of three thousand nine hundred and forty-two tweets[16], *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is made of one hundred and sixty videos[17], and *#ShakespeareNoFilter* was told through one hundred and seventy-seven posts on Instagram[18]. Therefore, the plot summaries offered in this chapter stand for intricate narratives, which were dispersed through multiple posts and platforms. Although one may consider that the summaries are lengthy, the details offered are meaningful for the analyses that follow. Not only that, considering the internet's ephemerality, these summaries may be valuable for further studies, when even more fragments of these productions will become

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[15] Here, the difference between performance and archive is appropriated from Diana Taylor, who contrasts the "so-called ephemeral repertoire of embodied practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports, ritual)" and "the archive of supposedly enduring materials (i.e., texts, documents, buildings, bones)" (TAYLOR, 2003 p. 21)

[16] Available in 2022, the tweets posted by *Such Tweet Sorrow*'s accounts are six hundred and eighty-eight from Juliet, five hundred and forty-eight from Romeo, eight hundred and fifty-nine from the Nurse, six hundred and sixty-one from the Friar, six hundred and fifty-four from Mercutio and five hundred and fifty-two tweets from Tybalt.

[17] See "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries - The Complete Playlist": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= KisuGP2lcPs&list=PL_ePOdU-b3xcDyyzeR5NjxeLEElsqYzn1>

[18] *#ShakespeareNoFilter*'s *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was told through eighty-two, *Hamlet* sixty-two*,* and *Romeo and Juliet* thirty-three Instagram posts.

unavailable. After all, the fragmentary social media artifacts that originated in these performances can only allow for a partial glimpse of how they were experienced in real time. A glimpse that, year after year, is getting more partial.

4.1 *Such Tweet Sorrow*

Such Tweet Sorrow premiered in April 2010, an overtly announced adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* to Twitter, and possibly the first adaptation of its kind. The production was signed by the highly prestigious Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), in collaboration with Mudlark, a production company specialized in digital media. It was directed by Roxana Silbert, RSC's Associate Director, and produced by Charles Hunter, from Mudlark. Geraldine Collinge, RSC's Director of Events and Exhibitions at the time, described the process of producing *Such Tweet Sorrow* in the article "All about *Such Tweet Sorrow*"[19] (2011). According to Collinge, the play script was created by the authors appointed by Mudlark, Bethan Marlow, and Tim Wright. While Marlow had a "more traditional theatrical experience", Wright had previous experience with digital storytelling (COLLINGE, 2011). The six RSC actors who worked in *Such Tweet Sorrow* – Charlotte Wakefield, Ben Ashton, Geoffrey Newland, James Barrett, Mark Holgate, and Lu Corfield – received a "daily mission document" from the writers, stating what they should communicate via Twitter at each moment during those five weeks. The script was not written in the form of Twitter posts, therefore, the actors had to improvise and write their posts conforming to social media etiquette and following their "daily mission document". Actors who did not have prior Twitter experience were coached by Mudlark. In the course of the production, the actors were directed by Silbert (COLLINGE, 2011).

A Twitter profile was created for each of the characters and managed by their corresponding actors. There were six major characters, with actors posting as them on Twitter: Wakefield played Juliet, Ashton played Mercutio, Newland played Laurence, Barrett played Romeo, Holgate played Tybalt and Corfield played Jess – a contemporary take on the Nurse. Each page featured a corresponding picture of the actors in character, but no forewarning that those profiles were part of a theatrical production and did not correspond to actual living

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[19] Originally published in 2011 at the Digital Content Development Programme's website, which is currently offline. Fortunately, it can be accessed through the Internet Archive (archive.org) – this same method was employed when accessing many websites in reference to *Such Tweet Sorrow*, including the production's own page. See: <https://web.archive.org/web/20110926042552/http://www.dcdprogramme.org.uk/projects/projects/such-tweet-sorrow/>

humans. Following the events of the play, actors started and stopped tweeting as their characters at different times – for instance, Romeo was the last to enter the virtual stage and Mercutio was the first to leave. In an interview with Thom Dibdin, from *All Edinburgh Theatre*, Ashton recounts how it was to exit *Such Tweet Sorrow*'s stage.

> "There was a definite finality," Ashton recalls. "I did feel a massive sense of loss. Normally when you are doing a show and your character has to die, you know that in ten minutes you are going to be up and walking around. In this one, you know that that's it," he pauses and lets the words roll out with an even emphasis, "That. Is. It! It is no more. I will never tweet as Mercutio ever again." (ASHTON, 2010)

And he adds, "[w]hen it ended, I kept on going to my computer thinking I'd better check Twitter. Then I'd remember. I'm dead" (ASHTON, 2010). Ashton's distinct experience playing a character on Twitter points out two characteristics of this production: even though the play was performed for three weeks, it was never replayed. Differently from most plays that are performed on conventional stages, when to be in theaters for weeks means performing the play from its beginning to its end many times, *Such Tweet Sorrow* was performed only once. Also, even though Ashton borrowed his body to Mercutio, to be Mercutio was to tweet as him: leaving the medium he used to perform the character, the Twitter profile, was equivalent to leaving his performing medium behind. But the performance left digital footsteps: even though the actors stopped tweeting in 2010, the profiles are still available on Twitter, Ashton never tweeted as Mercutio again, but his interpretation of the character and the persona he constructed is only a login away from becoming live once more. Mercutio being the first to die echoes Shakespeare's play script, but *Such Tweet Sorrow* is no replication of *Romeo and Juliet*. Even though the script that was written for this production "incorporated storylines and ideas from the original text" (COLLINGE, 2011), it was a new piece of media, written for an online environment and its audiences.

4.1.1 Plot[20]

In 2000, in an unnamed market town of England, Susan Capulet dies in a car crash, leaving behind her husband and three children – Juliet (Charlotte Wakefield), Tybalt (Mark Holgate), and Jess (Lu Corfield). The driver of the car, Montague, with whom Susan had an affair, survived. Montague is a painter and father of a young boy named Romeo (James

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[20] Revised and expanded, as originally written for the master's thesis *Shakespeare in the Timeline*: An analysis of RSC's S*uch Tweet Sorrow* and *#dream40* (2017).

Barrett). Susan's widower blames the driver for the accident, and her death sets the two families, Capulet and Montague, apart. Her children are not told about the nature of their mother's relationship with Montague.

Ten years later, Capulet, Susan's widower, now remarried, is planning to move to Australia with his second wife, taking along his young daughter, the fifteen-year-old Juliet. His older children, the seventeen-year-old Tybalt – who is a troubled child attending a boarding school – and twenty-three year old Jess – employed at a firm in a neighboring city – are not moving to Australia. On the anniversary of Susan's death, Tybalt's sisters learn that their brother was expelled from school for drug trafficking. Meanwhile, Montague has been living with his wife and their only son, nineteen-year-old Romeo. Having finished school, Romeo is taking a year off before college, working part-time, playing video games, and going to pubs with his friend, Mercutio (Ben Ashton), also a nineteen-year-old. Mercutio is an only son who has found a family with Romeo and his father after his own parents relocate to France. Friendly to both Capulet and Montague is Laurence Friar (Geoffrey Newland), the thirty-eight-year-old owner of a cafe and bookshop. His shop is a favorite of both Tybalt and Mercutio. Besides the usual, Friar also sells marijuana, hashish, and offers a place for teenagers to smoke. The local youth uses Twitter, and Laurence, due to his proximity to them, also has an account on the platform.

When the performance starts on Twitter, Juliet Capulet is soon turning sixteen. As suggested by her sister Jess, Juliet decides to have a masked party to celebrate her birthday – she gets excited and leaks all information to her followers on social media. Romeo and Mercutio have no difficulty crashing her birthday party, which has Laurence in charge of security. That day, without knowing, Juliet Capulet falls in love with Romeo Montague and spends the night with him. Jess recognizes Romeo but does not tell her sister. Interpreting his sister's passionate tweets about her birthday's night, Tybalt rages as he learns that she is no longer a virgin. Romeo is afraid of revealing his identity to Juliet, but Jess accidentally discloses it to her. The younger Capulet is devastated to learn her love is off-limits. Complicating the romance further, her father plans to move to Australia soon.

Going against both families, the young lovers confide in Jess – who has not experienced love in her own life – and Laurence – who believes this relationship could reunite both families – to have their secret meetings. At that time, in a table tennis tournament organized by Friar, Mercutio defeats Tybalt, who is a sore loser. Suspicious that Juliet and Romeo's relationship may be going too fast, Jess stops encouraging her sister. The young couple, however, still find encouragement and support from Friar. Learning that his lover

thinks his father is a villain, Romeo decides to tell his family's version of the car accident that killed Susan Capulet. To Juliet's surprise, she learns that her mother was in love with his father and, at the time of the accident, they were in an extramarital relationship. Convinced of this version of the story, she decides to flee from her home and spend the night in a hotel with Romeo. Looking for her sister, Jess loses her trust in Laurence, as she arrives at the cafe and finds him selling drugs to her brother. Concomitantly, Romeo and Juliet secretly get married at a registry office. When Jess confronts her sister about their relationship, which she worries has evolved too fast, Juliet reveals that she is now officially married to Romeo and will not be moving to Australia.

Tybalt discovers, through Laurence, that Juliet has had some secret dates with Romeo Montague at the cafe, and goes after him. Mercutio also discovers that the girl his friend has been dating is Juliet Capulet, and is also infuriated. After a football match, Tybalt and Mercutio cannot be found. Mercutio is later found injured in a hospital, and just before dying, he publishes a tweet in which he curses both Capulets and Montagues. A day later, the audience gets to know that Tybalt was knifed at the football match and also died. The young Montague is on the run, and witnesses claim that he killed the young Capulet. Juliet refuses to believe that Romeo is guilty of murdering her brother. Desperate that her lover might be also injured or dead, she threatens to commit suicide. Jess and Laurence, who are adamant that Tybalt's death was an accident, side on to find a solution to the young lovers' future.

Juliet, after reading Tybalt's posts on Twitter, is certain that her brother is the one responsible for the fight that led to his and Mercutio's death. She also discovers that her father is resolute in taking her to Australia. Jess, who is not as convinced of Romeo's innocence, cooperates with their father, refusing to let Juliet hide in her house. Juliet resorts to Friar, who publishes a poem on his website indicating that he left some milk with propofol – a short-term sedative drug – available to Juliet in his flat. He instructs: on the day she is supposed to fly to Australia, she should drink the propofol, sleep through the day, and miss the flight. To avoid raising suspicion, Juliet announces on Twitter that she is eager to leave England, but when she gets to Laurence's flat, she posts about her plans of having a new life with Romeo, and drinks the so-called "milk of amnesia".

Having spent a day without access to Twitter, Romeo is unaware of Juliet and Laurence's plans. He finds his lover unconscious and reads her last tweets as if they were a suicide note. In despair, Romeo posts on Twitter that his wife is dead. Unfortunately, Laurence is offline, thus unable to explain his plan. When he finally connects to Twitter, Romeo is already dead, after swallowing an overdose of pharmaceutical drugs with whiskey.

Juliet wakes up twenty minutes later, finding Romeo's body next to her. Via Twitter, she apologizes to Jess for the suffering her actions will cause. Her sister, stuck in traffic, cannot get to her in time. Juliet cuts her wrists and dies. Capulet, in a desperate attempt to locate his daughters, reactivates Tybalt's Twitter account. Jess arrives at Laurence's flat and asks him to come to her, in order to help her make sense of the catastrophe.

The performance continues for one more day after the star-crossed lovers' tragic death. Both Jess and Friar resort to Twitter to find advice on how to face this tragedy. Jess decides that love is the only emotion that is worth having, as it was the hate between the Capulets and Montagues that sparked all this calamity. Laurence is willing to face the police, tell the truth, and be a friend to both families. The play's last tweet comes from Tybalt's account, used by his father, apologizing to Jess, and calling her back home[21].

4.1.2 The Main Stage: Twitter[22]

Twitter was overtly announced as *Such Tweet Sorrow*'s main stage: "You know the tale of *Romeo and Juliet* but now you can see it happening live and in real time – in modern Britain and on Twitter. Six characters live the story over the five weeks of *Such Tweet Sorrow* and you can experience it with them" (SUCH TWEET SORROW, 2010). In this section, the focus is on the stage itself. Regarding *Such Tweet Sorrow,* the goal is to elucidate how Twitter changed over time, the importance played by profile pictures, and how language and other user conventions, such as hashtags, tags prefaced by the hash sign (#), were featured in this production.

Since April 2010, Twitter has changed significantly. For instance, in the second semester of that same year, the platform was redesigned and a so-called "new Twitter" was inaugurated (CALORE, 2010). Furthermore, since 2017 the posts on the platform – called "tweets" – which were at that time strictly limited to one hundred and forty characters, doubled in length: at the time of writing, tweets are up to two hundred and eighty characters. Nowadays, the platform is recognized as politically influential, shifting public opinion and election results; its fragmentary aspect favors the reinforcement of pre-existing beliefs and miscommunication. Because fragments invite completion, it "not only makes us comparatively likely to interpret in ways which fit with what we already believe, but also

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[21] A plot summary could be found at the performance's official website, now only available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20100802022649/http://www.suchtweetsorrow.com/>
[22] Revised and expanded, as originally written for the master's thesis *Shakespeare in the Timeline*: An analysis of RSC's *Such Tweet Sorrow* and *#dream40* (2017).

cover over the possibility of alternative interpretations and possibilities." (SADLER, 2022, p. 147). Even though it is not possible to build a digital glass case to isolate *Such Tweet Sorrow* from the changes in the platform, when analyzing the production the present aim is to address Twitter as it was in 2010.

At that time, Twitter was widely known both for its immediacy – as the platform used to organize the posts in reverse chronological order, showing first the most recent tweets to all users, favoring its real-time aspect – and for the maximum size of tweets – which could not be longer than one hundred forty characters, including spaces and punctuation. Every post from the profiles controlled by the actors from *Such Tweet Sorrow* adhere to this rule. Twitter's interface is not dissimilar from the way dramas are commonly displayed on printed pages, not only because of its chronological arrangement and fragmentation, but due to the fact that the author's name is always displayed close to each post on the platform, as if a dialogue in a play. The author's profile image also accompanies each tweet.

The profile images can be selected when users create their accounts on Twitter – but can be changed at any time – and the visual images that were chosen to represent each character play a meaningful part in *Such Tweet Sorrow*. Each profile features a photograph of the RSC actor who interpreted that corresponding character. Juliet's picture, for instance, shows a white teenager with brown eyes, long, layered, light brown hair with eyebrow-length bangs, and a large smile showing her tongue and white teeth. She wears a white shirt with a black small print. Over her shoulder, a black shoulder strap of her underwear. Many elements of that photograph – smile, bangs, white shirt – highlight her naivete, but the black bra strap contributes to the idea she constantly reinforces to her family, friends, and Twitter followers: she is no longer a child[23]. On the other hand, Romeo is shown as a blond teenager with light blue eyes and medium untidy hair. He wears a red and black patterned shirt. His expression is stern. Older and more serious than Juliet, the prevalence of red in his picture can be interpreted as a warning sign of sorts. The profile images, repeatedly shown to the audience alongside each tweet posted by the actors interpreting these characters, accentuate some of their qualities and contribute to how Juliet, Romeo, and the others, were perceived by the audience.

In terms of language, the way *Such Tweet Sorrow* adapted the dramatic text of *Romeo and Juliet* to the user conventions of Twitter has already been noted. In "Social Shakespeare:

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[23] See the following tweets from @julietcap16: <https://twitter.com/julietcap16/status/13716614395>, <https://twitter..com/julietcap16/status/13422024271>, <https://twitter.com/julietcap16/status/13604295049>, and <https://twitter.com/julietcap16/status/13496750134>.

Romeo and Juliet, Social Media, and Performance," Geoffrey Way discusses performances in social media, giving prominence to the fact that social media platforms "develop their own specific sets of user practices" (WAY, 2011, p. 402). In *Such Tweet Sorrow*, the experience of having Twitter as a stage allowed for the direct interaction between the audience and the actors tweeting as the characters. Further, the authors and actors made a linguistic approximation between Shakespearean drama and the contemporary audience, adapting to the conventions of the platform they chose to use. As Way puts it, "the performance embraced the site's user conventions, and provided the means for the audience to participate actively in the production" (WAY, 2011, p. 412). Thus, no additional effort was required from the audience, "the characters made it easy for the audience to participate, as users did not have to adapt their dialogue to match those of the characters since the characters had already adapted their dialogue to the conventions of Twitter" (WAY, 2011, p. 411). That being so, those who replied to the tweets could be unceremonious, as if they were tweeting to a friend. Among the set of user practices related to language embraced by *Such Tweet Sorrow* is the use of abbreviations and hashtags. Initialisms, such as LOL – laughing out loud[24], FFS – for fucks sake [25], WTF – what the fuck[26], OMG – oh my god[27], and others, were vastly used in the production. The reason why acronyms are ubiquitous on Twitter is evident, especially in 2010, when tweets were still limited to one hundred and forty characters: one must be breviloquent when using the platform, and the use of initialisms can shorten the messages with no compromise to meaning. The same can be said about other abbreviations. Many are the tweets in which one or more words are shortened. In just one tweet, for example, Romeo used six different abbreviations: "Tybalt i will not fight you.if i see u 2moz then im gna turn round and walk the other way.u obv dont understand how i feel!!" (ROMEO, 2010b), besides "I am" and "do not", he abbreviates "you" (u), "tomorrow" (2moz), "going to" (gna), and "obviously" (obv). Moreover, the acronyms and abbreviations convey a sense of authenticity, as these are distinguishing characteristics of the linguistic variation used among teenagers on digital platforms and, mostly, *Such Tweet Sorrow* is a representation of communication among adolescents.

Furthermore, when tweeting as the characters, the actors adopted the use of hashtags, which were popular among Twitter users in 2010. Hashtags are metadata tags that can be created when publishing any word or combination of words preceded by a hash sign (#) to a

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[24] See the following tweet from @julietcap16: <https://twitter.com/julietcap16/status/12688733701>
[25] See the following tweet from @tybalt_cap: <https://twitter.com/tybalt_cap/status/12232499620>
[26] See the following tweet from @mercuteio: <https://twitter.com/mercuteio/status/12723492966>
[27] See the following tweet from @jess_nurse: <https://twitter.com/jess_nurse/status/12590048188>

social media platform. Usually, people commenting about the same media product, event, software, celebrity, or other common interest, use the same hashtag. On Twitter, all posts that feature identical hashtags are grouped; if one wishes to find people posting about one subject, one can click on that specific hashtag and access a collection of posts. Among many hashtags used by Tybalt, for example, are both #TeamCapulet[28], encouraging the audience to participate in the production, and also stimulating them to signal their support to the Capulet family, and #bukowski[29], grouping the Charles Bukowski's quotes Tybald posted with extracts by the same author shared by other users. Besides the hashtags proposed in the characters' tweets, some of the audience created their own hashtags, the best example being the #savemercutio[30], which was used by those who wanted to save the well-liked character from his tragic death. As Mercutio, the actor even addressed the campaign, "[j]ust seen the #savemercutio - ha, what's the worry? Tybalt isn't going to whoop my ass at Ping Pong - I have a few tricks up my sleeve" (MERCUTIO, 2010), although, without hindsight of his impending death, he associated the campaign with the table tennis tournament organized by Laurence. Therefore, hashtags were used as a reproduction of the regular use in this platform, but also to encourage engagement, and to address points made by the audience.

In conclusion, *Such Tweet Sorrow* explored many features of Twitter as a main stage for performance. It embraced its brevity, as at that time tweets were limited to one hundred and forty letters, and used the profile images to shape how the audience perceived each character. As the platform allows for real-time two-way communication, more than spectators of a creative reenactment of *Romeo and Juliet*, the audience was encouraged to take part. The author and actors made the effort of adapting the Shakespearean play script to the current Twitter language, including initialisms and other abbreviations, making the audience interaction effortless. In this manner, there was no need for the audience to change their language register to match the characters. The use of hashtags was embraced and #savemercutio, spontaneously created by the audience, was acknowledged by the actors. Following, after diving into the ways Twitter was used as the main stage for this performance, the next section focuses on the side stages used by *Such Tweet Sorrow*.

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[28] See the following tweet from @tybalt_cap: <https://twitter.com/tybalt_cap/status/12415515148>
[29] See the following tweet from @tybalt_cap: <https://twitter.com/tybalt_cap/status/12186400625>
[30] See the following tweets from @cmcardle and @anoir_cat:
<https://twitter.com/CMcArdle/status/13062654664>, <https://twitter.com/anoir_cat/status/13314535996>

4.1.3 Side Stages

In 2010, Twitter only supported written text, therefore, it was not possible to post photographs, videos, or audio files directly on Twitter's feed. For that reason, when the actors wanted to share photos or videos of their characters, they resorted to platforms that supported different media formats such as TwitPic[31] for static visual media, YouTube for moving audiovisual media, or AudioBoo[32] for auditory media products. Juliet and Mercutio are the characters that most appeared outside Twitter. For instance, during the second week, Juliet tweeted about composing songs. Soon, the audience started asking her to sing for them. Charlotte Wakefield, as Juliet, recorded and published a video singing on a YouTube channel created specifically for the character. Other videos on Juliet's YouTube channel include a "bedroom tour" – a genre of videos in which people, mostly girls, show their bedroom appliances, beautiful or curious objects they keep, tell stories, and promote the stores where they bought their goods – and a vlog in which she recounts details about the first night she spent with Romeo. Mercutio, on the other hand, used YouTube to share short vlogs and TwitPic for what was called "Upload That Load".

Upload that Load is the name of Mercutio and Romeo's politically incorrect habit of posting cleavage pictures of unwarned women. In an interview, Ashton states that it was "very hard work as an actor trying to get those pictures", and answers about the source of the pictures he shared on Mercutio's page.

> "Pretty much all of them were friends of mine. I asked if they minded showing a bit of cleavage and they were fine with it," he explains. "Maybe there were a couple that were sneaky upload that loads, just so I could get the feel of it, the pressure of whether I would get caught and things like that. But most of them, yeah they were friends." (ASHTON, 2010)

Thus, according to Ashton, there is at least one woman who did not consent to having a picture of her body posted online, but was nevertheless made part of *Such Tweet Sorrow*. Even though one can argue that sharing intimate pictures of women online is likely how Shakespeare's Mercutio would behave if he had access to a smartphone with internet access, it was a violation of these women's rights. Despite the controversy, "Upload that Load" was a great success among some audience members, who even submitted their own entries to the hashtag #uploadthatload. TwitPic was discontinued in 2017 – when support for photos was

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[31] A website that allowed users to share visual media on Twitter, it was discontinued after Twitter implemented visual media within its platform.
[32] A smartphone application used for sharing auditory media.

implemented to Twitter, the platform became obsolete – and it is no longer possible to access the photos that once were uploaded to the platform. To this day, all the tweets featuring the hashtag #uploadthatload are references to *Such Tweet Sorrow* and Mercutio.

Furthermore, there is even a secondary character whose preferred medium is not Twitter, but Tumblr[33]. Different from the six Twitter profiles used by the other characters of the play, Jago Mosca's relation to *Such Tweet Sorrow* – and thus his status as a fictional character – is overtly announced on the About section of his blog: the page features a link to the adaptation's webpage. Jago is not central to the narrative, but sort of an "easter egg" in software lingo: a nonessential secret feature that delights those who discover it. Named after the antagonist in Shakespeare's *Othello, Such Tweet Sorrow*'s Jago also takes on an antagonistic role in relation to both the Capulets and Montagues. The audience members who found his page were provided with a different perspective, as he puts it, "if you want to know what's really going on around here, if you want read between the lines, tune in to the gossip, catch a whiff of that stench coming up from the Capulet drains or fall down the gaps between the Montague tweets… I'm your boy" (JAGO, 2010a). He assumes the position of a correspondent, from the universe of the play informing those who are keeping up with the production. Jago is an outlier: he belongs to the diegesis – he is Juliet's classmate, but has no emotional proximity to any of *Such Tweet Sorrow*'s characters, "I see everything, but they don't see me. They don't know that I am a camera, a spy camera, a cold-eyed reporter, a magpie, a thief. A tea-leaf". (JAGO, 2010a) The fact that he even uses a different digital environment highlights his distanced and privileged position. Like the others, he is also a fictional character, but differently from them, he addresses the audience directly. Furthermore, Jago's presence in a different social medium works as a sort of advertisement, targeted at Tumblr's users who may be unaware of the production that is, mostly, taking place on Twitter.

Lastly, even the list of songs played during Juliet's birthday party was made public via Spotify[34] and Last.FM[35]. That being so, the character's development took place not only on Twitter, but in other social media as well. Because in 2010 Twitter support for media other than written text was limited, the actors resorted to other platforms to share videos and photos as their characters, nonetheless, the use of different social media was not restricted to bypassing the main stage's limitations. YouTube genres were incorporated, such as the bedroom tour, and Tumblr allowed for a different perspective hidden in plain sight.

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[33] A social media and microblogging platform.
[34] A subscription streaming service focused on music and podcast.
[35] A music website in which users can display their listening habits and musical tastes.

4.1.4 Transfer and Transformation

Romeo and Juliet, according to Jacques Derrida, are the "heroes of *contretemps* in our mythology" (DERRIDA, 1992, p. 417). In French, *contretemps* is a polysemous word. Derrida, thus, refers to the couple's inopportune situation – star-crossed lovers from families that bear an ancient grudge – and to the many circumstances in which Romeo and Juliet's timing diverged. Among all *contretemps*, there is one that seals the tragic heroes' fate: a letter that never arrives in Mantua. *Such Tweet Sorrow*, Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (1996), and *YOLO Juliet* (2015) are adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* that have communication as a theme. This section discusses how this failure of communication is represented in these adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet,* considering that all three bring the lovers to contemporary times.

Initially, it is appropriate to discuss the circumstances for the letter never arriving in the source medium. In the first scene of *Romeo and Juliet'*s fifth act, Balthasar, Romeo's servingman, arrives in Mantua. Disappointing Romeo, he does not carry a letter from the Friar: having witnessed Juliet's body in the Capulet's burial vault, Balthasar rushed to Mantua bringing news of her death (SHAKESPEARE, 2004, p. 212-213). In the following scene, Friar Lawrence learns that Friar John's order had been quarantined. Because a friar had visited the sick, all friars associated with him were held in isolation. John was supposed to deliver a letter to Romeo – explaining that Juliet is not dead – but never got to Mantua (SHAKESPEARE, 2004, p. 219). Knowing that the contents of that letter are of crucial importance, Lawrence goes directly to the Capulet's vault, nevertheless, when he arrives Romeo is already dead (SHAKESPEARE, 2004, p. 231). Had the stray letter arrived in Mantua, Romeo would know that Juliet was not dead, but only temporarily unconscious. Hence, in the source text, the star-crossed lovers' death is due to a letter that was not delivered.

One could expect, thus, that transposing *Romeo and Juliet* to contemporary times, in which letters are not the first option for urgent communication, would entail changes to the play's catastrophe. It is not the case for Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*. Albeit far from a critical consensus, it became one of the most well-known modernizations of *Romeo and Juliet.*

> [I]t does seem to be more or less acceptable to adapt *Romeo and Juliet* into a respected high art form, like an opera or a ballet, but not to make it into a movie, especially an updated one like Baz Luhrmann's (1996) *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*. If an adaptation is perceived as "lowering" a story (according to some imagined hierarchy of medium or genre), response is likely to be negative. (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 3)

Not only does Luhrmann update the Elizabethan playscript, but he transports it to a gang-dominated city. The intended audience for this adaptation was "attuned to MTV music videos and Hollywood action movies, and this change motivated his gangland setting and frenetic pace" (HUTCHEON, 2006, p. 146). Its visual and thematic affinity with the music video culture from the 1990s is striking. As Luhrmann puts it, "setting the story in the contemporary world of urban gangs allowed us to put Shakespeare's inventive usage [of language] to work as a dexterous and ornate street rap", not to transform his language, but to "reveal Shakespeare's lyrical, romantic, sweet, sexy, musical, violent, rude, rough, rowdy, rambunctious storytelling through his richly invented language" (BROOK et al., 1998, p. 48). Provocatively, the title of the film attributes this ingenious adaptation to William Shakespeare himself. Among *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* detractors is Franco Zeffirelli, who was nominated best director at the Academy Awards for his *Romeo and Juliet* (1968), and considers that updating *Romeo and Juliet* is not only unnecessary but an endeavor that may have an opposite effect,

> [w]hen you have the power of a character that surpasses contemporary dressing up and other references, I don't think you need to make that effort. Actually, it might misfire. The Luhrmann film didn't update the play, it just made a big joke out of it. But apparently the pseudo-culture of young people today wouldn't have digested the play unless you dressed it up that way, with all those fun and games (BROOK et al., 1998, p. 54)

To Zeffirelli, *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* does not take its source medium seriously, but makes a pastiche out of it. However, this adaptation is no accolade for the culture it represents. On the contrary, as Peter S. Donaldson puts it, Luhrmann constructed an "allegory of life under the regime of fetishized media spectacle" (DONALDSON, 2002, p. 77). This puts the 1996 film alongside many other film adaptations of Shakespeare's plays that are commentaries on media.

> Baz Luhrmann's film belongs with this group of Shakespeare films that make creative use of the present ferment in communications technologies and representational practices not only to attempt new interpretations of the plays but to explore our own rapidly shifting media landscape. His *Romeo + Juliet* is perhaps the most media-saturated of all Shakespeare films yet produced, with televisions on the beach and in the pool halls of its contemporary "Verona," and a kaleidoscopic succession of video, newspaper, and news magazine coverage replicating the details of the Capulet-Montague feud, all adding, as the slogan on a gas station sign proclaims, "more fuel to the fire" of the urban culture of violence that destroys the lovers. (DONALDSON, 2002, p. 61)

Luhrmann's adaptation is a commentary on the media landscape of the time it was produced. From the first to its last frame, media play a central role in this film. It starts and ends with the representation of a television set, in which the audience watches the news coverage of Romeo and Juliet's untimely deaths. Although contemporary media is central to this adaptation, Friar Lawrence's letter remains undelivered. In *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*, Laurence (Pete Postlethwaite) sends a letter to Mantua Outfields, a trailer park where Romeo (Leonardo DiCaprio) has been hiding, through an express service. The postman (Jorge Abraham) arrives but does not find Romeo, who is outside. He leaves a delivery notice at the door. Meanwhile, in Verona Beach, Balthasar (Jesse Bradford) sees a funeral for Juliet (Claire Danes) and drives to Mantua Outfields with news of her death. Romeo does not see the notice, which has fallen on the ground. The postman arrives for a new delivery attempt but sees Romeo and Balthasar leaving in a car. In the meantime, Laurence contacts the postal service and learns, through the phone, that the letter was not delivered. He decides to send a new letter. The audience is left to ask: why did not Laurence call Romeo, instead of calling the postal service? It may be that Mantua Outfields does not have a landline phone. A justification for Laurence's preference for letters does not come as easy in *YOLO Juliet*.

In 2015, an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* featuring digital communication was published by Random House. In *YOLO Juliet*, from "OMG Shakespeare Series", readers access a contemporary take on *Romeo and Juliet*, as if the play developed through digital messages, filled with emojis[36], printed in book format. YOLO is an internet slang acronym for "you only live once" – a *memento mori* in digital culture. YOLO has also been associated with the Latin aphorism *carpe diem* – one must seize their life, as it will be their only one. Therefore, the title reminds Juliet of the inevitability of death, but also invites her to live her life to its fullest. In *YOLO Juliet*, fifteen characters from *Romeo and Juliet* exchange messages, while eight other characters from the source medium, including the chorus, are introduced as "people w/o [without] smartphones" (SHAKESPEARE; WRIGHT, 2015, p. ii),

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[36] Emojis are standardized visual icons used in digital communication.

whom the readers of this adaptation will not meet. Although it is established from the beginning that all the central characters have and use smartphones, it is a stray letter that once again brings *YOLO Juliet* to a tragic conclusion. Following closely the structure of the source medium, in the first scene of *YOLO Juliet*'s fifth act, Romeo receives a message from Balthasar, informing him of Juliet's death (SHAKESPEARE; WRIGHT, 2015, p. 82). In the following scene, Laurence discovers that the letter he sent through Father John does not reach Romeo because John had been in quarantine (SHAKESPEARE; WRIGHT, 2015, p. 85). Without the letter, Romeo does not know that Juliet's unconsciousness is temporary, and part of a plan Laurence had architected with her. Laurence goes to Juliet's tomb to meet with Romeo, but when he arrives Romeo is already dead. Even though the writing style undergoes massive transformation – Laurence's reaction upon learning that the letter never reached Romeo is "[h]oly 💩!" (SHAKESPEARE; WRIGHT, 2015, p. 85) – the overall plot is almost identical.

In *YOLO Juliet*, electronic text messages were employed for their appeal to teenagers. It is not a coincidence that these three adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* were explicitly targeted at this audience. In relation to Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968), Thomas Leitch states,

> [t]he first Shakespearean adaptation, and one of the first films, to be marketed specifically to a niche audience of young viewers. The casting of Olivia Hussey and Leonard Whiting, young enough to be the children of the stars (Norma Shearer and Leslie Howard) who had played the lovers in 1936, was specifically intended to lure teenagers into the theater and helped establish a genre—the teenpic, the movie designed to appeal to teens—that has become the single dominant genre in Hollywood (LEITCH, 2007, p. 102).

For decades, the star-crossed lovers' appeal to teenagers has been used commercially. In *YOLO Juliet*, the incorporation of electronic text messages enhances the allure of this play. However, the direct implication of introducing digital communication to the diegesis of *Romeo and Juliet* was neglected. In these scenes, there is a striking difference when compared with the source medium. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Balthasar is able to reach Romeo because he goes to Mantua, but Lawrence's letter cannot reach him because John was quarantined, and never leaves Verona. In *YOLO Juliet*, Balthasar is able to communicate with Romeo through electronic text messages. Why can not Laurence do the same? Sending a letter to a character who can be reached through his smartphone requires justification, but none was given. *Romeo and Juliet*'s *contretemps* are a challenge for adaptations that incorporate digital communication, and even more challenging for literature-to-social-media adaptations, which

incorporate Shakespeare's play into the actual environment where communication happens in real time.

In *Such Tweet Sorrow*, another aspect of digital communication challenged the verisimilitude of *Romeo and Juliet*'s *contretemps*: tweets are not only instantaneous but also public – the reason why Twitter worked as a stage for this production was that the audience could read the messages exchanged between the characters of the play. *Such Tweet Sorrow* creatively adapted miscommunication to digital communication. On May 10th, Romeo, hiding from the police, tweets to Juliet about turning off his phone, "@julietcap16 i need to turn my phone off,apparently the cops might b able to track me.I love you with all my heart,we'll be together soonxxx" (ROMEO, 2010a). On the same day, Juliet asks for Laurence's help to reunite with Romeo, and escape her father's plan to move the family to Australia. Laurence elaborates a plan and posts "poem for j." on his personal website, an acrostic poem that spells out the word "propofol",

> Perhaps if your love died
> Romeo would not despair
> Once the milk of amnesia
> Played its part there
> On the shelf in my domain
> Find a way to take it down
> One day's sleep will certain mean
> Love stays in this town (FRIAR, 2010).

Juliet deciphers Laurence's message: he prepared "milk of amnesia" – the popular name for propofol, a drug used to induce general anesthesia – for her and left it in his flat. It is noteworthy that, in order to avoid having his message to Juliet intercepted, Laurence not only used poetic language but also an entirely different platform to communicate with her. Thus, the fact that digital communication may happen over multiple channels was used to enhance the sense of privacy in this exchange. Laurence's website has less exposure than Twitter. After understanding Laurence's message, to avoid raising suspicion, Juliet apologizes to her family over Twitter, and pretends to be excited about moving to Australia[37]. The next day, she goes alone to Laurence's flat and drinks the propofol. Laurence is traveling, and his attempts to communicate his plan to Romeo are in vain. Therefore, when Romeo finds Juliet unconscious on May 12th, the audience knows that Laurence could not reach him because he turned off his phone, with the intention of evading police tracking. Thus, *Such Tweet Sorrow* reasonably

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[37] See the following tweet from @julietcap16: <https://twitter.com/julietcap16/status/13750031543>.

justified Romeo, while fleeing from the police, becoming inaccessible by phone and social media.

If the mythology of *Romeo and Juliet* is deeply connected to the *contretemps*, and the play's catastrophe is a consequence of a letter not arriving at its addressee in a timely manner, an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* to contemporaneity entails transformation: a media-specific characteristic of digital communication is that it affords instant communication. In *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*, Laurence's choice of sending an express letter is reasonable – the audience has no reason to believe that Romeo's trailer in Mantua Outfilds has a landline. On the other hand, it can be argued that, in *YOLO Juliet*, Laurence's attempt to send Romeo a letter is an anachronism used to enhance the comical traits of *Romeo and Juliet*, in order to transform the source playscript into a media product that is more pleasant to teenagers. However, by reproducing Laurence's stray letter without any variation, *YOLO Juliet* missed the opportunity of exploring ways of miscommunicating in digital media, which could make the play more relatable to its audience. Contrarily, *Such Tweet Sorrow* recognized *Romeo and Juliet*'s *contretemps* as an opportunity to put communication at the center of this production. As Maurizio Calbi puts it, "[t]he final phases of the performance exploit to the full the dramatic possibilities of the inability and/or unwillingness to access Twitter: the characters switch to an offline mode that alternates with a being online as intermittent access and/or distracted perception." (CALBI, 2013, p. 159). Hence, miscommunication becomes a central theme for this adaptation. *Such Tweet Sorrow* makes explicit that using social media does not guarantee communicative success. Appropriating Royle, there is a "(tragic, comic, ironic, and above all necessary) possibility" that a social media post "can always not reach its destination" (apud DERRIDA, 1992, p. 419).

4.2 *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries premiered on YouTube on April 9, 2012, and the last regular episode was exhibited on March 28, 2013. Developed by Hank Green and Bernie Su, this production brings Jane Austen's characters from *Pride and Prejudice* to contemporary times. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is the first of five adaptations produced by Pemberley Digital, a company founded in 2012, that specialized in the "adaptation of classic works onto the new media format" (PEMBERLEY, 2022a). It is composed of a series of a hundred video diaries presented by Ashley Clements as Lizzie Bennet, along with other sixty videos – which were posted on YouTube from April 9, 2012, to June 10, 2014. The full cast is composed of

twelve actors playing the twelve characters that appear on the screen. This production has drawn critical praise: in 2013, it received the Primetime Emmy Award for "Outstanding Creative Achievement in Interactive Media", becoming the first audiovisual production for YouTube to win an Emmy award.

However, the videos are only a part of this multimedia adaptation, which includes a series of social media posts on Twitter and Tumblr, in which the audience could "[s]ee the story through different points of views" (PEMBERLEY, 2022b), and other platforms such as Lookbook.nu[38] and LinkedIn[39]. Furthermore, the universe of this adaptation is expanded in two books: *The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet,* published in 2014, and *The Epic Adventures of Lydia Bennet,* in 2015.

4.2.1 Plot

From the beginning of the very first video, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* evinced its close but creative relation with Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Lizzie Bennet (Ashley Clements), a 24-years old graduate student in mass communication, holds a shirt with the famous first line from *Pride and Prejudice*, "[i]t is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (AUSTEN, 2007 [1813], p. 3). She complains to her internet audience about her mom, who is obsessed with having her sisters, Jane (Laura Spencer), Lydia (Mary Kate Wiles), and herself married to affluent men[40]. The older sister, Jane, works in the fashion industry, is responsible and pleasant. The younger, Lydia, is a college student, feisty and outgoing. When Lizzie starts recording her diaries, a medical student from the upper class, Bing Lee (Christopher Sean), has just arrived in town, and he soon starts to date Jane. Through her sister, Lizzie meets some of Lee's acquaintances: his sister Caroline Lee (Jessica Andres) and his successful friend William Darcy (Daniel Vincent Gordh), who she finds insufferable[41]. Lydia invites Lizzie to a pub, where they meet some swimmers who are in town for a tournament – they meet George Wickham (Wes Aderhold), who Lizzie starts to date. As the vlog starts to gain some notoriety, Lizzie travels with her best friend and partner on vlogging, Charlotte Lu (Julia Cho), to Los Angeles to attend VidCon – an online video conference, where they meet Ricky Collins

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[38] A platform for sharing fashion photography.
[39] A social media platform focused on professional networking.
[40] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KisuGP2lcPs>
[41] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #6: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Lmo22HWhbM>

(Maxwell Glick), a childhood friend who, as they learn, has a company – Collins & Collins – in the business of online video[42].

Simultaneously, it starts to become clear to the audience that the Bennets' are financially endangered. It is mentioned, for instance, that Mrs. Bennet is leaving the house at dawn in order not to be seen using food coupons[43]. Furthermore, Lizzie mentions that she fears the family may lose their home, as they had made a second mortgage. In this context, Mrs. Bennet concocts a convoluted plan: she will be remodeling the house for sale, forcing the family out of their home. She hopes that Bing Lee may invite Jane to stay at his house, Netherfield, with Caroline, Darcy, and himself[44]. Exceeding expectations, Bing invites Jane and Lizzie to stay at Netherfield. During her time there, Lizzie plans to record her vlog in secret, but she soon learns that Caroline, who promises to keep the secret, already knows that she keeps a vlog[45]. They stay for a month, during which Jane and Bing deepen their connection. Not only that, but Lizzie also starts noticing that Darcy, whose confidence she learns to admire, often gazes at her. Estranged from her sisters' new social circle, Lydia befriends her cousin, Mary Bennet (Briana Cuoco), with whom she is staying, and starts shooting her own vlog: *The Lydia Bennet*[46].

Their arrival back home is inaugurated by a dinner with Ricky Collins, who discovers the video diaries and offers Lizzie a position at Collins & Collins. Even though the offer is generous, she declines[47]. Hence, Ricky approaches Charlotte Lu with a similar offer, who accepts it – the Lus are in debt, and the offer is indeed lucrative. Lizzie is heartbroken with the departure of her partner, and claims that Charlotte is "selling out". Lydia applies for Lu's position in the vlog, but Lizzie makes it clear that she would rather work alone than with her younger sister[48].

Lizzie learns that the swimmer she's been dating, George Wickham, has a complicated past with William Darcy. According to him, William never fulfilled his father's promise of paying for George's education. Lizzie sides with Wickham, and starts doubting Bing Lee's integrity by being affiliated with people such as Darcy. The next event that moves the plot is the surprise party Caroline throws for her brother. Lizzie invites George to accompany her to Lee's party, but he leaves her waiting. Moreover, after the party, Jane and Bing start drifting

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[42] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #25: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hU6nVwRPcp8>
[43] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #19: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ce_URjhJ3Xs>
[44] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #26: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xl1iL3vGyNI>
[45] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #27: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nabp4vu_kv0>
[46] See Lydia #1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0H8WdGdxS8>
[47] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #40: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRR6Ft4uWLI>
[48] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #43: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfNWPJsYQaE>

apart: she discovers via Twitter that he is staying in Los Angeles. The older Bennet pretends not to be flustered by Lee's rebuff, but nevertheless, gets a job transfer and also moves to Los Angeles[49].

Lizzie realizes everyone she loves has left the town. Meanwhile, Maria Lu (Janice Lee) shows Lizzie's vlog episode entitled "Missing Charlotte" to her sister, who calls Lizzie and invites her over for a visit at Collins & Collins. There, Lizzie meets Darcy and his friend, Fitzwilliam (Craig Frank). Fitz learns about Lizzie's vlog, and she asks him to keep it a secret from his friend – her comments about Darcy have not been flattering. Fitz tells Lizzie that Darcy can be a great friend, and gives an example: Bing Lee was dating a girl that was just interested in his money, and Darcy advised him. Lizzie infers that Fitz is unknowingly referring to her sister, Jane[50].

In a turn of events, Darcy, not knowing about Lizzie's conversation with his friend, goes to visit her, and barges into a recording session of the vlog. Darcy surprises Lizzie with a declaration of love and learns that the feelings are not mutual[51]. Lizzie questions his attitude towards Jane. He explains that he has seen with his own eyes Jane "engaging with another man", and from that point, he has doubted Jane's long-term faith in that relationship. In turn, Lizzie tells about George Wickham's struggle and ends the conversation saying that Darcy is arrogant, proud, selfish, and the last man she "could ever fall in love with". He apologizes for causing her pain but says he was unaware of her feelings. Moved by anger, she asks: "Then, why don't you watch my videos?" (THE LIZZIE, 2012a). Following, Darcy watches her vlogs and writes a letter explaining himself. After reading, Lizzie considers the possibility of being exceedingly harsh on him, but does not share the letter on the vlog, and concludes that if he wanted it to be public he would "just tweet it"[52]. She eventually reveals to her audience that, according to Darcy, Wickham received the college money his father promised him, but spent it partying[53].

Lydia's birthday comes – and is celebrated with four nights of parties. Lizzie tells Lydia she needs to become a "mature, responsible adult" and that it would be good for her not to be "energetic all the time". As a response, Lydia records and shares a video entitled "Dear Lizzie" her own channel, listing all the reasons why her sister is the one Bennet who needs some changing[54]. From that point on, the sisters choose to go different routes. Lizzie moves to

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[49] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #49: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2EPa9-8kuU>.
[50] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #58: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LuPegu56xrY>.
[51] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #60: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZqL4ux1Yq0>.
[52] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #62: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTS60Gll1HQ>
[53] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #68: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRmtO2R4IIQ>
[54] See Lydia "Dear Lizzie": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryXOrkSkaeQ>

San Francisco to visit a company with a name that sounds familiar to her: Pemberley Digital[55], while Lydia goes to Las Vegas for the New Year's Eve[56]. At Pemberley, Lizzie learns why the business' name sounds familiar: without knowing, she is at the headquarters of Darcy's company. From her very first day, she befriends his sister, Georgiana Darcy (Allison Paige) – who already knows Lizzie from her vlogs. Bing Lee visits his friend's office and asks Lizzie if Jane is still single[57]. Moreover, Gigi Darcy decides to share a story on the vlog: she had been in a relationship with George Wickham, who used her and financially exploited her family[58]. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to her sister, Lydia has started dating and is living with Wickham. Lydia records and posts video diaries alongside George[59].

The next time Lizzie hears news of her younger sister is through Charlotte: George has posted a link for a subscription-based website selling a sex tape of Lydia, and they learn that the tape will be released in four days. Lizzie goes home to talk with her sister. She discovers that Lydia did not consent to having an intimate video posted online. Jane is also home and has resigned from her job to be closer to their sister[60]. The Darcy siblings are aware of the situation and get involved. Even though Gigi promises her brother that she will not step in, because of her past with George, she gets his number from Fitz and calls him[61]. In order to accept Gigi's call, he downloads an app developed by Pemberley Digital, allowing Darcy's team to have access to his personal data[62]. Darcy uses this information to identify the company that has been hosting Lydia's tape, preventing its release. The problem is solved, but Darcy has no intention of telling the Bennet Sisters that he is the one responsible for this.

Following, Bing Lee watches Lizzie's vlog and learns of the Jane's true feelings. They decide to give their relationship a second chance[63]. Lydia finds out that Darcy was responsible for buying the company that owned the website that was selling her intimate video and taking it down. Lizzie is grateful, but Darcy says that her family owes him no thanks. In a frank conversation, the leading couple discusses their feelings and decides to start a romantic relationship[64]. When talking about their future, Darcy offers Lizzie a job at Pemberley Digital, but she declines. Instead of being "the girl who dates the boss", Lizzie decides to be her boyfriend's competitor in San Francisco. After all, she has already created a business plan for

[55] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #76: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69g6ANxq0eg>
[56] See Lydia #20: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NL6rSVCTXAo>
[57] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #81: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SByg6RiLCZ4>
[58] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #82: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3nUxHf-BuM>
[59] See Lydia #27: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzD9WvxQLbc>
[60] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #86: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_nAjTphbzA>
[61] See Domino #4: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ksjeqs_IqMk>
[62] See Domino #5: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5przNqJOQrU>
[63] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #92: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTD2Fz-p048>
[64] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #98: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ncnZjwF50k>

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries as a startup company[65]. After all, Lizzie records one last vlog, saying that she is ready to move to the next chapter in her life[66].

4.2.2. The Main Stage: YouTube

Founded in 2005, YouTube is, from its beginning, a platform where any person can make audiovisual media products available to a general audience, free of charge. Since 2006, the platform has been owned by Google, and at the time of writing, it is the second most visited website in the world (STATISTA, 2022). The platform is extremely diverse, and due to its outstanding popularity, some audiovisual genres have flourished, such as vlogs. In this section, the focus is on YouTube as a stage for performance; the goal is to elucidate *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries'* approach to vlogging and how the dramatic device of a play-within-a-play is featured in this production.

Mainly, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is a collection of vlogs, and its characters are conscious of it. Unlike most narratives, in which characters are unaware of the fact that they are part of a story being told. In this production, Lizzie Bennet and Charlotte Lu are well aware of the fact that they are part of a story, and Lizzie is also conscious that she is the narrator of the story being told through their vlog. She is even aware that people are watching her: she repeatedly thanks people for watching her video diaries. In many instances, the characters address the expectations and reactions of the audience in relation to themselves or other characters. Thus, Lizzie comments about how the audience is impatient to see Darcy's face and has loved seeing Wickham shirtless. Furthermore, not only are most characters aware that they are part of a vlog, but the production also seems self-conscious of what a vlog entails.

Considering the centrality of vlogging for *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, the concept of "vlog" now requires closer examination. For instance, the term is polysemantic, and it can be used with flexible or strict meanings,

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[65] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #99: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTRvvJe9rPA>
[66] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #100: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kh5AcIAP6iU>

> [w]ith regard to both form and content, the term vlog has been used ambiguously and can refer to the style of the earliest videos uploaded to YouTube, to videos on social media which more generally showcase personal content, or to any video which is produced by individuals or groups located outside the traditional media. Most often, however, vlog refers to a video in which a content creator speaks directly to the camera, making a seemingly personal, sincere, authentic and direct address to the followers of a channel. (JENSEN; MOUSAVI; TORNBORG, 2022, p. 289)

In the context of this research, the word "vlog" has been used in its most strict sense: a genre of online videos, with specific qualities, in which a person is filmed while directly addressing their audience. Early vlogs, which started to gain popularity as soon as video hosting was made accessible by YouTube, were low-budget individual productions. Most of the early vlogs were recorded using improvised settings and lighting, cheap video cameras, and edited by untrained video editors using free editing software. Therefore, some of the same characteristics can be observed in many of those vlogs. For instance, it is typical for vlogs to be filmed using natural lighting coming from windows, with the vlogger's own bedroom as a setting, and using simple editing techniques – such as the "jump cut", which consists of a cut that eliminates all silences and hesitations from the vlogger's spontaneous speech, making the videos more dynamic. Another common trait of vlogging is having a friend or family member not only operating the video camera, but also serving as an interlocutor, who may be heard in dialogue with the vlogger, but usually does not appear on camera – a role that is played by Charlotte. Even though many of Austen's characters never made it to *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* – and two, Catherine (Kitty) Bennet and Anne de Bourgh, are only present as pets named after these characters – the cast is still large when compared to other literature-to-social-media adaptations. The production features a total of thirteen actors, but few are the occasions when there are more than two characters appearing simultaneously on screen, or even in different moments of the same video. Typically, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*' videos start and end with Lizzie sitting alone, talking directly to a static camera, set in front of her. However, in the middle of the episode, a character enters the scene and presents her with information or with a new perspective.

Even if the early aesthetics of vlogging were shaped by material conditions, it was soon observed how vlogs brought video makers closer to their audience, as Charlotte puts it in the eighth episode, "people like the DIY look, the video feels more authentic when it is not too polished" (THE LIZZIE, 2012c). Such a feeling of authenticity exists and is even exploited by the advertisement industry, which uses bloggers and vloggers' influence over their audience to boost marketing campaigns. Many aspects of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* are

references to vlogs as a media type. In front of the audience's eyes, the whole cinematography – framing, composition, angle, and lack of camera motion, is strikingly similar to mainstream vloggers. Behind the scenes, the production allegedly even used the same equipment used by many vloggers who, around 2012, were starting to professionalize their productions. The camera Charlotte supposedly operates is a Canon T2i, and the editing software she used is Final Cut Pro, both largely used by YouTube creators at the time *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* was produced. The source for the technical information is Charlotte's social media, as she was asked by a fan over Twitter[67] – an exchange that adds to the argument that this production perfectly mimics vlogging: curiosity about equipment and software is common among social media audiences. Furthermore, the edition of Lizzie's video diaries is filled with references to vlogging as a genre: not only is the jump-cut the prevailing editing technique employed, but also the camera operator, Charlotte, is known and voices her opinions even when she is not on camera. In terms of media, from the beginning, it is noticeable how Charlotte Lu embodies the self-referential aspect of this production[68]. Throughout the adaptation, she voices many concerns related to the mediality of their vlog, such as its video editing. She even expresses herself through some small interventions, such as refusing to delete parts of the vlogs that Lizzie straightway asks her to remove from the videos' final cuts, and dubbing her friend while she tells a story about her that she finds embarrassing[69].

Considering all this media consciousness and its mastery of video blogs as an audiovisual genre, it is no coincidence that one of the producers of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is Hank Green – an early and leading vlogger. In 2007, Hank started a vlog with his brother, John Green, when they decided that their main channel for communication would be the weekly videos they recorded for each other and made public through their YouTube channel. Since then, Green has grown to be a public voice for the vlogging community, creating the VidCon – which was attended by Lizzie and Charlotte in an episode of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* – and many audiovisual projects for science communication (GREEN, 2022).

Aside from the main diaries, there are two other vlogs, each posted on a different YouTube channel. The first is Lydia's *The Lydia Bennet*, created during the time Lizzie recorded from Bing Lee's house – until that point, Lydia would barge into her sister's room and use the main vlog to express her own perspective. The second, and shortest, is Maria Lu's, which was made when Charlotte stepped aside from Lizzie's vlog, assuming a

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[67] See the following tweet from @TheCharlotteLu:
<https://twitter.com/thecharlottelu/status/208626719719043073>.
[68] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Yq7aJ2uVBg>
[69] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #5: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vV3JJUpwC40>

partnership at Rick Collins' company. In terms of production value, these secondary vlogs are opposites. On the one hand, Lydia's is an overtly low-budget production, recorded by a handheld camera, with poor sound quality, in outside locations with minimal editing. On the other hand, *Maria Lu* was co-created by Charlotte, and recorded using Collins & Collins infrastructure. While the central characteristic of Lydia's channel is its spontaneity, Maria Lu's videos are practically institutional. However, both productions accomplished the purpose of developing secondary characters. The plot of the younger Bennet goes from peripheral to central: in her vlog, the audience can watch the abusive dynamics of George Wickham's relationship with Lydia, even before the sexual abuse scandal turns into the climax of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries'* plot. In turn, the younger Lu is a minor character until the end, but the vlog allows her the privileged position of being an outsider who is simultaneously part of the narrative: she watches the Bennet family's drama from the front seat. She watches Lizzie's videos and discusses them with her own audience, putting them alongside other media products she is a fan of, such as *Doctor Who*. The existence of a vlog within the story allows for other secondary characters to assume a position that is similar to Maria's, such as Fitz Williams and Gigi Darcy. Over Twitter, Fitz and Gigi would frequently comment about the most recent video posted by Lizzie – sometimes suggesting that they have privileged information unbeknownst to the audience, and even celebrate when the leading couple makes amends.

Ten of the videos uploaded to *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries'* YouTube channel are different from the rest, because they belong to a known subgenre of vlog called "Questions and Answers" (Q&A). In these videos, the characters answer comments sent via YouTube or social media. As indicated by the name, these are videos in which the vlogger answers some of the audience's questions. Q&As function not only as character development (e.g. addressing their favorite authors, plans for the future, etc.) but are also used to address matters that may be bothering the audience. For instance, in the first Q&A video, published on May 5, Lizzie faces some harsh criticism: "Lydia is excitable, inexperienced, and easily led astray. That, to me, says 'party girl' more than 'slut'. Lizzie, your college education is making you a tad judgemental or preparing you for a career on Fox". Lizzie promptly defends herself, saying that she is "not opposed to responsible, smart, safe women doing whatever they like in the bedroom with whomever they like" and she adds that hopes her sister "becomes one of those women", meaning that her problem is that Lydia is neither responsible, nor smart, nor concerned with safety (THE LIZZIE, 2012d). In that way, even though the vlog series follows a script, the audience's apprehensions could be acknowledged and addressed, when necessary.

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries is the only work discussed in this research that is not an adaptation from Shakespeare; it is, however, the only media product that actually engages with one of Shakespeare's favorite dramatic devices: the play-within-a-play. In fact, this device is crucial to *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries.* As mentioned, vlogs are an audiovisual genre that follows some conventions: one of these conventions regarding storytelling is that vloggers both tell *and* show events to their audiences. Because it is a vlog-like production, with a handful of actors and settings, many central events to the narrative, such as the parties, do not fit the characteristics of the target medium. The play-within-a-play fill in the gaps, and *shows* the audience things that had happened between episodes of the vlog, through short performances.

Differently from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* for example, there is no theater troupe enacting from within *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*' diegesis: the characters themselves interpret other characters for the vlog, using as their costumes some remarkable pieces of clothing and objects, such as hats, kerchiefs, glasses, and a pipe[70] – each representing a different character. For instance, every time Lizzie interprets her mother, she uses a blue hat, some pearl jewelry, and puts a colored kerchief on top of her regular clothing[71]. Although there is an improvisational and unprofessional aspect in these plays-within-a-play, this aspect is illusory. Due to this adaptation not really being a low-budget vlog produced by a graduate student, but an adaptation made by professionals emulating a homemade vlog.

Furthermore, these plays-within-a-play work as parodies, when introducing to the contemporary audience elements of the universe of *Pride and Prejudice* that sound antiquated for the historical context of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. The caricatural tone used by the characters shortens the historical distance between the time of production of the source medium and the time of reception of its adaptation. For instance, it is Lizzie dressed as her sister who tells the audience that Jane Bennet is thinking about marrying Bing Lee – a man she just met – even though Jane herself is also present in this vlog. The information of this sudden plan for marriage, as present in Jane Austen's novel, is still present in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, but is soothed by the parodical tone.

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[70] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #7: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SPDX0rOuds>
[71] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KisuGP2lcPs>

4.2.3 Side Stages

Digital platforms turned into side stages for *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* are abundant. As mentioned in the previous section, YouTube vlog channels are its main stage; however, a different variety of channels were also used by the cast and team behind this production, including those created for Ricky Collins' and William Darcy's businesses. Moreover, websites and social media platforms also play a role in expanding and enhancing the universe of the Bennet sisters living in the contemporary world.

On YouTube, vlogs commanded by other characters, and channels that are more institutional-like, are also part of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries.* As mentioned in the previous section, Lizzie is not the only vlogger in her social group: Lydia and Maria Lu also have their own vlogs. Besides, Collins and Collins and Pemberley Digital, fictional companies that are part of the plot, also have their dedicated YouTube channels. The channel of Ricky Collins' company plays a very minor part in the story, mostly used to host parody videos from a series called "Better Living with Collins and Collins", which are comic tutorials for mundane things, such as how to use a light switch, how to wear sunglasses, among others. Pemberley Digital's channel, on the other hand, plays a significant part. It was promoted as an environment in which Gigi Darcy would demonstrate the functionalities of Domino – Pemberley's video recording app. However, it is through this channel that the audience follows the Darcy siblings' investigation of George Wickham. Later, this same channel was used as a stage for the subsequent adaptations produced by Pemberley Digital – the actual company that shares the name with the fictional one. The following productions include *Sanditon* – a spin-off led by Gigi Darcy, reimagining Austen's unfinished novel with the same name – and adaptations of other classic works, such as Austen's *Emma* and Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

The online presence of both businesses is not limited to YouTube, but it expands over websites. Collins and Collins' web page is currently offline, but during the time it was online, collinsncollins.com mimicked a small company's website[72]. Divided into four sections, it featured a page with their contact information, which linked to Ricky Collins and Charlotte Lu's Twitter profiles, a section providing some background information about the company and its services, one in which news about the Collins and Collins and its team were shared and, lastly, a section with blatantly fake testimonials from former clients.

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[72] See: <https://web.archive.org/web/20121214214636/http://www.collinsncollins.com/>.

On the contrary, Pemberley Digital's website[73] – an equally fictional business – builds the image of a highly successful company, filled with employee perks. From a page that tells its history, the company is described as a San Francisco based facility that developed and financed film projects, founded in 1946 by William P. Darcy. He was succeeded by his son, who produced adaptations from Henry James short stories to television. In 1998, the company was rebranded as Pemberley Digital. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, Pemberley Digital worked on a digital video app technology, commanded by the founder's grandson and namesake, William F. Darcy. Perhaps, even greater than its history, are its facilities and amenities offered for its employees. The company campus includes a gym, massage therapy lounge, swimming pool, Japanese garden, ten napping pods, dining facility featuring the food of local chefs, and gourmet food trucks. A section of the website is dedicated to a memorial hall recently inaugurated, in memory of former CEO and CFO, Darcy's parents. The memorial contains "a world-class collection of modern art, a 300-seat performance space, a 150-seat movie theatre, conference rooms, and a top-floor greenhouse garden" (PEMBERLEY, 2012). The amenities include free laundry service, childcare, oil changes, and wide-ranging domestic partner benefits. Furthermore, the company's employees retain all rights to personal work developed on its campus. By the end of the performance, like Pemberley's YouTube channel, the website was also repurposed to host information regarding not only *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, but also the following adaptations produced by the same team.

Another website worth mentioning is lydiabennettape.com, a page illustrated by a sensual picture of the younger Bennet and George Wickham, which went online on January 30, announcing an intimate video of the "YouTube star Lydia Bennet" (LYDIA, 2013a), featuring a countdown to its release. Following an email address, where people interested in the video should sign up for the pre-order list, a warning that the interested must be over eighteen to sign up. On February 14, Darcy uncovered Wickham's scheme and arranged to make the tape unavailable, and the website was updated, "[w]e're sorry. Due to reasons beyond our control, we are no longer able to offer this product" (LYDIA, 2013b).

When social media is concerned, Twitter played the major part, as accounts on that platform were created for all characters who appear on video, plus one for Lydia's cat, Kitty[74]. Especially interesting is that, mostly, these profiles were used for commentary about the vlog and reflections about fiction. As Lizzie Bennet's video diaries are public not only for a

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[73] See: <https://web.archive.org/web/20131026155106/http://www.pemberleydigital.com/>
[74] See: <https://twitter.com/TheKittyBennet>

general audience, but also within the performance's diegesis, the characters commonly tweet about the videos published. For instance, when William Darcy learns about the vlog, he tweets, "[w]ell. Certain things are starting to make more sense" (DARCY, 2012), meaning that he has been watching the videos, considering Lizzie's perspective, and the reasons why she was apprehensive about him. This tweet, liked over three hundred times, and shared more than two hundred times, resonated with the audience, which could anticipate the reconciliation of the leading couple. Furthermore, there are even some publications made as if these fictional characters were reflecting on the nature of fiction. For instance, on October 27, Mary Bennet tweeted: "There's something to be said about investing yourself in fictional characters. They can't let you down when they don't know you exist" (BENNET, 2012). As Mary is an avid reader, this can be interpreted both ways: she may be addressing her own experience with reading when compared to her relationships to other people, but Mary can also be addressing some readers' posture towards *Pride and Prejudice*'s characters, as Mr. Darcy, who is loved by a share of Austen's readership and has been voted the fictional character most women would like to go on a date with (POTTER, 2004). There is one more possible interpretation: her tweet may concern *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*' own audience, which was getting invested in fictional characters, such as herself, albeit through social media.

Other platforms used by the cast and crew include Tumblr, Lookbook.nu, This is My Jam[75] and LinkedIn. For instance, Lydia's Tumblr[76] was mostly used for sharing photographs, links to her vlogs, and interacting with the audience. On the other hand, Lookbook.nu plays a part on Jane's plot: the job offer she accepts by the end of the performance comes from the looks she posted online[77], as she works in the fashion industry. Gigi Darcy uses This is My Jam to share her favorite songs with her followers, and during the time of performance, forty songs were shared[78]. It is also worth mentioning that a LinkedIn profile was created for the workaholic Ricky Collins[79].

4.2.4 Transfer and Transformation

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is "one of the most adapted of all novels" (CARTMELL, 2010, p. 3). As discussed before, Kate Newell suggests that some media

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[75] An extinct platform focused on music discovery, in which the users shared their favorite songs.
[76] See: <https://thelydiabennet.tumblr.com/>
[77] See: <https://lookbook.nu/looksbyjane>
[78] See: <https://www.thisismyjam.com/ggdarcy>
[79] See: <https://ca.linkedin.com/in/rick-collins-02171462>

products can be the source for many adaptations, giving origin to an adaptation network –
complexifying the idea that adaptation is a process involving a single source medium and a
single target medium. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is one more node in a complex network of
Austen's novel adaptations.

In its title, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* reveals not only a linkage to Austen's novel and
her heroine, Elizabeth Bennet, but also to Helen Fielding's epistolary novel *Bridget Jones's
Diary* (1998) and the novel-to-film adaptation *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001), by Sharon
Maguire. In Fielding's novel, the protagonist's romantic plotline is adapted from *Pride and
Prejudice* – the engagement with the source medium is evidentiated by Bridget Jones' love
interest's name: Darcy. The nature of Fielding's novel connection with *Pride and Prejudice* is
disputed. Thomas Leitch argues that it cannot be called an adaptation. Instead, Leitch refers to
this media product as an example of an "analogue".

> Still more tenuous in the connection it establishes with an earlier text is the
> analogue. In Helen Fielding's novel *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1998), the heroine, who
> is closer to her father than to her mother, has to choose between two suitors, her
> plausible boss Daniel Cleaver and barrister Mark Darcy. At first drifting into an
> affair with Daniel, she discovers his perfidy and ends up with Mark. All these are
> points of analogy with Elizabeth Bennet. Yet *Bridget Jones's Diary* is not an
> adaptation of Austen's novel, not even when it is filmed. Bridget, a neurotic loner
> who styles herself a career woman and whose closest friends are even odder than
> she, is remote from Lizzy in her trademark fixations: her weight, her sex life, her
> parents' and relatives' expectations of her (consistently more important to Bridget
> than Lizzy even though she lives on her own). The diary to which Bridget confides
> her story reveals her as savvy yet unperceptive about herself, witty, often acerbic, yet
> easily hooked by passing trends. She is less like Lizzy Bennet than like Emma
> Woodhouse or, for that matter, Cher Horowitz. If Bridget's need to choose between
> romantic partners who represent opposite ideals makes *Bridget Jones's Diary* an
> adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, then virtually the entire genre of female-oriented
> romance, especially the recent chick-lit explosion, has just as good a claim. Even
> Sharon Maguire's 2001 film—in which Fielding, as screenwriter, softened Bridget
> by making her less witty and more helpless, and Colin Firth's casting as Mark Darcy
> sharpened the evocation of the Mr. Darcy he had played in the 1995 television *Pride
> and Prejudice*— is an adaptation of Fielding's novel rather than Austen's. That does
> not mean that Fielding's novel and Maguire's film do not invoke Austen. But like
> Whit Stillman's *Metropolitan* (1990), which repeatedly and often explicitly invokes
> Mansfield Park without ever crossing the line to adaptation, both Fielding's novel
> and Maguire's film invoke Austen's characters, along with their world and their
> story, in such discontinuous, even episodic, terms that they are more properly
> considered analogues than adaptations. (LEITCH, 2007, p. 113)

Indeed, Bridget Jones is not Elizabeth Bennet and does not share many traits with Austen's
heroine. Nevertheless, Leitch understates the connection between both media products: the
love triangle is not all that makes Fielding's novel and Maguire's film part of *Pride and
Prejudice*'s adaptation network. In fact, it is revealing that Deborah Cartmell, who describes

the film *Bridget Jones's Diary* as a "loose adaptation" (CARTMELL, 2010, p. 5), indicates a different aspect from the source medium that is present in the film. Cartmell states,

> [t]he film's use of *Pride and Prejudice* is only apparent in the mother's addiction to matchmaking and the heroine's veiled confession about her fear of spinsterhood, visually offset by the Christmas setting, conveying to the audience that something good is about to happen. (CARTMELL, 2010, p. 53)

Namely, Cartmell highlights not only Bridget's dissatisfaction with being a single woman, but also sheds a light on the role of Bridget's mother, Pamela Jones, who shares Mrs. Bennet's fixation with marriage – adding to the list of similarities between both media products. In fact, Pamela Jones is a character of major importance, first mentioned before the actual beginning of the novel: Fielding dedicates the book to her mother, "for not being like Bridget's". Cartmell notes that the novel and the film function as autonomous media products, "[o]f course, *Bridget Jones's Diary* can be regarded either as an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* or as a novel – or indeed, film – in its own right, without requiring any knowledge of Austen" (CARTMELL, 2010, p. 98). Although no prior knowledge is required, familiarity with Elizabeth Bennet, her romantic plotline, and her family, makes it possible to read the novel and watch the film as adaptations of Austen's novel. Still, debating over how closely an adaptation adheres to its source medium is slippery, as it may inadvertently promote arguments for fidelity.

In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, through a mention of Colin Firth, light is shed on the connection between *Pride and Prejudice* and *Bridget Jones's Diary*. In the fourth episode, Lydia makes a reference to the film adaptation of Fielding's novel, when she tells Lizzie about Bing's "incredibly hot, incredibly rich piece of mancake friend" (THE LIZZIE, 2012b). Lizzie asks the "mancake's name", and becomes intrigued about "Darcy": "Is it his first name or his last name?". Nevertheless, she calls it an "awful" name. Lydia disagrees, says that the name is "great" and asks: "Isn't that Colin Firth's name in that chubby Zellweger movie?". Lizzie concedes and smiles: "I do love that movie" (THE LIZZIE, 2012b). As mentioned by Leitch, Firth has played Darcy before, in a British television adaptation from 1995. What indicates that the Bennet sisters are referring to *Bridget Jones's Diary* in spite of *Pride and Prejudice* (1995) is the mention of Renée Zellweger, who played Bridget Jones. The idea that the name Darcy makes the sisters recall Maguire's film, but not Austen's novel – or any of its more conventional adaptations – is humorous. It can be argued that *Pride and Prejudice* does not exist in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*' diegesis, but this passage can also be regarded as praise for

Bridget Jones's Diary's cultural relevance. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*' puts a loose adaptation at the center of *Pride and Prejudice*'s adaptation network.

This predilection for *Bridget Jones's Diary*, over all other media products which feature a romantic lead named Darcy, indicates that Maguire's film is an elected precursor for *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. Even more striking is the mention of diaries in both titles. For an epistolary novel, this is a commonplace editorial choice. Fielding's novel is framed as a one-year diary of Bridget Jones. It starts with her New Year's Resolutions, and the following chapters are named after the months, with date headers separating the entries, which are frequently timestamped. Further, the diary is also used to document the character's weight, along with her alcohol, cigarette, and calorie intake: "129 Ibs. (but post-Christmas), alcohol units 14 (but effectively covers 2 days as 4 hours of party was on New Year's Day), cigarettes 22, calories 5424." (FIELDING, 1998, p. 7). Throughout her diary, Bridget retells some dialogue she has.

> I took a deep breath. "Actually, I think we should be doing the off-screen romance between Darcy and Elizabeth."
> He looked me up and down slowly. "Brilliant," he said reverently. "Absolutely fucking brilliant. OK. The actors who play Darcy and Elizabeth? Come on, come on," he said, boxing at the meeting.
> "Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle," I said. (FIELDING, 1998, p. 217)

In this dialogue, she pitches an idea to her boss, establishing a connection with another node in *Pride and Prejudice*'s adaptation network: Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle played Darcy and Elizabeth in the 1995 television adaptation. Bridget Jones also keeps a record of some electronic messages she receives and sends. If the choice of naming this novel a diary is self-evident, the same cannot be said about the literature-to-social-media adaptation. In fact, calling Lizzie Bennet's videos her "diaries" brings attention to the epistolary nature of vlogs. If blogs are frequently described as "online diaries", on the other hand, vlogs are frequently described as "video blogs" – thus, in its title, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* abridges the gap between vlogs and diaries. Its epistolary aspect makes the connection with *Bridget Jones's Diary* unmistakable.

When Jane Austen's *Lady Susan* was posthumously published, some considered it a failure. *The Spectator*'s editor and literary critic R. H. Hutton blames it on the perverse nature of the protagonist, but also on the epistolary genre.

> Dialogue was of the very life of her genius, which was really free in its kind, though so minute; and yet dialogue can hardly be introduced at all into an epistolary novel, and never in its easiest and raciest form. Lady Susan is a failure, because, with a perversity not uncommon in young genius just groping its way to the comprehension of its own powers, Miss Austen had committed the double error of choosing a subject which required a bolder style than hers, and of fettering herself in its treatment by a method which robbed her style of its greatest grace as well as power. (HUTTON, 2002 [1871], p. 172)

Value judgment put aside, Austen is not remembered for epistolarity. Rather, the signature technique of her fiction is free indirect discourse (KEYMER, 2020, p. 87), and epistolarity is mostly present in her juvenile writings. In her late novels, free indirect discourse is conspicuous. Still, the technique is already prominent in *Pride and Prejudice* (KEYMER, 2020, p. 84). Without using the concept, Hutton praises Austen for dialogues that are "really free" and calls the dialogues the "very life of her genius". Thomas Keymer offers historical context for Austen's technique and explains the freedom in her writing with precise terminology:

> Free indirect discourse – the illusion by which third-person narrative comes to express, as though infiltrated by, or emanating from, the intimate subjectivity of fictional characters – was first conceptualized by Gustave Flaubert in the 1850s. Austen has long been seen as the first major exponent of this technique, so central to the modern novel, for filtering narrative through the consciousness of its subject, though few would now call her its inventor. Sporadic instances of free indirect discourse – indirect because mediating a character's speech or thought via the narrator; free because able to roam from viewpoint to viewpoint—exist in Burney, Richardson, and earlier writers. (KEYMER, 2020, p. 82)

Even though it is not precise to call Austen the inventor of free indirect speech, she is considered a precursor for the technique. It is no coincidence that Keymer mentions Frances Burney and Samuel Richardson – writers of epistolary novels – as other forerunners for free indirect speech. In fact, in spite of Hutton's critique, both methods are closely associated.

> Not only does the technique offer an intimacy of access to the heroine's consciousness that had never been so vividly achieved outside epistolary fiction. With startling flexibility, Austen extends the effect of telepathic insight to other characters, allowing readers to experience the novel's world kaleidoscopically as well as from within, and to look out by turns from multiple perspectives, albeit in fleeting ways, and with varying blind spots. (KEYMER, 2020, p. 86)

That is, although *Pride and Prejudice* is not an epistolary novel, Austen's free indirect discourse is considered an heir to epistolarity, as it also aims at offering direct access to the characters' consciousness. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, social media is used not only to offer access to Lizzie Bennet's innermost thoughts but also to make the protagonist accessible in

return. As a content creator, the protagonist plays a role that is known by YouTube audiences – she becomes one more voice in a plurivocal platform. A voice that is heard, but also can hear and answer back. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* combines the intimate aspect of free indirect speech – transposing complex characters that were built through this technique, and featuring a protagonist that also voices her opinions as a narrator – and the epistolary genre – as the story is told through diaries – with the interactive aspect of social media platforms. The result is an adaptation that gave life to a brilliant community, that reached back to a fictional character who is an open book – or diary.

4.3 #*ShakespeareNoFilter*

In 2016, the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death was commemorated. The British Council promoted a worldwide event named *Shakespeare Lives*. With the goal of celebrating the world's most famous playwright, a collection of short films was produced, theater and dance companies developed new interpretations of his works, an interactive platform, called "Mix the Play", was developed, classroom resources were elaborated[80], and more. Within the scope of this project, the British Council Europe produced adaptations from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, and *Romeo and Juliet* for Instagram.

> As part of our Shakespeare Lives programme, we are retelling three of the Bard's most iconic plays through the lens of Instagram! Set throughout Europe, these modern adaptions [*sic*] will inspire and intrigue. This is where you can catch up with the stories so far, and on Instagram you can follow @britishcouncileurope to watch them unfold in real time… (BRITISH COUNCIL DENMARK, 2022)

In August, in a creative reinterpretation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the story of Hermia, Lysander, and Demetrius – the members of an English band named "The Biologicals" – was told. Funded by their manager, Egeus, they tour Eastern Europe playing shows, accompanied by their close friend Helena and their roadie, Puck. Through photographs and videos, the audience follows not only the band's trips through England, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Greece, but also the relationship turmoil instigated by their roadie. In September, *Hamlet* turns into a performance centered on how a German designer, Hamlet, receives anonymous electronic text messages in his phone and discovers that Claudius – the CEO of the digital magazine G-Trude – poisoned his father to take control of their company. In December, a collection of thirty-three videos, excerpts of a performance of *Romeo and Juliet* by the National Youth

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[80] See: <https://www.shakespearelives.org/programme>

Theatre, were published on Instagram. Although abridged, the plot and characters' lines are very much alike the source media product. Nevertheless, the captions and the video editing provide some irreverence, making the production more approachable to digital audiences and adequate for Instagram's environment. *#ShakespeareNoFilter* received substantial media coverage in Europe (A MIDSUMMER, 2016; W&V, 2016) and was considered for social media awards (SHORTY AWARDS, 2022). However, possibly due to its relative novelty, the production has yet to inspire academic criticism. The analysis featured in this chapter was conducted through a close reading of the static and moving visual images, and the verbal written texts published as captions that comprise the three adaptations for Instagram.

4.3.1 Plots

This section is divided into three segments, in which plot summaries of the three adaptations are presented separately. The first is the *#ShakespeareNoFilter* version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, performed from August 11 to September 8. Coming next is the plot from *Hamlet*, a production divided into five acts, and presented from September 23 to October 11. Lastly, *Romeo and Juliet*, a recorded performance by the National Youth Theatre, divided into thirty-three short videos, was published from December 5 to December 20.

4.3.1.1 #ShakespeareNoFilter's A Midsummer Night's Dream

Living in London, Hermia (Amelie Edwards), Lysander (Liam Joseph), and Demetrius (Aaron Mavinga) form a band called "The Biologicals", managed by Egeus. Through Instagram, the band announces to its fans that they will be touring Eastern Europe, with scheduled shows in Budapest, Bucharest, Sofia, and Athens. Lysander, who used to run the band's social media, reveals that while the band is busy on their tour, Helena (Hannah Abbott), a friend and number one fan, will be responsible for keeping the fans up-to-date with the band[81]. Just before the tour, she promotes the band's new CD; on a personal note, Helena adds that the romantic proximity between two bandmates, Hermia and Lysander, can be observed even on the cover of the disc. The manager leaves a comment on the post stating that he is "[n]ot happy about this" and asks, "please tell Lysander to call me ASAP" (EGEUS, 2016b).

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[81] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BJFjEZEhgcw/>

The tour bus, funded by their manager, arrives. Before hitting the road, they announce a selfie contest for picking a roadie: among the comments, Oberon suggests to Puck (Ellie Tanner) that she should apply for the job[82]. With Demetrius sitting at the wheel, Helena in the passenger seat, and Hermia and Lysander in the back seat, the band start their road trip to Budapest. Helena catches on camera Demetrius flirting with Hermia, and even though she likes Demetrius and is brokenhearted, Egeus tells her that she must let "love run its course" (EGEUS, 2016a), suggesting that Demetrius is befitting for Hermia. They arrive in Budapest and, after their first gig, Lysander receives a call from Egeus stating that a relationship between Hermia and Demetrius would be better for the band, and he should cease his love chase. However, he confronts their manager and keeps investing in a romantic relationship with Hermia.

On the move, the band sees a poster announcing a music duo called "Titania and Oberon" as headlines at a festival in Bulgaria, and are excited to book an act in the same festival. They announce that Puck has won the selfie competition and will be joining the band in a few days. Arriving in Bucharest, Helena is jealous of Demetrius' groupies, but he is still invested in the prospect of having a relationship with Hermia. Meanwhile, tired of Demetrius' advances, Hermia flies with Lysander to the festival, leaving a note behind. Disappointing their manager, Demetrius has no choice but to cancel their next show, while Egeus tries to convince Hermia and Lysander to carry on with their tour. Helena and Demetrius arrive at the crowded festival, looking for the couple, and are met by Puck. Demetrius and Egeus are furious, but the troupe is reunited once again. After the reunion, the new roadie is properly introduced and takes over the band's Instagram account. The first piece of information Puck shares on social media is that Helena is heartbroken that Demetrius keeps averting from her.

Despite the turmoil, the band successfully performs at the festival. However, Helena is still disheartened, and Puck decides to play the cupid, putting some "flowers of love" in Demetrius water bottle[83]. Still, she soon gets interested in a guy, leaving the bottle behind. Stopping by the campsite with Helena, Lysander inadvertently drinks from the bottle. Egeus watches it all unfolding through Instagram and tries to alert him, but neither of them picks up their phones[84]. The next day, Lysander declares his love for Helena over breakfast, who thinks he is only teasing her. While Hermia looks for her beloved, Puck realizes she made a mistake. Hermia sees Lysander with Helena and confronts her. Puck, with the aid of Oberon, picks

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[82] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BJIVMEKhdbV/>
[83] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BJsfdpKhsYx/>
[84] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BJtNtiGB-GX/>

another "flower of love" and gives a bottle to Demetrius. Now, both men are in love with Helena, who accuses Hermia of being behind this farce. The roadie prepares a tea with a spell, which is a citation from the literary source:

> Jack shall have Jill,
> Naught shall go ill,
> The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well. (SHAKESPEARE, 2011, p. 133)[85]

Lysander drinks. Later, he makes his relationship with Hermia "Facebook official"; Puck considers that Egeus liking their relationship status change is a sign of approval. The two well-established couples leave the festival for Athens, in time for the performance of "Pyramus and Thisbe", an album by "The Mechanicals", a band the protagonists adore. The tour gets to its end and the last photo shared is of the van's windshield with "we bid you adieu" written in dust[86].

4.3.1.2 #ShakespeareNoFilter's Hamlet

In the first act, Hamlet, a German designer living in Hamburg, watches Claudius announcement on television. Following the death of Hamlet senior, former CEO and founder of G-Trude – a design magazine – Claudius will be assuming as the new CEO, effective immediately. The protagonist records the announcement and posts on Instagram "[t]hat it should come to this! Was I not the most immediate heir to my father's company? I ask this more in sorrow than in anger 🤔#BreakingNews" (BRITISH COUNCIL EUROPE, 2016m). Fortunately, his girlfriend, Ophelia, and his best friend, Horatio, have been on his side while he grieves[87]. In only two weeks, Hamlet's work environment has changed completely under a new direction, and he considers his new boss a "scurvy politician". Still, Hamlet is working hard on G-Trude's next issue. While grieving losing both his father and the control of G-Trude, his relationship with Ophelia deteriorates, and he starts to receive messages from an unknown number. The sender claims to be his own dead father.[88] Hamlet asks Horatio if he was responsible for the messages, but he blatantly denies sending them. The messages claim that Hamlet senior was murdered by Claudius, who mixed poison on his coffee. The messenger asks for Hamlet to avenge his father's death. At first, Hamlet thought it was all a

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[85] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BJ5QN5vBnZI/>
[86] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BKGWeXjBNou/>
[87] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BKvxM27BAZm/>
[88] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BK3mxSyBsFE/>

prank. However, due to a similarity with the way his father used to text him – including his nickname, Ham, and the inconsistent use of captioned letters and punctuation – he starts to question if the messages are trustworthy. Intending to extract information from Claudius, who Hamlet believes knows more about his father's death than he has been revealing, he concocts a plan to change his behavior around the new CEO, using his grief as an excuse.

In act two, Hamlet pretends to be in serious confusion, calling and ordering food to Claudius as if he were a fishmonger, and claiming that the sky is on fire. Still, he misses Ophelia, who is distant, and assures her that his madness is pretended. Sophisticating his plan further, among the activities of G-Trude's "team building workshop", he plots to produce a reenactment of his father's death as it was told to him through the messages and to observe Claudius reaction while watching it[89].

The third act opens with the first line of Hamlet's remarkable monologue. Walking on the harbor, he considers suicide: "To be, or not to be, that is the question", and he follows, "because I don't know if I can do this anymore… this… this living thing" (BRITISH COUNCIL EUROPE, 2016b). His motives are the fact that his girlfriend left him and the leadership of his father's company seems out of his reach. But when Ophelia sends him a message, alerting him that he has been sharing "too much" of his private life, he answers her saying that she is just pretending to care about him and says that he never loved her. In the team building workshop, a speaker presents a key principle of conflict resolution called the "Gonzalo principle". As an example, she proposes a fictional situation in which someone uses "coffee poisoning" to take over a company: Claudius gets up from his chair and leaves the room. His reaction is enough to make Hamlet assured of his guilt. In an attempt to have Claudius fired from the company, Hamlet invades his office and sends an email through the CEO's account offending the shareholders. Claudius suspects his employees and, fearing being discovered, Hamlet leaves for Warsaw. The act ends with Hamlet receiving a message, from the person that claims to be his father, saying that his vengeance must be completed.

In the fourth act, the protagonist arrives in Warsaw and receives a threatening call from Claudius, who knows that Hamlet is responsible for sending the email. He responds by posting a picture of a wall with graffiti, in which "my thoughts be blood" can be read in printed letters, in the caption he states that "[f]rom this time forth my thoughts will be bloody or worth nothing" (BRITISH COUNCIL EUROPE, 2016j). Finally, in act five Claudius invites Hamlet to a meeting room. Hamlet, hoping for an admission of guilt, that would get his father's murderer removed from the company, sets up a hidden camera in the room.

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[89] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BLLUZXoBvXr/>

Knowing of the dangers is soon to face, he asks Horatio to finish telling his story. Already, the next Instagram post is signed by Horatio. In a two-part video, Claudius is shown sitting at a table with Hamlet, offering him a cup of coffee and asking him to sign a resignation letter. Hamlet refuses the coffee and suggests that Claudius is the one that should resign. Enraged, they get up and step out of the frame of the video. The next publication shows an ambulance and red tape isolating the street, followed by a photo that shows a newspaper and its headline, which reads: "Two dead, G-Trude to close"[90]. The last picture depicts Horatio with a paintbrush on his hand and a wall on which there is a quote by Hamlet painted: "wilt thou know the effect of what I wrote?"[91].

4.3.1.3 #ShakespeareNoFilter's Romeo and Juliet

In Verona, two families, the Capulets and the Montagues, "have been bitter rivals for as long as anyone can remember. And well... they fight over anything" (BRITISH COUNCIL EUROPE, 2016h), as the Instagram caption announces. Lady Capulet, eager to marry her daughter, Juliet, discovers she is not inclined to marry. Juliet concedes and agrees to meet with a young man, Paris, at a ball her family will be throwing. Meanwhile, a young Montague, Romeo, has not been reciprocated by his love interest, Rosaline, and his friend, Benvolio, invites him to a party to "examine other beauties"[92].

In Capulet's ball, Juliet meets Paris and dances with him, but is not impressed. Arriving at the party, Romeo's and Juliet's eyes meet across the crowded room, and even though Paris whisks Juliet away, for that brief moment, a mutual interest sparks. Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, discovers that the Montagues have intruded on the ball, and alerts her uncle, who decides not to confront them. Away from the eyes of their families and other guests, the star-crossed lovers meet again, they talk and kiss each other. The lovers are interrupted by a maid, who tells Romeo that the girl he was with is the daughter of the lady of the house, and thus a Capulet. She also tells Juliet that the boy is a Montague, and the only son of her family's great enemy. Romeo, strolling in the gardens before leaving the house, finds Juliet's balcony, and meets his romantic interest there. Agreeing not to let their families put an end to their love, they decide to be together. Later, Romeo asks the friar for help. Convinced that this relationship may turn the families' mutual rancor into love, the friar chooses to assist them.

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[90] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BLa3anMhnd8/>
[91] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BLbc14KBAtU/>
[92] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BNtxvsAhZab/>

The young lovers get married on that same day. Tybalt confronts Romeo about his crashing the Capulets' party, but the newlywed refuses to fight his wife's cousin. Despite his efforts to keep the peace, his best friend, Mercutio, fights Tybalt, gets wounded, and dies. Enraged by his friend's death, Romeo kills Tybalt with a shotgun.

Romeo is sent into exile. Juliet learns that her cousin is dead, murdered by her husband – who is now banished from Verona. Meanwhile, the Capulets are impatient to marry their daughter to Paris. The ceremony is already scheduled for next Thursday, in St. Peter's Church. Desperate, Juliet asks the friar for help. He concocts a plan: she should go home and consent to marry Paris, but laying down on her bed, she will drink the medicine he gave her. The next morning, she will not wake up. Believing she is dead, her family will send her to their tomb. When the drug's effect wears off, she will wake, and Friar will be with her lover, waiting for her. Juliet follows the plan, and her family finds her looking dead. However, the news of her death finds Romeo. Desperately, he buys poison from an apothecary, drinks, and dies beside his lover's grave. When Juliet rises, she finds Romeo dead and the empty bottle of poison in his hand. Since Romeo drank all the poison, she finds her lover's dagger and dies by his side. The performance ends with both families discovering their son and daughter are dead, and deciding to put an end to their quarrel, in memory of their love.

4.3.2 The Main Stage: Instagram

Instagram worked as *#ShakespeareNoFilter*'s main and only stage. The choice of platform is related to the goal of presenting Shakespeare to a new audience. As stated, in "#ShakespeareNoFilter, we used Instagram to introduce three of Shakespeare's plays to a generation of young people" (SHAKESPEARE LIVES, 2022). In this section, the goal is to elucidate how Instagram can be used for a performance of a play by Shakespeare, the meaning of "#NoFilter" in the context of this platform, the use of supporting accounts, and the importance of captions in this adaptation.

#ShakespeareNoFilter is part of a larger project from the British Council, for which a dedicated Instagram account was created, @shakespearelives – which is currently an archive of activities held in 2016. Nevertheless, the *#ShakespeareNoFilter* performances took place over British Council Europe's account, @britishcouncileurope. However, the captions that accompany the photos, videos, and screen captures are not institutional in tone. On the contrary, being the three productions quite unlike, they are tied by captions that approximate

Shakespeare's plays to contemporary audiences, even when the last and more conventional adaptation, *Romeo and Juliet*, is considered.

In the project's title, Shakespeare appears between the hash sign and an expression that became popular on Instagram. First, the hash sign makes this title a hashtag, meaning that every post featuring its title, from the producers and audience both, is grouped together on Instagram. Second, the "NoFilter" is a reference to the platforms' paradoxical "creative authenticity". In the context of social media, filters are ready-made effects used to enhance and stylize photographs and videos. In this platform, "[t]he artistic patina encouraged by the app's marketing bleeds into living itself: The Instagrammer is encouraged to creatively document a life lived well" (SALISBURY; POOLEY, 2017, p. 12). Therefore, filters are very popular from the beginning, making real-life pictures look elaborate. However, portraying reality as enhanced by filters quickly became understood as less genuine. "The proliferation of #nofilter hashtags, and all the published backlash to staged perfection, are expressions of Instagram's defining paradox: The filtered effort required to achieve the look of throwback authenticity is at the same time disqualifying" (SALISBURY; POOLEY, 2017, p. 12). Thus, the hashtag #NoFilter is used when Instagrammers are claiming that their photo is unedited, and therefore, more genuine.

Notwithstanding, the title is not to be taken literally: it does not mean that no filters were used in these productions. On the contrary, especially in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, filters were used to match the fantastical tone of Puck's enchantments. Indeed, there is a specific post that is particularly heavy in filter usage: when announcing that she plans to reverse the mismatching of couples she caused[93]. In this video, using a filter, Puck appears tinted in orange, with sparkles on her eyes, and a crown of golden butterflies, made through computer graphics, on her head. Furthermore, in *Romeo and Juliet,* the recorded live performance is presented through videos with a style of video editing that calls attention to itself. For example, when a new character is introduced, the video freezes while a lower third[94] enters the frame, with bold white letters highlighted by bright colors, introducing the character's name and affiliation. A particular example of video editing playing a meaningful part in this version of *Romeo and Juliet* is how the friar's plan is presented to the audience. In spite of hearing it from him, it is shown written on the screen, as a numbered list[95]. Thus, the "NoFilter" does not mean that the productions lack post-production elements, rather, it seems

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[93] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BJ2rc0sh7vO/>
[94] In television and other audiovisual media, "lower third" refers to a block of text placed on top of existing video, in the lower area, usually identifying the people on screen.
[95] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BOFFf6lhWXn/>

to indicate that in these adaptations the playwright will be a part of the digital environment. For instance, some questions were posed by the *Hamlet* producers just before the performance, "[h]ow are Shakespeare's plays relevant to today?" (BRITISH COUNCIL EUROPE, 2016d), and "[h]ow would Hamlet have dealt with the same issues in a modern world?" (BRITISH COUNCIL EUROPE, 2016e). These questions made evident the goal of bringing the Bard to contemporaneity. Furthermore, one could argue that a Shakespeare "without filters" is one in which there is no language barrier. As announced on Instagram, "Shakespeare meets theatre, meets Instagram. Basically, follow us if you feel like you should understand what Shakespeare's stories are about but don't have the time to decode his cryptic language" (BRITISH COUNCIL EUROPE, 2016k). Hence, there is a concern about approximating these Elizabethan plays to digital audiences both historically and linguistically. The captions, written for the photos and videos in *#ShakespeareNoFilter,* contribute to this overarching goal.

For the first two performances, different characters sign the captions. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the @britishcouncileurope account is used as if it were the official page of "The Biologicals". Lysander is the one to sign the first posts, before handing over the responsibility of updating the band's social media to Helena. Later, when Puck wins the contest for roadie, she assumes control of the profile. Even though the narrative unfolded in that one institutional profile, at least seven supporting Instagram accounts were created. The five accounts for the central characters, @demetrius.lives, @lysander.lives, @hermia.lives, @helena.lives, and @puck.lives were mostly used for character development with few publications showing some aspects of their personalities. Two accounts, @oberon.lives and @Egeus.Lives, were explored even further. Comments tutoring Puck's on how the "flowers of love" should be used were posted from Oberon's account, and, mostly, comments from Egeus', as the band manager, concern the romantic relationships among the members of the band: reproving Lysander and approving Demetrius as Hermia's partner. Who was responsible for creating, posting, and commenting from these accounts was not disclosed, but the fact that they are all connected to the production is overtly announced through a disclaimer that reads: "Part of #ShakespeareNoFilter - retelling 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' on Instagram!" in all supporting profiles.

Likewise, during the performance of *Hamlet,* it is the protagonist who signs the captions. The British Council Europe's Instagram account was used as if it was Hamlet's own Instagram profile. In this way, he is the narrator of his own story. There are captions signed by Horatio, but they were published after his best friend's death. Similarly, supporting accounts

were also created for this second play, which are @hamlet.lives, @ophelia.lives, @horatio.lives, and @fortinbras.lives. Currently, with the exception of Fortinbras', the supporting accounts created for both *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Hamlet* are private. However, the account that remains public provides a glimpse of how these accounts were used. In @fortinbras.lives account, five posts can be found: three photographs from the interior of Notre-Dame de la Garde in Marseille, one of a McDonalds' meal ordered in France, and a poster for an event in London, celebrating the Nigerian multi-instrumentalist Fela Kuti. These static visual images were all published on September 27, a few days after the beginning of the performance. The account also features an Instagram bio – a section on one's account that can be used to share a brief description about oneself – that reads: "🇳🇴 Every battle is worth the fight, no matter how insignificant it may seem 💪 🇳🇴" (FORTINBRAS, 2022). The emojis are meaningful, the flag for Norway is a reference to the Shakespearean character's nationality, while the flexed biceps is a pun on his name, "fort in bras" (strong in arm). Hence, @fortinbras.lives provides a glimpse of an otherwise very minor character, more than Hamlet's friend, the account portrays him as someone who enjoys traveling, music, and does not fear fighting. Furthermore, the account @horatio.lives was used to perform communication through comments. For instance, in the comment section of the video the protagonist shares before meeting Claudius, Horatio promises to tell the end of Hamlet's story[96]. Another aspect in which the first two productions are similar is that every post made during the performances comes with a disclaimer: "#ShakespeareNoFilter is the retelling of Shakespeare's plays on Instagram by the British Council. Follow us to watch the story unfold".

Otherwise, in *Romeo and Juliet*, there is no disclaimer announcing that those thirty-three videos are unlike traditional Instagram posts. Perhaps, the producers may have decided that the stage, costumes, props, theatrical lighting, and even laughing in the background[97], suffice to signal to the audience that these videos are a recorded reenactment of a play, as performed to a live audience. Also, the captions written for the videos are not signed by a narrator who is part of the diegesis. In fact, the narrator seems to share the contemporary audience's perspective, which may consider Shakespeare a puzzling author. As stated in a post, *#ShakespeareNoFilter* presents "Shakespeare's best bits, minus the confusing stuff" (BRITISH COUNCIL EUROPE, 2016l). For instance, the video in which Juliet learns about Tybalt's death is captioned, "[j]ust three hours after marrying Romeo, Juliet finds out her

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[96] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BLYOruQhm8N/>
[97] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BN1edzwB_aV/>

husband has killed her cousin and gotten himself banished from Verona. She isn't impressed. Eventually, she decides to stick by Romeo (who she's known a whole day). #WhatADay" (BRITISH COUNCIL EUROPE, 2016g). Thus, the caption highlights the speed in the succession of events, and in love. The humorous tone is present even in the tragic ending, which uses the "happily ever after" cliché just before listing dead characters, "[t]hat's it. The end. They all live happily ever after (except for Romeo and Juliet, oh and Tybalt… and Mercutio)" (BRITISH COUNCIL EUROPE, 2016n). Through sarcasm, the captions address the slice of the audience that takes the story of teenage lovers falling and dying for love, over the course of days, with disbelief. This approach is not unprecedented by any means, other adaptations targeted at younger audiences[98] also make prominent the comicality of this Shakespeare tragedy that, after all, shares many characteristics with romantic comedies.

However, the characters from *Romeo and Juliet* meet their tragic fate, and, in what concerns both tragedies, it is worth mentioning that, in *#ShakespeareNoFilter*, suicide, and suicide ideations are presented alongside trigger warnings. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, in online platforms such as Tumblr and LiveJournal[99], those who published visual or verbal media featuring sensitive issues – such as sexual assault, self-harm, eating disorders, racism, or depictions of violence – started to warn, beforehand, that their post contained topics that could potentially trigger harmful responses from other users (WASHICK, p. 94, 2017). Nowadays, trigger warnings are conventionally adopted in social media.

> In general terms, a trigger warning is a cautionary note that may be added to syllabi or online sites to alert readers, students, or casual browsers about violent or sexually explicit images and text in the materials on a site, in a course reader, or up ahead in a blind chain of Internet clicks. The trigger warning could easily be read simply as a protocol proper to new media forms in the early twenty-first century. (HALBERSTAM, 2017, p. 535).

Even though, in the context of popular media, trigger warnings may resemble motion picture content rating systems, "the trigger warning is not limited to cautioning a general audience about what they are about to watch". On the contrary, it presumes that viewers could be triggered into crisis, and may "wish either to mentally prepare to engage with it or to avoid it altogether" (HALBERSTAM, 2017, p. 537). In agreement with this posture, predominantly assumed towards contemporary audiences in the digital environment, alongside each depiction of suicide or suicide ideation, the production indicates suicide prevention helplines.

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[98] See, for instance: WRIGHT, Brett. *YOLO Juliet*. New York: Random House, 2015.
[99] Livejournal is a social media platform focused on blogging.

For instance, when Hamlet grieves his father and contemplates suicide, claiming the world without his parent seems "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable" (SHAKESPEARE, 2003, p. 101), the caption reads: "If you feel similarly to Hamlet and need some support, remember you can talk to Samaritans free any time 📱 116 123 or 📧 jo@samaritans.org (UK & Ireland) or find support in your country at 🖥 www.befrienders.org" (BRITISH COUNCIL EUROPE, 2016o). Similarly, the caption for Juliet discussing her suicidal thoughts with the friar reads: "If you feel similarly to Juliet and are having suicidal feelings you can get help right now from Mind - Mind Info line 📱 0300 123 3393 or e-mail info@mind.org.uk" (BRITISH COUNCIL EUROPE, 2016f). Once more, these adaptations act according to the set of user practices from social media platforms.

4.3.3 Other Media

Even though Instagram is *#ShakespeareNoFilter*'s only stage, the three plays are similar in their use of media, other than photography and video, during their performance. While in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the characters form a band, and music plays an important part, in *Hamlet* the protagonist is a designer with a sketchbook filled with his own drawings, and in many scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*, the National Youth Theatre's actors are surrounded by dance and music.

First, arriving for the first show in their tour, the band plays a song on the bus. With Demetrius singing and playing percussion, Lysander on the guitar, and Hermia doing back vocals, "The Biologicals" perform a song with lyrics that come from the second act of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. More specifically, Demetrius sings the following Oberon's lines:

> I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
> Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
> Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
> With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine[100] (SHAKESPEARE, 2011, p. 67-69).

In the second production, Hamlet shares doodles[101], letterings[102], and a short stop-motion showing his drawing process[103] on Instagram. The protagonist's artistic expression is closely related to the source medium. In a self-portrait, drawn when he starts to doubt his own sanity, his face is in the center of the notebook, divided into two pages. He

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[100] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BJQUQAwhUTQ/>
[101] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BKvkQkchBzu/>
[102] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BK52jVeh03y/>
[103] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BLWYxGNB3FJ/>

holds his mouth and has wide eyes. On the left page, nothing surrounds the portrait. On the right, the shadow on his face is darker and written in various styles, there are lines and expressions from the play. The letterings include, "primrose path" (SHAKESPEARE, 2003, p. 108), "a man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king" (SHAKESPEARE, 2003, p. 200), and "from this time forth, My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!" (SHAKESPEARE, 2003, p. 204), along other words and expressions that are meaningful to the context of *Hamlet*, such as, "brother", "I know the truth", "prying eyes", and a word that is crossed out: "love". Also, on this same side of the portrait, there is a crown on the top of his head, a small devil's horn, and in the middle of his forehead, a small third eye. The caption for this photo reads, "[a]ll this acting is tougher than it sounds, sometimes I'm not sure where my true thoughts end and the fake ones begin!" (BRITISH COUNCIL EUROPE, 2016a), referring to his effort to fake madness to Claudius. Thus, this sketch represents a man divided in two: a sane man who is pretending to be mad, and an insane man, surrounded by intrusive thoughts. His notebook also refers to an emblematic scene from *Hamlet*: a drawing of a hand holding a human skull, alongside the iconic words, "[a]las, poor Yorick" (SHAKESPEARE, 2003, p. 231), is presented through a video composed by a series of photos showing the illustration in progress. This video is accompanied by a caption,

> Did this piece based on my old mate Yorick. It's been years since he died, but today he helped me realise the importance of life. That imperious Caesar, now dead and turned to clay, might stop a hole to keep the wind away. Does anyone but God have the right to decide who lives or dies? (BRITISH COUNCIL EUROPE, 2016c).

In contexts similar to the literary source, the drawing substitutes the traditional monologues, but it similarly represents the character's struggles and contemplations.

Third and last, *Romeo and Juliet* is told in a performance surrounded by dancing. For instance, the video in which Juliet meets Paris for the first time shows the betrothed couple, and the protagonist's parents, dancing accompanied by other dancers. The caption written for this video reads, "Paris (that guy who wants to marry Juliet but she only agreed to meet to keep her mum happy) shows off his moves on the dance floor… 💃 Sadly Juliet's more of a big-fish-little-fish-cardboard-box girl, so they aren't quite enough to win her round" (BRITISH COUNCIL EUROPE, 2016i). Thus, the dance plays a narrative part in this scene, the dancing is part of the play diegesis, as it is through his dance moves that Paris plans to attract his betrothed's attention. Furthermore, music also plays a part in this adaptation. In the

Capulet's Ball, the hosts sing to welcome their guests, once again, other media are used to quote lines from Shakespeare's play:

> Welcome, gentlemen! I have seen the day
> That I have worn a visor and could tell
> A whispering tale in a fair lady's ear
> Such as would please. 'Tis gone, 'tis gone, 'tis gone[104]. (SHAKESPEARE, 2004, p. 51)

After dueting these four lines with Lady Capulet, Capulet addresses someone arriving at the ball, "[a]h, sirrah, this unlooked-for sport comes well" (SHAKESPEARE, 2004, p. 53), likely referring to Romeo and his friends.

In summary, Instagram is in fact *#ShakespeareNoFilter*'s only stage, it is the only of three analyzed adaptations from literary sources for social media that uses a single platform. However, the three plays that are part of this project resort to different media when reenacting the Shakespearean canon. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the protagonists are musicians, in *Hamlet,* the protagonist is a designer, and in *Romeo and Juliet*, the Capulets throw a ball, filled with dancing and singing. More than isolated references, other media add to the overall tone and meaning of these adaptations. In the next section, the overt influence of music and fan culture in *#ShakespeareNoFilter*'s *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is discussed in more detail.

4.3.4 Transfer and Transformation

In celebration of Shakespeare's 400th birthday, on the television special *Around The Beatles*, the most influential rock band of all time reenacted *Pyramus and Thisbe*. Half a century later, *#ShakespeareNoFilter* also transmediated the mechanicals and the lovers from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to music groups. Transforming theater in music represents these adaptations' historical contexts, and their target audiences' interests and behaviors.

In 1964, despite the institutional effort and substantial economic investment, the exhibition in celebration of Shakespeare's quatercentenary in Stratford-upon-Avon "ultimately failed to attract the hundreds of thousands of visitors that were expected" (FOLKERTH, 2004, p. 76). Among the possible reasons for the disappointing reaction of the public to the festivities in Stratford is the shift in the collective attention of the English audiences over the course of four centuries, "[t]he most popular entertainment form of the

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[104] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BNwWCnCh51x/>

1960s was beat music, much as the theatre was in Shakespeare's day" (FOLKERTH, 2004, p. 79). That same year, while the exhibition on Shakespeare's birthplace did not meet the organizer's expectations, The Beatles were becoming international stars, attracting unprecedented attention. The Beatles stood at the center of public interest.

> In the midst of these quatercentenary festivities, though on a very different cultural register, Britain in April of 1964 found itself in the grip of a phenomenon that much of the rest of the world would soon also come to experience, one which the Daily Mirror had recently christened "Beatlemania." (FOLKERTH, 2004, p. 75)

Beatlemania was a term coined to describe the worship of The Beatles by their fans. Amidst such cultural turmoil, the band recorded the television special *Around the Beatles*, in which they presented a comical adaptation of the play-within-a-play from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In Act Five, Theseus and Hippolyta's royal wedding is celebrated. For the festivities, the mechanicals, a theatrical troupe formed by a group of artisans who are also amateur actors, perform a confusing and comical version of the classical story of two lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe. From Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, *Pyramus and Thisbe* is a story of forbidden lovers, whispering through a wall. On her way to a secret meeting with her lover, Thisbe sees a lion, illuminated by the moon, and runs, leaving behind her veil. Discovering Thisbe's veil stained with blood, Pyramus presumes that her lover was killed by a "savage beast". In grief, he takes his own life. Ultimately, Thisbe finds Pyramus' lifeless body. In desperation, she uses her lover's sword to put an end to her life (Ov. Met. IV 55-166). In the mechanicals' absurd and laughable version, the wall, the lion, and even the moon are speaking roles. The specific scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that is reenacted by The Beatles is the mechanicals' play, featuring Paul McCartney as Pyramus, John Lennon as Thisbe, Ringo as Lion, and George Harrison as Moonshine. Trevor Peacock, a Shakespearean actor of the RSC, played Wall (FOLKERTH, 2004, p. 77). Reenacting this scene suited perfectly The Beatles' effort to be perceived as members of the working class.

> The mechanicals' scene was a natural choice for the group since, like the artisanal characters whose roles they were assuming, they were themselves working-class entertainers who had only recently performed before royalty at the Prince of Wales Theatre, where John Lennon had notoriously requested of the audience, "Will people in the cheaper seats clap your hands? All the rest of you, if you'll just rattle your jewelry." This working-class image was one the group carefully cultivated at this stage of their career, in images like the cover of their *Please Please Me* album, which presented them looking down to the viewer from the balcony of a building of Council flats. (FOLKERTH, 2004, p. 77)

Therefore, The Beatles wanted to be perceived as if they were also in that position of displacement, evoked in the mechanicals' play: although they are performing before royalty, they are commoners. Further, the band members left their signatures on the roles they performed. As Wes Folkerth states,

> [t]he audience was clearly not invited to see Paul McCartney as Bottom playing Pyramus, or Ringo Starr as Snug the joiner playing Lion, but rather to see Paul McCartney playing Pyramus, and Ringo Starr playing Lion, with the result that the Beatles were positioned as Shakespeare's mechanicals "in their own write." (FOLKERTH, 2004, p. 77)

This skit paid homage to the Elizabethan theater, and The Beatles were as irreverent in their representation of Shakespeare, as the Bard had been before, in the mechanicals' performance of Ovid. Folkerth sees The Beatles as precursors for a contemporary approach to the Shakespearean canon, "the more 'duty-free' mode of accessing his works that has come to characterize virtually all of Shakespeare's most interesting, energetic, and provocative appearances in mass media in recent years" (FOLKERTH, 2004, p. 79). Alluringly, the setting for this special was not as iconoclastic, on the contrary, the studio in which The Beatles recorded this show was staged to be evocative of the theatre in the round.

Around the Beatles is named after the round stages of Elizabethan theaters (FOLKERTH, 2004, p. 77). Until 1660, all English playhouses were constructed to allow for audience proximity, around all sides of the stage (GURR, 2017, p. 167). Before audio amplification technologies, the audience needed to be near the stage. Such closeness was crucial for a better experience listening to the actors. The design of these playhouses privileged auditory over visual sensory perception. As Andrew Gurr puts it, "a theatre in the round, intended for hearers rather than viewers, the kind of venue that was standard in all the Elizabethan and Jacobean playhouses for which we have some record" (GURR, 2017, p. 169). *Around the Beatles* was recorded in front of a live audience, and electing a stage design that favors the auditory sensorial modality is a reasonable choice for a musical group. Further, the audience in this special is loud, "the audience has obviously been instructed to be as vocal as possible in this fab recreation of Elizabethan performance conditions" (FOLKERTH, 2004, p. 78). Another distinct aspect of theaters in the round is that this stage design encourages crowd behavior.

> Our modern sense of ourselves, and the long-growing individualisation of audiences, has been imposed on us gradually over the last three hundred years, new theatre designs turning us into private spectators sitting in the comfortable dark as invisible, hidden and mute eavesdroppers. Such distancing inhibits us from behaving like the crowd with its collective passions that shared the plays at the early playhouses. (GURR, 2017, p. 180)

Differently from contemporary passive spectatorship, Elizabethan audiences were lively, and would loudly express their feelings. Such an active and exuberant crowd, screaming at the stage, suits this television special well. *Around the Beatles* is not only a playful homage to Shakespeare but also a commentary on Beatlemania – their enthusiastic fans.

Fan culture is also a theme in *#ShakespeareNoFilter*'s *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. As aforementioned, in this adaptation not only "The Mechanicals" are represented as a musical group, but "Titania and Oberon" – queen and king of the fairies in the source medium – are a music duo headlining a festival[105]. Even more remarkable is that three of the lovers – Lysander, Hermia, and Demetrius – also constitute a band: "The Biologicals". Biological is not only an antonym for mechanical but an indication of the lovers' organic nature. Ultimately, is their biological nature that makes them vulnerable to Puck and Oberon's spells. The fourth lover, Helena – who is in love with Demetrius, but is scorned by him – is presented as a band's fan. However, as a member of The Biologicals' audience, she is not a "hidden and mute eavesdropper" (GURR, 2017, p. 180), she is an active and creative fan, responsible for updating the band's social media. Her role is not underestimated either; Egeus, the band's manager, considers that a romantic relationship between Hermia and Demetrius would be advantageous for the band's image. Egeus relies on the power of Helena, in control of the band's Instagram, to create this romantic narrative.

Although Helena's representation as a fan is metaphorical for her unrequited love for Demetrius, she is a fan who is in direct contact with the group she admires. After all, as the curtain falls, in both source and target media, Helena and Demetrius are a couple. Helena stands for a specific paradigm of spectatorship, that is proper to digital media. In *Convergence Culture*, Henry Jenkins discusses how the internet has powered fan culture,

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[105] For an exposition of *#ShakespeareNoFilter's A Midsummer Night's Dream*, see section 4.3.1.1.

> [f]ans have always been early adapters of new media technologies; their fascination with fictional universes often inspires new forms of cultural production, ranging from costumes to fanzines and, now, digital cinema. Fans are the most active segment of the media audience, one that refuses to simply accept what they are given, but rather insists on the right to become full participants. None of this is new. What has shifted is the visibility of fan culture. The Web provides a powerful new distribution channel for amateur cultural production. (JENKINS, 2006, p. 131)

Helena is a fan, but she is also a participant. In a sense, she is part of The Biologicals, the participant in control of the band's image. Hence, as a literature-to-social-media adaptation, *#ShakespeareNoFilter* calls attention to the audience's engagement in social media, which is more similar to the loud Elizabethan crowds than to the silent audiences of contemporary theaters.

Following The Beatles, *#ShakespeareNoFilter*'s *A Midsummer Night's Dream* transforms *Pyramus and Thisbe* into a musical number. If The Beatles' television special is emblematic that, in 1964, English audiences were more focused on beat music than on Elizabethan theater, the adaptation of the lovers into a music group touring music festivals in Europe represents a different attention shift. The change from theater to music was not related to the characteristics of the target media product – The Biologicals could have been a theater troupe. However, to make Shakespeare more compelling to Instagram audiences, *#ShakespeareNoFilter* transformed the characters from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* into touring musicians. Last, if the theater in the round was used in *Around The Beatles* to evidentiate Beatlemania, characterizing Helena as a fan highlighted the proximity of audiences in social media. All things considered, music brought back the participating audiences to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

In this tripartite chapter, *Such Tweet Sorrow*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, and *#ShakespeareNoFilter* were approached individually, as case studies. Following, amplifying the scope of this investigation, these productions are clustered together; an effort that is pertinent to the objective of identifying and describing the media traits for the qualified media type of literature-to-social-media adaptations.

5 THE QUALIFIED MEDIA TYPE OF LITERATURE-TO-SOCIAL-MEDIA ADAPTATIONS

In this chapter, a synchronic investigation of *Such Tweet Sorrow*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, and *#ShakespeareNoFilter* is conducted, to test the hypothesis that literature-to-social-media adaptations present similar media traits. In the first section, two pivotal concepts from Lars Elleström's framework are introduced, "qualified media type" and "technical media of display". Following, in the second section, tweets, vlogs, and selfies are presented as qualified media types of social media platforms. In the third section, *Such Tweet Sorrow*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, and *#ShakespeareNoFilter* are clustered together and the productions are compared in terms of media modalities, technical media of display, and themes. The fourth section discusses media transparency and opacity in digital environments, contrasting the strive for immediacy in media history with the opaque representation of digital communication in cinema and literature. Finally, the fifth section presents how literature-to-social-media adaptations, as a qualified media type, are similar in their approach to social media as a common theme.

5.1 Qualified Media Types and Technical Media of Display

In the first chapter, Lars Elleström's framework was briefly introduced. Other categories of his taxonomy that will be the basis for the analysis conducted in the present chapter are "media type", "qualified media type" and "technical media of display". As aforementioned, Elleström developed a medium-centered communication model, in which media products are defined through their communicative function: that is, media products are entities that enable communication between minds (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 8)[106]. However, one of the greatest achievements of his framework is not related to focusing on individual media products, but to amplifying Intermedial Studies scope.

Elleström's model makes the conduction of investigations on media types viable and less blurred with terminological ambiguities. Whereas a media product is a single entity, a media type is a "cluster of media products" (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 54). The art forms, such as film and literature, for example, can be considered qualified media types. For instance, a characteristic of film as a qualified media type is the combination of visual and auditory signs that develop in a temporal dimension (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 59). Yet, qualified media types

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[106] For an exposition of Elleström's model, see section 2.1.

are not limited to the art forms. Elleström discusses "children's drawings" – "still images that are handmade by very young people" (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 55) – as an example of a qualified media type. That is, a qualified media type is any cluster of similar media products, which share characteristics beyond media modality modes. Such characteristics may change over time and cultures – for instance, in relation to Elleström's example, "children" is a category that has changed over time, and varies over cultures (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 55).

A qualified media type is a category of media defined by the function it performs, the basic media types involved, and also by its social, cultural, and historical contexts. Thus, the limits of qualified media types are unstable and are debatable. As Elleström explains, "[q]ualified media types are simply categories of media products grounded not only on basic media modality modes but further qualified" (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 55). In relation to literature, Elleström argues that it should be regarded as "at least two different qualified media types" (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 58) – visual literature and auditory literature. In terms of media modalities, audiobooks are profoundly different from written literature. On the one hand, readable literature is constituted by a sequence of visual signs that are not actually temporal – written literature does not change in time. On the other hand, auditory literature is made of sequential auditory signs developing in a temporal dimension – the length of an audiobook can be measured in time. Hence, auditory literature can be interpreted as a different qualified media type, even though it shares characteristics with written literature, such as sequentiality and narrativity.

Readable and auditory literature are frequently distributed by different technical media of display. For example, a smartphone can realize visual and auditory literature, however, a screenless Bluetooth speaker can realize an audiobook, through the emanation of sound waves, but cannot display the visual signs of written literature. Technical media of display are imperative for the realization of any media product, and each technical medium of display affords the distribution of specific sensory configurations. As Elleström puts it, "technical media of display should be understood as entities that realise media products; they distribute sensory configurations with a communicative function" (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 34). For instance, the exemplary technical media of display for written literature are books, that is, bounded printed pages displaying written verbal text, but the technical media of display for films are a flat surface that displays visual signs and an audio system emanating sound waves. When literature-to-social-media adaptations are considered, the technical medium of display is any electronic device that combines a digital screen with a loudspeaker and can access the internet and social media platforms.

Impermanence is a distinguishing quality of social media. Not only is the sense that media products hosted on these platforms are ephemerous and subject to sudden deletion but also that the traits of these media also constantly change. As discussed in the previous chapter, these platforms were quite unlike when were conceived. Some of these differences still endure. However, as of 2023, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram, in response to TikTok's[107] boom, have been investing in short-format vertical videos, the qualified media type that made TikTok popular. These platforms are, thus, converging – the experience of social media is homogenizing. Nonetheless, in the last decade, when the adaptations under discussion were produced, each of these three platforms was specialized in a particular basic medium. Once again, putting it grossly, the proper basic medium for Twitter was written text, for YouTube it was online video, and for Instagram it was digital photography. From that, each platform gave origin to a hallmark qualified medium: tweets, vlogs, and selfies.

5.2 Tweets, Vlogs, and Selfies as Qualified Media Types

Investigating literature-to-social-media adaptations requires analyzing the digital media types that are distinctive for Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Accordingly, tweets, vlogs, and selfies are now described in relation to their media modalities, following Lars Elleström's framework. Every media type or product can be described in these terms because these "four media modalities form an indispensable skeleton upon which all media products are built" (ELLESTRÖM, 2021, p. 46). As aforementioned, the four media modalities are material, spatiotemporal, sensorial, and semiotic modality[108].

A tweet is the qualified media type of Twitter. In 2010, a tweet was a genre of verbal and digitally written text, composed of 140 characters maximum; the character count included whitespaces between words. Besides letters and numbers, Twitter affords so-called special characters – punctuation marks, diacritics, and symbols. Some symbols can be used to perform interactions. For instance, a tweet that begins with an at sign (@) has a specific addressee. That is, in order to send a tweet directly to a person, one must start a tweet with an @, followed by that person's username. Similarly, a hash sign (#) turns any combination of letters between the hash and space into a hashtag. There are also retweets (RTs), when a person reposts a tweet. Although, at that time, the only basic media type afforded by Twitter was language written with digital characters, tweets afforded hyperlinks. Therefore, one could

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[107] A video-hosting service, and a social media platform, which focuses on vertical short-form videos.
[108] For a discussion on media modalities, see section 2.1.

use a third-party platform to host different types of media products, e.g. static visual media, audiovisual media, or auditory media, and indirectly post them on Twitter, through hyperlinks. In terms of materiality, tweets are non-solid media products. A typical tweet, consisting of one or more sentences of written verbal text, is sequential – as natural languages are sequential – but not temporal, as a tweet does not change in time. A tweet is realized through the sensorial mode of visuality. Lastly, in relation to the semiotic modality, tweets are a medium type primarily based on symbols (written words), although punctuation marks can be used to create iconic signs. Matching the behavior of Twitter users, in *Such Tweet Sorrow*, the characters expressed their emotions using combinations of punctuation marks and symbols. Expressing happiness, the sign consists of a colon representing eyes and a closing parenthesis representing a smiling mouth :)[109], a wink was represented by a semicolon and a closing parenthesis ;)[110], and sadness was expressed through a colon representing eyes and an opening parenthesis representing a frown :([111]. As these signs are based on the similarity with the facial expressions, they are iconic signs.

A hallmark qualified medium of YouTube is the vlog. As aforementioned, YouTube is a video-sharing platform – it was developed to host digital video[112]. Since its launch, YouTube technically evolved, and there have been robust improvements in the size, length, and quality of video it affords. Presently, YouTube also affords different formats of videos, such as live transmissions, and short-form vertical videos – at a maximum length of sixty seconds. At the time of writing, even static images, gifs, polls, quizzes, and posts entirely consisting of written texts can be shared on YouTube, through a feature called "community tab". As the name indicates, this tab was developed for community building – growing the frequency of interactions and the sense of proximity between video creators and their audiences. The media products shared through the community tabs are intended for niche audiences – thus, these posts are secondary in the platform's environment. Online video is still YouTube's flagship. Genres of online videos include reaction videos, gaming videos, humorous sketches, video essays, and vlogs. Vlogs were named after blogs. If blogs are virtual diaries that mostly consist of handwritten verbal language, vlogs are virtual diaries in online video form. Some traits that distinguish vlogs from other audiovisual media types are related to the context of production. As previously discussed, early vlogs were characteristically recorded with

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109 See the following tweet from @julietcap16: <https://twitter.com/julietcap16/status/11987881893>.
110 See the following tweet from @julietcap16: <https://twitter.com/julietcap16/status/13311800709>.
111 See the following tweet from @julietcap16: < https://twitter.com/julietcap16/status/12886250568>.
112 For an exposition of YouTube, see section 4.2.2

handheld low-quality cameras and edited by amateurs[113]. Frequently, the vloggers set up the camera, record themselves, and edit their videos using free editing software. The audience is addressed directly, as the vlogger talks and looks directly at the camera lens. Mostly, as vlogs are sort of online diaries, the videos are focused on themes related to the vlogger's personal life (e.g. routine, lifestyle, work, opinions, travels, health). YouTube features a comment section, in which people who watched the video can send feedback through written text messages. In turn, vloggers can write an answer to the audience's comments directly in the comment section, or even record an answer for a future video. The sense of proximity brought by the interaction between YouTube creators and their audiences gave origin to digital communities centered on YouTube channels. In terms of media modalities, vlogs can be described as moving visual images accompanied by speech and musical sounds in a digital format. Like all digital media, vlogs are materially non-solid. In terms of spatiotemporality, vlogs are sequential and temporal. They are realized through audiovisual sensorial modes. In semiotic terms, vlogs are a media type primarily based on icons and symbols.

Accordingly, a qualified media type proper of Instagram is the selfie. Initially, Instagram only afforded the basic media type of static images. More specifically, the platform was developed for hosting and sharing digital photography. Instagram's ideal technical media of display are smartphones, and more specifically, iPhones. Although currently widely available, Instagram was launched as a mobile application exclusive to iOS – Apple's mobile operating system. More than a technical media of display, smartphones are the characteristic media of production for selfies. Typically, selfies are taken with built-in digital cameras. Selfie is short for self-portrait. The quintessential selfie features the photographer's face and their arm extended in the camera's direction, as they hold the smartphone, with the camera lens facing their direction. That is, smartphones can also be employed in the production of digital photographs that are subsequently shared on Instagram. The selfie's photographer may be alone or may be part of a group of people. Selfies are usually casual. The basic media type for selfies is static visual images. Selfies, as a genre of digital photography, and in the context of Instagram, are materially non-solid. A selfie is not sequential, nor is it temporal. However, a distinguishing spatial characteristic of early Instagram photography is that the platform used to only afford images in the shape of a square. Sensorially speaking, selfies are a visual media product. In terms of the semiotic modalities of selfies, as the object of a selfie is always the photographer's body, especially their face, this genre of photography is primarily based on iconic representations.

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[113] For a discussion on vlogs, see section 4.2.2.

5.3 The Qualified Media Type of Literature-to-social-media Adaptations

Throughout this dissertation, *Such Tweet Sorrow*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, and *#ShakespeareNoFilter* are mentioned by name each time the media traits of these productions are discussed. Even though these productions share many similarities, they are not yet recognized as a group of similar media products that resulted from a similar process of transformation – from literary sources to social media platforms. When put side by side, *Such Tweet Sorrow*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries,* and *#ShakespeareNoFilter* indicate that literature-to-social-media adaptations constitute a qualified media type.

Before describing the media traits of literature-to-social-media adaptations, there is some terminology, related to digital media, that requires consideration: "web series", "transmedia storytelling" and "digital adaptation". First, web series is an audiovisual format that originated as a low-cost alternative to mainstream television. As Aymar Jean Christian states,

> [w]hat we call a "Web series" is a peculiar invention. It exists variously as amateur and independent media and as corporate and advertising product. Short form and low budget, it is not quite television but is still filmed and episodic. Originating in the 1990s but picking up in the mid-2000s, Web series developed primarily as a vehicle for independent filmmakers and production companies to tell stories and grow audiences in ways previously unavailable to them in ways more sustained than YouTube-based viral videos, higher in audience scale than most low-budget film, with a lower cost and fewer barriers to entry than mainstream television, but also with the smallest potential for revenue from advertising and sponsorship. Web series, then, exist between the conflicting and shifting currents in the new media economy. They represent the desire among many working in media for a new kind of television, as mainstream television industries face uncertainties about their business models. They suggest the maturation of online video from one-off amateur content to more rigorous — and expensive — production. (CHRISTIAN, 2011)

Although this definition applies neither to *Such Tweet Sorrow*, nor to *#ShakespeareNoFilter*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is audiovisual, episodic, and does represent a change in online video production, from amateur to professional. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* can indeed be considered a web series. Another category of production that is associated with this adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* is transmedia storytelling. According to Camila Figueiredo, the distinctions between adaptation and transmedia storytelling are not clear-cut. However, there are some compelling differences regarding how these processes establish connections with prior works,

> [w]hereas adaptations invite audiences to compare and contrast the adapted work with an original (a kind of vertical memory, as Harvey calls it), transmedia storytelling establishes a different dialogical relationship with a previous text, one that recalls some of its narrative, aesthetic, and storyworld elements – activating a type of horizontal memory – only to expand them. (FIGUEIREDO, 2022, p.4)

That is, in contrast to adaptations, which are *repetitions* (with variations) of one or more source media, transmedia storytelling promotes *extensions* of their sources. Further, Figueiredo argues that transmedia storytelling and adaptation can be combined in transmedial adaptations (FIGUEIREDO, 2022, p. 4). For instance, adaptations from literary sources to television may include "characters' blogs and social network profiles as extensions of the TV show" (FIGUEIREDO, 2022, p. 5). That is, although social media platforms are frequently involved in transmedia franchises, these platforms usually work as transmedial extensions, "making the fictional world more believable" (FIGUEIREDO, 2022, p. 6). One could argue that the social media profiles for *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries'* are extensions of the audiovisual media. Furthering the argument for *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* as a transmedial adaptation, the world of the Bennet sisters is expanded over two books: *The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet* (2014) and *The Epic Adventures of Lydia Bennet* (2015). However, *Such Tweet Sorrow* is a transformation, but not an extension of *Romeo and Juliet*, and, in fact, *#ShakespeareNoFilter* transforms and *abridges* its source texts. Lastly, "digital adaptation" is a category that encompasses all three adaptations. However, it groups literature-to-social-media adaptations with quite unlike media products, such as games, virtual reality experiences, ebooks, podcasts, and the aforementioned cyberformances[114]. Digital adaptation is a concept so vague that leads to the exact type of ambiguity in Intermedial and Adaptation Studies that this research aims to avert. Unfamiliarity with the digital may lead to a false assumption that all digital media are similar. However, as quoted before, digital is a "loose and generic term" (DIXON, 2017, p. X), which is exactly why the concept of digital adaptation should be further qualified.

The first step in understanding literature-to-social-media adaptations as a qualified media type, taken in the second chapter, was to observe that literature-to-social-media adaptations belong to an emerging tradition of similar processes of media transformation. As aforementioned, the tradition of adapting literary sources for digital communication platforms dates back to 1993[115]. Although some adaptations to virtual stages are pioneers in different ways, analyzing each of these works individually, as inaugural acts, may not be fruitful. The

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[114] For a discussion on cyberformance, see section 3.1.

[115] *Hamnet*, a precursor of literary adaptations to digital media, is discussed on section 3.2.

similarities in these productions illuminate relevant characteristics in them. Even though the three productions under investigation were chosen purposely due to their difference in their chosen stages, comparative investigation reveals parallels in media modalities, technical media of display, and themes.

In terms of the material modality, all digital media are the same. That is, some elements are common to all digital media. In "Language in Digital Motion", Heather Lotherington presents the pixel as the shared materiality of pictures and letters in digital multimodal communication. Pixels are a technical attribute of digital displays, the smallest element of any digital visual configuration, frequently represented as minuscule colored squares. According to Lotherington,

> [t]ext composition today engages and remixes graphic resources, sound files, and moving images from gifs to videos into alphabetic text in a key stroke. Elemental semiotic resources, such as pictures and letters, are essentially mashable by virtue of their shared materiality: the pixel. Mobile smart devices embed a portable digital toolkit for designing, producing, and sharing multimedia texts. Making sophisticated multimedia texts on a smartphone is easy-as-pie. (LOTHERINGTON, 2021, p. 228)

Lotherington recognizes that media products related to the sensorial modality of visuality are built of pixels, and thus can be easily combined. As pixels are characteristic of a technical media of display that only realizes visual configurations, they are the shared materiality of digital visual media. There is, however, a shared materiality of all visual and auditory media: the bit. A bit, short for binary digit, is the basic unit of digital information. Bits are materially non-solid, can be stored in digital devices, and transmitted through data cables or wireless communication. Every picture and letter, every tweet, vlog, and selfie are but a long string of bits. Pixels are a visual realization of information shared and stored in bits. Sound waves emanating from a smartphone's speaker are the auditory realization of information also shared and stored in bits. If pixels are the shared materiality of visual digital media, bits are the shared materiality of all digital media.

Technicalities aside, the fact that all digital media is materially the same has some implications. For instance, the technical media of display for Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram are the same. *Such Tweet Sorrow*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, and *#ShakespeareNoFilter* are displayed by flat, two-dimensional digital screens realizing pixels that form verbal written text and visual images, which may be static or moving, and speakers emitting sound waves. Desktops, laptops, phones, and televisions are examples of electronic devices that can be used as technical media of display for these media products.

The spatiotemporal modality in literature-to-social-media adaptations has some distinguishing traits. First, temporality plays a major part in this qualified media type. These adaptations were performed for extended periods of time. The fragments that constitute *Such Tweet Sorrow* – e.g. tweets, videos, Tumblr posts – were posted over five weeks. The first vlog by Lizzie Bennet was shared on YouTube almost a year before the last regular episode, and a special episode was published over a year later, totaling more than two years separating the first act and the epilogue. Each of the three Shakespearean plays of *#ShakespeareNoFilter* was performed for approximately one month. The length of these performances is a consequence of the chosen stage. Social media publications are characterized as real-time broadcasting of events that may be public (e.g a music festival, a convention) or private (e.g. a marriage proposal, a skincare routine). As the sequence of fictional events represented in these productions unravels for weeks, months, or even a year of the characters' lives, these adaptations chose to make the duration of the performance equivalent to real time. In literature-to-social-media adaptations events are represented in their full fictional duration. That said, a spatiotemporal trait of the qualified media type of literature-to-social-media adaptations is that the progression of diegetic time is tied to chronological time.

Moreover, the spatiality of literature-to-social-media adaptations is also noteworthy. Surely, their spatiality is digital, but these productions have a fragmentary spatial quality within digital environments. When the environment of social media is considered, the tweets, vlogs, or selfies that make an adaptation of this sort are discontiguous – meaning that, while the printed pages of a novel are bound to each other, social media fragments are boundless. Nowadays, when these productions are revisited, there is a sense of contiguity that does not represent how they were received during the extended period of time of their performances. After the conclusion of these performances, if one desires to access *Such Tweet Sorrow*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, and *#ShakespeareNoFilter*, it is likely that the person would go directly to a corresponding social media profile. From there, they would be able to see the related posts, from the beginning to the end, sorted in chronological order. However, this is not a complete access to any of these productions, as aforementioned, they all involved more than one social media account[116]. Still, it would be an immensely more contiguous reception than the real-time experience. Borrowing Diana Taylor's category, these adaptations can no longer be accessed as performances but only as archives (TAYLOR, 2003 p. 21). After all, as discussed before, liveness, as a fundamental characteristic of performances, is a consensus in

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[116] For a discussion on the different social media platforms involved in these adaptations, see sections 4.1.3, 4.2.3 and 4.3.3.

performance studies, a field with little general agreement. During the time that separated the first and last increment of these productions, people who followed *Such Tweet Sorrow*'s characters on Twitter, subscribed to *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, or followed the British Council on Instagram would see, displayed on the screen of their electronic device, fragments of fiction appearing in the midst of their social media feeds. A social media feed is a digital stream of information, which can be organized in chronological or algorithmical order, featuring digital content from diverse sources within a platform. That is, fragments of literature-to-social-media adaptations appeared amidst news stories, selfies, life updates from family and friends, or anything else that was shared by people on their social media networks. Consequently, not every member of the audience will access every fragment of these productions. In relation to *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* there is evidence for the fragmentary reception of these adaptations. For instance, the most watched episode is the first, with over three and a half million views[117], however, the second episode most watched is the ninety-eighth, which amounts to a million and seven hundred thousand views[118]. This indicates that part of the audience for *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* watched episode ninety-eight, but never watched earlier episodes, with lower view counts. Therefore, the digital spatiality of literature-to-social-media adaptation is discontiguous, which amounts to fragmentary reception.

In terms of sensorial modalities, literature-to-social-media adaptations are visual and auditory. Visuality is a major trait of all three social media platforms under analysis. At the time of these productions, Twitter was mostly visual, YouTube was mostly audiovisual, and Instagram was both visual and audiovisual. As mentioned before, at the time *Such Tweet Sorrow* was produced, the only media type afforded by Twitter was written text[119]. However, the production used different platforms to share other types of media. For instance, in the early morning of April 13, Mercutio complains about Romeo snoring[120], asks for suggestions about how he should wake Romeo up[121], and how he could share the audio he recorded of Romeo snoring on Twitter[122]. Later, Mercutio uses AudioBoo to share an audio file titled "Romeo-has-the-horn"[123]. Although "Romeo-has-the-horn" can no longer be accessed, the context makes evident that it featured snoring sounds. This use of AudioBoo is exemplary of

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[117] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KisuGP2lcPs>.
[118] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #98:<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ncnZjwF50k>.
[119] For a discussion on Twitter, see section 4.1.2.
[120] See the following tweet: <https://twitter.com/mercuteio/status/12097034313>.
[121] See the following tweet: <https://twitter.com/mercuteio/status/12097720890>.
[122] See the following tweet: <https://twitter.com/mercuteio/status/12098175189>.
[123] Originally, the audiofile could be accessed on <http://boo.fm/b115859>.

how media other than written text – photographs, videos, and audio files – were not used to further the plot. Instead, the production explored the affordances of different platforms for fragments of performance that allowed for character development. Among the three productions under discussion, *Such Tweet Sorrow* was the only one that created media products consisting of purely auditory signs.

Lastly, when semiotic modalities are considered, literature-to-social-media adaptations are mostly made of symbols and icons – as aforementioned, tweet signs are mostly symbolic[124], as language is based on conventions; on the other hand, social media photographs are predominantly iconic because their sort of representation is mostly based on similarity. Symbolicity and iconicity both are major traits of vlogs. First, spoken language frequently plays a part in the signification of vlogs. Second, the audience recognizes the people and objects that are represented visually in videos based on resemblance. The iconicity in Lizzie Bennet's plays-within-play is noteworthy. In her vlogs, Lizzie impersonates family and friends. For such, based on looks, she establishes icons for each person. For example, a combination of a blue hat, pastel color scarf, and pearl jewelry stands for her mother[125], while a brown beret with a red bow tie stands for William Darcy[126]. Although indexicality is not as frequently involved in these productions, it is worth noticing that indexical signs were used to attest to the presence of a body in relation to *Such Tweet Sorrow*, which is a mostly disembodied performance. For instance, the audio file named "Romeo-has-the-horn" brings awareness to the actor's body, featuring sounds related to snoring, a bodily function. The meaning of these snoring sounds lies in the contiguity of this sign with the actor playing Romeo. "Romeo-has-the-horn" is a trace of Romeo. Furthermore, shared by Mercutio, this audio file also serves as evidence that, on the morning of April 13, Romeo and Mercutio were supposedly present in the same environment. It works as a footprint of the event reported on Twitter – namely, that Romeo had been snoring on the morning of April 13. Similarly, the photographs used as profile pictures used in the Twitter accounts from *Such Tweet Sorrow* also have indexical significance. The faces of the actors, who played the characters, establish a sense of contiguity between their virtual written textual production and an actual body. In a way, these photographs put back the bodies of the people tweeting into a digital space that, not affording visual media, is characterized by the absence of bodies. On account of *Such Tweet Sorrow*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, and *#ShakespeareNoFilter* being fictional

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[124] For a discussion on the semiotic modality of Twitter, see section 5.2.
[125] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KisuGP2lcPs>
[126] See *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* #7: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SPDX0rOuds>

productions, it becomes strikingly evident that the identity of each character from each of these productions was carefully constructed: literature-to-social-media adaptations shed light on the fabrication of identities in digital spaces.

5.4 Media Transparency and Opacity in Digital Environments

In "Romancing the Anti-Body" (1996), before discussing her own artistic production, Lynn Hershman Leeson presents three case studies of conflicting identities and bodies in digital spaces during the 1980s and 1990s (i.e. digital impersonation, identity theft, and virtual creatures that reproduced and evolved within a virtual reality system). Hershman Lesson considers all these "nonbodies" cases.

Identity is a persistent theme in Hershman's oeuvre. From site-specific installations to feature-length movies, she belongs to a tradition of artists who, as she describes, "have attempted to reauthenticate reality by dissolving the boundaries between art and life" (HERSHMAN LEESON, 1996, p. 325). For instance, an artwork she associates with such efforts is *Rrose Sélavy*, Marcel Duchamp's pseudonym/persona from the 1920s, described by Hershman as "a nonbody through which Duchamp could escape fixed identity" (HERSHMAN LEESON, 1996, p. 329). She similarly frames her performance *Roberta Breitmore*, from 1973, as "a private performance of a simulated persona. In an era of alternatives, she became an objectified, disembodied, alternative personality (. . .) She was a nonperson, the gene of the anti-body" (HERSHMAN LEESON, 1996, p. 330). Evidently, *Rrose Sélavy* and *Roberta Breitmore* are offline performances. That is, neither the creation of alternative identities nor the attempts at crossing the borders of fiction depend on internet access.

However, Hershman acknowledges the affordances of digital spaces in such artistic endeavors. The artist argues that "[p]rior to this decade, there has been no medium available to render ideas about the 'edge of life' as effectively and instantly as cyberspace" (HERSHMAN LEESON, 1996, p. 325). If Hershman can be considered a pioneer in new media, much is due to her perspective on the construction of identities in digital platforms. A decade before social media platforms became popular, she observed that "[i]dentity is the first thing you create when you log on to a computer service. By defining yourself in some way, whether through a name, a personal profile, an icon, or a mask, you also define your audience, space, and territory" (HERSHMAN LEESON, 1996, p. 325). That is, one must build their online identity before communicating through a digital platform. The construction of an

identity may be as simple as choosing a nickname and profile picture or as elaborate as modeling a 3D avatar. Nevertheless, assuming a synthetic identity is a mandatory step. In this way, every communication between virtual selves is a conversation between constructed identities. As Hershman highlights, people can be "anything" of their imagination (HERSHMAN LEESON, 1996, p. 326). When setting up a virtual self, people may conform to their bodies in relation to gender, age, and ethnicity, for instance, or dislocate even their species and assume an identity modeled after their pet dog. That is, one may choose to align or to deviate from their physical attributes. Furthermore, as Giannachi noted,

> Hershman draws attention to one of the paradoxes of cyberspace: the more sophisticated the fake (simulation), the more authentic (and 'truthful') it appears. Thus, cyberspace is not so much a place for authenticity and truthfulness, but rather the site of simulation, artifice, and performance. In other words, it is the very theatre of the real (GIANNACHI, 2004, p. 144).

Paradoxically, the perception of authenticity in a digital identity is more closely related to the sophistication of its construction, than to how accurately the digital identity conforms to the physical body in control of it. In the context of Instagram, an identity meticulously crafted with hundreds of photos and videos, followed by thousands of accounts, appears more truthful than an account that lacks any effort in its setup, with no posts or followers. Even if the first digital identity is that of a dog, and the second identity corresponds to an actual living human. As Hershman puts it, "[t]ruth is precisely based on the inauthentic!" (HERSHMAN LEESON, 1996, p. 325). In digital environments, truth claims are not based on authenticity, but on the effort put into the construction of identities and their narratives.

Digital environments are not pioneers in deception through media, nor have such artifices originated in the twentieth century. Hershman Leeson attributes to Renaissance artist Leon Battista Alberti the promulgation of "an age of exquisite illusionism" (HERSHMAN LEESON, 1996, p. 329). In *On Painting* (2004 [1435]), Alberti introduces a method for linear perspective, in which geometry is used to create an illusion of depth on flat surfaces. When describing his own process, the artist states, "[f]irst of all, on the surface on which I am going to paint, I draw a rectangle of whatever size I want, which I regard as an open window through which the subject to be painted is seen" (ALBERTI, 2004, p.54). Alberti looked at his paintings as windows; this metaphor is an optimal illustration of Bolter and Grusin's concept of immediacy. The logic of immediacy is that "the medium itself should disappear and leave us in the presence of the thing represented" (BOLTER, GRUSIN, 1999, p. 6). A painting that looks like an open window is invisible as a painting; in such paintings, all that is to be seen

are the painted subjects, and that is what the logic of immediacy dictates. Discussing the Albertian method, Bolter and Grusin state, "students of linear perspective promised immediacy through transparency. They trusted in linear perspective to achieve transparency because, by mathematizing space, it used the 'right' technique to measure the world" (BOLTER; GRUSIN, 1999, p. 24). In other words, these painters used mathematics to create an illusion of transparency, "[i]f executed properly, the surface of the painting dissolved and presented to the viewer the scene beyond" (BOLTER, GRUSIN, 1999, p. 25). Thus, the illusionary aspect of Alberti's technique is evident: the goal was to create a painting that did not look like a painting, but rather like a window, the reason why linear perspective can be referred to as "the technique that effaced itself as technique" (BOLTER, GRUSIN, 1999, p. 24). Put simply, it is a painting technique that exists so that it cannot be seen. Paradoxically, a hard-to-achieve but successful attempt at immediacy calls attention to itself, "the artist's success at effacing his process, and thereby himself, became for trained viewers a mark of his skill and therefore his presence" (BOLTER, GRUSIN, 1999, p. 25). Renaissance painters succeeded as illusionists, articulating art and mathematics for a method in which the painting – and the artist – disappeared, and that put them and their technique into evidence.

The logic of immediacy and illusions of transparency still prevail in contemporary times. In terms of hardware, the technology industry's inclination for screens that seem borderless is exemplary of this logic (see KELLY, 2023). The search for borderlessness strives for a sense of continuity between the image displayed and the space that surrounds the screen. In terms of software, immediacy is also valued. For instance, Bolter and Grusin describe the immediacy of the "desktop metaphor":

> The desktop metaphor, which has replaced the wholly textual command-line interface, is supposed to assimilate the computer to the physical desktop and to the materials (file folders, sheets of paper, inbox, trash basket, etc.) familiar to office workers. The mouse and the pen-based interface allow the user the immediacy of touching, dragging, and manipulating visually attractive ideograms. Immediacy is supposed to make this computer interface "natural" rather than arbitrary. (BOLTER, GRUSIN, 1999, p. 23)

That is, through iconic representations of analog objects in place of their digital counterparts these interfaces make parallels to office spaces. The desktop metaphor also introduced ways for manual interaction mediated by mouse or pen, evocative of pre-digital spaces. In that way, the gap between life before and after computers was abridged. However, the authors discuss how this model is not yet perfectly transparent. The goal would be a total erasure of the interface, "[w]hat designers often say they want is an 'interfaceless' interface, in which there

will be no recognizable electronic tools – no buttons, windows, scroll bars, or even icons as such" (BOLTER, GRUSIN, 1999, p. 23). Once again, the end game of immediacy would be total transparency.

> In this sense, a transparent interface would be one that erases itself, so that the user is no longer aware of confronting a medium, but instead stands in an immediate relationship to the contents of that medium.
> The transparent interface is one more manifestation of the need to deny the mediated character of digital technology altogether. (BOLTER, GRUSIN, 1999, p. 23-24)

That is, similar to Renaissance artists using linear perspective, designers working within the logic of immediacy strive for an interface that not only does not call attention to itself but ultimately cannot be seen. However, as of 2023, after more than two decades of technological development since the publication of *Remediation*, windows, scroll bars, and icons are still present in the interfaces of the most popular operating systems for smartphones – iOS and Android. In terms of software, opacity survives, and digital windows have become a metaphor for decentered digital identities,

> [t]he development of windows for computer interfaces was a technical innovation motivated by the desire to get people working more efficiently by cycling through different applications. But in the daily practice of many computer users, windows have become a powerful metaphor for thinking about the self as a multiple, distributed system. The self is no longer simply playing different roles in different settings at different times, something that a person experiences when, for example, she wakes up as a lover, makes breakfast as a mother, and drives to work as a lawyer. The life practice of windows is that of a decentered self that exists in many worlds and plays many roles at the same time. In traditional theater and in role-playing games that take place in physical space, one steps in and out of character; MUDs, in contrast, offer parallel identities, parallel lives. The experience of this parallelism encourages treating on-screen and offscreen lives with a surprising degree of equality. Experiences on the Internet extend the metaphor of windows — now RL itself, as Doug said, can be "just one more window." (TURKLE, 2011, p. 14)

Therefore, interfaces affect our perception of our experiences with identity. Multiple windows, simultaneously running multiple applications, are a visual metaphor for our parallel lives. Thus, it is not surprising that present-day interfaces are not transparent and have been purposely made present in cinema and literature. When digital icons appear in other media they are operating under the logic of hypermediacy, "[a] style of visual representation whose goal is to remind the viewer of the medium" (BOLTER, GRUSIN, 1999, p. 272). That is, when such interfaces are evoked by other media they are made entirely opaque – digital media are there to be seen.

The presence of digital interfaces in cinema and literature has sneakily grown. Increasingly, smartphones and social media platforms are part of the diegesis of contemporary narratives. Matching the audience's habits, fictional characters are frequently represented as social media users. It has been noted that the presence of digital media in cinema aims to add a sense of truthfulness to audiovisual narratives. In "Truthfulness and Affect via Digital Mediation in Audiovisual Storytelling", Chiao-I Tseng describes how cinema has used mediated images,

> [u]sing mediated images to increase the truthfulness has been applied in cinema for decades. For instance, Oliver Stone's film JFK (1991) cuts between actual footage of the alleged assassin Lee Harvey Oswald and the staged images of actor Gary Oldman who plays Oswald. It mixes fact with fiction to propagate the idea that Kennedy was the victim of a conspiracy. Phyllida Lloyd's Iron Lady (2011) uses a similar strategy, intercutting between close-ups of Meryl Streep and real news footage, which sometimes includes archival images of Margaret Thatcher, in an attempt to blur the boundary between factual frames and fictional frames. Apart from biopics, several recent war films also use online news report, YouTube clips, Skype chats, and diegetic camera to add the realism and truthfulness of the representation of soldiers' experiences and trauma. (TSENG, 2021, p. 183)

Thus, archival images and news footage have been blended into fictional scenes, a movement described as a blurring between fact and fiction in cinema. In war films, digital platforms such as YouTube and Skype are used as claims of truthfulness. Further, through the representation of digital media, films simulate experiences afforded by these platforms.

> Another form of digital mediation draws on simulating the interactive experiences that we encounter each day, for example, social media on computer screen, smartphone interaction, and YouTube videos (. . .) this form of digital mediation has the potential for triggering our empathetic attachment drawing on the metaphorical projection from the communication that we encounter within our daily social circle. Nevertheless, along the same lines, the affective intensity of digital mediation is built upon combining our familiarity of the media forms and the contextualization of these digital media properties within the narrative semantics of story contents. (TSENG, 2021, p. 187)

Because social and other digital media are part of the daily experience of movie audiences, these platforms convey a sense of verisimilitude for audiovisual narratives. Accordingly, there is a recent surge of screenmovies, also known as screenlife, or computer screen films. Timur Bekmambetov, the Russian-Kazakh film director for *Profile* (2018) and *Searching* (2018), and producer for *Unfriended* (2014), describes computer screen films as "a new format of cinema in which all the action takes place on the protagonist's computer screen" (BEKMAMBETOV, 2015). In other words, screenmovies are a narrative audiovisual genre in which the action happens through digital applications (e.g. web browsers, electronic text messaging, and

videoconferencing software). The thrillers *Profile* (2018), in which an undercover journalist uses Facebook to investigate the Islamic State, and *Searching* (2018), in which a father searches for his missing daughter through her digital footprints, are examples of screenmovies. The horror films *Unfriended* (2014) and *Host* (2020), which take place on video calls on Skype and Zoom, respectively, are also exemplary of this audiovisual storytelling format. In terms of experience, watching a screenmovie is similar to looking at a computer screen and listening to the sounds emitted by a computer loudspeaker; it is a computer-like experience, minus the interaction. Bekmambetov states,

> [t]he birth of the screenmovie is preconditioned by the evolution of communication. The average person spends more and more time in front of the computer screen and looking at their smartphone. Virtual reality is replacing reality proper. Virtual reality has long since become part of various art forms, exemplified, among others, in multimedia and hyperlanguage. Virtual reality has its own laws, which, logically, infiltrate film and other media (BEKMAMBETOV, 2015)

In that way, screenmovies are a response to the change of behavior induced by virtual realities. It is noteworthy how the iconicity of interfaces is made present in these films; the presence of digital technology is frequently communicated by means of visual references to software interfaces. For instance, in *Unfriended* (2014) the video call is not in full screen, meaning that the audience can not only see the windows of the characters' cameras but also the Apple menu bar, which appears on the top part of the screen. In *Host* (2020), the Zoom menu bar appears at the bottom of the screen – the icons that stand for the microphone and camera, along with icons for security options (a shield), the participants (two human figures), the chat (a speech balloon), the screen sharing option (an arrow framed by a square), the recording options (a round rec light) and reactions (a smiling face) are a constant presence on the film. That is, cinema uses digital media's iconography to represent contemporary life convincingly. Authenticity is not achieved through the logic of immediacy or transparency, but through hypermediacy, when films evidentiate the iconicity of digital media interfaces.

Similarly, printed media can also borrow from digital media to foster a feeling of familiarity. An example is Random House's aforementioned "OMG Shakespeare Series"[127]. In this series, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* and *Macbeth* are retold through electronic text messages – that is, the playscript was transformed, formatted, and printed as if it were text messages. The series is published by the publisher's division of children's books and targets "hip theater lovers and teens" (OMG SHAKESPEARE, 2023). In

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[127] For a discussion on YOLO Juliet, from the "OMG Shakespeare Series", see section 4.1.4.

terms of visual presentation, the dialogue is printed in blue and grey speech balloons, evoking Apple's instant messaging application, and monologues appear over a ruled yellow background, reminiscent of the classic layout in Apple's Notes application. Further, the presence of emojis is extensive – frequently, a single message features several emojis. In terms of writing, the series assimilates internet slang such as ASAP, BRB, and IRL, providing a glossary of abbreviations "for those not in the know" (SHAKESPEARE; WRIGHT, 2015, p. 96). Once again, under the logic of hypermediacy, elements from digital media are made present to enhance a sense of familiarity – bringing recognizable media traits, such as visual elements and writing style, to Elizabethan theater, a qualified media type that may be unfamiliar to teenagers.

5.5 All Social Media Are Stages

While other qualified media types, such as cinema and literature, may represent digital media to enhance a sense of authenticity, in literature-to-social-media adaptations the trustworthiness of social media is frequently put into question. For instance, from a critical standpoint, *Such Tweet Sorrow* and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* shed light on how social media users are unreliable narrators of their own stories. Even further, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* features the owner of a technology company using its access to a user's personal data for his own advantage, to the detriment of the user[128]. Lastly, in *Hamlet, #ShakespeareNoFilter* presents electronic text messaging as a type of communication that is vulnerable to impersonators.

In the first literature-to-social-media adaptation discussed, *Such Tweet Sorrow*, a character who takes a critical stance in relation to social media is Jago. As aforementioned, Jago is a secondary character and, differently from the main characters, the social media platform he favors is Tumblr[129]. However, he also had a Twitter presence: each time he posted on Tumblr, a link for the post was shared on his Twitter account. He is not a Capulet or a Montague, in fact, he is not even a friend, he is but a young man who attends Juliet's school. He presents himself as a "spy camera" – sees everything and is not seen (JAGO, 2010a). As an outcast, he antagonizes Juliet, Romeo, and the others. According to Jago, the narration in *Such Tweet Sorrow* is unreliable, there is "stench coming up from the Capulet drains" and there are "gaps between the Montague's tweets" (JAGO, 2010a). Supposedly, there are

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[128] See Domino #5: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5przNqJOQrU>
[129] For a discussion on Jago, see section 4.1.3.

inconsistencies between the way Jago witnesses events unfolding, and how they are reported by the main characters through social media. Addressing the audience directly, he promises that he is the one narrating what is "really going on" (JAGO, 2010a). What he sees is not what is told to the audience by the other characters. For instance, his account of a key moment of *Such Tweet Sorrow* contradicts Romeo's version. In this literature-to-social-media adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, Tybalt and Mercutio are killed after a football match. Although there is a consensus that Mercutio was murdered by Tybalt, versions diverge in relation to the circumstances surrounding Tybalt's death. Romeo is adamant that he was self-defending against Juliet's brother, and that Tybalt's death was accidental. Jago reports it differently. According to him, in a move that "[d]oesn't look like self defence [sic]" (JAGO, 2010b), Romeo "piles in" the brawl and murders Tybalt. Providing evidence to his claim, Jago shares a shaky video,[130] which supposedly shows Romeo entering the fight late. Further, Jago appeals to the audience, asking the "lurkers[131] out there" (JAGO, 2010b) to send the video to Juliet's sister, who until that point also believed in Romeo's innocence. Calling attention to how the characters from *Such Tweet Sorrow* leave "gaps" when broadcasting their private lives, Jago is also highlighting the general unreliability of narration in social media. Such unreliability is related to the "gaps" that are left untold, that is, what a user chooses not to share. Also, the fact that a social media post represents the subjective perspective of a single person makes it even less trustworthy. Even when all main characters repeat the same version of a fact (e.g. Romeo killed Tybalt as an act of self-defense), it may not be an accurate representation of how an event unfolded. After all, Jago himself is an unreliable narrator, who is moved by his personal interests and antagonism in relation to Juliet and Romeo.

Next, in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, the reliability of social media is also questioned. Similarly, it is the antagonist, George Wickham, who puts the truthfulness of social media to the test. As previously introduced, Lizzie Bennet's younger sister, Lydia, keeps a vlog on a YouTube channel of her own. In her vlogs, Lydia frets about school exams and shares her excitement about parties. She is a cheerful young woman whose biggest struggle is finding a good balance between schoolwork and her social life. Until she starts dating and moves in with George Wickham. From that point on, her vlogs work as a commentary on how social media users choose how to frame the stories they tell. In her vlogs, Lydia and George act as if they have a happy and passionate relationship. However, the audience soon learns that

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[130] See Jago Mosca's video: <https://vimeo.com/11479068>.
[131] In social media lingo, lurkers are people who use these platforms passively. Lurkers read and watch, but do not post or interact directly with other users. In relation to *Such Tweet Sorrow* and other literature-to-social-media adaptations, the audience mostly "lurks".

Wickham is controlling and abusive. Deceiving Lydia, he sells an intimate video of hers to a subscription-based website. Framed as a social media love story, George's interest in Lydia was strictly financial – he saw her online popularity as an opportunity for easy money. Furthermore, it is also noteworthy how *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* thematizes the handling of users' private data by digital companies. In order to interrupt the release of Lydia's video, Gigi Darcy calls George using the app developed by Pemberley Digital[132]. To answer her call, George downloads and installs the app. Through this installation, George involuntarily gives Pemberley Digital access to his digital footprints[133]. Hence, in a breach of George's privacy, William Darcy is able to discover for which company Lydia's tape was sold. With this information in his hands, he is able to cancel the tape's distribution. Even though Darcy's action is righteous, and framed in the production as heroic, such denouement works as a digital media cautionary tale. After all, it puts into evidence how companies behind apps can access more information about their users than they suppose. It highlights that installing apps can lead to a breach of users' privacy. In the end, the audience is left to reconsider how reliable are social media platforms. Not only because people may craft a distorted representation of their lives and relationships, but also because they may inadvertently provide these companies with personal data, that can be used against themselves, in accordance with the interest of the platforms and their shareholders.

Last, *#ShakespeareNoFilter's Hamlet* addresses the disembodiment of digital communication. Appropriately, the ghost of Hamlet's father is brought to this adaptation in the form of an unknown person who claims to be his deceased father and sends electronic text messages to Hamlet's phone[134]. Hamlet could not use his senses to recognize his interlocutor. If there was a body involved in this communication, he would be able to assess if the person speaking to him looked like his dead father, or even if the voice of this unknown addresser sounded like his father's voice. Usually, productions of *Hamlet* associate this spectral presence with an actor's body or voice; the trapdoors from Elizabethan playhouses allowed the actors to appear and disappear on the stage, rendering supernatural characters possible, such as spirits, devils, and ghosts (VIEIRA, 2012, p. 52). Otherwise, being contacted by a disembodied version of his father, social-media Hamlet is left to judge the authenticity of the messages through nothing but verbal written electronic text. Thus, Hamlet compares the way the unknown addresser composes the messages with the messages he had previously received

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[132] See Domino #4: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ksjeqs_IqMk>
[133] See Domino #5: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5przNqJOQrU>
[134] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BK3mxSyBsFE/>

from his father[135]. Claiming to be his father, he tells Hamlet that the cause of his death is poisoning and that it was Claudius who murdered him. Hamlet realizes that these messages mirror his father's digital communication. The resemblances he recognizes are the use of punctuation, erratic use of capital letters, and the fact that the messages addressed him using the same nickname his father used for him. The fact that Hamlet believed the messages were authentic is decisive. Due to characteristics that are easy to reproduce in digital communication, Hamlet is led to a relentless pursuit of revenge, which results in his death.

Ultimately, literature-to-social-media adaptations do not thematize social media to enhance a sense of familiarity. On the contrary, literature-to-social-media adaptations *defamiliarize* social media. The presence of overtly fictional literary characters sheds light on the lack of authenticity of these environments. In linear perspective paintings, the artist stands outside the scene he represents. Following Alberti's method, the painter creates an illusion of depth, a window to a place in which he is not. The technique creates an illusion of transparency and proximity, but those who observe a painting also stand outside and look at the represented subject from afar. Otherwise, literature-to-social-media adaptations are windows that are built from within these platforms. If a digital passerby, who participates in these digital environments, looks through these windows, what they see is a representation of the artificiality of social media. In a sense, these adaptations are interior windows for the inner workings of social media. The characters from *Such Tweet Sorrow* have their reliability constantly challenged by Jago Mosca, who denounces their partiality and artificiality. After all, he offers what he claims to be video evidence for Romeo's dishonesty regarding Tybalt's death. The audience then faces a dilemma: which version can be trusted? Ultimately, can tweets be trusted? Similarly, the audience of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, learns that George has been emotionally abusing Lydia, and that he used her to fabricate a loving relationship for YouTube. Wickham was confident that he could use Lydia's vlogs to portray his misdeeds as a love affair. Once more, audience members are left to question: can vlogs be deceptive? Are vloggers' narration reliable? Finally, *#ShakespeareNoFilter*'s *Hamlet* places digital communication at the center of its conflict. Hamlet accepts that the text messages he received are authentic, and starts plotting revenge. To check the authorship of the messages, Hamlet clings to details that other people could easily replicate. Again, one may ask: what constitutes a digital identity, and can it be trusted? Hence, these adaptations are not celebrations of social media. On the contrary, literature-to-social-media adaptations are digital cautionary tales that invite skepticism about these platforms.

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[135] See @britishcouncileurope: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BK8m3TahHmO/>

Digital media are accepted as platforms that afford instantaneous communication. In comparison to "electronic mail", traditional postal services are called "snail mail". In Joyce Carol Oates' "Passions and Meditations" (1975), the literary source for Hershman Leeson's *Roberta Breitmore*, the protagonist sends letters to her romantic interest. Despite Roberta Bright's initially friendly tone, the letters remain unanswered. First, the protagonist entertains the idea that Keith Lurie has not written or called back because he has been busy or out of town (OATES, 1975, p. 131). Later, Roberta reveals to Keith that she knows that she has been ignored; she has seen him three times that week, while she sits in the park across from his apartment building, thinking about "the folly and cruelty of human relationships" (OATES, 1975, p. 132). Roberta insistently asks "[w]hy didn't you call?" (OATES, 1975, p. 132) and "[y]ou refuse to answer my letters. Why?" (OATES, 1975, p. 135). The source for *Roberta Breitmore* is an epistolary story about letters that fail their communicative purpose. Ultimately, all three literature-to-social-media adaptations investigated in this work similarly present social media as platforms that may not achieve their goal of conveying a message from an addresser to an addressee. In *Such Tweet Sorrow*, this aspect is evident in the failure of Laurence's tweets to reach Romeo, who has turned his phone off to avoid being tracked by the police. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, even though Lizzie's vlogs are public, and reach an audience of thousands, William Darcy fails to watch her videos, which leads to misinterpretation and miscommunication. Lastly, in *#ShakespeareNoFilter*, The Biologicals never read Egeus' comments, who ends up failing to alert them about Puck and Oberon's spells. Putting the communicative efficacy of social media into question is a shared characteristic of literature-to-social-media adaptations.

A synchronic investigation of *Such Tweet Sorrow*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, and *#ShakespeareNoFilter* reveals affinities that go beyond their digital materiality. The qualified media type of literature-to-social-media adaptations share many media traits, including media modalities, technical media of display, and thematic affinity. On the one hand, contemporary cinema and literature have been representing digital media's iconography, aiming at enhancing their audiences' sense of familiarity. On the other hand, literature-to-social-media adaptations are defamiliarizing social media – bringing fiction to platforms where fiction is not expected, dissolving boundaries between fictional and actual events; and stimulating a critical perception of the manufactured authenticity of social media platforms. All social media are stages.

6 CONCLUSION

Literature-to-social-media adaptations are worth investigating, not only as case studies but as a category of digital media products, a qualified media type. In this conclusion, a summary of key research findings is offered. It also includes a discussion on the ephemerality of social media, which is a research limitation, but also makes this dissertation a relevant firsthand account of media products that are discussed here – which are now subject to be deleted, due to recent changes in the platforms' policies. Additionally, some suggestions for further study are covered. Lastly, the dissertation ends with personal insights in relation to content creation on social media.

As demonstrated, *Such Tweet Sorrow, The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, and *#ShakespeareNoFilter* were produced by different companies, articulating different literary sources and social media. Nonetheless, a diachronic investigation of these productions reveals that they belong to a decades-long tradition of performances in virtual environments, and a synchronic investigation reveals that these productions share many media traits. As the expression "literature-to-social-media adaptations" indicates, these media products result from a similar process: the transformation from literary sources to a target social media platform.

However, in terms of the resulting media products, the similarities are not as evident; especially considering that Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram were developed for different basic media. The most pronounced correlation is related to the materiality of these adaptations. All digital media is materially the same, constituted by a non-solid unit of digital information: the bit. Approaching this qualified media type through Lars Elleström's methodology was effective in achieving the goal of identifying less conspicuous similarities, which was central to this research. The most striking findings are related to the spatiotemporal media modality. Their spatiality is noteworthy: despite the platform of choice, literature-to-social-media adaptations are fragmentary and circumscribed to a social media feed – that is, the fragments are delivered amidst a stream of information, made of different kinds of media products, such as news stories, videos, or else. Further, the temporality of literature-to-social-media adaptations is also a distinguishing feature: these performances are calculated to last the full duration of the fictional events they represent. Longer than most performances, the adaptations investigated lasted for weeks or even months. Besides, there is a metareferential aspect to literature-to-social-media adaptations, that frequently comment on aspects of the social media platforms in which they are staged.

Social media are continuously changing, and that is the biggest limitation of this dissertation. Every investigation on social media risks being outdated at the time of its publication, and that is the inevitable fate of the current pages. During the last months of this doctoral research, Twitter, under new administration, was rebranded. The company formerly known as Twitter is currently named X (CONGER, 2023). Expressions derived from the platform's original name are now becoming obsolete. Even though "tweet" and "retweet" were incorporated into contemporary speech and appeared on dictionaries' pages, X's administration removed the terms from the platform. Further, it was announced that inactive accounts on the platform will be removed (GERKEN, 2023). That is, the accounts and tweets that constitute *Such Tweet Sorrow* are now bound to be deleted, since the accounts have not been used since May 2010. Similarly, Twitter accounts for *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* have been inactive since June 2014. Furthermore, Google also announced the deletion of accounts that have been inactive for over two years (KORN, 2023). Due to Google's ownership of YouTube, the dependability of videos hosted on YouTube was questioned. The company has since stated that it does "not have plans to delete accounts with YouTube videos at this time" (KRICHELI, 2023), a statement that denies the exclusion of videos such as *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* in the existing time. However, this statement also makes evident that Google's plan to keep older YouTube videos online is not definitive. Ephemerality is the biggest shortcoming of every attempt at describing digital media phenomena, but it also gives more purpose to such endeavors.

The ephemerality of social media makes this dissertation a historical document for literature-to-social-media adaptations: a firsthand account of these productions. As mentioned before, the history of performances in digital media has been buried. In 2020, COVID-19 social distancing policies gave rise to a plethora of productions in which digital media were used to bring together remote performers and their audiences. Although performances like these existed for over two decades, these new media products were publicized as pioneers. Therefore, this dissertation is not only a media-conscious description and analysis of literature-to-social media adaptations; it is also an archive of performances in digital environments – a humble effort against digital culture's tendency to undervalue its history and precursors. Although humble, such effort is especially pertinent in the here and now, as the preservation of social media history is being put at risk by the platform's administrations.

As literature-to-social-media adaptations belong to a tradition of virtual performances, this dissertation was also precursored by former works. This investigation is in debt of dissertations that came before, under the supervision of Thaïs Flores Nogueira Diniz, which,

in the last decade, cleared the path for graduate research on Intermedial and Adaptation Studies in the Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos Literários at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais. Namely, Erika Viviane Costa Vieira's *Espectros de Hamlet*: *questões de adaptação e apropriação* (2012), Glória Maria Guiné de Mello's *Metamorfoses de um rei: imagens de vilania em "Richard III" de William Shakespeare* (2013), Miriam de Paiva Vieira's *Dimensões da écfrase: a presença da pintura e da arquitetura em romances de artista* (2016), Camila Augusta Pires de Figueiredo's *Em busca da experiência expandida: revisitando a adaptação por meio da franquia transmidiática* (2016), and Flávia Rodrigues Monteiro's *Staging Shakespeare: (Dis)solutions in Intermedial Processes* (2019). This dissertation's literature review, which includes volumes published in the last years, especially Kamilla Elliott's *Theorizing Adaptation* (2020) and Lars Elleström's *Beyond Media Borders* (2021) is a contribution to this ongoing, and collective, investigation of intermedial and adaptation processes in our institution.

Studies on the potentialities of social media for literary adaptations are yet in their early stages. Thus, this dissertation was structured in a way that further studies may build upon this work: Lars Elleström's framework was elected for the elaboration of unambiguous descriptions of literature-to-social-media adaptations' media traits. Comparing other adaptations with this dissertation's corpus is likely to yield fruitful results. In relation to literature-to-social-media adaptation there are research questions that are still worth pursuing. Do fictional performances on social media platforms that do not borrow from literary sources also demonstrate a tendency to metareferentiality? There are also questions appertaining to the future of such endeavors. For instance, how will transmediations from literature to social media adapt to recent changes in social media platform's policies, in which authentication will be required from all users, who will have to prove to be "real humans"? (see FUNG, 2022)

On a personal note, investigating literature-to-social-media adaptations after running a social media project informed my analysis. During these years, *mimimidias* not only worked as a social media laboratory but also granted me access to the backstages of social media production. For example, in 2019, *mimimidias* was invited to be a part of Science Vlogs Brasil – an initiative that brings together sixty of the leading science communication projects in the country. Hence, as I researched these adaptations, I have been in contact with other people who were experimenting with the potentialities and limitations of these platforms. I got acquainted with the challenges and discussions around social media production. I also gained particular knowledge about the technicalities of this process. In *Theorizing Adaptation* Kamilla Elliott suggests, "[r]ather than judge an adaptation's failure or success according to a

priori theoretical principles (aesthetics, narrative, politics, etc.), judge it by how adaptive it is" (2020, p. 237). In order to assess how adaptive literature-to-social-media adaptations are, one must be intimate with social media platforms, and their users' practices. For instance, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*' adequations to the qualified medium of YouTube vlogs became evident. Not only in terms of what I could see in lighting, setting, or framing but also regarding the technical information shared by Charlotte – who claims to use a similar camera and video editing software to what I personally used to create YouTube videos. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*' implicated meticulous adaptive effort, a conclusion that comes from personal experience.

Such an up-close perspective made it evident that all digital media are definitely not equal. On the contrary, the notion of "digital adaptation" is myopic. Besides the shared digital materiality of the bit, there are not many media similarities between a literature-to-social-media adaptation and a videogame, an e-book, or a podcast, for example. To comprehend digital media better, adaptation discourse needs further qualification, for which Lars Elleström's framework proved to be valuable. It is indisputable that companies that bring literary sources to social media are calling attention to social media's potential for artistic endeavors. Nevertheless, investigating social media from literature-to-social-media adaptations is not looking through rose-colored glasses. On the contrary, *Such Tweet Sorrow, The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, and *#ShakespeareNoFilter,* each in its own way, inspire a much-needed critical perspective on the ever-greater share of our social, cultural, and artistic lives dominated by social media platforms.

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GLOSSARY:

Audioboo: A smartphone application used for sharing auditory media.

Blog: A combination of the words "web" and "log", blogs are type of website, often written in the style of a diary.

Emoji: Standardized visual icons used in digital communication.

Final Cut Pro: A video-editing application developed by Apple.

Hashtag: Digital tags, prefaced by the hash sign (#), that can be searched and grouped.

Instagram: A smartphone application and social media, originally focused on mobile photography.

IRC: An acronym for Internet Relay Chat. It is an instant messaging service, focused on online discussion forums.

Last.FM: A music website in which users can display their listening habits and musical tastes.

LinkedIn: A social media platform focused on professional networking.

Livejournal: A social media platform focused on blogging.

Lookbook.nu: A website focused on fashion photography.

Profile: The collection of digital media and information that represents each individual user of a social media platform.

ReTweet: The reposting of a tweet.

Selfie: A digital self-portrait, often posted on a social media platform.

Spotify: A subscription streaming service focused on music and podcasts.

TikTok: A video-hosting service and social media platform, which focuses on vertical short-form videos.

Tumblr: A multimedia microblogging platform.

Tweet: A post made on Twitter.

TwitPic: A website that allowed users to share visual media on Twitter, it was discontinued after Twitter implemented visual media within its platform.

Twitter: A microblogging platform originally based on written text. In 2023, the platform's name was changed to "X".

User: Someone who uses the service of a social media platform.

VidCon: An annual convention focused on online video.

Vlog: Short for video blog. Generally, vlogs are diary-style online videos, based on personal experiences and opinions.

Vlogger: A person who creates and publishes vlogs, typically on YouTube.

YouTube: A video-sharing and social media platform.