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The Analysis of the Filmic
Adaptations of Shakespeare
History Dramas

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The Introduction

This dissertation will discuss about the filmic adaptations of two Shakespearean history dramas, *Henry V* and *Richard III*. Many film directors have moved these two plays from theatre to the cinema and not so easily because of the great importance of the work of William Shakespeare on theatrical stage. Clearly, each director has his own style in filming the Shakespearean play; some follow a theatrical mode of shooting the scenes, while others follow a filmic one. Therefore, the filmic mode gives a great importance to the visual aspect of the films while the theatrical mode focalises in the verbal aspect and the directors shoot the films as theatrical plays.¹ Every work has explicit characteristics, which belong to the ideas of the director, indeed, every reader interprets a book in his own way, this is what makes a film based on a book much more personal and it gives a touch of originality to the whole work.

The dissertation will discuss the main similarities and differences among the movies on Shakespeare, in addition, the topics and the ideas that are prevalent in the screenplays. I will explain the scenes looking at them from different points of view, which appear in several films about the plays; also, I will briefly present the style of the directors who filmed some adaptations of *Henry V* and *Richard III* in the twentieth century, for example, Laurence Olivier, Kenneth Branagh, Richard Loncraine, Al Pacino. According to the historical context the interpretation of the history dramas may change greatly, one example is *Henry V* directed by Laurence Olivier on 1944 during the last years of World War II.

Therefore, the fact that Great Britain was in war against Germany deeply influenced the content of the adaptation and the actors truly felt the tragicalness of war during the period required for shooting the film. Indeed, the actors were truly living a war situation, which was hard to face every day of those past years. Moreover, the aim of the dissertation is to

¹ 'The Filmic Mode' in Maurice Hindle, *Studying Shakespeare on film*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, p.77.

explore the two plays *Henry V* and *Richard III* through their cinematic adaptations discussing the similarities and differences between the filmic adaptations of the two history dramas. There are a certain number of characteristics, which differ among the films of the history dramas *Richard III* and *Henry V* while other characteristics are similar. They create a connection between the films despite different directors have worked in them. Indeed, in the dissertation, I will write about the types of shots and the plot of these films, what changes in the interpretation of the history plays from one director to another.

I will write in the first chapter of the dissertation about the story of the play *Richard III* which is about a man of the family of York who manages to become king illegitimately by the murder and execution of his enemies: relatives and political enemies. Moreover, I will present the plot of *Richard III*, which is a history drama, the story deals with political power, that is to say, the long quest for power of a character of the York family during the war of the roses who then becomes a villain for his own choice. There is much more to say about the protagonist, even in the play *Henry VI* Richard of Gloucester appears as well as other characters of *Richard III*: George, the Duke of Clarence, Edward Plantagenet, Hastings. Later, the story will explain how Richard reveals his purposes at the end of *Henry VI* to the audience after stabbing King Henry VI. In the other play, Richard fights against the Lancaster family so to give the crown of England to his father, the Duke of York, then, at a certain point, he decides to be selfish and to realise his personal objectives without thinking at his relatives. In addition, I will write about the play *Henry V* which talks of the English King Henry V and of the battle of Agincourt between England and France. In the play, Shakespeare discusses about political power and he concludes the story present in the tetralogy of history dramas. In the same chapter, I write about William Shakespeare and his plays and finally of the similarities and differences between the two history dramas: *Henry V* and *Richard III*.

Then, in the second chapter, I will talk about the main different styles of shooting the films and the personal life of five directors: Welles, Olivier, Branagh, Loncraine and Pacino. The third chapter will analyse mostly the two film adaptations of Olivier, *Richard III and Henry V* showing the similarities and differences between the interpretations of the two plays of Laurence Olivier. What the fourth chapter will outline is the comparison between Branagh's *Henry V* and Olivier's *Henry V*, what is the historical context of the two adaptations that have influenced the shooting of the scenes. The fifth chapter will

present the character of Richard of Gloucester and then I discuss the differences and similarities between two filmic versions of *Richard III* while describing also the characteristics of the two movies. The sixth chapter will present a film-documentary on *Richard III* called *Looking for Richard* directed by the actor-director Al Pacino who discusses with the cast about Shakespeare and the play *Richard III*. I write about the production of the documentary, the scenes of *Looking for Richard*, in addition, I will discuss the differences and similarities with Olivier's *Richard III* (1955) and Loncraine's *Richard III* (1995). In the seventh chapter, I will write a conclusion about adapting Shakespeare history dramas for the cinema explaining the pros and cons of the film adaptations, what they communicate to the audience nowadays and additionally, I will write about the adaptations of Shakespeare history dramas for the television, in particular, the two BBC series of *The Hollow Crown*.

Shakespeare for writing his history dramas took inspiration by the works of many authors such as Thomas More, who wrote *the History of Richard the Third* presenting the character also as ironical figure and not only as a bad ruler. During the period of Thomas More many voices spreaded about the kingdom of Richard III, there were also historical myths about him, which surrounded this figure, the myth of a really vicious and bad character who also ordered to eliminate Edward IV's children in the tower of London because they could have claimed the throne of England before or later.

Of course, at the Elizabethan's age, the description of Richard as a bad ruler and a tyrant could be useful for the Tudors dynasty since the Tudor's monarchies may have appeared much more legitimised to rule in England if Henry VII, the grandfather of Queen Elizabeth, a really bad character later defeated Richard. It is not sure whether Thomas More wanted to use his written work on Richard III² as a form of propaganda for the Tudors' monarchy and against the kingdoms of the York, nevertheless, his book influenced Shakespeare and spreaded the popular myth of Richard III as a child murderer and a ruler hungry of power. Historically the figure of Richard III is still ambiguous nevertheless; the Shakespeare play has deeply influenced the collective imagination on the character. According to H. A. Kelly, three theories spreaded during the period from

² 'Introduzione' in Thomas More, *The history of King Richard the Third*, G. Giappichelli, Editore Torino, 1964, p. x.

1399 to 1485: The Lancastrian myth considered Richard II's kingdom corrupted and Henry Bolingbroke, who providentially overthrew his cousin, was the rightful successor to Richard II. The Yorkish myth had an opposite theory than the Lancastrian, therefore, the Lancasters usurped the throne and they providentially lost their power. The Tudor myth thought that the revenge of the Lancaster took place with the defeat of Richard of York and King Henry VIII restored the Lancaster line.³

Chapter 1: William Shakespeare and the world of history dramas

1.1 The content of Shakespeare history dramas

William Shakespeare the best known writer in the history of British Literature; the name of this author remains widely known for his tragedies, but as well for his comedies. Critics also reminds him for one other genre, that, of history dramas, indeed, there is a large knowledge of these works, such as, *Richard II*, *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, and many others. The history of theatre has been widely influenced by the genius of William Shakespeare who put many important topics inside his plays, therefore, he has discussed through the actions, thoughts and words of his characters about family, love, death, religion, politics, morality and many other topics.

The figure of the King is important on history dramas where the protagonists are always monarchs: Shakespeare has written plays that dramatize the history of the English rulers and of their enemies and usually there are battles where the two parties fight each other. History plays have had a crucial function in the past since they have been useful to tell what happened hundreds or thousands of years ago putting historical characters in a Shakespearean context, that is to say, on a theatrical stage where the plot is partially fictional but at the same time, some events have really occurred. Those stories have had a particular function; they present the hidden face of politics, the crimes and the lies used

³ 'Introduction 2' in Graham Holderness, *Shakespeare's History*, Gill and MacMillan, Dublin St. Martin's Press, New York, 1985, p.22.

by the English rulers in the aim of rising to the throne and keeping the power, also their enemies act in the same manner for substituting the kings. Therefore, the history dramas show the political strategies of the kings to obtain the support of the people and of the members of their parties; nevertheless, this move does not always work or at least not for long and some characters will fail because of their tyranny and lack of morality in ruling his country.

In *Richard III*, the Earl of Richmond when he becomes *King Henry VII* speaks to the English subjects but also to the audience. Therefore, he announces the beginning of his kingdom with the promise of a new age of change and the union of the two roses, the red of Lancaster and the white of York with the marriage of Richmond with Elizabeth Tudor. The history plays have had an important function to tell British history to the people of Great Britain and to the whole world for centuries, now; it is difficult to imagine the characters of Richard III or Henry V differently from how William Shakespeare has described it. However, other historians such as Polydore Vergil, Hall and Holinshed wrote about the political career of Richard III and the chronicles of the battle of Agincourt was a source for the play *Henry V*. Indeed, these plays have influenced enormously the international audience and they have told the British history even if initially the author has written for entertaining the theatrical audience.

The play addresses to the future British people but also to the non-British audience to tell the story of the beginning of the kingdom of the first Tudor King and also of the ending of the rule of the last Yorkish King. One purpose of the history dramas is to discuss about political power and about how historical characters arrived at the throne and the ways in which power becomes legitimate.

Therefore, in the Shakespeare history plays kings either are unable to rule wisely, either they act violently against their opponents, such as, in the case of *Richard III* where Richard of Gloucester slowly becomes king killing or indirectly causing the death of his political enemies. Then, in the battle of Bosworth, his enemy Richmond will kill him in duel and the new king tells that the two families of York and Lancaster have united with his marriage with Elizabeth of York.

These historical plays have had an enormous impact on the audience for centuries; this is the reason why theatres have continued to show them even nowadays. Probably the critics

who know very well the plays written by William Shakespeare do not love history dramas and focus their attention on the tragedies such as *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, etc. These plays have influenced also the world of cinema, indeed, there is a great number of plays, which have become films and many adaptations are successful and a large degree of audience have seen them.

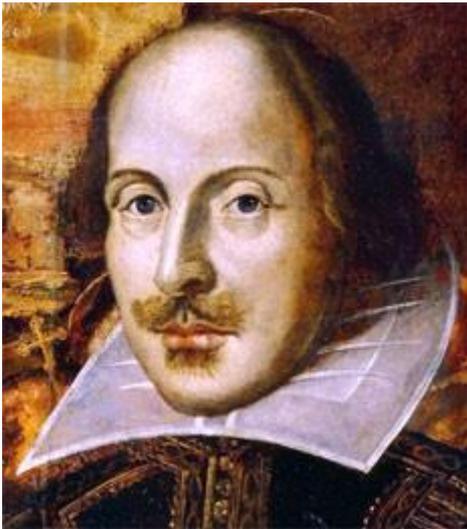


Illustration 1 William Shakespeare

1.2 The heritage of Shakespeare

Shakespeare was not only a writer but also an actor as well in his plays, so, he had a central role in making popular his works on theatrical stages. He discussed implicitly important moral questions with irony and style; some of his characters do speeches about politics and religion inviting the audience to understand the messages inside the texts. One famous example is Iago who manipulates Othello and the International audience with his words or Hamlet with his philosophical soliloquies where he quotes the Greek and Latin authors. They are quite ambiguous characters who have inspired many future critics

at writing essays on different disciplines. There is the presence of a character, which has heavily influenced several plays of Shakespeare, that is to say, the fate. It appears in the form of superstitions, so, there are oracles who prophesise what happens to the main characters. Many characters of the works of Shakespeare believe in the omens that they see in the story, indeed, the author suggests the ending of the story through the symbols appearing to the protagonist or to the antagonist.

A play, such as *Macbeth*, has among the characters witches who tell the future to the characters and they tell to the reader how the play ends, so, the prophecies of the witches deeply influence the characters and try to escape from their fate, nevertheless, despite their efforts everything happens as seen or told before. The fate transforms the destiny of the protagonist of *Macbeth*, since he begins as a hero who defeats the Thane of Cawdor and later he becomes ambitious and the witches tempt him to betray his sovereign. Therefore, since the beginning the fate decided that every character might win, lose, or have a special role. Behind the prophecies, the English author teaches moral lessons to the audience, especially, at the end of the plays.

The balance moves continually and as consequence the story becomes more curious and there is suspense while reading it until the story finishes. The Shakespearean plays may end well or end badly, it depends if the story is a comedy or a tragedy, but the comical style appears in his works, also in tragedy such as *Hamlet*, so to break from the tragic events, which occur during the development of the stories. The works of Shakespeare belong to different genres and it is often not so easy to define them, nevertheless, this is also an interesting characteristic, which make them much more original.

1.3 The story of the history plays written by William Shakespeare

The plot of *Henry V* and *Richard III* have a point in common; they both lie around the figure of an English King who fights against his enemies internally, and, externally. There is the presence of similarities and differences between the two plays, for example, the aims of the protagonists and of the antagonists, the beginning and the ending of the story. Both Henry and Richard have many opponents, they would fight each other until one side

or the other wins, therefore, a duel or a battle will decide the destiny of England at the conclusion of the play and the good characters will restore the order after the chaos of war.

It is difficult to foresee how the plays end, how the heroes will defeat the villains and how a character will reach the throne since the characters are not always coherent with their behaviour and they may change alliance multiple times, some characters do not survive and they appear as ghosts or their relatives mention them. At the end of the plays, one-side triumphs and the enemies surrender or die in battle, but, one play is not always enough to tell the story and there are plays which have two or three parts. Usually in long works, it is possible to know the characters more because there are more scenes and they appear more times than in a play lasting five acts.

The content of the Shakespearean plays becomes richer because of the complexity of the characters, indeed, some of them are present in many works and their personality is always the same. However, others change their role according to the play, once they seem to be the heroes and they defeat the villains, afterwards, they change alliances, they become murderers, and someone else will have to defeat them, such as, in *Richard III*. For example, Hal (Henry's name in the play *Henry IV* before he becomes King) has not an important function in the two parts of *Henry IV* as much as in *Henry V* (there is also the presence of his father as King of England).

On the contrary, an important figure is Falstaff, Hal's friend because he represents everything that Henry is not, a man who descends from a noble family, who does not like politics and he lives without duties in a tavern with his friends, a sort of eternal boy inside an old body. In *Henry IV*, Falstaff and Henry are so different to each other that they represent allegories of ideas about order and disorder. This is the reason why despite their friendship Henry pretends not to know Falstaff in the aim to be king since with the presence of Falstaff, the King cannot do his duty and his will and, so, they are friends and at the same time enemies of each other during the first tetralogy of Shakespeare history dramas.

Then, in *Henry V* the situation changes, so, Falstaff is very far from the new king because Henry banished him before becoming sovereign in *Henry IV*. Falstaff is not physically well in *Henry V*, indeed, *Henry V* describes him as a dying man, he suffers for the ending

of his friendship with Hal, and, at a certain point of the play, and his friends communicate his death to the audience. The death of Falstaff is a great loss for Shakespearean history dramas, the character who is completely opposite to Henry dies and the play gives space to other characters: Pistol, King Charles of France and his son, the Dauphin. The conscience of Henry also morally dies with Falstaff who has always challenged him at words and has taught him about politics in *Henry IV*, therefore, Henry is much more naïf in *Henry IV* when at that time he still has not political power on his hands.

Nevertheless, the irony of Falstaff does not die with him and one character who represents it is Pistol. Indeed, he says many jokes in *Henry V* and he behaves like a comical character until the battle of Agincourt where he loses his friend Nym and he discovers that his wife Nell died during his absence and then he decides to survive as a criminal.

Henry is not the same person described in *Henry IV*, indeed, after the death of his father he becomes the King of England. This event leads to a change in Hal, since he abandons his old friends of the Boar's head and he begins to lose his personality to do the will of the country. Indeed, he is no more the pupil and friend of Falstaff because of the heavy responsibilities of the crown. The use of the first plural person by Henry is one of the aspects that shows the transformation in his personality. Therefore, he is no longer only a person but also a king who speaks to his people and to his enemies in the aim to defend his country and the monarchy, but also to redeem the fault of his father. The fact that Henry IV becomes king with the murder of the rightful monarch has terrible consequences on the actions of his son, indeed, in *Henry IV*, Bolingbroke (Henry IV) wants to fight a war because he feels guilty on the manner in which he arrives at the throne.

Later, his son Henry V will do the war to France because he would like to redeem the faults of his family and he aims to become the Emperor of a Christian empire after defeating the kingdom of France. As the Chorus tells us, after Henry's death, England will lose France and the civil war will threaten the territory of England, then, the conflict of *Henry V* would produce additional blood to the country and Henry VI will have difficulties in reigning.

1.4 The plays: *Henry V* and *Richard III*

A famous scene where Henry shows his political strategy and cleverness to the audience is the meeting of a group of soldiers. He talks to them hiding his identity, that is to say, he hides to be the sovereign. What he does in that scene is explaining to his soldiers the importance of fighting for the King; he does everything in a clever way, even if one of them does not agree with Henry and they risk fighting each other. Indeed, Henry talks about himself while listening to the questions of his soldiers, then, he tries to convince his men of their duty towards their country even if he does not answer to their questions. Indeed, he talks about the responsibility of the King for the success or defeat of the war against France and of the non-responsibility of the King for the souls of the British subjects who will fight for England. Therefore, the soldiers know they will inevitably risk their lives and their souls for fighting a war between two kings and they are not so sure on the reasons for fighting.

One other aspect, which distinguishes King Henry V, is his cold behaviour with his enemies but also with his allies, which makes him a dark figure. Indeed, during the battle of Agincourt, he orders to kill the French prisoners, a difficult decision which makes understand how angry he is during the battle in France, where many of the soldiers of his troop died; the French also kill the pages, English boys who are unarmed, they are there to carry the standards.

Henry coldly orders to his soldiers to kill the French prisoners because of the attack of other French soldiers, so, he needs men to fight the remaining French otherwise they would lose. In addition, when King Henry sentences to death by hanging Bardolph for theft, he remembers about the joyous days of his friendship with Falstaff's fellowship and he feels pain about the sentence that he has to make, nevertheless, he gives the order to hang Bardolph using him as an example for all his people.

The battle of Agincourt becomes more and more cruel and it is a dangerous situation for Henry, since he goes to the breach with his soldiers and he can lose his life, nevertheless, he manages to survive losing many soldiers because the number of the French troops is much greater than the British ones. This play deals with the topic of war and it divides the critics, some consider *Henry V* a history dramas that William Shakespeare has written to condemn war in its cruelty while others think that this work glorifies the English

monarchy and the war against France. There is also a third opinion identifying the play as an ambiguous work with a double significance, so, Shakespeare aims at describing the horror of the war but eventually he glorifies the King of England against his enemies.

The topic of war is often present in history dramas because of the several wars occurring in the past and it explains the political situation of England in the centuries sometimes in war with France, Scotland or other nations.

At the beginning of the play, the English parliament (house of common) proposes to tax the ownerships of the church; the purpose is to give the properties and economic resources to the crown and to the aristocracy, but the Archbishop finds the way to avoid this operation by suggesting the idea of invading France. Doing so it would be possible to find much more treasures and money than taking resources by the English church. It seems that the clergy has a great influence in the decision of Henry V in the play despite the power of the King. Probably, the reason of this is the fact that Henry V feels to be devout to the religion or at least he apparently behaves in this manner.

Therefore, a sort of Christian King who tries to protect his people because he thinks they cannot survive without the leadership of Henry. However, Henry has already taken the decision to invade France and the bishop take advantage by this to avoid the loss or the decreasing of the incomes of the church. The play gives an enormous space to Henry, the character who mostly represents a political body (referring to the political theory of the double body of the King, which belongs to the Tudor's monarchy).

Indeed, he speaks to the other characters using the first plural person to represent for England and its people. The play *Henry V* deals with the concept of power and it does not hide what are advantages and disadvantages produced by the loyalty and disloyalty to the figure of the King.

Indeed, one example is when the King orders the death sentence to his old friend Bardolph, what happens is that his friend is accused of stealing inside a church and the punishment for this crime according to the law of his Kingdom is death sentence by hanging. Henry V cannot escape from that situation and since he is the King of England among his functions, he has to punish the traitors, the thieves, even if they are old friends such as Bardolph. The fellowship of Falstaff does not exist anymore, Falstaff, Nym and

Bardolph are dead, Pistol is alone on the court of battle and Henry becomes also King of France at the end of the war between England and France.

A Shakespearean work, which, is widely known everywhere in the world, is *Richard III*, a play that is among the most loved plays by the Shakespeare audience. The villain of the story influences the audience, then, he manages to convince many characters of his actions and he plays constantly with them. It happens in the case of Anne, his wife who tries to challenge her, seducing her at the wrong moment, during Anne's father-in-law funeral, Henry VI Richard confesses his crimes to her but he finds a way to attract her. During the three parts of *Henry VI*, the role of the protagonist is different because he is not so far from the definition of hero, contrarily from his role in *Richard III*; he takes part in the war between the families of Lancaster and York. Richard is the chief of the army, which fights against King Henry VI, and he wants to obtain the crown so to make his father, York, King of England.

Because of this terrible conflict, there are deaths in both sides, at the end of the play *Henry VI*, the York win and his brother Edward reaches the throne of England and he becomes king with the name of Edward IV. The killing of prince Edward of Wales and of King Henry VI has shown the evil side of Richard with the final lines that he tells to Henry VI and to the audience. After the death of Edward IV, the Duke of Buckingham invites Richard to accept the crown, indeed, Richard pretends not to desire the throne of England but he finally accepts. Later, he orders the murder of Edward IV's children: Prince Edward and his brother Richard of York.

So, his fate changes when he conquers the throne and his fall is near since his enemies are waiting the right moment for making their move. Richard becomes different, he begins to be paranoiac and he does not know who to trust anymore, meanwhile, his enemies wait Richmond to defeat Richard and to become the new King of England. Therefore, he loses his abilities that have helped him to rise to the throne, also his cold behaviour that helps him on influencing the other characters for his purposes. It is possible to argue that he tries to capture the attention of the audience as well, indeed, he wants us to be on his side and he does not lie to the audience.

On the contrary, he does never show himself to the other characters, this is a reason why they do not understand him, and he defeats some of them while others, such as Stanley,

Elizabeth manage to survive and they see the end of the Richard III's kingdom. Richard does not simply act when he sees the other characters of the play but he would like the audience to support him in his actions in the same manner as he behaves with the Duke of Buckingham. He does not like himself and he knows to be the villain but he prefers to choose this role and he fights and plots against his enemies that he imagines to be a threat to his throne. In the play, Richard is an outcast because the other characters feel that he is different because of his physical deformities. Yet, there are also other reasons for their behaviour: political reasons and Richard's crimes.

Probably, Richard has suffered for the lack of affection from his parents and relatives and consequently his personality worsened. For example, in the end of *Henry VI*, Richard kills King Henry VI; the end of act V summarises what would happen in the following play, *Richard III*. There is the prophecy of the eve of a new kingdom where he would be the King. Anne, Clarence, Rivers, Edward never see the real Richard, they only see a series of masques and it is one of the motivations why the other characters do not fully understand Richard, until the ending of the play he will have more and more enemies like many rulers have. Before the ultimate battle, he starts to feel guilty for his crimes and he sees the ghosts of his victims that announce his death. Therefore, he understands what will be his fate, this leads to the end of his throne and his death. His brother Clarence believes in Richard and he does not have any doubt about his person, for example, even when Richard orders Clarence's Death and the killers confess the truth on Richard, Clarence cannot trust them.

He still thinks his brother cannot hurt him because Richard acts well with the other characters and it is difficult to understand his bad intentions, when he cooperates with Buckingham it is easier to understand his objective even if they hide their actions. At a certain point of the play, Buckingham does not answer immediately to Richard's order to murder the princes and consequently Richard loses his confidence on him. When Buckingham asks him for the dukedom of Hereford, he puts far him with the sceptre telling that he is not in the vein. Buckingham has doubts about cooperating with him and this helps the realization of the fall of Richard, this fact changes the plot since Buckingham helps Richard in his crimes for the most of the play. However, when the opportunity arrives, he has doubts concerning the profit on helping Richard and Richard

no longer wants Buckingham's help because he reflected on one of his order without accepting immediately and in any case.

One character who is almost absent during the acts of *Richard III* before Richard becomes King is Richmond, sometimes mentioned by his allies he appears before the last battle and at the end of the play. The members of the anti-Richard party identify him as the hero, the saviour of England, probably, the only one who could defeat Richard. At the end of the play, the two characters would duel and only one would reign in England. Richard never loses his sense of irony while plotting against the Edward IV or Edward's heirs to the throne, especially when he talks to the audience about his true intentions towards his enemies. What is interesting in Richard is his great skill in acting with the other characters; therefore, he is good in dissimulating his plans to Clarence, Anne, Edward IV and this makes easier for him to become king.

After succeeding, the actions of Richard have produced a series of events, which have had for consequence the destruction of Richard of Gloucester and the beginning of a new era, the age of the Tudors monarchies. Henry and Richard are both clever characters with different purposes, they appear in more than one play and they know how to challenge their enemies, a difference between them is their personality, on the one hand, Henry sacrifices his self to be monarch and he does not really behave as a person but as a symbol. On the other hand, Richard is full of himself and he jokes with the other characters about their behaviour and about the fact that he deceives them without much difficulty.

Their fate is not at all the same; one of them dies during the final battle of the play and a new king takes his place while the other gets married to a French princess and he unites the kingdom of England and the kingdom of France, only later he dies and the kingdom passes to his son Henry VI.

Chapter 2: Analysis of the different styles of Shakespeare films

2.1 Adapting Shakespeare plays for the cinema

William Shakespeare has written a large number of plays that have influenced many film directors, indeed, since the invention of cinema film directors have filmed several adaptations of Shakespeare. Some films have reached success such as Laurence Olivier's *Henry V* (1944) and Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) while others such as *Love's Labour's Lost* (2000) have not persuaded enough the audience. The effort of several directors to put on screen the Shakespearean plays is obvious and certain films have required years for shooting the scenes. However, the directors do not always manage to realize their projects because of financial problems.

Shooting a Shakespeare film for the directors represents a challenge since it means to reinterpret a theatrical plays tradition with contemporary instruments and linking the events of the plot to the historical context of the production of the film. A few directors who have put Shakespeare on cinema are Laurence Olivier, Kenneth Branagh, Richard Loncraine, Al Pacino, Orson Welles and Franco Zeffirelli. They all have deeply influenced the Shakespeare cinema and Shakespeare literature with their films and they have received many awards. Adapting the Shakespeare plays for the cinema is an important chance for directors since they can re-interpret the works of Shakespeare accordingly to their point of view and they also discuss of contemporary themes, for example, psychology, feminism.

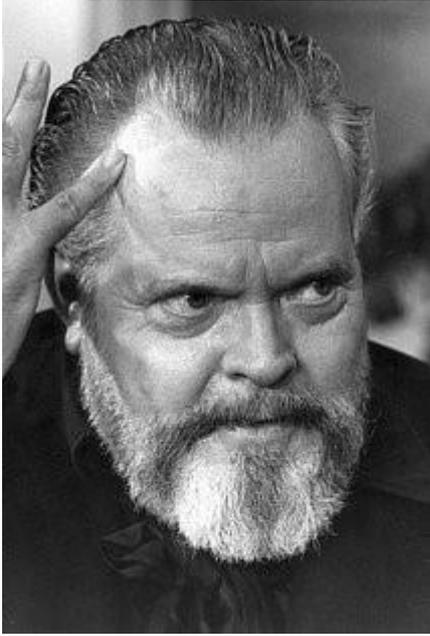


Illustration 2 Orson Welles

2.2 The Life and style of Orson Welles

The history of the cinema remembers a film director who became famous also for his adaptations of the Shakespeare plays, Orson Welles. He was born on 6th May 1915 in Kenosha, Wisconsin; his mother was a concert pianist and his father a businessman, during his childhood he showed skills in painting, piano, violin, acting, drawing and writing and occasionally he performed magic shows and spectacles on Shakespeare. At eleven years old, he entered in the Todd School in Woodstock, in Illinois, he staged at school modern and classical plays, and then, he graduated in 1931. He studied for a short period at the Art Institute of Chicago and later he went to Dublin where he auditioned at the Gate theatre the stage adaptation of Lion Feuchtwanger's novel *Jew Süss*. Welles stayed in Ireland for one year acting at the Gate theatre and at the Abbey theatre, in 1932, he went to London and New York for staging with success and he moved to Morocco and Spain.

He went to the United States where he played the role of Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet* in the Cornell's road company, when he was nineteen years old, he organized a summer

drama festival at the Todd School, and he played the role of Claudius in *Hamlet* and Svengali in *Trilby*. During that special event, he directed his first film, *The hearts of age*, then, Welles organised with Roger Hill, Todd school Headmaster *Everybody's Shakespeare* (performances of *Julius Caesar*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Merchant of Venice*) and he acted at Broadway the role of Tibald in *Romeo and Juliet* in December 1934. John Houseman decided to cast Welles for the play *Panic* taking place in 1935 after meeting him during the performance of *Romeo and Juliet* and they worked on *Macbeth* for the WPA's Federal Theatre Project.

Welles and Housemann worked on *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, but the project of the proletarian musical play *The Cradle Will Rock* determined the end of the theatre because of economic reasons. In 1937, Housemann and Welles formed a new theatre, Mercury Theatre, where *Julius Caesar* and they performed some other plays there, nevertheless, one year later Welles shot three short films but he did not manage to finish them. Welles worked in the radio around the thirties, he adapted on 30th October 1938 Wells' *War of the Worlds* and he described so well the events of the Alien invasion of the novel that the listeners believed he was telling real facts. Two years later, he signed a contract with RKO for writing and directing two films, firstly, he started to adapt Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* but the project failed and he directed *Citizen Kane* (1941) reaching a huge success.

The second film for RKO was *The Magnificent Ambersons*, (1942) Welles married Rita Hayworth in 1943 and three years later he directed *The Stranger* (1946) and *Macbeth* (1948). The marriage with Hayworth ended in 1948 and he decided to leave Hollywood for a long period. He directed the Shakespeare film adaptation *Othello* (1952) and another film, *Mr. Arcadin* (1955) but he reached success with *A touch of Evil* (1958) and *The Trial* (1962). Welles directed a Shakespeare adaptation where he played the role of Falstaff; the film was *Chimes at Midnight* (1965). When he returned in The United States in 1975 he shot the documentary *Filming Othello*, the same year he received The Lifetime Achievement Award of the American Film Institute and ten years later, he obtained the D.W. Griffith Award. Orson Welles died the 10th October 1985 in Los Angeles.



Illustration 3 Laurence Olivier

2.3 The Life and style of shooting of Laurence Olivier

Sir Laurence Olivier was born on 22nd May 1907 in Dorking, his father was an Anglican clergyman, and he started his studies in London, at All Saints choir school. Among the first appearances of Olivier on stage, he acted the role of Brutus at ten years old and Katharina at fifteen years old. Some years later, he started a period of apprenticeship at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, later; he got married with the actress, Jill Esmond in 1930. ⁴ Olivier and his wife signed for RKO studio in Hollywood for two years but they did not continue their career there and they decided to return to England.

Olivier played many roles during the Thirties for the theatre, at the Old Vic, such as Romeo, Mercutio, Hamlet, Henry V, Iago, Macbeth, Othello, therefore, he acted mostly

⁴ 'Laurence Olivier profile' in Daniel Rosenthal, *Shakespeare on screen*, London: Octopus, 2000, p. 48.

in Shakespearean roles and his wide experience on the plays helped him performing in the filmic adaptations. Later, Olivier returned to Hollywood where he played the role of Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* at thirty-two years old receiving the nomination for the Oscar and one year later, he acted in *Rebecca* as Maxim de Winter. Moreover, Olivier divorced with Jill Desmond and later he married the actress, Vivien Leigh, protagonist of *Gone with the wind* (1939), a successful film about a love story during the American Civil War, it received the Oscar prize.

Later, he obtained one Oscar for *Henry V* (1944) and two Oscars for *Hamlet* (1948). Olivier and his wife tried with many efforts to play the roles of the Macbeths for the film of *Macbeth*; nevertheless, they did not manage to find a producer. Therefore, the Olivier's project failed even because Alexander Korda, the producer of *Richard III* died in 1956 and probably Korda was one of the few producers who could invest in the film because he already worked with Olivier and he believed on his talent.

Olivier and Leigh divorced in 1960, the same year of *The Entertainer* where he played the role of Archie Rice, in the following year he married the actress Joan Plowright. Moreover, he acted in the Shakespeare plays on stage, such as, *Othello* (1965) and *The Merchant of Venice* (1970) and he stopped acting in theatrical spectacles in 1973. Later, Olivier appeared in *Marathon man* (1976) and *The boys from Brazil* (1978) he played Zeus in *The clash of the Titans*. (1981) He performed for the last time a Shakespeare role in 1983 playing King Lear for the television, therefore, his long career and experience in the Shakespeare plays and cinema ended and Olivier died six years later in July 1989.

Olivier directed three Shakespearean films: *Hamlet*, *Richard III* and *Henry V* and he has influenced enormously the Shakespearean cinema both with his style of directing and acting. He has obviously spent decades acting in Shakespearean films, while doing different roles and focusing his attention in keeping a relationship with the world of theatre in his films. The director shot *Henry V* during the final years of World War II, indeed, the production of the film started in 1943 with Filippo Del Giudice and ended in 1944.⁵In the film, there is the presence of The Chorus as in the original text who tells the audience all that happens in the plot.

⁵ 'Shakespeare, Film and Nationalism: Henry V' in D. Cartmell, *Interpreting Shakespeare on Screen*, 2000 p.94.

Davies writes that,

Olivier exploits the cinematic potential of a Chorus whose monologues consciously explore the relationship between the spaces of history, theatre and imagination. But to these three areas of action, Olivier adds a fourth, the historical occasion of the play's own performance.⁶

Olivier has addressed the adaptation to the British soldiers who fight World War II in that particular historical context, we see the special dedication to the British army in the opening credits and Olivier appears initially as a theatre actor. It is important to notice the use of the director of different types of shooting according to the situation and event of the play: the long shot, the short-cut, the medium shot.

In the adaptation of *Richard III*, Olivier plays the role of the protagonist and villain, Richard who speaks personally to the camera telling the plot of the film and a few events happening in *Henry VI*. Olivier's experience in the theatre stages is useful to mix the world of theatre and the world of cinema in the adaptations. Often, the camera follows Richard while he is walking in the throne's room during his soliloquy following the scene of the coronation of his brother, Edward.

Therefore, in most of the scenes of the film even if Richard is not present immediately in the scene, the camera focus his attention on Richard who tells the camera what he plots to do, so, he communicates to the filmic audience. Towards the end of *Richard III*, the attention of the camera moves also to Richmond, when he prays in the night and he meets Stanley on the court of battle and, finally, at his coronation shortly after the death of Richard III.

⁶ 'Laurence Olivier's Henry V' in Anthony Davies, *Filming Shakespeare's plays, the adaptations of Laurence Olivier, Orson Welles, Peter Brook and Akira Kurosawa*, Cambridge scholars publishing, 1988, p.30.



Illustration 4 Kenneth Branagh

2.4 The life and style of shooting of Kenneth Branagh

Sir Kenneth Charles Branagh was born in Belfast on the 10th December 1960, he moved with his family from Belfast to Reading (a village near London) when he was nine years old because of the rivalries between Catholic and Protestant that could spread violence acts in Northern Ireland. At the age of five years old he went to Oxford for a theatrical spectacle, he saw *Hamlet* acted by Derek Jacobi and he decided to study Shakespeare works and to become an actor. Later, he attended The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) where he graduated in 1982; he also won the Bancroft Gold Medal.

Then, Branagh wrote an autobiography *Beginning* in 1988 and the newspapers attacked him because he published a personal autobiography at a young age.

Branagh directed four Shakespeare adaptations: *Henry V* (1989) *Much ado about nothing* (1993) *Hamlet* (1996) *Love's Labour's lost* (2000).⁷ Kenneth Branagh got married with the actress Emma Thompson in 1989; however, their marriage does not last several years and they divorced in 1995. They worked together in the films *Henry V* and *Much ado about nothing*.

In addition, Kenneth Branagh directed other films, which are not Shakespeare adaptations, such as, *Dead Again* (1991) and *Peter's friends* (1992), *The Big chill* (1983).⁸ He acted on the stage as Henry V in 1984 and Hamlet in 1992 and 1993 for the Royal Shakespeare Company before acting in the filmic adaptations of the two plays. Indeed, the success of *Henry V* (1989) earned him the nomination as best actor and best director for the Academy Awards in 1990. In the following years from Branagh's *Henry V* (1989) many Shakespeare adaptations appeared on cinema between the nineties and the first decade of the twenty-first century, so, Shakespeare plays returned in many films and the audience rediscovered Renaissance British Literature.

In *Henry V* (1989), Branagh aims at imitating partially Olivier but at the same time, he re-interprets the play in his own way, he has chosen as Chorus a Shakespearean actor who has already performed the role of the protagonist in *Hamlet*, Derek Jacobi.

According to Samuel Cowl,

Branagh is, in fact, the first director of Shakespeare films to mix Olivier's attention to the spoken text with Welles's fascination with the camera angle and editing and Zeffirelli's visual and musical romanticism.⁹

⁷ Samuel Cowl, 'Flamboyant realist: Kenneth Branagh' in Russell Jackson, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on film*. Cambridge University Press, 2000, 223.

⁸ 'Kenneth Branagh Profile', in Daniel Rosenthal, *Shakespeare on screen*, London: Octopus, 2000, p.174.

⁹ Samuel Cowl 'Flamboyant realist: Kenneth Branagh' in Russell Jackson, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on film*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, 224.

The actor appears physically in many scenes of the film where he summarises what occurs in the scenes and also the adaptation opens and closes with the words of the Chorus. Branagh interprets the role of King Henry V and the camera shoots from a long distance the scene of Canterbury's dialogue with the English king where the character of Henry appears for the first time. Branagh avoids cutting scenes from the screenplay of the adaptation and therefore he shoots the scene of the punishment of the three traitors as well as the scene of the hanging of Bardolph.

In the scene of the death sentence of Bardolph the director uses the technique of the flashback when Henry hears the name of the man sentenced to death and the camera moves to a different time, the scenes of the play *Henry IV*. Indeed, Falstaff and the others are drinking beer, the focus of the short-cut shot camera is on Bardolph, therefore, Henry is looking at the scene from a certain distance and while the characters are drinking their cup of beer, Bardolph hits jokingly Falstaff and the prince is laughing at the scene from his far position.

Moreover, Bardolph tells that when Henry becomes king he will not condemn to death a thief and the flashback ends. Branagh chooses the short-cut shot taking the face of both, Bardolph and Henry, therefore, we can see Henry's tears remembering the past days that he shares with Falstaff and his friends but at the same time, he decides to give the order to the soldiers to hang him. For the scenes of the battle of Agincourt, Branagh uses the slow motion of the camera and the audience sees the soldiers fighting slowly, The French soldiers encircle the Duke of York, Henry's cousin, and they attack him with their weapons cruelly and the blood exits from York's mouth. We see Exeter, Henry and other nobles fighting fiercely the French from a short shot and in slow motion.

For the most of the film, precisely, during the campaign of France the rain appears as cinematic effect and the mud, indeed, French and English soldiers face the mud while fighting against the opponents. In Olivier's *Henry V*, the mud is not present and the actors during the scenes of the battle remain clean while fighting their enemies, Branagh chooses to use the effect of rain and mud against the cleanliness of Olivier's version of the play to make more realistic the adaptation.

One of the scenes that Branagh chooses to omit is Henry's order to cut the throat to the French prisoners, and there is the scene of Fluennen finding the young dead pages as in Olivier's version of the play.



Illustration 5 Richard Loncraine

2.5 The life and style of Richard Loncraine

Richard Loncraine was born on 20th October 1946 in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. Firstly, he studied at the Central School of Arts, and he obtained in the following years a degree from the Royal College of Art film School. He started shooting advertising for the BBC, short documentaries (Radio Wonderful in 1974) and telefilms. Later, he arrived at the world of the cinema with *Flame* that was not successful but two years later Loncraine directed a horror film *Full circle* and he won the Gran Prix at the International festival of Avoriaz for the Fantastic film in 1978. Loncraine directed in 1982, *Brimstone and Treacle*

and *The missionary* (John Gielgud and Laurence Olivier were initially among the choices for the cast, but because of the expenses they chose other actors. One of his most successful films as director was obviously *Richard III* (1995) with an excellent cast such as Ian Mc Kellen, Maggie Smith, Annette Bening, Kristin Scott Thomas and Robert Downey Jr.

The film re-interprets the story of the Shakespeare play *Richard III* transferring the plot from the Renaissance age to the twentieth Century, precisely in the subsequent years after World War I and this cinematographic choice leads to substituting many objects normally used for the play such as the swords with guns and automatics weapons. Loncraine received the nomination for the BAFTA and Alexander Korda for the Best English film, then, he shared the victory of the Berlin Silver bear for *Richard III* in 1996 with Ho Yim. (*Taiyang you er*) Five years later he started working with HBO, therefore, he directed an episode of the mini-series *Band of Brothers* (2001) receiving an Emmy award.

In 2002, he directed a film on Winston Churchill's life, *The Gathering Storm* and another film for television, *My house in Umbria* (2003) which obtains a nomination for the Emmy award. After the films for the television companies, Loncraine shot a love comedy called *Wimbledon* in 2004, film that received a good success, then, he worked on *Firewall*, (2006) despite the presence of Harrison Ford in the cast the audience did not appreciate the film. In addition, he directed three more films: *My One and Only* (2009) *The special relationship* (2010) and *Ruth and Alex* (2012). In *Richard III* (1995), Loncraine chooses to cut partially the scenes and to mix the background music with the shots of the characters. At the beginning of the film in the aim of telling the previous facts happening in *Henry VI*, the director puts a title explaining briefly the plot.

In some seconds the action scene starts and Richard wearing a gas mask kills two characters, Henry VI and his son Edward of Wales and the title of the film appears on the screen. Loncraine manages to tell the story through the images without using words until Richard's speech during the scene of the ball and to transfer the events of the play to the historical context of the twentieth century; therefore, he uses symbols of the fascism in English locations and links to the story of *Richard III*. The story of *Richard III* in Loncraine's film is similar to the classical gangster movie since there are the main elements of the genre. Indeed, there is the presence of an anti-hero, who is often an

alienated from the society he lives in, such as Richard, the mother of the protagonist does not love him and the film tells the rising and fall of the protagonist.¹⁰



Illustration 6 Al Pacino

2.6 The life and style of Al Pacino

A film director who has acted in several films and performing two Shakespearean roles is the American actor, Al Pacino, who has also directed a film-documentary on *Richard III*, *Looking for Richard* (1996). Alfredo James Pacino was born on 25th April 1940 in New York from Italian parents; he grew up in the South Bronx and East Harlem. When he was fourteen years old, he saw the play *The Seagull* by Chekhov at the Elsmere Theatre. Later, he moved to the Greenwich Village at nineteen years old where he attended at The Herbert Berghof studio (Acting school). Pacino appeared in some off-

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- ¹⁰ James N. Loehlin, 'Top of the World' in L. E. Boose and R. Burt, *Shakespeare and the movie popularizing the plays on film, TV and video*. London and New York, 1997, p.77.

Broadway productions such as, *Hello, Out There* (1963) and three years later *Why Is a Crooked Letter* (1966). He made his debut in Broadway in 1969. Therefore, he acted in the play *Does the tiger wear a necktie?* In addition, he obtained a Tony award. The first appearance in a film as the protagonist is in *The panic in needle park* where he acted the role of the drug-addict.

The film that made Al Pacino famous is surely a Francis Ford Coppola's film, *The Godfather* (1972). The plot is about a crime family who fight against other criminals to rule in New York, he interprets the role of Michael Corleone, the son of Vito Corleone played by Marlon Brando in the first film and Robert De Niro in the second one. Thanks to his performance in *The Godfather*, he gained the Academy award for the best picture. In addition, he acted in *Scarecrow*, (1973) *Serpico* (1973) and *Dog Day Afternoon*. (1974)

Al Pacino acted the role of Michael Corleone also in the second film of the trilogy of *The Godfather*, *The Godfather part II* (1974) where he won again the Oscar for the best picture and *The Godfather part III* (1990). Al Pacino plays a role similar to Michael Corleone of *The Godfather* in the Brian De Palma's *Scarface* (1983) that tells the story of the rise and fall of the gangster, Tony Montana. In the nineties, Pacino received the Best actor Oscar for *Scent of woman* (1992) where he acted the role of the Vietnam War soldier who becomes blind. Moreover, he acted in other films such as, *Carlito's Way* (1993), *Heat* (1995) *Donnie Brasco* (1997) *Any Given Sunday* (1999) *The Insider* (1999).

In 2002, Pacino acted in four films *People I Know*, *S1m0ne*, *The Recruit*, and *Insomnia*. In *Insomnia*, he acted the role of a detective who investigated in a murder in Alaska; one actor who acted with him in the film was Robin Williams. The film, *S1m0ne*, uses a digital special effect to introduce a virtual character in the plot who is also one of the most important characters of the film. Pacino appeared in the HCO production's *Angels in America* (2003) and the film earns him a Golden Globe award and an Emmy award. Two years later Pacino played Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* and he also played the antagonist in *Ocean's Thirteen* (2007) the third film of *Ocean's Eleven* trilogy, with Matt Damon, George Clooney, Andy Garcia, Brad Pitt. Pacino acted with Robert De Niro in *Righteous Kill* (2008) and he appeared in *You Don't Know Jack* (2010) and received and EMMY award. Moreover, two of his most recent films are *Manglehorn* (2014) and *Danny Collins* (2015).

Looking for Richard (1996) is a film-documentary about Shakespeare focusing on the play *Richard III*, therefore, Pacino produces the theatrical spectacle in New York and London, he plays the role of Richard of Gloucester, the villain of the story. During the documentary, Pacino and other actors study the play and repeat the cues on studio and on the theatrical stage.

In this film, *Looking for Richard* Pacino is not only an actor but also the director and he goes outdoors in the city of New York asking people questions about Shakespeare. Moreover, he discusses with the cast about the play, mostly with Frederic Kimball and each one tells his personal interpretation. Kenneth Branagh, Vanessa Redgrave, Kevin Kline participate to the documentary and they give advices to the actors for performing in the Shakespeare plays.

2.7 Many directors, same plays

The Shakespeare cinema has reinforced the audience interest for the Shakespeare plays, indeed, seeing *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* or *Othello* on screen provokes the inevitable spread of a general curiosity on the works of Shakespeare. Moreover, many people ignoring Shakespeare may like reading his plays or even studying them after seeing one, two or more Shakespeare adaptations. The directors who have taken the heavy responsibly of adapting one play or multiple plays for the screen have discovered that it is completely different than directing a play for the theatre. Moreover, different directors have chosen to adapt certain plays, therefore, there are many films on the same Shakespeare play that look differently from the other but those films may influence each other and the director who has seen the earlier version may quote it in a scene or he may change many characteristics of the film comparing to the other.

In the history of Cinema, plays such as *Hamlet* have many filmic adaptations, among the most famous Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet*, (1948) later, Franco Zeffirelli's *Hamlet* (1990) and Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* (1996) with Derek Jacobi, Kate Winslet and many famous actors. In addition, there are many films of *Macbeth*, *Henry V* and *Richard III*. In

these adaptations, the Shakespeare plays revive thanks to the performance of actors such as Kenneth Branagh, Laurence Olivier and Orson Welles.

The three actors are also the directors of the films and they have worked in Shakespeare films for many years although they may have cancelled some projects because of financial difficulties. Indeed, Orson Welles's *The Merchant of Venice* (1969) is one of the famous examples of unfinished films.

Many directors have adapted also Shakespeare's tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*. George Cukor and Irving Thalberg have directed an adaptation on *Romeo and Juliet* produced by MGM in 1936; however, the film has not had success because it has not developed from a theatrical production. Furthermore, the choice for British actors has had negative consequences since they have chosen experienced actors that they were not fit for the roles because of their age. Later, Renato Castellani directed *Romeo and Juliet* in 1954; therefore, he shot the film in Italian cities such as, Verona, Venice and Florence. Franco Zeffirelli directed one famous version of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1968 that the audience received successfully. Some decades later, in 1996 Baz Luhrmann re-interpreted the story of the tragedy in an American and contemporary contextualisation with actors such as Leonardo Di Caprio, Claire Danes and Pete Postlewaite. Therefore, the film has aimed at reaching as much audience as possible also among the young people and it has had a great success.



Illustration 7 Laurence Olivier's *Henry V* (1944)

Chapter 3: Analysis of the differences and similarities between the two film adaptations of Laurence Olivier: *Henry V* and *Richard III*

3.1 The production and the characteristics of Olivier's *Henry V* (1944) and Olivier's *Richard III* (1955)

The theatrical actor Laurence Olivier directed two history dramas for the cinema around the forties and fifties, *Henry V* and *Richard III*, a common characteristic of these two films is the fact that in both of them the director, Laurence Olivier, plays the role of the protagonist of the Shakespearean plays. Furthermore, Filippo Del Giudice and Laurence Olivier produced the first film (*Henry V*) in 1944, while The London film productions and Laurence Olivier produced the second, (*Richard III*) eleven years later, in 1955. One

main aspect that make these films different from the previous Shakespearean films is the fact that they are not mute films as the antecedent versions of *Richard III* and they rely on the theatrical experience of the actors for making the adaptations. Indeed, many films produced in the early years of cinema between 1900 and 1930 were silent, such as in the case of the *Richard III* that was produced in 1911. In that version a written text appears on the screen so to explain to the audience better what happens during the developing of the film and even the dialogues between the characters.

Henry V (1944) and *Richard III* (1955) are linked with the world of theatre, indeed, in the first half of *Henry V* (1944) all the actors prepare themselves for the spectacle and they act on the stage of the English Globe Theatre. In addition, the Chorus of the play makes his appearance inside the Globe and a visible audience can judge the play with positive or negative reactions to what he says on the stage.

According to Anthony Davies,

In turning away the face from the camera, the Chorus becomes a part of the audience, for he looks as we do, towards what the camera will show. The camera's image dissolves to a long-shot, high-angle view of the French palace, and the Chorus, now no longer visible, remains with us only in voice.¹¹

Therefore, Davies mentions the role of the Chorus in *Henry V* explaining how close is the point of view of the Chorus to our point of view while looking at the play. In addition,

¹¹ 'Laurence Olivier's *Henry V*' in Anthony Davies, *Filming Shakespeare plays, the adaptations of Laurence Olivier, Orson Welles, Peter Brook and Akira Kurosawa*. Cambridge scholars publishing, 1988, p.32.

Davies also specifies that, firstly, in the first half of the film, the Chorus appears on the stage as a Renaissance man who speaks to the audience of the Globe and then he physically disappears from the adaptation for most of the time. Nevertheless, his voice remains for introducing the most relevant scenes of the film, after the marriage between King Henry and Princess Catherine the Chorus returns physically on the stage to tell the audience what happens in the following years from the events of *Henry V*.

In *Richard III* (1955), the second scene of the film, that is to say, the soliloquy of Richard is similar to a theatrical scene since Olivier acts as Richard in a precise location, a great hall (The king's throne room). He speaks directly to the audience through the camera; surely, the long experience of Olivier on theatrical plays has influenced enormously this scene. However, the attention of the spectator cannot judge the performance of the actors at the same time of the shooting of the scenes in *Richard III* since the audience is not present following the play in the Globe theatre. On the contrary, in another Shakespeare work of Olivier, *Henry V*, the audience of the Globe judge the performance of the actors in the first scenes but there is also a great number of people appearing in *Richard III*. For example, after the coronation of Edward IV a large crowd of people feast and exult for the new king, or during the battle of Bosworth, Richard is alone and crownless encircled by more or less a hundred of enemy soldiers.

Olivier's *Henry V* puts King Henry as main hero of the story, he speaks to his soldiers before the battle, he verbally faces the French nobles and he fights in battle against his French enemies with great skill. Apart from the comical scenes of Bardolph, Nym, Pistol, the film adaptation focuses very much, as in the original text, on the figure of King Henry, on its strong will to defeat France and to become the next King of France. He talks with the Archbishop of Canterbury about the mission in France and almost at the end of the film; he tries to speak in French with some difficulties for conquering the love of Princess Catherine and so she understands more clearly what he says. Therefore, Henry fights in the battle of Agincourt, in France and he appears on his horse many times, for example, during the siege of Harfleur and before the battle of Agincourt. Indeed, he does not participate passively to the events of the plot but he is present on the battle court with all his men and he will fight a black knight during the battle of Agincourt. Moreover, Henry gives the command to the English archers to shoot their arrows towards the French army; he sends a signal moving down the sword.

Henry speaks a couple of times to his army so to convince them to join the battle with a good oratorical ability, indeed, after hearing his speeches the English soldiers exult and follow Henry without any hesitation. The number of the English forces is dramatically inferior to the number of the French but Henry manages to control the situation and find the way to increase their courage with his patriotic words. The film adaptation contains a small number of scenes with a group of French characters that discuss about the war against England and King Henry; there is obviously the French royal family among them.

Indeed, the Prince Dauphin and Charles, the King of France are the enemies of King Henry who appear mostly in the adaptation, the first challenges King Henry, he is proud and vain and he does not think that fighting England would be so difficult for the French army. While Charles seems coward before taking important political decisions and he, shows fear towards the military power of England, the Dauphin takes the decisions at his place, and he believes that France is superior to England, especially, in war and he is always ready to face the English.

Two feminine characters, Catherine and her Lady-in-waiting, Alice, are present in two scenes; one is the scene of Catherine learning the English language asking Alice the names of the parts of the body. The final scene of the two feminine characters is when King Henry woos the Princess Catherine of France, where the two women are in the same place as in the other scene and they both talk with Henry, yet Alice translates the French words pronounced by Catherine to Henry and the English words pronounced by Henry to Catherine. Henry misunderstands some words in French, Catherine misunderstands other words in English, and Alice help them to understand better what they say to each other.

Olivier's *Richard III* starts with a main event of the final act of *Henry VI*, the ceremony of coronation of King Edward IV, brother of Richard of Gloucester and of George, Duke of Clarence. A small part of the characters is not friendly to each other and the group split after the death of King Edward. Surely, Richard is the villain in this film adaptation and he slowly manages to become the new king of England, also with the help of his counsellor, the Duke of Buckingham. For most of the plot, Richard acts dishonestly; in fact, he orders the death of some of his relatives who may claim the English crown at his place. But, of course, Richard does not manage to defeat all his opponents; his main enemy is the Earl of Richmond. Therefore, Richard fights against Richmond in the final

battle of Bosworth in the original text of the play, however, the duel between them occurs differently in the film.

One particular aspect of the adaptation of *Richard III* is that Olivier, who acts the role of the protagonist-villain, Richard of Gloucester, often talks to the audience with the help of the camera, revealing his true intentions despite what he shows to the other characters (Clarence, Anne, and Edward). Buckingham, in the first half of the film he collaborates with Richard and in the second he becomes Richard's enemy, during the developing of the plot he often knows the plans of Richard but he is reluctant on Richard's plan to eliminate the princes. Therefore, this is the reason why at a certain point of the film he changes side, Richard decides firstly to banish him and then to execute him. Buckingham helps Richard in the conquest of the power, indeed, he asks publicly Richard whether he wants to accept the crown or not. The request of Buckingham to Richard masques their plot since they dissimulate the will of Richard to rise to the power.

Richard III with a brilliant performance pretends not to desire the throne and he shows everyone to accept reluctantly this duty. As soon as Richard becomes the new king, he asks Buckingham to kiss his hand as sign of loyalty and respect when all the others have gone away. Of course, the friendship and political alliance between the two characters does not last and before or later Richard will be almost alone with his great army, few loyal followers who will fight with him in the battle of Bosworth. The filmic audience often hears the name of Richmond but the audience does not see him before the battle of Bosworth while talking to Stanley, the English courtier who proves his false loyalty to Richard sending him his son as prisoner, so, Stanley with his alliance with Richmond may risk the life of his son.



Illustration 8 Laurence Olivier's *Henry V* (1944)

3.2 The differences and similarities between Olivier's *Henry V* (1944) and Olivier's *Richard III* (1955)

The two adaptations of *Henry V* and *Richard III* directed and acted by Laurence Olivier have a certain number of similarities and differences. Therefore, I will outline the major interesting aspects of the two works, then, I will discuss of the multiple scenes in the two films, the characters of the plays and the messages of Olivier's films to the audience, especially in *Henry V*. Indeed, the adaptation *Henry V* (1944) opens with an epic song performed by an English composer, William Walton remembering the sounds of battle; a flying paper appears on the screen, where there is the title of the play and the name of the Author. In addition, the date of the spectacle is first may 1600, presumably the official date of the first spectacle of *Henry V* displayed in the Globe theatre of London. Then, the eye of the camera shows London from a higher and far position, forties' London precisely, few seconds later, the scene moves to a different age, Renaissance, where the spectacle transfer towards a symbol of Renaissance England, the Globe theatre.

Indeed, the Shakespearean theatre had an important function during the Elizabethan age, moreover, the Globe displayed the Shakespearean plays and William Shakespeare has

acted there several plays but it is important even nowadays for the history of theatre and British literature. When the attention of the director shifts inside the theatre, the camera shoots a man playing the trumpet, but he is not the only one playing instruments since there is the orchestra in a lower position from him. Everyone moves inside the building: spectators, actors, technicians. Indeed, the play *Henry V* is starting in few minutes and King Henry, The Archbishop of Canterbury, other characters, appear on the stage, so, the beginning of the film contains a theatrical spectacle inside the film. Later, the production chooses a theatrical effect, the water, indeed, suddenly, the rain arrives inside the Globe wetting the cast and the audience and a new scene starts, as a boy indicates with the written text, the Boars head.

Richard III (1955) begins exactly at the time of the play, in the middle age; therefore, the opening shows the ceremony of the coronation of King Edward IV, brother of Richard and Clarence. While Edward receives the crown of England the look of the camera with a short shot feature Richard putting a crown on his head, a gesture that outlines the will and ambition of Richard to become King of England and so he starts to plot against his brother Edward behind the scenes.

At a certain point, the camera shoots Richard and Buckingham looking to each other; these glances explains implicitly what occurs in the following scenes, the alliance of Richard and Buckingham against the other members of the English court. A large number of people is present in the scene of the ceremony of coronation with flags of multiple colours, mostly blue and red. When King Edward IV rises from the throne, everyone follow him, not only his relatives. Later, Elizabeth, the wife of Edward, his son, Clarence and Richard are near Edward and he asks them to show affection to each other.

Following this reunion, King Edward and his family, Buckingham and many others feast joyfully the beginning of the new kingdom. All the characters are happy for the coronation of the new sovereign except for one character, Richard of Gloucester who in the next scene presents himself to the camera telling his most important aims to the cinematic audience but not everything.

In the opening of Olivier's *Henry V*, the production underlines the name of the spectacle and the year, the film travels in three different times. The first: the contemporary time, the age of World War II. The second: The Renaissance time, the age of the first spectacle

of *Henry V* and of the spectators of the Globe theatre. The last: The medieval time, since when the Chorus speaks the focus of the plot of the film transfer to the time of the play, therefore, in the last decades of the middle age. On the contrary, *Richard III* begins at the time of the story; the opening shows a written text with the name of the characters of the play and the actors who play them. The coronation occurs at the final act of *Henry VI* in the original text but the director chooses to start the adaptation with this important scene, where the audience can understand partially the plot analysing the behaviour and actions of the main characters.

In the two adaptations (*Henry V* and *Richard III*), the opening scene is full of crowd, since there are many people for the ceremony of Edward IV's coronation in *Richard III* and inside the Globe theatre to see *Henry V*, also, in the battle scenes there are many people fighting in the two battles, Agincourt and Bosworth. The two films differentiate in the role of Olivier in the initial scenes, because he is not immediately the protagonist of the film. In *Henry V*, the camera depicts the view of London and there are characters speaking before his arrival: the Chorus, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely. On the contrary, in *Richard III* the opening gives importance to the ending of the last act of *Henry VI*. The scene shows the coronation of Edward and Richard is not the main character, but he puts a crown on his head and talks to his relatives and so he appears briefly in that scene.

In *Henry V*, firstly, Olivier is present in the film while wearing the clothes for the scene and then he listens to Canterbury's speech. Then, he talks to Montjoy, the French ambassador about the mockery of the Dauphin, the gift to Henry, the tennis balls that mean that Henry is still young to rule England and implicitly, France.

Therefore, Olivier already appears as the protagonist since the opening in *Henry V*, but the situation is different in *Richard III* where the character of Olivier is behind the scenes, the focus of the camera is not only on Richard but also on Edward IV, Elizabeth, Buckingham, later, Richard will participate more to the events of the play.

The second scene of *Richard III* starts with the opening of a door of a large hall, that is to say, the hall of the king's throne. The open door symbolises the passing from a scene to another one. The camera frames an unknown far figure, that person who stays near the empty throne. Then, he notices the far presence of the camera, the unknown man starts

walking near and finally the audience discover his identity, Richard of Gloucester, the protagonist and villain of the film who communicates to the camera as talking with a person telling the famous passages of Shakespeare at the first act of the original text. The place of the scene of the soliloquy is the residence of the King of England with medieval weapons and other objects on the wall.

Olivier shouts during some parts of the soliloquy so to emphasise the emotions of the character and to give a touch of theatricality to the cinematic performance. Then he looks from a window and he sees Lady Anne going to her husband's funeral announcing to the audience that he wants to marry her. In addition, he also talks of Prince Edward of Wales who was stabbed during the last act of *Henry VI* describing him as a gentleman that the world does not deserve to keep, ironical words of the villain towards an enemy during the war of the roses.

In the rainy scene of *Henry V*, the audience notices a boy with a bill indicating the start of the new scene at the Boar's head. Therefore, he puts the bill at the contrary and the audience sees the images of a boar, the Boy goes out of the stage but someone else enters on the stage from the curtain, Nym, who appears falling from the terrace, a few seconds later he sees Bardolph. After the dialogue between Nym, Bardolph, Pistol and his wife, Nell, the theatrical audience largely applaud at them. Nym and Pistol quarrel and they raise their swords; Nell and Bardolph try to stop them from fighting each other. At a certain point, the boy tells them that Falstaff is very ill and Bardolph talks about the journey to France but Nym and Pistol try to quarrel again. Nell advises them to meet Falstaff because his health is bad, then, Pistol, Nym and Bardolph decide to go to France.

The scene of the funeral of Edward of Wales in *Richard III* describes the ability of Richard on wooing women and acting with, especially in this case, Anne, during this scene we hear a religious music and a group of monks carrying the corpse of Prince Edward of Wales. Anne talks uncomfortably about her loss, she is depressed, and it is almost impossible for Richard to seduce her if she still suffers for her dead husband.

Therefore, Richard considers as a challenge the possibility to conquer her even if he is the cause of the death of her father-in-law and husband. Despite the situation, he follows the guards and Anne; they try to send away Richard but he disarms one of them while she is staying near to the coffin of Prince Edward of Wales, she cries and curses the murderer

of her husband. Following the words of Richard Anne spites at him because he approaches her during the funeral and she imagines that he is directly responsible for the Edward's death. Richard looks at her and he understands that he may have her but he is not willingly to stay with her for long time.

Then, after the scene of Nym, Pistol and Bardolph, the Chorus arrives and closes the curtain displaying an image of a place; he also announces that before moving to France the scene goes to Southampton. The scene of Southampton in the original play is a particular moment when King Henry punishes the three traitors, Cambridge, Grey, Scroop for betrayal and Henry somehow knows of their plot against his person. Nonetheless, Olivier avoids referring to the betrayal in the scene because during the period of the production of the film, there was the war and he preferred to avoid the scenes where the British are against each other because the country required a sense of unity.

Therefore, also this Shakespeare adaptation promotes the loyalty towards the English King and the union of the English soldiers against a foreign enemy. The Southampton scene starts with the words of the Chorus describing the scene and we hear a religious chant, later, we see a designed castle, a high cross and many people. Henry is in front of the Archbishop of Canterbury with a red and yellow cape, he forgives the prisoners telling that the wine was the cause of their wrong behaviour. Moreover, he announces everyone that it is time to march to France wearing a white headgear, now he tells the famous cue, *No king of England if not King of France*. We hear William Walton musical movement at high volume and Henry walks away, moreover, the long shot of the camera shows a painting of a landscape, France.

One scene that mostly shows to the audience the ability in acting of Olivier is certainly that of the wooing of Edward of Wales's widow, Anne, therefore, the long shot of the camera puts attention on Richard who is walking outdoors. At a certain time, he turns his head and he glances at Anne praying near to her husband's coffin and Richard walks near her and he starts talking to her.

He woos her telling that her beauty is the cause of her husband's death; therefore, she answers back that if so she could have removed her beauty from her cheeks so to save the life to her husband. Moreover, Richard tells her that a better husband may arrive for her; a person that may love her much more than Edward did, talking of himself. Immediately,

Anne spits angrily to Richard's face and he asks her the reason for doing so, after a few words, Richard almost kisses her and she moves away from him.

Richard gives her the sword so she could kill him if she wants, he also confesses her that he killed Edward of Wales, Anne is tempted to avenge her husband by killing Richard but a few seconds later she put down the swords. She tells him that she does not want to execute him notwithstanding the crime that Richard committed. Richard imagines that she would not kill him despite her sorrow; he asks her that if she wants his death he might kill himself if she gives him that order. Then, she stops him and he walks towards her, he embraces her and telling her some compliments he kisses her, she goes away looking back at him and saying goodbye at him. When Richard stands, alone he reflects about what just happened, the fact that he succeeded with her despite the sufferance that she was feeling for her grief.

He talks to the sun so that he may see his shadow and the short shot of the camera shortly frames on his shadow. There is a scene in *Henry V* which is similar to the scene of the wooing of Anne in *Richard III*, the scene of the encounter of King Henry V with Princess Catherine at the end of the film, indeed, the situation changes enormously but the character of Olivier tries to conquer a lady in both cases. When Henry asks Isabelle, the Queen of France to leave her cousin Catherine with him, the Queen accepts and she goes out of the hall with all the other characters, suddenly we hear a chorus chanting for the meeting between Henry and Catherine. At the beginning of their dialogue, he speaks in English with her and of course, she does not understand immediately the English words.

Therefore, Catherine tells him that she does not understand a word of English, Henry asks her if she likes him but she does not understand once again and he laughs and takes her hand. Alice, the Lady-in-waiting translates both languages to Henry and Catherine, she asks him if she can love the enemy of France and Henry replies that with their marriage he can become the friend of France.

Later, Henry kisses her hands and she runs away, then, Henry tells her that he may kiss her lips but she refuses because in France it is not fashionable for two people kissing each other before the marriage. Nevertheless, after a certain time Henry kisses Catherine and then the members of the French court arrive and Henry asks Charles if he can marry

Catherine and the King of France accepts and the scene closes with the marriage of Henry and Catherine.

The two scenes are obviously similar because the same actor, Laurence Olivier, acts the role of the romantic lover with a woman. In *Richard III*, Richard deals with a woman full of pain for the loss of her husband and she is difficult to conquer especially because he is the responsible of the death of Edward and she could feel only hate and anger. Although, Henry knows that he may hardly win the heart of Anne, he cannot but see it as a difficult challenge to do. In the case of *Henry V* Henry must conquer the princess of France, that is to say, the daughter of his enemy since he aims to unite the two kingdoms. The main difficulty is the fact that they speak different languages but Alice is near to help them, nevertheless, after some minutes of the film Henry kisses Catherine such as it happens in *Richard III* when Richard kisses Anne after the initial resistances of her due to what happened to her husband.

Falstaff's death scene switches the attention of the audience from Henry to Falstaff and his group of friends (Nym, Pistol, Bardolph, Nell, and the Boy). The character of Falstaff appears in the plays mostly in *Henry IV* and hardly ever in *Henry V*. In Olivier's *Henry V*, indeed, when he is alone in his room he gets up remaining on his bed and speaks to Henry even if he is not present in the Boars' head and Falstaff calls him Hal. (Henry's name in *Henry IV*) During the scene, Falstaff remembers a dialogue from the past, Henry's words when he pretends not to recognise him, moreover, he continues to look a point of the room with a suffering facial expression and the camera shoots him by a short-cut position when we hear that Henry does not speak anymore to his friend in the souvenir.

Then, Falstaff tries to sleep and Nell looks at his physical conditions and she understand that he is dying, indeed, in the following scene the group reunites and they talk about Falstaff's life and death. In Olivier's *Richard III*, there are characters who die during the plot of the film, Clarence, the princes, Edward IV, Richard III, but some characters report the death of a few characters such as, Anne or The Duke of Buckingham.

There is a similar fate for two different characters in the two adaptations: the rejection of the Duke of Buckingham and the rejection of Falstaff. The audience does not see the scene of Henry banishing his old friend; nevertheless, we hear Henry's voice in Falstaff's mind.

A similar scene in *Richard III* is Clarence's murder where we see Richard looking through the keyhole of the cell in the tower of London and other characters arrive: Buckingham, Catesby, and Brackenbury (he listens Clarence's monologue on his dream). Richard talks with the two assassins advising not to let Clarence speak otherwise he would influence them with his words, Tyrrell and the other killer show their certificate for taking in charge the Duke of Clarence to Brackenbury and they manage to pass. They enter inside the cell and he asks for a cup of wine, without realising immediately of their presence. They answer that soon he will drink a great quantity of wine, Clarence understands their intention and he shouts but they stun him and they put him inside a barrel of wine drowning him and the wine goes out from the barrel. In the following scene, all the English nobles are in the same room of the king; therefore, Edward tells them to make peace to each other despite their past reciprocal hatred.

Richard arrives late in the reunion and he informs King Edward of Clarence's death, Edward is shocked about the news and he becomes angry because he feels responsible for his brother's death since he gave a death order to him that he cancelled later.

Then, Edward becomes weak and he asks Hastings help so to go to his office, but not so much time later he inevitably dies. The good performance of Laurence Olivier is noticeable especially in a few scenes, that is to say, when the English army arrives in France. Following the dramatic voice of the Chorus, a small group of soldiers carry the fire cannon with them, the long shot of the camera displays a pictorial landscape of France, but many soldiers run towards the camera and the look of the audience.

Then, a grey knight arrives and he removes his helmet, he carries the sword and we recognize Henry who moves by horse during this scene and he invites the English to reach the breach.

3.3 The speeches and the battles of Henry and Richard in *Henry V* (1944) and *Richard III* (1955)

The soldiers are all around when King Henry stays still on his horse, when he opens his speech the camera shoots him by a short distance but slowly he becomes more and more

distant. We also see Henry's face, the white horse and some flags, it is important to notice a great silence of the troops during Henry's speech, at a certain moment, they only repeat the words: Henry, England and Saint George. They all run following Henry towards the battle of Agincourt. During the speech, Olivier slowly raises the volume of his voice so to motivate the English army to fight the French although their number is much bigger.

Even in *Richard III*, King Richard does a short speech before of the beginning of the battle of Bosworth, he knows that he may lose the battle and he chooses to fight anyway and this choice leads him to his death. In the brief speech, he tells to fight together until the end whether they all go to heaven or hell. Richard's army run towards Richmond's army, the shot of the camera shows the armies moving fast by horse and the fight opens, the archers are in position and many soldiers fight by sword.

In the meanwhile, Richard follows the battle from a far position and he begins to worry when a large part of his army cease of fighting. A large group of his army desert him, they stop fighting each other, and only a few remain loyal to him, Catesby is one of them and he takes Richard's crown putting it in a safety place.

Richard tells the soldiers to fight as dragons and he marches towards his enemy despite the fact that they are dramatically inferior to their enemies. Then, Richard starts his duel with Richmond, they both are on their horses and they hit each other with the sword, Richard looks at the armies and at a certain moment an enemy stabs Richard's horse and consequently Richard falls from the horse.

The crown falls and the camera shows the moving of the crown, Richard steals the horse pushing the soldier down and an archer hits the horse, before the man could hit Richard, he kills him by sword and he fights some other enemies.

The camera focus on Catesby who sees that their enemies are advancing and he shouts for help, he talks from a distant position to the Duke of Norfolk so to change the evolving of the battle, but an archer shoots an arrow to Norfolk. Consequently the man falls from the bridge, Catesby escapes avoiding some arrows and he hears Richard shouting *a horse, a horse, my Kingdom for a horse*.

Catesby goes where Richard lies giving the advice to him to withdraw but the King does not consider this option, then, a group of soldiers arrive and they stab Catesby and so

Richard is alone around all the enemies. The move of the camera emphasises the fact that the enemies form a circle around Richard moving and the enemy soldiers are everywhere. The face of Richard outlines that he is near to certain death, then, Stanley takes his sword and he goes towards Richard but a few seconds later all the soldiers attack the King.

One of them cuts Richard's throat and many others hit him with their weapons; Stanley looks at him and asks the other soldiers to stop the attack. They see Richard still trying to defend himself and trying to raise his sword that inevitably falls down and so Richard dies. The soldiers tie Richard's leg to a horse and they let the horse go, Stanley looks at the scene, so, the end of King Richard III leads to a new Kingdom, indeed, Stanley finds the royal crown near a bush and he sees Richmond from a far distance, the camera takes Stanley crowning the new king and the film ends.

The scene of the preparation for the battle of Agincourt in *Henry V* starts with the French nobles who are wearing their armours for the battle, also the Dauphin is on the battle court, a black knight appears near the French Prince and the other French, he walks away and the eye of the camera follows him.

We see the French camp, then, the short-cut of the camera shows an English flag. We move to the English camp, a medium shot takes a group of five soldiers: Westmorland, Exeter, Gloucester, Bedford and Salisbury, Gloucester asks where King Henry is. Moreover, they talk about the battle, the number of the French soldiers, then, King Henry arrives and he talks to all the English army about the battle, the future glory reserved for the fighting English soldiers. Henry talks about the day of the battle, Saint Crispin's day and he communicates to the soldiers that one day they will remember that glorious day. Henry continues walking during the scene and the army follow him, he tells them that everyone will remember them until the end of the world and they will fight and die as brothers and the people who will know of this famous battle they would damn themselves for not being there on that day.

At the end of the speech, Henry climbs on his horse and the camera shows from a far position the English preparing the camp of battle. On the other side of Agincourt, the French are drinking and laughing before the battle. The camera shoots a small group of knights arriving on the English court and one of them is Montjoy, who talks to Henry. They smile at each other, the French messenger speaks to him while Henry replies to him

standing on his horse about the possibility to ransom himself in case of defeat and Henry tells him that he prefer to leave his bones if the English soldiers lose. The aerial view of the camera shows the landscape of Agincourt before of the battle, the camera shows seven men drumming during the marching of the French army. The English archers are ready to shoot their arrows and we see the black knight in the first line of French soldiers, the French soldiers run with their horses towards the English army.

The camera takes the French army horizontally; it is possible to hear the music of battle composed by Walton during the scene, the music stops when Henry gives the command to shoot the arrows to the archers and a storm of arrows fly toward the French knights. The two armies initially fight on horse and the archers continue shooting, then, the French move by horse but the English attack them jumping from the trees. At a certain time, Henry speaks to the soldiers and the English flag appears once again on the screen, then, the French nobles are talking to each other.

They decide to attack the English army but the Dauphin and Montjoy stay where they are. Therefore, the black knight and the other knight attack the English camp putting fire to the curtains and killing the English pages. Captain Fluennen finds the dead boys and he cries lamenting that this crime is against the military rules, later, Henry arrives and says that he was not angry until he arrived in France.

The black knight sees Henry and he attacks him, they fight each other by sword and the camera moves from a short-cut shot to a medium shot, Henry wins the duel and the black knight falls dead from the horse. Henry talks to Montjoy whether he has come because of the ransom for the king; nevertheless, he replies that he is there to ask the English the license to bury the French dead soldiers. Montjoy also tells Henry that France has lost the battle against England, Henry asks the messenger what is the name of the far castle and he replies, Agincourt and Henry decide to name battle of Agincourt, the conflict that has just ended.

Then, the camera shows the English flag from a short-cut shot. King Henry counts the number of the casualties and thirty people die among the soldiers of the English army, they are all surprised by the little number of the English dead since the enemy army was much superior, they consider this a sort of miracle, therefore Henry tells to chant a *Te Deum* and the scene ends.

3.4 The acting and directing of Laurence Olivier

Laurence Olivier as a director makes his filmic adaptations both cinematic and theatrical and obviously, the direct use of the camera is one of the most important instruments, a kind of substitution of the theatrical audience that the director needs for the film. During the thirties, Olivier played the role of Romeo and Mercutio at the Old Vic and in the following years, he acted many other Shakespearean roles: Henry V, Macbeth, Hamlet, etc. His large experience on the Shakespearean plays on stage helps him carrying out several roles even on cinema. Barbara Freedman points out that Olivier when he started acting for the cinema he did not believe in adapting the Shakespeare plays on cinema.¹²

Despite Olivier, acted and directed many times *Henry V* on a theatrical stage, therefore, shooting for the cinema could influence his performance, but Olivier chose to direct some scenes in the first half of the film inside a theatre. During the film the camera passes from short shots to long shots, it depends from the number of people present in the scene and from the aim of the director. In the scene of the siege of Harfleur, firstly, the camera shoots Henry from a short position, when the knight removes his helmet and we discover that King Henry is the knight. During the king's speech, Olivier chooses to distance progressively the camera so to depict Henry with all his soldiers from a high angle.

Therefore, the high-shot gives to the King a certain form of respect and we even see some soldiers looking at the scene near to the position of the camera. Olivier created a relationship between cinema and theatre, especially his acting represent the world of theatre when he communicates with the audience through the camera and with other actions.

Olivier directed *Henry V* during the tragic events of World War II and one of the reasons for filming this adaptation is political, since the film discusses the role of the King for his

• ¹² Barbara Freedman, 'Critical junctures in Shakespeare screen history', in Russell Jackson, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on film*. Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.56.

country and subjects in the difficult period of internal division between England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales antecedent the age of the Tudors.

Olivier omits many scenes present in the original text where the personality of Henry changes due to the situation, for example: the punishment of Grey, Cambridge and Scroop, the hanging of Bardolph, etc. Moreover, the historical time for shooting the film required that in the adaptations there was not division among the British citizens since during World War II, all the countries of Great Britain had to unite against Germany and its allies.

In another film directed by Olivier, *Richard III*, precisely, in the first scene, the short-cut shot of the camera shows the coronation of Edward IV and the allegorical coronation of Richard and we understand the irony of Richard, which often appears in the film. Then, during the scene of Richard's soliloquy the long shot frames Richard and it is difficult to recognise him immediately, when he gets near to the camera, we see Olivier's character. For most of the time of the scene, the camera moves and follows Olivier while telling the cues of the soliloquy because he continues moving during the whole length of the scene.

For the first half of the film the camera follows the point of view of Richard, indeed, he is always present in the scenes and he observes the others from the keyholes, the windows, so to understand if his plans have success or not, in addition, he describes the evolving of the situation with irony. When the character of Richard woos Anne during the funeral of her husband Olivier let the character talk about the intention to conquer Anne when she and the monks are far away. The focus on the villain's behaviour is also when Richard meets Anne again and this time kisses her, first the camera pays attention to Richard looking at Anne and then to the whole scene from a near position and Richard comments what just happened to the audience.

The medium shot of the camera takes the scene when Richard and Anne talk to each other until she moves from that position and she tells him that she does not want to see him because he has infected her eyes. In the following Scenes, Olivier acts in the scenes with Ralph Richardson interpreting Buckingham. During the final battle of Bosworth, the camera focus on Richard's expression looking at the evolving of the situation. When Olivier's character dies, the short-cut shot of the camera observes what happens to Richard's corpse and Stanley looks at the scene.

Chapter 4: Analysis of the differences and similarities of the two adaptations of *Henry V* directed by Laurence Olivier and Kenneth Branagh

4.1 Politics in the play *Henry V*

The play *Henry V* is famous for the great role of the monarch of England during the development of the plot such as in the case of other history dramas: *Richard II*, *Henry VI*. Shakespeare chose to write about many historical characters, such as, Richard III, Henry VIII, Julius Caesar, Anthony, and Cleopatra. In the original text of the play *Henry V*, the English author discusses about the moral and political responsibilities of King Henry V in multiple political situations: political councils, the betrayal of three English nobles. Moreover, Shakespeare outlines in all the plays related to *Henry V* the crimes that a monarch and his followers may commit in the aim of rising to the throne and when a tyrant defeats his opposition violently or there is war between two countries.

In the opening overview of *Shakespeare and politics* Blair Worden talks about the definition of *political realism* present in Shakespeare's plays in some characters seeking power in the old regime (The political order present in *Richard II* representing many traditions, rituals and sacrality of political and religious power). The medieval political and religious society slowly lose their structure because of the growing of a modern political order where the kings share more power with the parliament. Specifically, the play *Henry V* talks about the English monarchy, the distance from the world of the sovereign to the world of his English subjects and the difficult political relationship between the two kingdoms. The plays have become famous in the last two centuries because of the film adaptations, which have given an important contribution to the history of British literature.



Illustration 9 Laurence Olivier's *Henry V* (1944)

4.2 Laurence Olivier playing the role of Henry V

One famous theatrical actor who managed to put three Shakespearean plays to the screen with a huge success was, Laurence Olivier who tried to transfer his ability on acting to the world of cinema with the help of the camera, indeed, some decades before actors hardly ever imagined to work differently from the theatrical stages. Laurence Olivier, played at theatre Brutus in *Julius Caesar* and Katharina in *The Taming of the shrew*, then, he acted the role of Hamlet, Henry V and Macbeth, Iago.¹³ After his huge experience on stage, it was not easy for Olivier to direct the works of Shakespeare for the cinema. Therefore, for the initial part of the film he used to work on stage with a visible audience, which could react, to the spectacles making applauses, laughing, or even crying especially in the tragic scenes. Indeed, the world of cinema is completely different from the theatrical one since despite the quality of the film, there is less space to the imagination and the audience captures a great extent of what the director image about the plot on the screen.

¹³ 'Laurence Olivier Profile' in Daniel Rosenthal, *Shakespeare on screen*, London: Octopus, 2000, p.48.

When the theatrical director organises a scene, the staff prepare many objects on the theatrical stage so to create the right atmosphere for the plot of the play. The film director develops it not only through the help of the material objects of the scenes but with the background music, the presence of the camera, which films everything from multiple distances. Nowadays, directors create the films eventually with digital special effects, which substitute the objects that were once necessary for shooting the scenes decades of years ago.

Olivier interpreted the role of Henry V many times in the thirties and forties as theatrical actor; at a certain moment of Contemporary history, something terrible happened in Europe, World War II began and the countries of Europe fought each other again. Soon, England would take position in this conflict, which involved very quickly a large number of nations of every continent in the world. The war of the allied forces against Germany and the other two countries of the triple axis produced a series of immediate dangers for the ordinary life of many British soldiers and for the civilians.

The British government promoted a film about the Shakespearean play *Henry V* and the purpose was not entirely academic but also political, indeed, the original text of a history drama adapted to the reality of World War II could invite the British soldiers to fight for Great Britain and for the King in that particular historical context. At that time England, France, United States, later Russia, all allied against Germany, Italy, and Japan. The ending of the production of *Henry V* was one year before the end of World War II.

Therefore, the political situation of Olivier's *Henry V* is completely different since in the middle age, many European countries were monarchies and the republics did not yet exist as contemporary people consider them nowadays. Nevertheless, the message of the King addressing to the British countries and their allies to unite against a foreign country is the same despite many centuries have passed from the years of the plot of *Henry V*.

Laurence Olivier was probably the best choice during the forties for directing and acting in this adaptation in that particular historical context. Indeed, he had a great experience in the organization of theatrical plays for the soldiers and he used to face himself the horrible situation of the conflict because he fought as air pilot in the British army. Therefore, Olivier described the reality of the World War II through the mirror of the Shakespearean play.

Olivier started directing his filmic version of *Henry V* in 1943, then, the production of the film ended in 1944, almost at the end of the war, the same year of the landing on Normandy of the British and American soldiers. Clearly, the soldiers and the citizens of Europe were living a very difficult situation because of the war. Therefore, the film *Henry V* could influence the people of that historical period since in the plot there is a war and something near to a common national patriotism. These topics make the political situation of the play really similar to the one of the Second World War

At the beginning of the adaptation, the audience sees an aerial view of London, but not a medieval London.¹⁴ Indeed, the long shot of the camera runs towards a twentieth century London eventually showing the river Thames with an epic background music which evokes the war present in the plot of the play and the one present during the years of the film production, World War II. Therefore, the medieval story of the Shakespearean play is in open contrast with the image of twentieth century London; nevertheless, the producer wants to unite the reality of 1940s with the reality of the play. In the first scene of Olivier's *Henry V*, the director addresses the adaptation of Shakespeare to the soldiers of the British army who were risking their life as Olivier for their country in those times, especially, to the Royal Air Force. Precisely, during the title credits there is a written text appearing on the screen, which tells that the adaptation talks to the British citizens, and then the action moves to a theatre, therefore, the cast, the staff and the audience prepare themselves for the play.

The actors wear the medieval clothes and at a certain point the Chorus appears, as a bearded man who announces the beginning of the play with a speech, then, Laurence Olivier (Henry) enters on the stage and he talks with the Archbishop Canterbury about the decision to declare the war to France. The audience clap their hands when there is the epical speech of Henry and when the Chorus briefly presents the play. The people of the audience inside the Globe have an active role in the adaptation, a sort of participation to the main events, which occur during the play.

¹⁴ 'Laurence Olivier Henry V (UK 1944)' in Maurice Hindle, *Studying Shakespeare on film*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2007, p.43.

Since when the play starts, the director mixes theatrical scenes with the cinematic scenes, the reason for the mixture of two opposite kind of spectacles lies in the long career of Laurence Olivier as a theatrical actor. He acted for the cinema in more adaptations of Shakespeare (*Hamlet*, *Henry V*, *Richard III*); nevertheless, he maintained a good relationship with the world of theatre especially in his style of acting.



Illustration 10 Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V* (1989)

4.3 Kenneth Branagh playing the role of Henry V

The situation is not the same for another adaptation of *Henry V*, which arrives later on the cinema screens, *Henry V* (1989) directed and acted by Kenneth Branagh, an Irish director who acted in this film as Henry, the protagonist of the play.

He took care of this work following the steps of Laurence Olivier but making important changes, which differentiate the adaptation to the famous film of Laurence Olivier. The year of the production of the film was 1989, so, the historical context changed from Olivier's *Henry V* and this produced multiple consequences in the emotional behaviour of the cast. The producers did not have to be too careful about the content of the scenes, which appear in the adaptation.

Therefore, Branagh did not cut half of the lines of the original play as in the Olivier's *Henry V*; indeed, Olivier chose the scenes where the English army is loyal to Henry. Especially, the few scenes where there is the union of the different countries of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales and the soldiers are favourable to fight France without any doubts. There was not a war in Europe during the years of production of the Branagh's *Henry V*, so, the audience may not have imagined the war scenes as present facts, which were occurring in those years.

The main conflict where Great Britain had participated before the production of *Henry V* was the Falklands Islands' war in 1981 during the period of Thatcher's government. Probably, Branagh wanted to present Henry in all the aspects of his personality, therefore, he chose to shoot the scenes, which could show a dangerous and violent king. Branagh did not simply direct *Henry V* as Shakespearean play but also other three adaptations: *Much Ado about nothing* (1993) *Hamlet* (1996), *Love's Labour's lost* (2000). He also acted the role of Iago on *Othello* without being the director of that film (1996) where Laurence Fishburne acted as Othello (Laurence Fishburne appears in the trilogy of *The Matrix* with the role of Morpheus). Therefore, Branagh explored the world of the British Literature of Shakespeare both as director and as actor like Olivier did many decades before him. Since he was young, he followed the Shakespearean plays acted by Derek Jacobi¹⁵ and the passion for Shakespeare's literature slowly grew on him.

¹⁵ 'Kenneth Branagh Profile', in Daniel Rosenthal, *Shakespeare on screen*, London: Octopus, 2000, p.172.

His adaptation on *Henry V* portrays the character of Falstaff in some scenes: in the first scene, Falstaff lies ill on the bed and the woman discovers of his physical conditions looking at him and touching some parts of his cold and dead body. In the second and third scene, Falstaff appears with Bardolph and the other members of the group in two flashback of Henry's past memory. In the first flashback, Falstaff talks to his friends that are laughing about his jokes, then, Falstaff sees someone and the future king arrives in the scene, Henry, who never talks but he smiles and listens carefully to the words of Falstaff. Indeed, Falstaff asks him not to banish him when Henry becomes king otherwise he will be alone in the world, but Henry thinks otherwise and Falstaff moves back understanding what Henry has in mind. In the second scene, the focus of Henry's attention is on the figure of Bardolph, who sits next to Falstaff drinking beer, then, he tells Henry that in the future when Henry will become king he will not be brave enough to sentence a thief while laughing.

Following the second scene a tearful Henry decides to give the order to hang Bardolph, the corpse of his old friend remains still hanged until the Chorus arrives in the scene and he looks at it with disgust and indifference. Indeed, the character is often near his friends and he suffers for the rejection of Henry as friend, since he believes in the person of the future king but Hal becomes the sovereign and he has to forget his past life and himself and to give priority to the political body of the king. This choice put Henry in a situation of deep solitude and sufferance in his conscience. The beginning of *Henry V* (1989) shows the archbishop of Canterbury with the other priest, Ely who talks about the proposal of the Parliament to tax the estates of the English Church. In addition, they find the solution to move war to France so to give to the crown other treasures and money without the risk of the Government to take a big part of the estates of the Church so to finance the military campaign in France.

Henry V (1989) does not start immediately with Henry, but as in the original text the Chorus is the first allegorical protagonist who invites the audience to follow the play, therefore, he reminds us that we see a spectacle and not what really happened many hundreds ago in France and England. Derek Jacobi expresses his emotions while narrating the facts happening in the plot in a journalistic style. The arrival of King Henry transmits a sense of fear to the audience, we see him as an Enlightened person appearing very far from the camera, we hear many steps and then the lieutenants, nobles and followers bowing

their head to him when he passes near them. Even Scroop, Cambridge and Grey are present in the scene since the king has not yet discovered their betrayal. The audience still does not see his face until he sits on his throne and the camera is in front of him.

Suddenly, we know that King Henry is a young man despite his dark entrance to the scene and the huge respect received by the nobles, lieutenants, indeed, a spectator could guess that the king is aged but it is not so. Furthermore, he starts talking about France and politics with a serious voice and face waiting for the advices of the members of the aristocratic council of England. He threatens the Archbishop of Canterbury that he is responsible for what he says so to transfer the responsibility to him in case of loss of the war. Then, the Archbishop explains to Henry and his followers the legal reasons for claiming the throne of France. In this scene, Exeter shows many expressions while hearing the words of Canterbury and Henry.

The King asks the Archbishop whether he may claim legitimately and consciently the throne of France, the answer of Canterbury is that the guilt may fall entirely on his head in case of failure of the French campaign. The movie shifts from the point of view of Henry and it also focuses its attention on the friends of Falstaff, how they behave without their old friend and their pain due to the unhealthy physical conditions of Falstaff and his following death. Indeed, the group has changed since Falstaff's death and Nym, Bardolph, the boy, Pistol have to go to France and therefore the group divides because of the conflict and also there is the possibility that no one will return home.

Nell Quickly pays attention to the conditions of Falstaff and she is the first who discovers that he is dead, such as in the play when the woman tells the hour of the death of the famous character to the other members of the fellowship. Falstaff is much more present in the play *Henry IV*, he is friend of Henry or at least he thinks so before their division at the end of the play. He tells continually many jokes, which makes the play more comical but in a way also more tragical since his character does never evolve and later he dies when Hal becomes sovereign and forgets about their friendship.

He remains a joyful fellow of the taverns and feasts without having a role in the future Kingdom of Hal (Henry V). The boy is one other character who appears in more than one scene in *Henry V* (1989) interpreted by Christian Bale (*Empire of the Sun* (1987) *Batman Begins* (2005) *The Prestige* (2006)). He is a member of the fellowship of Falstaff, he also

participates in the war between England, and France, the camera shows him running while keeping the English flag. Unfortunately, he does not survive the Battle of Agincourt and Henry shows a great rage when he discovers about the death of the pages, therefore, he tells the famous line: *I was not angry since I came to France*. Henry replies with a great rage also to the arrival of the French messenger Montjoy without knowing what he has to say because of the atrocious killing of the pages.

Branagh's film is different from the adaptation of Olivier since the main purpose of the two directors are not the same and they link to the historical context. Branagh tries to develop the character of Henry, not simply as a symbol of England and monarchy, but as a person who cannot always control his emotions when he has to fight France or when he has to condemn someone he knows, such as, Bardolph, especially because there is a profound conflict inside King Henry.

Therefore, Henry's personality divides between the personal self, which is not easy to understand and the public self, the whole of all the responsibilities and duties of the king towards his country. He has to make difficult decisions to defend England from foreign enemies and also when he has to punish the traitors or all the citizens who do not respect the law.

At the beginning of the adaptation, Henry appears a strong leader of his country, but there is the dauphin of France who is not afraid to challenge him since the initial scenes, indeed, King Charles tries to be diplomatic with Henry but then he becomes ready to show his strength sending his army against him. The Dauphin of France presents as gift to his Majesty some tennis balls to mock Henry for his lack of experience in the throne of England such as in the original text and he represents the self-confidence and vanity of the France towards the political and military forces of England.

When Henry knows about the joke of the Prince of France, he looks Montjoy with a serious facial expression showing a deep anger who tries to control, then, he gives a message to the dauphin through the messenger Montjoy. Therefore, he tells him that what will happen to France is a consequence of the mockery of the prince of France, his actions will provoke death, and sufferance in France, so, Henry refuses the political responsibility for the conflict. Yet, Henry uses the joke of the Dauphin as a pretext to declare war to

France, he has already decided with the court, Canterbury, Ely much time earlier to claim the throne of France.

Before going to France, the King of England seems really strong and almost invincible with his enemies, indeed, and he knew mysteriously of a plot to kill him at Southampton. Following his Arrival in France, Henry would soon understand the difficult and desperate situation of the conflict between England and France. Indeed, he does a few speeches and he gets near to a group of soldiers during the night before the battle talking to them so in the aim to increase the self-confidence and loyalty of the army to the cause but also to understand what they think of himself.

The English forces are dramatically inferior than the French army and so they have to engage much more than they previously imagined in this war and the morale of the troops is really low. Henry does the speech to the soldiers so to convince them to believe to the English patriotism and to the union of the multiple states of Great Britain against France (England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales). With his patriotic words, Henry tells them that together they can defeat any kind of enemy independently from the number of the soldiers of the other army. According to King Henry, the English soldiers that will not fight will not share the common glory and the English that die in battle they will die gloriously. Branagh, directed a couple of scenes where he fights the French men, such as, in the battle of Agincourt against many enemies tactically more prepared, sometimes risking his life, but the camera puts its focus also on Henry's allies and relatives. For example: his uncle, Exeter, appears in the battle scenes fighting bravely and during the famous speech of Henry before battle. Exeter shows great enthusiasm such as other characters who were afraid of the battle but then they are ready to fight after Henry's speech, he never shows any fear about the conflict and he always advises Henry to fight France.

Branagh's *Henry V* (1989) describes with a great precision the crimes and atrocious facts of war showing many scenes where the characters fight each other with all their physical forces also falling on the mud, the scene describes well the evolving of the battle. Henry's face as well is filthy with the mud because of his active participation to the difficult battle. Then, the situation is opposite and much more pacific and colourful in the scenes concerning the Princess of France, Catherine. Indeed, the situation is different in the fairy

world of Catherine where we do not hear about the problems in the foreign political relationship between England and France.

Therefore, she lives in a colourful world where the dangers of war are far and peace between the two kingdoms may arrive before or later, then, she wants to know more about England and those peaceful scenes explain what may happen at the end of the play. The Princess Catherine and Alice laugh pronouncing the words in English, but in a particular moment the joyful scene changes when Catherine opens the door and sees her father, Charles, the King of France, is very worried about the situation of the country and he looks at her seriously before to go away with the other nobles.

Catherine is only present in some scenes of the film: Firstly, when she is near to a French Lady-in-waiting who helps her to learn the English language systematically, so, they start with the translation of the names of the parts of the body from French to English. Secondly, when she meets Henry in the castle of the King of France after the meeting of the two kings takes place at the end of the war between England and France. The second scene explains the ability of Henry to act with the other characters, friends or enemies, in this case with the princess of France pretending not to desire only the crown of France but also the love of Catherine and he communicates to be a friend of France.

At the conclusion of Branagh's film, Henry marries Catherine, therefore, a period of peace between the two European countries starts and so the play ends with the words of the Chorus. He explains what will happen in the following years, a couple of main events, which have important consequences for the kingdom of England: the loss of France, the death of Henry V. He tells also how the conquest of France and the celebration of the marriage between King Henry and the Princess Catherine (it symbolises a union of the two Kingdoms) are vain and a terrible civil war will occur in Great Britain (Plot of *Henry VI* and *Richard III*). Then, the Chorus slowly closes the door who opened previously in the first scene of the film and the film ends.



Illustration 11 Laurence Olivier's *Henry V* (1944)

4.4 The differences and similarities between Olivier's *Henry V* (1944) and Branagh's *Henry V* (1989)

The two adaptations of *Henry V*: Olivier's (1944) and Branagh's (1989) both interpret the play in a twentieth century historical context and the two directors give their contribution to the final works also as actors and from their acting the audience understands the ideas they have about the characters. These two versions of *Henry V* distinguish from each other but they both have become important British Literature around the world. The first scene before the beginning of the play, when the Chorus tells the story to the audience presents a large number of differences whether you see one film or the other. Indeed, the role of the Chorus, how the director places him in the scenes of the film explain how a Shakespearean adaptation may change accordingly to the year and period of production.

Olivier's (1944) chooses to represent a city of England using the long shot of the camera, that is to say, London, a background music is present during the scene and it explains one of the topics of the film, it anticipates a battle, which will take place subsequently in the plot of the movie. The director dedicates the film to the soldiers of the English forces with the opening credits where there is a text appearing on the screen, which underlines the addressee of the message. The focus of the camera shifts from the long shot of London to the internal hall of a famous English theatre, the English Globe, the sixteen-hundred century Shakespeare theatre, so, there is the presence of the theatrical audience of the Shakespeare's age.

Then, the Chorus appears on the stage as an Elizabethan man,¹⁶ the audience strongly clap their hands especially when he announces that the spectacle is about to begin. The time of the plot of the play is different from the time of the spectators of the English globe. A man shows that the scene is taking place in King Henry's palace with a written text, then; the camera shoots Canterbury and Ely talking to each other. The Renaissance audience of the Globe react to what they say, one of the actors does not hide that he has with himself a paper with all the cues of the scene. Then, the following scene focus on the preparation for the play, all the actors wear the clothes for the spectacle, when the dialogue between King Henry and Canterbury starts, the actor who acts as Ely gives to the actor interpreting Canterbury the wrong cues for the scene and we see pieces of paper falling on the stage.

In the adaptation of Kenneth Branagh, the initial scene does not portray a city of England, but the Chorus who enlightens the dark of the scene with the help of a match, then after a few steps he turns the lights on walking inside a large hall full of technological instruments for shooting a film. He talks to the audience about the realism of theatre displaying the spectacles of other ages. The Chorus repeats the passages already present in the original text of *Henry V* moving to a large door and opening it shouting the word *play*, he shows a great passion in telling the story, so, when he opens the large door is an allegory of the beginning of the play. Therefore, the Chorus invites the audience to pay attention to the play; nevertheless, the audience is not visible, such as, in the case of

¹⁶ 'Laurence Olivier Henry V (UK 1944)' in Maurice Hindle, *Studying Shakespeare on film*, 2007, p.142.

Olivier's adaptation and it cannot comment immediately the spectacle, whether they like it or not.

The scene of the dialogue between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely put the two characters alone thinking how to solve a possible problem for the English church, the expropriation of a big part of the ownerships of the clergy so to finance the military campaigns, the nobles, lieutenants. They look around with attention so avoid the risk that someone may listen to their dialogue and refer it to the King or the other nobles, then, they hear noisy steps and they see some shadows on the walls walking probably for the arrival of King Henry.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has an important role in the two adaptations of the play in the first scenes, even if there is a difference in the place of the scene of the dialogue between Canterbury and Ely. On the one hand, in *Olivier's Henry V*, Canterbury appears with Ely on the Renaissance stage for a short time and the scene appears comical to the audience since the actor of Ely does not know the cues and he brings with himself many papers. On the other hand, in *Branagh's Henry V*, Canterbury opens slowly a door so to understand whether there are people that may hear their secret dialogue. Indeed, He lies in a little dark chamber talking at a low voice about his fears and ideas about the Parliament proposal to take a part of the ownerships of the Church to Ely, and they identify France as a solution to England problems.

They think to convince the King while mentioning the great chance for him to enlarge his Kingdom through the war against France and they talk about Henry's past and his habits and old friends (Henry IV) and his probable indifference toward the law of the Parliament. Nevertheless, they require the help of Henry for their cause and at the end of their dialogue, they hear the noise of many steps, indeed, a group of people walks towards the great hall where the king will meet the archbishop of Canterbury and the members of the English court.

There is a scene in the two adaptations when Henry appears in the stage and he discusses about the campaign of France with the court about the negative consequences that it may provoke to the country. Then, the Archbishop of Canterbury will try to convince the king and his followers with a great oratorical ability of the legitimacy of the Henry's claim for the throne of France. In Olivier's' adaptation the camera shoots from a long distance the

scene on the Globe theatre and the actors wear particular clothes similar to ones of the age of Shakespeare. The theatrical audience laugh at a few comical scenes of Ely and the cinema audience hear their immediate reactions to the spectacle.

There is a throne on the stage and the camera focuses on the facial expressions of the King while Canterbury is talking to him and Henry speaks after the Archbishop of Canterbury concludes his speech. At the end of this scene, the Renaissance audience clap their hands noisily and the actors bow to them and the camera moves to a different place, a colourful landscape.

Branagh's *Henry V* puts the beginning of the scene of the council for the military campaign in France with the arrival of Henry and Canterbury's speech on the legitimacy of the claim for the throne of France. Canterbury explains all the motivations to consider unlawful the French legacy, then, Henry asks him about the possibility to claim the French crown. The camera with a short shot shows Canterbury and Ely talking next to the King so to convince him about the war to France. Then, the word passes to Henry announcing to all the nobles and other members of the court that England will march towards France.

When Henry announces this decision, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely are still near him and Henry prepares for the travel to France with all the members of the English court who follow him. The following scene of Branagh's *Henry V* is not present in Olivier's film; I refer to the scene of the punishment of the three traitors (Cambridge, Scroop, Grey).

Olivier chose not to shoot this scene because it was dangerous at that time because of the war, therefore, it was more important to describe in the adaptation a kingdom without any internal division and the presence of the traitors could influence negatively the audience. Indeed, it was better not to outline the presence of traitors for the morale of the troops because it was important to support the loyalty of the soldiers towards England especially during the years of the war.

The scene of the discovering of the betrayal of the three English men by the King starts with the Chorus talking as in the previous important scenes; he presents the three traitors revealing their plot to kill the sovereign of England. Then, the Chorus announces to the

audience that the action moves to Southampton. In the scene, Henry accuses the three nobles (Cambridge, Scroop, Grey) of corruption and of the plot against his person.

The members of the English court are present; Henry deceives the traitors talking about an unknown traitor asking also their opinion on the matter. They reply that is important to punish the people who are not loyal to the King, yet, they do not know about the trick. Indeed, he was referring to Cambridge, Scroop and Grey, then, Henry gives them a letter each and they understand that he knows how much they are worth because of their plot against him.

They confess their guilt and Henry judge them verbally and the loyalists and the traitors almost fight each other. Henry takes Scroop and he tells how wrong his betrayal is with many poetical words, then, Exeter arrests them telling their names. The audience does never know the reasons for the plot and it is possible that the three men wanted to put to the throne a legitimate sovereign at the place of Henry since his father Henry IV did not become King lawfully. When Exeter walks near Scroop, he slaps him because his betrayal is even worse than the others are because he was one of the few trusted people of the King. After the punishment of the three traitors, King Henry tells the nobles that he is ready to become King of France and that the moment to go to France is near and the scene ends.

The following scene of Branagh's film communicates to the audience that Falstaff is dead, as in the original text Nell Quickly, (the woman of the Boar's head) tells the bad news to the others. In Branagh's *Henry V*, all the members of Falstaff's group: Quickly, Bardolph, Nym, Pistol, the Boy are in the Boar's head and they think about the tragic disappearance of their friend. They sadly remember their shared past with Falstaff, then, Pistol suddenly sees something. Indeed, Pistol starts laughing when he sees an old souvenir of Falstaff where he talks to all of them and they laugh to his verbal jokes. Then, Henry arrives and Falstaff suggest him to banish the other members of the fellowship, Nym, Bardolph, Pistol but not him otherwise Henry would be alone in the world. We hear the thoughts of Henry because he does not speak to him or to the others, Henry keeps his distance from his friends and he thinks that he does not know Falstaff and the flashback ends and the camera shows again Pistol, Nym, Bardolph, Nell and the Boy.

In Olivier's *Henry V*, the scene of the death of Falstaff starts with Nell Quickly opening a window of the room of Falstaff, she checks the physical conditions of Falstaff. Later, he start speaking to the King from far since Henry is not there, in addition, Falstaff remembers Henry's words during the moments of the banishment.

Nell understands that Falstaff is dead, therefore, all the members of the group go outside the house and they talk about their dead friend, then, they all prepare to go to war in France and Pistol tells his wife, Nell, to take care of the Boar's head. Bardolph, Nym, Pistol, the Boy say farewell to Nell and the camera shoots the closing of the window of the Boar's head; this is also the allegorical end of the Falstaff's fellowship. Indeed, at the beginning of the scene the situation is completely opposite since a woman fully opens a window, so, to show the audience the scene of the death of Falstaff, where he lies on the bed inside the house. In the second part of the two adaptations of *Henry V*, the Chorus describes the battle of Agincourt and focuses the attention on the two armies: the English and the French. The directors want to emphasise how the English and French characters behave before and during the war especially when they fight each other.

Indeed, the two films do not present the French and English characters always in the same manner, Falstaff, Henry, the Dauphin are only a few of the characters that change at least partially from the Olivier's adaptation to the Branagh's adaptation. It is possible to find some stereotypes inside the adaptations, such as in the case of the aristocratic and vain behaviour of the French court when they aim to challenge the English, especially in the adaptation of Laurence Olivier. The French Dauphin is really sure of France's strength and military superiority and he and the group of French nobles think that their victory is certain and they would like to fight the English as soon as they can.

A scene anterior to the battle of Agincourt illustrates Henry speaking to the English army as an invitation to the battle. Olivier's (1944) put the Chorus' voice shooting many waves, then, a group of soldiers place a cannon on the sand. Suddenly, many soldiers arrive and also a knight on his horse, King Henry who shows his face removing his helmet and looking away he pronounces *Once more unto the breach*, the famous speech and he still moves by horse while his soldiers are all around him listening to his speech. The camera slowly moves away from Henry and a red flag appears on the screen, moreover, it is

possible to see a group of soldiers arriving from north-west from the position of the King and we see a natural pictorial landscape. At a certain point of the speech, Henry raises his sword and the camera shoots him from a higher position, we also see a soldier looking and hearing the king's speech. When Henry finishes his speech he moves with the horse and all the soldiers follow him, then, we see Pistol shouting to go to the breach accidentally falling near his three friends.

Fluellen angrily tells them to follow the rest of the army and they run away, then, the camera shows from a short-cut shot a man firing with a cannon and the scene ends. Branagh puts the Chorus as well at the beginning of the scene but there a few changes, firstly, we see a castle in fire and we hear a long sound of epic music and the Chorus near Harfleur excited for the siege reporting what happens, when he stops talking all the soldiers run fast. Henry appears far from the camera on his horse raising his sword pronouncing *Once more unto the breach*, his battle uniform is red, then, the camera shows Nym, Bardolph, Pistol and Fluellen present at the King's speech. At a certain moment, we hear a fire explosion and Henry's turns his head, the camera moves and shoots the British soldiers as well as Exeter. When Henry tells: *God for Harry, England and Saint George* the British army repeats his words raising their weapons and they all run to battle. Nym, Bardolph and Pistol invite the soldiers to fight but they try to escape, nevertheless, they find Pistol angry who raises his sword and tell them to go to the breach and they run.

The two scenes show Henry with a good oratorical ability convincing his outnumbered army to march for war and in both the scenes Bardolph, Nym, the Boy and Pistol are present. Obviously, The Chorus acts in a manner in Olivier's and another in Branagh's, the scene of Falstaff's friend running away from Fluellen is similar in the two films. Of course, Olivier shoots the scene in a particular historical context, World War II, and so the audience listens to Henry's call to arms when The United Kingdom needs help against Germany and the film adaptation could increase the patriotism and the will to fight for the country and the King.



Illustration 12 Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V* (1989)

Chapter 5: Analysis of the differences and similarities in the adaptations of *Richard III*

5.1 The character of Richard of Gloucester

The play *Richard III* has as main character the figure of Richard of Gloucester, member of the York family who has also appeared in the play *Henry VI*, where he has an important role during the war called *the war of the Roses* between the family of York and the family of Lancaster. The war of the roses was a bloody conflict ending in the following play *Richard III* with the defeat of King Richard and the beginning of the kingdom of Henry VII. What is most famous about the play *Richard III* is the uncommon ability of the

protagonist to deceive the other characters. His soliloquies also are important for the evolving of the plot of the play, so the audience may foresee what will happen at the end of the story.

Richard is often able to convince the other characters that he is different from his real self, to appear a better person, to reach political power. This fact also happens in the other play, *Henry VI*, when Richard wants to fulfil his objectives, such as, the rise to the throne of England. In *Richard III*, he aims at seducing Anne, the widow of his old enemy Edward of Wales without the intention of a long-term love relationship with her. However, Richard only deceives some of his relatives since his mother already knows his evil and has never thought him as a son because of his physical deformities and Elizabeth would understand only later the real nature of Richard because of his crimes.

Of course, the political and personal success of Richard of Gloucester does not last long time and before or later in the play he has to face his own destiny, the season of the play, winter, suggests what will happen, that is to say, the end of his kingdom and his death.

5.2 The filmic adaptations of the play *Richard III*

The Shakespeare play *Richard III* has influenced many directors for several years and it has appeared on theatres for hundreds of years. Later, it has also arrived on the cinemas and on television channels in many versions, both British and American, for example in the British channel BBC. The film adaptations of Laurence Olivier of *Richard III* (1955), *Hamlet* (1948), *Henry V* (1944) become rapidly famous and a great model for the future film and theatre directors all around the world.

Indeed, many Shakespeare critics have studied the work of Olivier and they have learned very much about the relationship of Olivier with the camera as if the actor acts on a theatrical stage. One of the directors who filmed a recent adaptation of *Richard III* in 1995 is Richard Loncraine, who is specialised on TV advertisement and documentaries and he directed a film on Shakespeare linking to the historical context between the two world wars (twenties and thirties).

Loncraine's film has as actors and actresses, famous names such as Ian Mc Kellen, Robert Downey Jr. and Kristin Scott Thomas. They all give their marks to the film adaptation with their acting and interpretation of the Shakespearean roles since they all belong to different filmic genres: tragedy, comedy. *Richard III* directed by Richard Loncraine is different from Olivier's: first, the story takes place in the thirties' England, immediately, before World War II and so all the plot is situated in a specific historical context. The producers of the film probably aimed to show the international audience what would happen if Fascist party manage to rise to power in England, so, Richard does not act in a middle-age historical context but in a much more contemporary one. The decision of the producers to transfer Richard to a twentieth Century England has influenced enormously the interpretation of the original play and it has created a series of main differences from the classical adaptation of Laurence Olivier filmed few years after World War II.

Everything is different; the budget for filming, the absence of digital technology or at least the technology still had to develop to help the realization of the films. Even the duels between Richard and Richmond take place in a different way, the two characters do not fight by sword and medieval weapons as in the case of the original text. Indeed, they use modern guns and vehicles such as helicopters which appear in the initial and ending scenes, so, many changes have given to the play a twentieth century' atmosphere and also a touch of originality.



Illustration 13 Laurence Olivier's *Richard III* (1955)

5.3 The main characteristics of Laurence Olivier's *Richard III*

The version of Olivier has a deep relationship with the world of theatre where the director and actor, Laurence Olivier had worked for several years before his cinematographic career, so, the film contains theatrical performances and the result is an original adaptation.

For example, in the second scene when Richard walks towards the camera and he recites the famous soliloquy, the face of the actor often looks at the camera from a close position for almost ten minutes, then; the other characters such as the Duke of Buckingham, King Edward IV appear in the scenes. In that particular scene, there is a throne inside a large hall (King's throne room) and Richard wearing a red suit. He is very distant from the camera and also to the eye of the filmic audience.

Since the beginning, during the coronation of his brother Edward he is the main character as in the original play and then he tells the audience what will happen in the story as if he

is the narrator in the scene of the soliloquy. Of course, what he tells is not necessarily the truth and the audience will discover only later, what happens to the characters that are on his way.

Then, he looks outside the window and he sees King Edward, we see Richard preparing his strategies to become the new king; he reveals to the audience what he has in mind to do or at least it is possible to understand partially his intentions. Buckingham is the only person apart from the audience to whom he tells his plans but the situation changes when Richard plans to kill the son of Edward and his cousin because they may claim the throne before or later. Therefore, Richard begins to suspect him as a potential traitor, and Buckingham thinks whether it would be useful helping Richard or not and he will try to help Richmond. For the first half of the play, Richard and Buckingham are loyal to each other and they are wise in their actions, the end of their alliance arrives when Richard conquers the throne of England and so he becomes suspicious of every one even of the most loyal friends. Therefore, Buckingham does not accept immediately a request and Richard does not listen to him when he asks for him retribution.



Illustration 14 Richard Loncraine's *Richard III* (1995)

5.4 The main characteristics of Richard Loncraine's *Richard III*

In Loncraine's version, the scene of the ball in the palace has a huge importance because it describes all the characters and their relationship and everyone lies in a specific position in the story. Overall, the scene shows what will happen in the future events of the film, for example, Richard and Buckingham meet and laugh, this fact outline their friendship and their temporary alliance against the enemies of Richard.

The music for the ball is a mixture of thirties jazz music and middle age poetry since the jazz song played is a poem written by Christopher Marlowe *The passionate shepherd to his Love*.¹⁷ The music of the ball explains the type of film, a mixture of Renaissance age and twentieth century so to re-invent the Shakespearean universe with a contemporary look. Then, Richard speaks with the microphone and he recites the famous verses of Shakespeare, which open the play, the scene happens in a different place and situation from Olivier's *Richard III* since there are many people inside the palace and he behaves like a special guest in a party who suddenly wants the attention from the audience.

King Edward IV, the brother of Richard dances with Elizabeth, played by an American actress, Annette Bening. Elizabeth's behaviour is much more joyful than other members of the court mostly played in the film by British actors. One character who reaches England by air and, then, he arrives at the palace in limousine is Elizabeth's brother, Rivers, who claps his hands and he embraces his sister in the ballroom when he sees her. He enters inside the building while smoking a cigarette without any problem even if he is indoors. Therefore, It is not difficult to notice that he does not follow rigidly the rules of the social environment of the court because of the non-aristocratic behaviour (he is not cold in his behaviour and he does not follow literally the conventions of a noble society) and the court mistrust Rivers and Elizabeth. In addition, non-British actors play the two characters (Elizabeth and Rivers) and they represent the American Bourgeoisie, which

• ¹⁷ James Loehlin 'Top of the World, Ma' in L. E. Boose and R. Burt, *Shakespeare and the movie popularizing the plays on film, TV and video*. London and New York, 1997, p.69.

arrives in England in the twentieth century meeting a traditional and aristocratic society. Indeed, the actor playing Rivers is the American Robert Downey Jr. who recited in many comedies around the eighties and nineties; he also played the role of the American actor Charlot in *Chaplin*.

Loncraine's *Richard III* also talks about the relationship between United States of America and England during World War II, even if in a hidden manner through the Shakespearean story of *Richard III*. When Richard speaks to the camera, at least in the first scene he recites the famous soliloquy, there is a large number of people, the guests of the party and Buckingham laughs at Richard's speech. It depends from the context of the adaptation since in Loncraine's version, the action takes place in the thirties and Richard is a dictator who has the physical appearance not so different from Hitler¹⁸.

The character acts as a Machiavellian politician and he does not invent theories about the race or nationalism such as in the case of the Nazi or Fascist party. Moreover, during the thirties in Britain there was a historical character similar to Loncraine's Richard whose name was Oswald Mosely, who was the leader of the British union of fascists. Probably, this British historical character inspired Ian Mc Kellen's Richard to the producer of *Richard III*. At the beginning of his kingdom, Richard does, a speech with a microphone addressed to a large crowd of soldiers such as in a totalitarian state who applaud to him. The camera focuses its attention to Richard's mouth while he is speaking and at certain point of the speech many red and black flags with the image of a boar appear another symbol of totalitarianism. Maybe, the producers want to outline the evil of Richard and emphasise that he is not telling the truth to his subjects, a kind of double face that many rulers have when they have power. After the kingdom of his brother, Edward IV, Richard rises to the throne, a part of the subjects mistrust him and the number of his enemies slowly grows because of his crimes. At a certain point, he will become afraid of losing his power, this lead to a paranoiac behaviour, which causes also the loss of the confidence towards his ally, Buckingham and he also loses his ability in manipulating the others.

• ¹⁸ James N. Loehlin, 'Top of the World, Ma' in L. E. Boose and R. Burt, *Shakespeare and the movie II popularizing the plays on film, TV and video*. London and New York, 2003, p.176.

5.5 The differences and similarities between Olivier's *Richard III* (1955) and Loncraine's *Richard III* (1995)

There are some differences between the two movies in a particular moment, the night before the final battle, when Richard cannot sleep because of his conscience, then, he suddenly has visions of the people he killed directly or indirectly.

In the Olivier's version, King Richard sees the ghosts of his enemies and each one of them reminds him to think at them the following day since he will die in battle, so, the nightmare ends with the desperate shout of Richard, which wakes the soldiers of his army. Loncraine does not put the ghosts of the victims of Richard in the movie, but he does something alternative, indeed, the short shot of the camera shows Richard sleeping and having a nightmare. Then, when he wakes he has a profound sense of guilt for his crimes and he also offend himself telling how bad he is to a soldier, then, he almost cries.

Richard remembers the words of his mother, the Duchess, who rejects him for his physical aspect when he was young and she curses and rejects as a son during their last meeting for all the horrible actions that he did to his relatives and enemies. The following day he prepares his army for battle trying to challenge his foreseen destiny (Richard believes in superstitions and the setting of the sun influence his ideas about what may happen to his reign). Apparently, he does not show any fear to his army, instead of riding a horse in battle, at a certain moment of the scene, he enters into a car so to escape from the battle. Later, an ally soldier advise him to surrender to the other army but he takes his gun and shoots him showing his contrariety to surrender. He also challenges a military airplane with a machinegun, until he tells the famous phrase *My Kingdom for a horse* quite ironically since there are not horses in this film but cars and other twentieth Century' vehicles.

One important difference between the two adaptations of *Richard III* concerns the killing of Richard and the end of the film. Indeed, in Olivier's version, a soldier kills Richard's horse, so, he has to walk alone without any ally can protect him except one, Catesby, then, Richmond's soldiers hit with an arrow the Duke of Norfolk who could help the King.

Then, Catesby dies and Richard faces a large group of enemies alone killing some of them before they move all around him, he fights with Stanley (a member of the English court) but immediately all the others run towards Richard. They all hurt the King, he loses his crown accidentally, then, one of the group cut his throat and at a certain moment, the soldiers stop their attack. They see Richard trying to resist, taking his sword but without result and a few seconds later dying. Then, the camera follows Stanley, after he finds the crown; he puts it on Richmond's head.

Then, Stanley takes the Royal crown and he delivers it to Richmond, the short-cut shot of the camera frames the crown and the film ends. Therefore, the crown passes from a sovereign to the other and the war between the two families ends with a new king who descends from both the families of Lancaster and York. In addition, Richmond marries Elizabeth of York, the daughter of Edward IV, this marriage symbolises the union and peace between the two families.

The original play describes the killing of Richard differently since when Richmond appears in the scene, then, they fight each other and Richmond kills Richard, all happens very fast without many details of the duel. In Loncraine's *Richard III*, after the attack of the Richmond's army, Richard sees Richmond and his allies, he shoots them without hurting his enemy, and then he tries to escape from them. He goes at the upper stage of an old factory, it is not more possible to go anywhere from there, then, Richmond arrives and Richard ironically invites him to go to hell with him before jumping from the platform.

Richmond shoots him while looking with an ironical face at the camera. Richard falls towards the flares (an allegory of the flames of hell) laughing at the camera even if he goes towards a certain death, so, the character maintains his irony even at the moment of his death. The background music of the scene is the song *I'm sitting at the top of the*

*world*¹⁹. Therefore, the film ends with a short-cut shot of Richard falling; ²⁰the speech of Richmond for the future generations is not present in Loncraine's film.

The choice of the director was to put the protagonist at the centre of the plot from the beginning to the end of the film, despite the fact that he is the bad of the story and people should sympathise since the opening for Richmond and Elizabeth, two characters who resist against him.

The figure of Richmond appears really late in the film adaptations when the film is almost finished and the pro-Richard and anti-Richard characters have already started to fight each other. The Earl of Richmond is like a Deus ex Machina who resolves an old conflict between the two families and receiving the crown, the golden age of the Tudors sovereigns has begun. Some followers of Richard betray him and decide to help Richmond, Buckingham is one of them and before the end of the play, and Richard will decide to execute him and he will return in the play only when the ghosts appear to Richard during his nightmare before the final battle.

In the Olivier's version, the characters often talk about Richmond as potential saviour of England and at a certain moment the camera shows him on the court of battle meeting Stanley. There he starts talking and the audience understands how the character is, it is possible to understand the differences between Richard and Richmond. In Loncraine's film, Richmond appears during the scene of the ball, which reunites all the characters where he invites Anne to dance, and now of his marriage with Lady Elizabeth, the daughter of Elizabeth and Edward IV.

A scene which is really fast is the opening of Loncraine's *Richard III*, after the camera shows the subtitles which explain what happens and what is the situation of the kingdom of England, the actions takes place inside the headquarters of King Henry VI, so, the film

¹⁹ James Loehlin, 'Top of the World, Ma' in L. E. Boose and R. Burt *Shakespeare and the movie popularizing the plays on film, TV and video*. London and New York, 1997, p. 75.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.77.

starts from the final events of the play *Henry VI*. There is also the son of Henry, Edward of Wales, who is eating a dish of roast beef and drinking a glass of red wine, the camera shows a dog eating raw meat while suddenly a tank destroys the wall and enters inside the building; the soldiers inside the tank kill Henry's army.

A soldier with a gas mask shoots Edward, then, he goes in the room where the King lies hopeless waiting for his death and he kills him, taking off his mask and showing his face to the audience. The red title reveals the identity of the killer, Richard; the letters appear on the screen with the sound of a gunshot. Therefore, the film soon explains what happens in the story before the beginning of *Richard III* and the audience knows the important facts, which occur before the plot of the adaptation in a few minutes.

This fast scene is full of action, explain what happens before *Richard III*, and present the main character, Richard, showing immediately that he is the bad of the story. Nevertheless, he still does not talk in the opening scene, indeed, he only shoots and the audience can hear the breath from the mask, a tribute to Darth Vader of Star Wars. One other character who has a certain importance in the film is Elizabeth, indeed, she appears in more scenes than in the play and she has a direct role in the resistance against Richard. She also prepares the marriage of her daughter with Richmond, a sort of symbolic alliance to the Tudors; one other interpretation is that the marriage between the Earl of Richmond and Lady Elizabeth is the allegorical alliance between United States of America and England against Germany.²¹

²¹ James N. Loehlin, 'Top of the World, Ma' in *Shakespeare and the movie popularizing the plays on film, TV and video*, London and New York, 1997, p.71.

Chapter 6: The interpretation of *Richard III* in the film *Looking for Richard* (1996)

6.1 The production of the film-documentary *Looking for Richard* (1996)

During the nineties, Al Pacino decides to direct a project on Shakespeare focusing especially on the play *Richard III*. The production of the film-documentary has lasted three years and the shooting of the scenes more or less one year, from 1995 to 1996. The film aims at linking Shakespeare to the historical context of the twentieth century and therefore the director and the actors try with many efforts to modernise the play *Richard III* by alternating the theatrical scenes of the Shakespeare play and the scenes of the documentary. Indeed, the actors perform the play not only on the theatrical stage but also in many places, the production studio and the New York streets.

Al Pacino organises through many steps the play *Richard III* in his film, he wants to display *Richard III* in a free spectacle inside a theatre in New York and he is uncertain about the results of the project. Indeed, he imagines that nowadays many people do not know the plot of Shakespeare works such as *Richard III* or *Henry V*, yet they may not read the plays because they belong to the Renaissance age, which was a different and distant world or they may prefer reading other genres of books. Nevertheless, it is a great challenge for the American actors of the film to organise a theatrical spectacle on Shakespeare since for the most of the times British actors and directors traditionally take care of Shakespeare plays. Pacino and Kimball often walk on the streets of New York during the production of the documentary and they ask questions about Shakespeare and his works at the pedestrians in the aim of listening to contrasting and contemporary opinions on the English author.

Some people answer, some not, indeed, the short-cut shot of the camera shows the faces of the people trying to answer to the questions. Therefore, a few of them have found some difficulties since they may have not studied much of the Shakespeare literature or they may have not seen the Shakespeare plays and that makes really difficult to understand what they are talking about.

The team of actors discuss about the topic in many scenes of the film, sometimes arguing on the characters' behaviour in the play, but we see an elaborate reflection on the Shakespeare plays despite the difficulties present in reading and analysing the original texts. Pacino goes to The Cloisters, the New York Metropolitan museum for shooting the scenes of the play and then we see the actors looking around New York to find the right location for the spectacle that is similar to the historical places of the play. Indeed, the Cloisters contains inside the building many ancient objects suggesting the atmosphere of another age and it is obviously the better choice for shooting scenes of a play whose events occur in the middle age.

6.2 The content of *Looking for Richard* (1996)

The film-documentary of Al Pacino splits in many parts referring to the acts of the Shakespeare play *Richard III* (most of the chapters have a title suggesting the content of the scene) and to the directing of the documentary. During the film, Al Pacino often explains the plot of the play and he discusses about it with the actor Frederic Kimball, but also with other actors such as, Kevin Spacey playing the Duke of Buckingham. The film changes location many times during the shooting of the scenes since Pacino does not remain in New York (the place of the spectacle organised by Pacino) but he also goes to London with Frederic Kimball. They have explored important key places of the past of William Shakespeare, such as the house museum of William Shakespeare in Stratford-Upon Avon and the site of the Globe theatre.

The film begins with the title changing from *King Richard* to *Looking for Richard*, then, we hear the words of an invisible narrator reciting the verses of *The Tempest* and when the voice silences, the camera shows Pacino turning his face towards the audience. When Pacino in the first scene enters in an old theatre, he walks through a dark corridor, then, he arrives on the stage, he sees only one actor symbolising William Shakespeare, the scene describes the challenge for Pacino and the full cast to adapt *Richard III*. So the director puts allegorically Shakespeare as spectator and judge of the film, we hear a Renaissance music starting after the scene of Pacino's entrance on the stage.

The documentary discusses about the manners of acting in a Shakespeare play and the American cast of the film have widely explored the different ways to study the original text of *Richard III*, in the aim of interpreting it as the British would do. Pacino invites a series of famous actors, relevant names such as Kenneth Branagh, Vanessa Redgrave, James Earl Jones and Kevin Kline and they all give their opinion on Shakespeare and his style of writing. Pacino takes a book containing the story of *Richard III* but he substitutes it with a pocket copy because it is too heavy to carry.

Then, the play starts inside the documentary and Pacino starts repeating the cues of the original text, for example, *Now is the winter of our discontent*, the famous lines of Richard's soliloquy in the first act of the play which summarise what will happen in the plot. Moreover, Pacino tells the other actors of the cast that it is important to know the antecedent events of *Richard III*, that is to say, what happens in the plot of *Henry VI* to understand better the evolution of the story.

In the seventh chapter of the film the actors talk about an important rule for acting in a Shakespearean play, the iambic pentameter, therefore, the British actors explain to the Americans how to pronounce the lines with this particular metre. The eighth chapter focuses on the scene of the arrest of Clarence because of a prophecy, indeed, a person whose name starts with the letter G of George (Clarence's second name) will plot against the King. Richard embraces his brother because of the situation but of course, he has caused Clarence's arrest and imprisonment in the tower of London. Nevertheless, Pacino makes a change from the original text and while talking with Kimball he decides as letter the C as Clarence at the place of G for George.

In the tenth chapter, Queen Elizabeth argues furiously with Richard about the situation and the arrest of Clarence. Suddenly, the ghost of Margaret appears in the scene and firstly she threatens Elizabeth and she speaks badly of everyone present in the throne room because they have caused directly or indirectly the defeat of the Lancaster. Indeed, she uses many bad adjectives to describe Richard and she also advises the duke of Buckingham to beware of Richard. During the making of the documentary, the cast discuss about a problem on acting on the Shakespeare plays, the fear of the American actors to act in a Shakespeare spectacle since they often reflect on the British manner of speaking Shakespeare.

Therefore, they inevitably prefer to avoid Shakespeare roles, Pacino asks to the British actors why the Americans have difficulty in interpreting the Shakespeare roles even when they are good and experienced actors. Derek Jacobi answers back that there is probably a psychological motivation; some teachers tell them that they cannot speak Shakespeare like the British and finally they believe so.

Pacino and Kimball go to London to visit the Shakespeare's house at Stratford-upon Avon, they enter inside the house and they discover that the room is little and suddenly an alarm goes on and the fire brigade explains what has happened. Therefore, accidentally the fire alarm sounds and they have to leave the Shakespeare's house for safety, Pacino and Kimball joke about the fact that they have travelled for thousands of miles to get there and they cannot visit Shakespeare's mansion. When the cast is almost complete, one role remains vacant, that of Anne, Edward of Wales's widow. Therefore, Pacino and Kimball are walking on the streets when at a certain moment the short-cut shot of the camera takes Pacino turning his face and suddenly he sees the actress. Winona Ryder plays the role of Anne and she tells her idea on the character, then, the scene of the wooing of Anne occurs on the theatrical stage, Anne wears a red cape and she meets Richard who tries to conquer her. The camera blinks now, from the theatrical scene to an outdoor scene with Pacino commenting the scene and laughing when Anne shows compassion for him because she believes that Richard is really suffering for killing Edward of Wales and Henry VI.

The film moves many times from the studio where the cast is studying the cues of the screenplay to the theatrical stage, at a certain time they even talk about the play outdoor of a café in New York but the police officers inform them that they cannot stay there. The scene of the murder of Clarence gives much space to the performance of Alec Baldwin, he seems calm for the whole length of the scene despite he understands the intention of the assassins. Clarence tries to save his life affirming that his brother Richard would pay them if they avoid killing him. Nevertheless, they confess that Richard is the person that orders his death, Clarence cannot believe at what they are saying.

He tries to reason with them about the consequences of the crime that they are going to do, for a moment it seems that the murderers have doubts about killing Clarence after listening to his words. They think that refusing to kill is coward and womanish, Clarence replies that not to do that is devilish and bestial. Nevertheless, they both decide to murder

him, first they hit him at the neck, then they finish him and the camera shows the blood spreading on the floor of the cell.

During the scene of the murder, a family reunion takes place and they hypocritically make peace to the other, despite they hate each other. In the same scene, Richard arrives late at the family reunion, he informs his relatives of Clarence's death. Not so much time later, the King replies that he has reversed the order of condemning to the death penalty and Richard communicates that Clarence died due to the Edward's first order.

Edward is weak because of the sufferance for what happened to Clarence and he feels responsible for his brother's fate. Therefore, he asks help to Catesby for going to his room and the short-cut shot of the camera shows him on his bed.

Then, when Edward dies, Elizabeth puts two coins on his eyes as the ancient Greeks did with the dead soldiers in battle. Elizabeth cries desperately for her loss and the following chapter has the title: *Now to take the crown* therefore, it shows Richard's strategies to become the new sovereign with the help of Buckingham. In the fourteenth chapter, Kevin Spacey talks with Al Pacino about the role of his character in the story and Buckingham and his alliance with Richard against all the others, therefore, Dorset and Rivers are the first arrested and then executed.

The following chapter focuses on Pacino visiting the site of the English Globe; a guide explains the characteristics of the Globe theatre and Pacino talks with a woman who has been working there for long time. Then, Pacino sees a boy, son of a man working at the site and he decides that he may play the role of Edward V, Prince of York. The camera immediately switches to a scene of the play where the Prince sits on his horse.

In the sixteenth chapter, Richard meets Edward and even Buckingham is present in the scene, they are riding their horses and Richard while talking to Edward, he advises him to be careful to the false friends and Buckingham laughs when the Prince answers to Richard that there are no false friends near him. Indeed, Richard and Buckingham are plotting against Edward's heirs, nevertheless, Prince Edward does not imagine being in serious danger.

The protagonist of the scene of the reunion is surely Hastings, the scene starts with Buckingham, Stanley, the bishop of Ely and the other members of the court, all around a

table, then, Richard arrives late and he mentions that a traitor plot against his person. Hastings tells that he is far from being one of the suspects and he advises him to execute the guilty person, Richard addresses to Elizabeth, mistress Shore the guilt of the deformation of his arm considering them as witches, Hastings has doubts about this affirmation, and therefore Richard finds the excuse to condemn to death Hastings for protecting Shore. Richard tells to all the members of the council that who loves him should follow him and everyone does so without hesitation, even Stanley despite he is sorry decides to leave Hastings alone against Richard.

Kevin Conway, the actor who plays the role of Hastings is the protagonist of the scene and when they all exit, he shouts: *Bloody Richard* before the guards carry him to his execution.

In the eighteenth chapter, Richard and Buckingham speak loudly to the people, we see Kevin Spacey talking to the people of New York crowd and also doing the speech on stage. Richard and Buckingham lie about the legitimacy of the princes, and therefore, they spread the voice that Edward's children are illegitimate and the people believe them, consequently, Richard may be the next king. The following chapter has the title *Richard is King* and there is the scene of the split between Richard and Buckingham, therefore, we see Richard sitting on his throne, he asks Buckingham to eliminate Edward's heirs because he fears that they are a menace to the stability of his throne. Pacino and Spacey discuss whether it necessary to kill the princes since Richard is already King. After thinking, Buckingham tells him that he needs some time before to take a decision, but, Richard does not like Buckingham's doubts and he starts to consider him as traitor.

Indeed, when Buckingham comes back for communicating his choice Richard avoids listening to him and he talks with Stanley about the Earl of Richmond, if he communicates with him he shall pay. At a certain moment, Buckingham tells him that, he is there to receive the dukedom of Hereford as a reward for his services. Nevertheless, Richard angrily push him away with the sceptre and so Buckingham exits from the Throne room thinking that he is risking his head, so he remembers Margaret's words advising him not to trust Richard.

The twentieth chapter presents the character of Richmond; Richard asks Tyrrell to kill two enemies, telling that if he does what he asks he will appreciate his loyalty, he consents in carrying out the elimination of the princes.

In Pacino's *Looking for Richard*, Tyrrell works alone, later, Elizabeth discovers about the death of the princes and she cries outdoors. The title of the chapter is *Richmond* and Pacino describes the character that has not appeared yet in the documentary but he remains fundamental for the ending of the story. The following chapter talks of Richard's death and Pacino takes his temperature with a thermometer discovering that he has the fever; Pacino tells that this is the right temperature of Shakespearean actors. The next chapter describes Richard's nightmare before battle, therefore, the title of the scene is *The battle*, and Pacino shows his character alone in the tent alone with his conscience after seeing the faces of Buckingham, Elizabeth and the other characters that he has killed since the beginning of the play.

The twenty-third chapter gives a certain space to the characters, Richard and Richmond, they both speak to their followers, a difference between them is that Richard is angry and he speaks badly about his enemy while Richmond prays for the battle and he presents himself as a saviour for the English people from the tyranny of King Richard. During the scene of the battle, the camera shows a red background, following the death of Catesby Richard is alone in battle and the archers hiding on the grass hit him shooting their arrows. Then, Richmond arrives near his enemy; he tries to finish him with the sword. Nevertheless, Richard tries at protecting himself with his sword and Richmond makes him fall on the court, he transfixes him and Richard shouts.

At the same time, Pacino shouts continuing in the streets of New York, the performance and so Richard dies in the play as well as in the documentary, Kimball and Pacino can relax for the ending of their long work on *Richard III*. The director has called the last chapter *Silence*; the close-up of the camera shows the face of Pacino telling that he likes the silence and that whatever he may say Shakespeare has already said it and the narrator of the opening returns telling the verses of *The Tempest*. The camera shows Richmond on the court of battle and the studio of the cast, then, once again the church and the image of a book. Finally, the camera shows also Pacino playing basketball with a boy, the same

scene of the beginning and the actors walking outdoors and we hear a music at the end of the film.

6.3 The differences and similarities between Pacino's *Looking for Richard* (1996) and the adaptations of *Richard III*

Al Pacino directs *Looking for Richard* (1996) which is very different from Olivier's *Richard III* (1955) and Loncraine's *Richard III* (1995) for multiple reasons. First, Olivier chooses only the time of the story for his adaptation on *Richard III*, therefore, the film starts with a pompous ceremony, it evolves with the plot of the protagonist, later, Richard manages to reach his objective and the film becomes less interesting. In the documentary *Looking for Richard* (1996), the action switches continually from the time of the play and the shooting of the documentary with Pacino and Kimball travelling and discussing on *Richard III* with the other members of the cast. Therefore, the audience should follow the film with attention to understand better the skipping from one scene to the other.

In Loncraine's version the film starts with the final events of *Henry VI part III* but it continues with the plot of *Richard III* even if the historical context is quite another from the medieval one because the scenes occur during an imaginary England in a post-World War I environment. In both Loncraine's *Richard III* (1995) and Pacino's *Looking for Richard* (1996) the story of *Richard III* links to the twentieth century notwithstanding they refer to different ages, the thirties and the nineties. Second, in *Looking for Richard* the actors play their roles in certain scenes whereas they play themselves for their research and discussion on William Shakespeare in some others. They have worked in a documentary but in the other films of *Richard III*, the actors coincide with their characters for the whole length of the films, such as it usually happens in the films. Third, Pacino acting the role of Richard of Gloucester often communicates to the camera as in the antecedent versions of Loncraine and Olivier, indeed, he comments the scenes of the play and the evolving of the documentary.

The adaptations of Olivier and Loncraine start with two scenes taken from the last act of *Henry VI*, therefore, in the first scene of Loncraine's *Richard III*, Edward of York's army

attacks the castle of King Henry VI and Richard who is the leader of the military forces shoots the king Henry VI and his son Edward of Wales. In Olivier's *Richard III* the film, starts with the ceremony of the coronation of King Edward IV after the York have won against the Lancaster during the battle of Tewkesbury in the final act of *Henry VI part 3*.

In the documentary *Looking for Richard*, the camera takes in the opening scene from a long distance Pacino playing basketball in a contemporary New York and we hear a voice quoting some famous verses of Shakespeare talking of the temporary performance of the actors in their life. In the same scene, Pacino enters inside the theatre always wearing the black cap and when he arrives on stage, he sees a far figure from his position, an actor symbolising the presence of Shakespeare as judge of the show.

The adaptation of Loncraine starts immediately with an action scene occurring in the Lancaster's castle and this choice of the director explains to the audience that the film contains many action scenes so to attract much more the audience at watching it. Therefore, *Looking for Richard* (1996) does not start immediately in the opening with the main events of the play, with Richard or the other characters but with a voice repeating some verses of Shakespeare taken from *The Tempest: we are such staff dreams are made of*. The verses explain briefly the film-documentary because the verses speak about the limited time for the actors for playing their roles. Firstly, the Shakespeare lines speak of the life of actors then referring more generally to the mankind. During this scene, the camera shows a contemporary landscape, not in England this time but in the United States of American, precisely in New York, so, the location is not typically Shakespearean but it explains one aim of the documentary, finding a balance between the American interpretation of the play and the British tradition.

Indeed, both British and American actors share their ideas on Shakespeare and also in *Richard III* in the documentary to the audience. The scene of the arrest of Clarence gives space to the performance of Alec Baldwin and Al Pacino chooses a place for the Clarence's cell in the tower of London. In Loncraine's *Richard III*, the eye of the camera shoots Clarence and the guards from a high position and Richard talks to the camera revealing his plan with a few words, when Richard calls his brother Clarence he pretends to be sad and to worry about his arrest and also to do what he can for solving the situation.

Everyone except Richard is wearing a dinner jacket, he says goodbye to his brother Clarence with a handkerchief when the guards deliver Clarence to the prison by boat and they disappear from the view.

The short-cut of the camera shows Richard telling to the audience that Clarence will die and he will marry to Anne although he has killed her husband and her father-in-law. In Laurence Olivier's *Richard III*, the camera shows the shadow of Richard moving on the floor when at a certain moment there are two shadows, because Richard is talking to his brother Edward. Firstly, the camera takes the face of Edward and a few seconds later that of Richard who seems almost sad of telling to Edward about Clarence's plot to remove Edward from the throne. During the scene two monks are chanting a religious chant, Richard's shadow returns and when Richard exits from a door he reveals to the audience his plan against his brothers. He is at the right position so to spy through the window his two brothers when Edward believes in the betrayal of Clarence and he consents on his arrest taking the decision with great sufferance. Richard tells that he hopes Edward not to live for long and then he talks with Clarence who explains to him the reasons for his arrest ignoring that Richard is responsible for what is happening to him.

During the scene of the wooing of Anne, she starts talking when she is near to the coffin of her father-in-law and the camera moves from the scene to a short-cut shot of Pacino repeating the verses of Richard, *Was ever woman in this mood wooed? Was ever woman in this mood won?* In the documentary, Richard tells the cues before wooing Anne. The camera often splits from one place to the other and Pacino tells the events of *Henry VI*, which concerns Anne. Kimball asks Pacino why they need to interview a British scholar on Shakespeare since Pacino has a great knowledge on *Richard III* and so it pointless to call other experts on English literature.

In the scene of the wooing of Anne, Richard disarms the guards protecting her and Henry VI's coffin and he moves near her. During the dialogue between Anne and Richard, the stage is dark externally and the light is on the centre of the stage. When Anne and Richard say farewell to each other, Richard repeats once again the verses of Shakespeare on the conquest of Anne, then, laughing loudly. In Loncraine's version, Anne looks at Edward's corpse and we see the sign of the deadly head shot, then, Richard appears behind Anne, suddenly, Anne hears the steps and she turns around and they start talking to each other.

The atmosphere of the scene is dramatic, but, when Richard goes out of the door, he tells the lines about Anne and we hear the jazz music of the scene of the ball.

In Olivier's *Richard III*, we hear William Walton music in the background of the scene and it occurs outdoor, additionally, there are shots of the camera lasting for outdoor lasting for some minutes. So, the characters do not walk too much, she goes away opening a door and Richard thinks on his unexpected success and he enters the door, the camera shows on the floor his shadow. In the fourteenth chapter of *Looking for Richard*, with the title: *Now to take the crown*, we initially see King Edward dead on his bed chamber and the camera shows Pacino and Frederic commenting what is happening in the plot, the situation favourable for Richard so to become the new king.

Then, the actors talk about the role of Buckingham, indeed, Al Pacino and Kevin Spacey discuss about Buckingham's importance on Richard's plans. In Olivier's *Richard III*, all the relatives are inside the castle, Edward speaks for the most of the scene and he asks his relatives, Hastings, Elizabeth, to be in peace notwithstanding their division. Richard communicates to Edward IV the bad news of Clarence's death, therefore, Edward is angry about what happened to his brother and he asks help to go to his chamber and later his wife finds him dead. Loncraine has chosen for this film an external location near to the sea for the scene of Richard's communication of Clarence's death to King Edward, so, Richard and Anne are inside a car, both wearing sunglasses.

Edward asks his relatives to shake their hands for making peace, Richard and Anne arrive late, and then, Richard says hello to all the present members of the family York. Then, he tells them about Clarence's death, the camera takes Edward with a short-cut shot and he hardly breaths after receiving the bad news. The relatives of Edward carry him inside the palace, the Duchess arrives in the scene, later, we see Edward from a near position of the camera and Elizabeth while crying tells everyone about the King's death.

In the seventeenth chapter of Pacino's film, the reunion of Hastings, Stanley, Buckingham takes place, as in other scenes Richard arrives late and the first speaking is obviously Hastings. The actors are discussing about the scene of the council while they are shooting the scene and so the camera switches from one place, the film to the other, the making of the documentary. All the members of the council look to each other when Richard and

Buckingham exit from the hall. Meanwhile, Hastings describes Richard to Stanley and the other present members and Richard returns in the hall with an angry facial expression.

Therefore, Richard tells that there are people who conspire against him, plotting Richard's death and immediately Hastings defends himself from the accusations replying that the offenders should be executed. Richard tells that Queen Elizabeth and mistress Shore have caused the deformation of his arm, Hastings replies with the conjunction 'if' to Richard's sentences and he accuses Hastings of betrayal, therefore, he orders Hastings' death. Richard tells the members of the council to follow him if they love him. The members of the council exit from the hall, the only one who has waited is Stanley that looks at Hastings but then he also leaves him alone to his fate. In the end of the scene, Hastings shouts: *Bloody Richard* and the camera shows Hastings' execution.

In the scene in Loncraine's *Richard III*, all the members are around a table like in the Pacino's film; Hastings and Buckingham speak before Richard's arrival. When Richard arrives, he reads a file and he mentions some people who are conspiring for his death walking around the table. He shows the signs of his deformed arm telling that Elizabeth and mistress Shore are responsible for his injury. Hastings replies that it is uncertain about their responsibility towards what happened to Richard using the word if and Richard uses this answer against Hastings accusing him of protecting mistress Shore. After the members of the council have left the hall, Tyrrell sits on Richard's place and he tells Hastings that the duke is waiting to see his head. The camera shoots Hastings hanging from a lower position and suddenly Richard's portrait appears on the scene.

In *Looking for Richard*, they shoot the scene of the acceptance of the crown on the streets of New York and the aerial view of the camera takes Pacino, Kimball and Spacey walking on the streets. The people appear on the theatrical stage and Kevin Spacey speaks to them on the streets, even in this scene the camera moves from place to place. Pacino and Spacey are talking about the scene, then, Richard carries with himself a book of prayer and a scholar defines the term irony referring it to King Richard's actions. Buckingham lies to the people telling that Edward's children are illegitimate and in this way Richard may be the next king and they believe to this lie. Therefore, Buckingham asks Richard to accept the crown and the people trust Richard ignoring his plot for arriving at the English throne, obviously Richard accepts pretending that it is far from the will to become King.

In Olivier's scene Richard walks on a terrace with a book of prayers on his hands and Buckingham sees him, the people are present and they are waiting for his coronation. They believe that the princes are illegitimate Edward's descendants, Buckingham who is played by Ralph Richardson publicly asks Richard to accept the crown but at certain moment, he leaves telling that he will not insist anymore, and the crowd follow him. Catesby invites Richard at calling his cousin Buckingham again otherwise, he will lose the opportunity to have the throne, and after Richard asks to call him, he announces reluctantly that he has made the decision of accepting the crown. The monk tolls the bell but Richard takes his place making much more noise with the bell to feast the coronation. Richard offers his hand to Buckingham, he kisses as sign of loyalty to the new king and therefore Richard has reached his primary objective.

In Loncraine's version, Anne speaks while she is with her relatives, then, a car arrives with Richard, he immediately speaks to Buckingham so to know the situation. They carry Richard to the hairdresser and they prepare him for the request to accept the crown, Buckingham gives him some advices. While Richard is at the hairdresser, Buckingham talks with the people, then, he knocks to the door calling Richard. As in the other films, Richard does not accept immediately but he looks at the camera showing that he is acting; when he accepts the crown, Richmond is also present in the scene. Richard walks out of the hall he laughs with Buckingham since the plan has succeed, Stanley and Richmond prepare to move against the new king and Catesby sees them through the key hole.

We hear the drummers and after Buckingham says *long live King Richard!* The people clap the hands and we see flags with the image of a boar, the short-cut shot of the camera takes Richard smiling. In the chapter *Richard is King* in Pacino's documentary the camera shoots Richard, Anne and the Bishop of Ely walking to the official ceremony of coronation, Buckingham is near to the King and Richard talks to him about the princes, the camera moves to another place and we see the prince sitting on his horse. We see the dialogue between Buckingham and Richard through the short shot of the camera, then, Pacino and Spacey talk about their characters and the princes on a sofa. A scholar comments the scene referring to a limit of decency for the characters and in this case, of Buckingham since he has followed Richard's plan until now but this time Buckingham has some doubts on killing the princes.

Richard has discovered that Buckingham's loyalty is not absolute and he is angry about it. Indeed, Buckingham comes back to the King and he does not listen to his request for the promised dukedom. Richard speaks of Richmond and he seems to be calm until he pronounces *I am not in the vein* and he moves away Buckingham with the sceptre. Therefore, the duke knows that he is risking his life and the actress playing Margaret hits with a book Kevin Spacey for ignoring her warnings on Richard and Margaret tells Buckingham that he shall consider her a prophetess.

In the chapter *The battle*, a scholar explains the events of the last act of the play, and then the camera shows the scene of the night before battle, precisely while Richard is sleeping. Pacino is reading a book and repeating the cues, also Kimball appears with a book near Pacino and then he describes Richard as someone who realises at the end that he has lost his humanity and his ability to love. We see Richard's nightmare showing many familiar faces looking at Richard, Buckingham, Elizabeth, Hastings and the other characters reminding his crimes and Richard's death. When he wakes, we see his fearful face thinking and speaking a soliloquy, he knows that his enemies will not have mercy with him since he even does not forgive himself.

A few seconds later, he starts walking inside the curtain before Catesby arrives after hearing him shouting. In Loncraine's *Richard III* the camera shoots him while he is sleeping, the audience does not view the images of the nightmare. When he awakens, he thinks at all the crimes he has done and he suffers in his conscience, In Olivier's *Richard III*, we see the Richard's curtain and the ghosts from a distant position the short-cut shot of the camera outlines Richard's suffering during his sleep and he sees all the ghosts of his victims, Clarence, the princes, Anne, Buckingham. At the end of the nightmare, he inevitably shouts waking some of his soldiers and the ghosts retreat going far and disappearing.

In the twenty-third chapter, there is the description of the battle of Bosworth, Richard shouts to his soldiers so to do propaganda against Richmond's army and we see blinks of shots of the battle, the screen becomes red during the fighting scenes, Richard's horse escapes and the camera follows it, Richard is confused while fighting. Then, the screen returns normal and there are Ely, Elizabeth and two women looking at the battle from a higher point.

Catesby finds Richard but he dies and so the king tries to escape from the court of battle, the scholar tells that Richard becomes a boar and his adversaries are hunting him. He tells the lines *My horse, my horse, my kingdom for a horse* and two archers see him and they bless him, a classical music starts for the last moments of the villain, Richard starts falling on the ground and his enemies walk towards him.

Richmond appears, therefore, he attacks him with the sword but Richard protect himself with the sword, Richmond kicks him and he stops Richard's arm with a foot and he finishes him. Richard shouts before dying and at the same time Pacino acts, the scene in New York Kimball is present. The actor representing Shakespeare of the initial scene seems nodding to the scene because his character dies. In Olivier's *Richard III*, the battle between the armies is fast since at a certain moment a part of Richard's army united with Richmond soldiers and cease of fighting, then, Richard fights to survive as long as possible but inevitably he dies. In Loncraine's battle, Richard and the other character uses many contemporary weapons and vehicules, then, the duel between Richmond and Richard takes place differently since Richard jumps from the platform and we hear a song starting during his fall and end of the film.

Chapter 7: The adaptations of history dramas on cinema and television

7.1 Adapting history dramas for the cinema

William Shakespeare has written a great number of history dramas such as *Henry VI, Richard II, and King John* dramatizing three centuries of British history and focusing the attention on the protagonists of the plays, mostly kings or dukes becoming kings. Nevertheless, some antagonists of the plays such as King Charles of France, the Dauphin and also the enemies of the villain Richard of Gloucester as in the case of *Richard III* have a certain importance and they often appear in the scenes even if the author does not describe them as the protagonists. Therefore, the Shakespeare plays have told the lives and the ruling years of English sovereigns describing indirectly the world of politics in the middle age.

The history dramas written by William Shakespeare have important sources such as, the chronicles of Edward Hall, Raphael Holinshed and Thomas More, which have reported the historical events and the lives of the English sovereigns. Shakespeare history plays have not recorded only real historical facts happened in the past but also fictional events that the English Author invented in the aim of making the stories more appealing to the audience. ²²Thomas More wrote a book on King Richard III with the title *Historie of King Richard the Third (1513)* which describes ironically the figure of King Richard III, indeed, the book influenced the writing of the Shakespeare play *Richard III*.

Nowadays, a large group of people may still know the historical and literary characters of the plays *Richard III*, *Henry V*, *Richard II* and many others. The wide diffusion of Shakespeare plays all over the world has occurred for many reasons in the last centuries: the lectures on Shakespeare at universities and schools, the British colonialism, the long tradition of theatrical plays, the works of the Author circulating as books, the filmic adaptations of his plays for the cinema and the television.

Indeed, the theatrical directors have shown these plays on stages for many centuries and successfully; nevertheless, at a certain age of contemporary history the French Lumière brothers, August and Louis invented a new form of spectacle, the Cinématographe on 13th February 1895. Therefore, this invention has clearly influenced the artistic world and it has offered new possibilities for the directors and producers, such as, to show through the images of a screen the spectacles which once actors performed only in the theatrical stages. The filmic adaptations of the Shakespeare history dramas have described and portrayed the stories of the plays accordingly to the original screenplay and also to the historical and political context of the film.

Furthermore, in every age, there are different actors and actresses who interpret their roles in a particular manner, which distinguish them from others, a great number of techniques for shooting the scenes for the cinema, such as, the use of special effects that create digital places with the help of the computer. The film adaptations on Shakespeare plays have re-invented and influenced enormously the collective imagination of the audience towards

²² 'Introduction 2' in Graham Holderness, *Shakespeare's History*, Gill and MacMillan, Dublin St.Martin's Press, New York, 1985, p.16.

Shakespeare works and they have created an important link to the old theatrical tradition of the Bard.

Sometimes the directors may take a few liberties in re-interpreting the plays written by William Shakespeare and this lead to new and original projects as much as they are not in contrast with the plot of the play. For example, Richard Loncraine has decided to transfer the story of *Richard III* to a different time than the medieval age of the historical facts. Therefore, he has put as time of the plot the twentieth century, and consequently as I have written in the earlier chapters the music, the weapons employed for the battle of Bosworth, the clothes belong to the twenties and thirties.

7.2 The pros and cons of the filmic adaptations of Shakespeare plays

The theatrical directors have displayed history dramas on the theatres for centuries, famous authors of this genre, such as Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare. They had the main purpose to make British history dramatic, and theatrical for entertaining the audience, otherwise the plot of the plays would contain only a list of historical facts, so it is necessary to dramatize the stories so that the history plays become much more interesting.

First, the filmic adaptations of the Shakespeare plays often do not contain the whole text of the original play because otherwise, the directors would have to shoot a film lasting several hours and it would be less complicated to produce a TV series of this great length than a film. An example of this is the long adaptation of a Shakespeare tragedy, Branagh's *Hamlet* (1996) having a standard version and a four-hour extended version of the film. What happens in the world of the cinema is obviously that the directors decide to cut certain parts of the original text because they think that they are not necessary for the developing of the plot or that the audience may not appreciate them. In addition, there are many other motivations for reducing the original screenplay, maybe certain scenes contains too much violence, therefore, it would damage the quality of the film and consequently the results at the box office.

As Deborah Cartmell points out in the book: *Interpreting Shakespeare on Screen*,

Laurence Olivier eliminates half of the play's lines (most notably, episodes which cast doubt on Henry's motives and heroism) and produces the unity which critics had found missing.²³

The theatrical adaptations of the plays follow literally the original text, therefore, the directors do not normally cut the scenes and this leads to a stronger similarity with the original play as much as it concerns the content of the text. The theatrical works on Shakespeare may be more faithful to the text than a film, however, it is difficult to judge a filmic adaptation without knowing the historical context that influence at least minimally the plot of the play, for example, *Henry V* (1944) that Olivier directed during World War II. Furthermore, the scholars or experts on Shakespeare literature may prefer theatre instead of cinema for the realisation of the plays since the directors may not cut partially the screenplay because of the lack of time and so they manage to present the full text of the play.

As I have written before, the films on Shakespeare usefully link to the historical context of the years of their production. Therefore, the film directors use special shots for the scenes or mix the film with particular cinema genres such as American western movie, the action movie so to address to a specific audience or to communicate hidden meanings or messages to the audience. Nevertheless, this choice has not always received good results and the traditional viewers with a good knowledge on English literature may not appreciate the modernisation of the play, since they use to know the original screenplay or to see the performance of actors on theatre. One advantage of the Shakespeare adaptations is obviously that the films are culturally popular and people of every age see them. Therefore, they make Shakespeare plays even more accessible to everyone thanks to the presence of the cinemas. One main disadvantage of the filmic adaptations is the possibility for the directors to cut some scenes for many reasons, indeed, this choice leads the film at showing only a part of the events of the play or describing only superficially the characters without focalising in all their actions and thoughts.

²³ 'Shakespeare, Film and Nationalism: Henry V' in D. Cartmell, *Interpreting Shakespeare on screen*. Mac Millan press LTD, 2000, p.96.

Indeed, it is difficult for the audience to understand fully the plot of the play and the characters if they miss some scenes relevant or not for the developing of the plot, on the other hand the directors may have success in the adaptations of the Shakespeare plays without paying too much attention on the details. An opposite action from cutting that consequently modifies the original text is adding the scenes to the screenplay; therefore, the director invents dialogues or scenes for linking certain scenes of the plot. Despite they are not present in the Shakespeare play, they enrich the plot or at least the film goes in another direction only for a short time.

Especially, in the twentieth-first century the digital special effects are widely used for the films, there are green screens which give space to the fantasy of the computer engineers that create digitally what they like, for example: landscapes, creatures (as in the second trilogy of Star Wars starting in 1999), buildings.

Therefore, the technology can help the production of several films although the good performance of the actors/actresses is fundamental for the success of the film. Laurence Olivier had an enormous success in displaying the plays *Henry V* and *Richard III* as cinematographic versions. Despite the different plot, the two Shakespeare works talk about the politics present in the middle age and the role of the king during historical events such as the Battle of Agincourt, the War of the Roses. Olivier in his films acts as King Richard III or King Henry V for the world of cinema performing with the same style used for the theatre.

In the first years, Olivier acted on the theatrical stages and then he played the production of the filmic adaptations, such as *Henry V* (1944) and *Richard III* (1955). His Shakespeare films have revitalised the traditional Shakespeare plays with the help of the camera moving from place to place. *Henry V* (1944) is a film where the director uses the long shot of the camera during Henry's speeches. Moreover, it is the first adaptation of a Shakespeare play in colour; the critics received well Olivier's film.²⁴ Some characters especially in Olivier's *Richard III* may seem weak when they have the chance to fight Richard or at least they do not understand his intentions.

²⁴ 'Laurence Olivier's Henry V' in Ace G. Pilkington, *Screening Shakespeare from Richard II to Henry V*, Delaware, Newark: University of Delaware Press, London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1991, p.110.

All in all, the adaptation of Shakespeare plays as operation of modernisation does not work all the times. Indeed, films such as Branagh's *Henry V* (1989), Loncraine's *Richard III* (1995) or Welles's *Chimes at Midnight* (1965). These films have reached a great audience because of the skill and experience in Shakespeare of the directors and also the presence of important actors such as Ian Mc Kellen, Robert Downey Jr., Ian Holm, Orson Welles and many others.



Illustration 15 *The Hollow Crown Henry V* (2012)

7.3 The adaptations of the history dramas for television

Some directors have adapted history dramas for the television, for example, in England, where they have produced Shakespeare series for the BBC and they have started at the last decades of the twentieth century in transmitting those series, many series are about *King Lear*, *Hamlet* and many other Shakespeare works. The adaptations of the plays for the television whether they are successful or not, they have increased the interest for English literature of the audience.

The BBC has produced a television series called *The Hollow Crown* telling the stories of some of Shakespeare history dramas, the series split in two parts: The BBC produced the first season of episodes named *The Hollow Crown* in 2012 and the second season named

War of the Roses in 2016. All the episodes of the first season of *The Hollow Crown* compose a Shakespeare tetralogy of the history dramas: *Richard II*, *Henry IV part 1*, *Henry IV part 2*, *Henry V*. Tom Hiddleston is one of the famous actors in the episodes, *Henry IV part 1*, *Henry IV part 2* and *Henry V*. Indeed, he has acted the role of Loki in *Thor* (2011) and in some other Marvel films; the actor plays the role of Hal, the future King Henry V.

In addition, Jeremy Irons plays the role of Bolingbroke, Hal's father, Henry IV, the British actor has played many roles in his career such as *Mission* (1986) *The Man in the Iron mask* (1998) *The Merchant of Venice* (2004) acting the role of Antonio.

The first season of *The Hollow crown* has three directors: Rupert Goold, Richard Eyre and Thea Sharrock, The directors have chosen as location for the scenes of the plays, England, they have shot the scenes during the period between summer 2011 and spring 2012 and they have tried to make the scenes as medieval as possible.²⁵

The series has received multiple BAFTA Television Awards because of the acting of Ben Whishaw (*Richard II*) and Simon Russell Beale. Moreover, two additional BAFTA Craft Awards for Original Television Music to Stephen Warbeck and Sound for the play *Richard II*, which has also earned an RTS Programme Award. The first season presents four Shakespeare history dramas and it shows to the audience many characters of the plays in a successful way.

Dominic Cooke directed the second season of *The Hollow Crown* in 2016 and among the actors, there is Benedict Cumberbatch, acting Richard III who is famous for the TV series *Sherlock*. Judy Dench plays the role of the Duchess, Richard's mother, she has played the role of M in many Bond films, and she acted in *Pride and Prejudice* (2004), *Henry V* (1989).

Other actors appearing in the episodes are Ben Daniels as the Duke of Buckingham and Sophie Okonedo as Margaret. The second season divides in three episodes: *Henry VI part I*, *Henry VI part II* and *Richard III*, differently from the Shakespeare tetralogy where there are four parts: *Henry VI part I*, *Henry VI part II*, *Henry VI part III*, *Richard III*.

²⁵ 'The Hollow Crown: Shakespeare's History plays About the Series' from www.pbs.org

The Hollow Crown Henry V (2012) starts with the Chorus speaking and the funeral of the protagonist, Henry V, the camera takes Henry's corpse from above, then, the story moves to the time of the beginning of the play. King Henry is directing to royal castle by horse whereas the Bishop of Ely and the Archbishop of Canterbury are talking about the political situation of England and France. In the scene of the condemnation of Bardolph, Henry cannot decide whether to punish him or not, indeed, he discovers later of Bardolph's death by Fluennel before he could possibly take a decision on Bardolph's life and he shows sadness.

During the moments of difficulty before a battle or a fight, Henry speaks directly to his army, face-to-face; we see a difference from *The Hollow Crown Henry V* to the other adaptations of *Henry V* is that the battle does not take place entirely on an open court but also in the wood. Towards the end of the episode, the two kings, Henry and Charles meet each other; a third person tells them the legal conditions of the peace between France and England. Following the scene of the marriage between Henry and Catherine, the Chorus speaks and we see again the opening scene of the funeral of Henry V, the camera takes the expression of sorrow of Queen Catherine. Moreover, the Boy of Falstaff's fellowship of the Boar's head who appears in the episode does not die as in the play and the adaptations but he becomes the Chorus and we see him as adult.

The Hollow Crown Richard III (2016) begins with Richard playing alone at chess and he does so other times during the episode, later, the director takes the scene of Richard getting near to Anne in a forest. A female character having a certain relevance in this episode is Margaret, *Henry VI's* widow, played by Sophie Okonedo, acting in *Hotel Rwanda* (2004); indeed, she does not appear in Olivier's *Richard III* (1955) and Loncraine's *Richard III* (1995). Margaret also appears in the final scene on the court of Bosworth after the conclusion of the battle, therefore, she looks at the sky and the aerial shot shows the soldiers' dead bodies. Richard is often alone during the key moments of the episode and he plays chess, because the character of Richard has always a strategy in his actions as in the game of chess, for example, he drinks wine after the assassins have murdered his brother Clarence.

In conclusion, the two series of *The Hollow Crown* has rediscovered Shakespeare history dramas giving space to all the characters and the scenes are filmed in many indoor and

outdoor locations, the presence of actors and actresses famous for Shakespeare roles link the series to the history of cinema.



Illustration 16 *The Hollow Crown War of the Roses* (2016)

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