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Much Ado About Nothing – A comparison
of the play as a text with a filmed version of
the same

MARINA CASTELLVÍ SORIANO



UNIVERSITAT ROVIRA I VIRGILI
DEPARTAMENT D'ESTUDIS ANGLESES I ALEMANYS

2021

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MARINA CASTELLVÍ SORIANO

TUTOR: Dr John Glenmore Style

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I would like to add a few words of appreciation for the constant supervision and support by my tutor, Dr John Glenmore Style. His dedication has genuinely helped me to carry out this dissertation.

I would also like to thank my family and friends, for their patience and the unconditional backup they gave me during all these months.

Lastly, I want to thank Ismael, Mireia, Clara, Andrea and Janet, for being my rock during all these years. You are my five lucky charms.

ABSTRACT

Film adaptations of literary classics have often been subject to prejudgement and even discredit. This dissertation compares *Much Ado About Nothing*, the comedy by Shakespeare, and its adaptation in a 1993 film by Kenneth Branagh. By working on these two media, play and film, the principal purposes of this project are to study the adaptation process by analysing how the version modifies the real text and the effect of these modifications. By citing many experts' opinions in reviews, essays, and books to study how critical opinion reacted to the fidelity of Branagh's adaptation, it is found that this version is universally admired and respected by the spectator.

Keywords: Shakespeare – Comedies – *Much Ado About Nothing* – Play – Branagh – Adaptation – Cinema – Critical Reviews

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1. INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare's figure and the importance of his works have been the subject of study not only in many literature subjects throughout this English degree but also in Primary and Secondary Education. From a very young age, students all over the world are taught to learn about distinguished authors from classical literature, thus, they study Shakespeare and the power of his grammar and rhetoric. Since cinematographic art arose, an infinity of literary works from all genres have been adapted and versioned by filmmakers for the big screen.

This dissertation aims to analyse different aspects of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* adaptation for cinema directed by Kenneth Branagh in 1993. The specific enquiries that this research aspires to answer are:

- What does an adaptation of a classic with such significance imply?
- How has Kenneth Branagh adapted this play? What aspects did he take into account when modifying lines and rearranging and reordering scenes?

Why *Much Ado About Nothing*? When I got assigned the topic of the TFG, I decided I wanted to work with a comedy, as it is a genre I relish watching and reading, and I am eager on learning about. Furthermore, the way comedies dating four hundred years ago and the current ones may differ was an inner thought that emerged in my mind.

With the object of answering all of these questions, I searched for books to read on the topic of adaptations. Moreover, I read multiple reviews, essays and dissertations written by experts in literature and critics about the play itself and Branagh's filmed version. I also read the comedy and watched the film to analyse the visual and linguistic aspects and compare the differences from one medium to the other.

The first part of this dissertation works with the theoretical concepts: the general characteristics of film adaptations of texts; an introduction into Shakespearean plays, more precisely his comedies, and *Much Ado About Nothing* in particular; how Shakespeare's work has been portrayed in films thorough history; and finally, a look into several critical reviews on Kenneth Branagh's version.

Moving on to the second part, the practical framework works with the comparison and analysis of the visual aspects the director took into account when adapting the film (casting, location, colour, costumes and music); an analysis on how the classic's text has been adapted for the film (creativity of the director concerning visual language and reordering or omission of scenes), and a concrete analysis of a scene to study particular parts of the script (opening scene).

The last part of the dissertation summarizes the conclusions obtained from the investigation held on the question of adaptations and from the analysis and comparison of the two different media versions.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This first part of the dissertation deals with all the background information needed to fluently follow the analysis of the film and the text in the second section. To acknowledge the main methods used to adapt scripts to the big screen, we are going to talk about the film adaptations of texts. Then, we will contextualize *Much Ado About Nothing* among all of the Shakespeare comedies. Finally, we will start discussing our chosen film adaptation in detail: looking at critical reviews, and contrasting and comparing them.

2.1. Film adaptations of texts

According to Willems (1987) in her essay ‘Verbal-Visual, Verbal-Pictorial or Textual-Televisual? Reflections on the BBC Shakespeare series’, words have a different function in every media they appear in. In a theatrical representation, the actor performing is full-time aware of the response of the public and is capable of sensing the effect he is giving to the audience. On the other hand, when it comes to acting in a film, the actor is not conscious of the impact made to the public, as there is no direct feedback. Moreover, the spectator, when in an audience of a theatre, is completely in control of which actor, decoration or spot of the stage they want to look at. They can also “focus on one actor, or on the reactions of all the actors on stage at once” (S. McEvoy, 2012), and this is not a decision a spectator can take when watching a film, as what they view is controlled by, for instance, the different shots and the camera zooms.

Throughout history, the existence of books adapted to films, poetry adapted to music, plays adapted to operas, etcetera, has always been present. As mentioned by James Harold (2018) in his essay ‘The Value of Fidelity in Adaptation’, Paisley Livingston (2010), in his paper ‘On the Appreciation of Cinematic Adaptations’, states that there are many

aspects an adaptation should follow to be considered one, and he builds an opinion in favour of appreciating faithful adaptations:

For a work to be an adaptation, many of the distinguishing and characteristic features of this source, such as the title, setting, main characters, and central elements of the plot, must be expressly adopted and imitated in the new work. As adaptations are distinct from mere copies or reproductions, they must also be intentionally made to diverge from the source in crucial respects.

(Paisley Livingston, 2010, 105)

The debate on the criterion of fidelity has supposed and still supposes nowadays an argument among critics, authors and reviewers. As Harold (2018) explains, there are completely opposed points of view from Livingston's (2010), as it is the case of authors such as Dudley Andrew, Thomas Leitch and Brian McFarlane, whereby their adaptation's themed books, one can state that the general view on the subject is that fidelity is considered a bad and harmful criterion. One of the main difficulties when adapting is the question of converting a text into visual imagery. As the writer, Michèle Willems (1987) says:

The screen, [...], addresses its public through pictures which often replace words, so much so that words may seem out of place and too much speech may be prejudicial to the effect of a film.

(Willems, 1987, 70)

In line with the citation above, fidelity also leads to other inconvenient opinions that "privilege the written world over pictorial storytelling" Harold (2018):

For some, as Robert Stam argues, literature will always have axiomatic superiority over any adaptation of it because of its seniority as an art form.

(Hutcheon, 2006, 4)

What Hutcheon is claiming here is that literary originals always have seniority of adaptations because they came first in time.

The adaptation of a classic, that is the case studied in this dissertation, is extremely challenging, as it alludes to “the process of recall¹” (Geraghty, 2007, 16). When we acknowledge that something is an adaptation, we automatically feel that the original work “shadows” the new version (See Linda Hutcheon, 2012, 6).

In summary, nowadays there exist uncountable adaptations from one medium to another, and as every media is designed to be addressed in a particular way, it is hard to fulfil the opinionated criterion of fidelity in a way that suits everyone’s expectations. Moreover, the fact that sometimes adaptations are made from literary classics, the spectator has already created a prejudgement in their minds (the process of recall) as there is an overcritical tendency to give more prestige to written works over pictorial ones.

2.2. Shakespeare and comedies

William Shakespeare is one of the most eminent writers from the world’s literary panorama. Born in 1564, he was a poet, dramatist, comedy writer and actor. His work was not just recognised antemortem, but his legacy continues to live posthumously throughout the generations. Shakespearean texts have been adapted to films on more than two thousand occasions. Furthermore, his plays have been translated into over fifty

¹ Process of recall: Has to do with the attachment to a source (in this case to a classic) when an adaptation is offered to the audience. (See C. Geraghty, 2007, 16)

languages and are still performed worldwide nowadays. He is considered one of the biggest names of English Literature.

Shakespeare's work includes at least thirty-seven plays, labelled as comedies, tragedies and histories; one-hundred and fifty-four sonnets; two volumes of narrative poems, and a diversity of many others. Apart from his work, he also included numerous original words to the English language (more than one thousand and seventy hundred words). Still, nowadays no original Shakespearean manuscript has been found. Seventeen of his plays were first printed in *Quarto*², but there were eighteen of them missing, which later appeared thanks to two Shakespeare's company actors in the *First Folio*³, published in 1623, seven years before the author died.

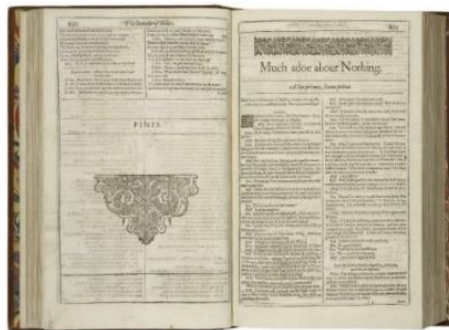


Illustration 1: Picture of the First Folio (1623)

As this dissertation works with a play, and more specifically with a comedy, we are now going to look at how many theatrical productions did Shakespeare write in this genre and its main characteristics to get started with the following section '*Much Ado About Nothing* (the play)'

² Quarto: the size of a piece of paper cut four from a sheet. (Merriam Webster)

³ First folio: A book printed in folio format that contains thirty-six Shakespeare's plays, published in 1623.

The Folger Shakespeare Library register thirteen comedies on their website, and they go from *All's Well That Ends Well* to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. The genre that Shakespeare wrote in the most is comedy, along with tragedies (as he wrote eleven plays in this category). With their complex plots and intense romantic lovers, comedies make the reader or audience enjoy the story with their metaphors and admiring wit.

Mentioning some of the distinguishing characteristics of Shakespeare's comedies, according to John Mullan (2016) in his article for the British Library's 'An Introduction to Shakespeare's Comedy': the stories revolve around marriage; there happen to be misconceptions and the play gets amusing as characters behave dramatically ironic; Shakespeare makes his characters switch identities and genders as disguises are a recurrent technique to bring confusion to the characters and make the story even funnier; the settings of the plays could be either greatly imaginary or contemporary and English; Shakespeare in his playwright mixes genres by bringing comedy into his tragedies and tragedy into his comedies.

All of these traits mentioned above are issues addressed throughout the dissertation that appear in our play. The following part of the writing deals with an introduction of the comedy, the themes it covers and the remarkable characteristics that distinguish this play from other Shakespearean comedies.

2.3. *Much Ado About Nothing* (the play)

Much Ado About Nothing is a renowned middle-late comedy written by Shakespeare between 1598 and 1599. It was published in *quarto*, in 1600, by Valentine Simmes for Andrew Wise and William Aspley. This work, as all the generally accepted Shakespeare plays, is included in the *First Folio*. According to this *First Folio*, *Much Ado About*

Nothing is the eighth comedy written by Shakespeare and the eighteenth play published among the thirty-six figuring in there.

By the time the work was written and published, England was living the end of the Elizabethan era, and along with it, the beginning of the Jacobean era and the Stuart period. They experienced the apogee of poetry, music and literature naming it a “Golden Age”.

Much Ado About Nothing pictures the 16th-Century Gender Roles and concerns of the society in that epoch at its finest: females were expected to maintain their virginity until the engagement or the wedding with the man they were to marry. As a matter of fact, it is believed to be the most mature romantic comedy Shakespeare ever wrote, and this explains the popularity it still has nowadays (Travis Curtright, 2018).

The story centres on Beatrice and Benedick’s love-hate relationship and Hero and Claudio’s romantic story. These two plotlines mirror and complement each other, they do not go alone as they have so much in common and the characters rely on each other all the time. The turning point in the play has to do with one of the biggest concerns present in the society of that time: the unfaithfulness of women towards their husbands. In the play, there is a false accusation of disloyalty from Hero towards Claudio made up by Don John to fool him and Don Pedro. This situation obliges Hero to hide and pretend she died till everything is fixed and she can end up marrying Claudio.

One of the main differences to other plays that critics point out from *Much Ado About Nothing* is the type of characters this story has. Hannah Fearn (2016) in her article for The Independent ‘*Much Ado About Nothing*: A delightful and empowering lesson in love’, writes that the character of Beatrice is “the sort of Shakespearean heroine I could identify with. Beatrice sparked a flicker of the feminism that would develop over the

coming years.” She is different from other female characters Shakespeare wrote about, such as Juliet or Ophelia, who are involved in extremely romantic love stories that eventually end in death. In those two cases, the audience maybe cannot feel a real connexion with the protagonists nor identify with their love stories.

Set in the Messina of the sixteenth century, this play moves from the comedy genre to almost tragedy in several scenes. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, the element of humour differs from how it was represented in the early comedies. Shakespeare makes the characters of this play be the comical factor by their fooling appearances and manners of behaviour due to their high position in society.

Another difference *Much Ado About Nothing* has from the other Shakespeare plays is the way he balances verse and prose. Taking as an example *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, verse and prose follow class lines: low-class characters speak in prose, as they have lesser knowledge of the language, while nobles and fairies speak in verse. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, it does not happen exactly like this. Rather than distinguishing the character’s status, Shakespeare, in this play uses verse to point out formality and emotions. Although the piece is almost completely written in prose, there are moments where some characters change into verse:

Indeed, my lord, he lent it me a while, and I gave him use for it, a double heart for a single one: marry once before he won it of me, with false dice, therefore your grace may well say I have lost it.

(2.1.211)

In the example above, Beatrice is conversing with Don Pedro and she is not using verse, as it is not a transcendental dialogue and they are not sharing strong feelings for something or someone, as it is the case of the following example:

What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?

Stand I condemned for pride and scorn so much?

Contempt, farewell, and maiden pride, adieu,

No glory lives behind the back of such.

[...]

(3.1.107-110)

This example of the soliloquy⁴ above is the response of Beatrice after overhearing how Hero and Ursula talked about the love Benedick felt for her. It is the first time that Beatrice speaks in verse in the play, and also the first time she does not avoid the topic of love with witty ironies and humour. As she is expressing sincerely what his heart is feeling, she speaks in verse. As mentioned before, the form of verse was also used in this play to represent formality. One case of a formal and serious scene in the story, written in black verse, is in Act. 4, sc. 1, when Claudio accuses Hero of disloyalty.

Despite *Much Ado About Nothing* belongs to the genre of comedy, and the central theme of the play is love, as it is known from all the Shakespearean works that belong to the genre, it stands out for being different from the others in some aspects. The identity of the characters, the element of humour and the use of verse are three of the many distinctive traits that make *Much Ado About Nothing* differ from other comedies.

⁴ Soliloquy: monologue, solo speech.

2.4. Shakespeare in films

This part of the dissertation looks into the way Shakespearean plays have been portrayed in films and television throughout history. The year 1944 signified a major turning point in the creation and the public acceptance of Shakespearean films (Anthony Davies, 1994, 3) since several cinematic adaptations were released later that years: *Henry V* (1944), *Hamlet* (1948), *Macbeth* (1948) and *Othello* (1952), among others. Later on, in the late 1960s, a golden age for Shakespeare movies emerged, beginning with Franco Zeffirelli (K. S. Rothwell, 2005).

Despite there exist film adaptations of many of Shakespeare's comedies such as *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, together with *Much Ado About Nothing*, that further on we will talk about it in detail, "Shakespearean comedies have been less attractive to film-makers than tragedies and histories" (Russell Jackson, 1994, 99).

Generally, in the adaptations of Shakespeare's plays into films, language dominates among any other aspect even if the script has been trimmed for adaptation. Shakespearean film characters will simply talk more, as well as more quaintly, than in comparable films with contemporary dialogue (Russell Jackson, 1994, 101). Despite this domination of language among Shakespearean films, the adaptive process of the text requires a significant reduction of the number of the original lines from the play:

Most films use between twenty-five and thirty per cent of the original text. It will also be necessary to cut up and re-order both speeches and whole scenes in order to produce a narrative which will work according to the rhythm of a

medium where it is rare to find extended scenes in one location, let alone individual speeches of more than a few lines.

(S. McEvoy, 2012)⁵

As R. Jackson (1994) explains, “Tragedies and histories suffer less than comedies” (p. 101) from this whittling of the dialogue. Film-makers from the tragedy and history genres, use almost all Shakespeare’s words from the original texts from the scenes they select to be in the script to be as faithful to the story as possible, and not take the trouble to find different idioms to suit the setting. The aforementioned setting takes indeed an especially important place when it comes to films, rather than theatre. André Bazin (1951) reproduces Sartre’s words “in the theatre...the drama proceeds from the actor; in the cinema, it goes from the décor to the man” (p. 412). In Shakespearean plays represented on stage, the “drama” André Bazin mentions above does not have much to do with the actual location of the characters starring the representation, in juxtaposition with a film adaptation from the same, where all the location decisions would be a high-priority aspect to consider to make a difference.

In summary, in the Shakespearean world in which words rule, it is a challenge to adapt visual images to combine with the play’s text. Nevertheless, the necessity of reducing lines, get by without some scenes of the play or the differences between the importance of the aspects when one of Shakespeare’s plays is whether represented in a theatre or filmed for the big screen, have not been an impediment to create excellent versions throughout the years.

⁵ See ‘Shakespeare on Film: How do you film Shakespeare’ in Shakespeare: the basics, Part 1, section 4.

2.5. Kenneth Branagh's *Much Ado About Nothing*

Kenneth Branagh has become one of the most distinguished and well-known playwrights, cinema and theatre actors and directors of England. Born in Belfast in 1960, he has been his whole life surrounded by literature and acting. His prizewinning career started with two nominations for the direction and performance of *Henry V* (Academy Awards, 1989) and followed by a remarkable number of many other award nominations and winnings of Grammy Awards, Golden Globe Awards or the Oscars.

He has starred in many prominent productions such as Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk* (2017) and *Tenet* (2020), *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (2002) or *Wallander* (2008). Apart from *Much Ado*, he adapted, directed and starred in other Shakespearean plays like *Henry V* (1989), *Othello* (1995), *Hamlet* (1996), *Love's Labour's Lost* (2000) and *As You Like It* (2006).

The adaptation for the screen of *Much Ado About Nothing* was released on the 7th of May 1993 in the United States and on the 27th of August of the same year in the United Kingdom. It was the second Shakespeare play the director adapted, and his fourth feature production. Directed and starred by Kenneth Branagh, it was the first version of this play produced for cinemas in the English language. The film also stars actors such as the English Emma Thompson (Beatrice), Kate Beckinsale (Hero) and Gerard Horan (Borachio), and the Americans Michael Keaton (Dogberry), Robert Sean Leonard (Count Claudio), Keanu Reeves (Don John), Denzel Washington (Don Pedro).

The film did prompt a revival of that box office excitement (Samuel Crowl, 2003, 64). As Crowl states, such success made the film world, and Hollywood in particular, become interested again in Shakespeare films, after a period of darkness. The movie had great

acceptance by the public. It was nominated in several categories in award ceremonies such as the British Academy Film Awards for Best Costume Design and the London Film Critics' Circle for British Producer of the Year (won). Kenneth Branagh was nominated in the 1993 Cannes Film Festival for the Palme d'Or. Despite not winning the award, the film got a place in one of the biggest film festivals in the world.

Three things that Russell Jackson (1994) mentions to stand out from the film, as he discusses in his study *Shakespeare's Comedies on Film*⁶ are: the festive environment; its present ability to accommodate verbal wit and the fantasy of happy articulacy; and, finally, the way Branagh approaches 'High Comedy'⁷ with the making of it. As Lynda E. Boose and Richard Burt express in *Shakespeare the movie: popularizing the plays on film, tv and video*: Branagh adapted faithfully the Shakespeare script in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

In summary, this award-winning film was an indubitable success in Kenneth Branagh's career, and it also entailed a reappearance of the interest in filming Shakespeare in the cinematographic world.



Illustration 2. *Much Ado About Nothing* film's poster

⁶ See 'Shakespeare's comedies on film' in *Shakespeare and the Moving Image*, 1994, 118.

⁷ High Comedy: also known as 'Pure Comedy', is a type of comedy with the characteristics of: satire, smart humour and critical with society.

2.5.1. Values and attitudes of the 1990s

The nineties in Europe are known as an optimistic age: some countries were recovering from a period of unstable economics. Europe was living in an age of newness, enthusiasm, chances, independent media, technologies and multiculturalism. In the case of England, after the early nineties recession, in 1993 both the United Kingdom and Ireland started experiencing an economic rise and left behind the increasing unemployment and lack of sentiment of hope and positivity.

As mentioned, the play was written in 1599 and, without a doubt, the society from the sixteenth century was tremendously different from the one of the twentieth century, and so was the making of a comedy in both of these centuries. Even though the adaptation of the play to contemporary society was a real challenge to Branagh, the director is known for achieving the link of ideas in Shakespeare's play with the witty Hollywood comedies of the 1930s, labelled as "screw-ball"⁸ (Samuel Crowl, 2002)⁹. He is also said to be the originator of reviving the popularization of Shakespeare on the big screen.

2.5.2. Critical reviews

Branagh's adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing*, someone's opinion for better, someone's for worse, had an important impact in the universe of Shakespearean adaptations to the big screen. As above-mentioned, the release of the film was a complete box-office success and it carried with it a spectacular amount of critiques, reviews and opinions of all types. Precisely for that reason, this section's point to deal with is a selection of various expert's comments on the 1993's version of the play.

⁸ Screw-ball comedy: Type of romantic comedy popular during 1930s-1940s which main characteristics are: witty, the battle of sexes and misunderstandings between social statuses.

⁹ See 'The Marriage of Shakespeare and Hollywood' in *Spectacular Shakespeare: Critical Theory and Popular Cinema*, 2002, 112.

Renowned critics such as Vincent Canby (1924-2000) associated with newspapers like The New York Times published a review¹⁰ on the film the same day of the release, back in May 1993. In Canby's (1993) words, Branagh's *Much Ado* was a movie "triumphantly romantic, comic and, most surprising of all, emotionally alive." He also stated that because the film was "such a surprise amid the tumult" it made him feel "an emotional impact" he had "never before experienced in Shakespeare, on stage or screen."

In contrast to Canby's review, the literary critic Adam Mars-Jones contributor to *The Independent* (among many other newspapers), wrote in August 1993 a review entitled *Much Amiss: Adam Mars-Jones is disappointed by a lacklustre Much Ado About Nothing*. Taking this headline as proof, it can be stated that Branagh's version was subjected to a huge polarity of opinions. Citing Mars-Jones (1993) in his review, the opening of the film with Beatrice reading 'Sigh no more' was "a rather self-indulgent moment, with Shakespeare's wittiest heroine being rewarded inordinately with applause for reciting lines that he did not put in her mouth, in a way that makes us think we must be missing something.". It is not just Beatrice's character that he did not approve, but also Don John, starring Keanu Reeves. This character, in Mars-Jones' view, "doesn't suit Reeves, for whom acting is an energetic business". Furthermore, he says the actor gives the spectator "plenty of inappropriate fire" for this reason. He ends his review with a strong statement that defines Branagh as "the director of a star-studded but lacklustre production".

Moving on to another critical review, this time from OnStage Blog's¹¹ contributor Jon Ciccarelli. He finds noteworthy the newness of American artists joining the cast, as it

¹⁰ See 'Review/Film; A House Party of Beatrice, Benedick and Friends' in NYT, May 7, 1993, Section C, Page 16.

¹¹ OnStage Blog: Resource dedicated to cover theatre from the perspective of fans involved in theatre as a regular part of their lives. See Shakespeare Retro Reviews – Film; Kenneth Branagh's "Much Ado About Nothing", 2015.

was, in his words, “controversial where many felt that they had no place in a cast with British actors”. Ciccarelli also qualifies as “amazing” the tones the play takes in some scenes, such as the one where Hero was mistakenly accused of infidelity.

As mentioned before while citing Mars-Jones (1993), the opening scene with Beatrice reciting ‘Sigh no more’ was one of the scenes that created more controversy among the Shakespearean experts. As Travis D. Williams (2018) declares in the updated Introduction¹² of The New Cambridge Shakespeare’s version of *Much Ado*:

The words of the song ‘Sigh no more’ are spoken by the wrong person, at the wrong time, to an audience of men and women who of course learn none of the wry lessons conveyed by the lyrics. The placement of the song shows the very free hand Branagh as director takes with the play’s text throughout the film.

(Travis D. Williams, 2018, 49)

Citing Roger Ebert (1993), whose opinion concurs with D. William’s: “this is not a film "of" a Shakespeare play, but a film that begins with the same materials and the wonderful language and finds its own reality”.

Summarizing, these five critiques and reviews cited above, are taken as an indication of the duality of opinions this Kenneth Branagh’s production holds. Traits that some critics qualify as remarkable, others feel they are errors that lead the spectator to misunderstand the main topics of the Shakespearean classic.

¹² See *Much Ado About Nothing*, The New Cambridge Shakespeare, Introduction, Page 49.

3. ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

This section of the dissertation analyses the play from the following points of view: visual aspects, including the casting, location, colour, costumes and music from the film, and secondly, a detailed analysis of the script of the film, comparing it with the original text of the play. This will help us observe and understand how Kenneth Branagh interpreted the text to develop the film. The last part of this framework deals with a concrete analysis of a scene of the film to thoroughly focus on particular lines of the script and picture every detail and change in them.

3.1. Visual aspects

It may seem that analysing a film could be similar to analysing a piece of literature, but the truth is that filmmaking gathers such different features to take the viewer's senses to reflect the events of the story:

The cinema, television and the theatre all appear to rely on the layering of signs to communicate with their public. Viewer and audience alike must apprehend a variety of signs simultaneously: aural signs such as words spoken by actors, music and other sounds; visual signs such as costumes, setting, lighting and sometimes special effects. But there the similarity ends, because the respective importance and status of these signs vary enormously from one medium to the next.

Michèle Willems (Davies & Wells, 1994, 70)

Shakespeare's words and vocabulary make the effect in his creations: the sensuality of this play, that on the text itself is performed verbally, in the film, the director preferred making said sensuality something more visual rather than spoken. A stage representation is straightaway subordinated to speech, for instance in a monologue, a dialogue or aside.

On the screen words are secondary; the dialogue follows the image (Davies & Wells, 1994, 70). Visuals can describe what is said by the text in successions of purely referential shots (Davies & Wells, 1994, 75).

Kenneth Branagh gleaned visual ideas that provided keys to the translation of his Shakespearean material into the language of film (S. Starks & Lehmann, 2002, 111).

The following parts of this section of the dissertation aim to develop each of the aspects this adaptation counts on concerning the visual aspects: casting, location, colours, costumes and music.

3.1.1. Casting

“Henry V meets Malcolm X, meets Batman, what a combination”, this was observed on the TV programme *Film 93* by Barry Norman. From this quote, and together with the next citations we are going to look at, we will see how prestigious and singular this film’s casting was to the spectator.

Kenneth Branagh, in an interview by *Film 93 Report* remarked the film was “seething with hot blooded acting”. He also mentioned he wanted “a very interesting mix of actors”. He finally added he was looking for actors who were “hungry to do it.”

Many experts, such as Samuel Crowl (2003), state what Branagh tried to do with the film was merge Shakespeare and Hollywood. “*Much Ado*, raiding Hollywood for several of its stars and its romantic screwball-comedy form, found the teenage summer-moviegoing audiences it so energetically courted” (Crowl, 2003, 64).

As Jacek Fabiszak (2015) explains in his essay *Kenneth Branagh’s Multicultural and Multi-ethnic Filmed Shakespeare(s)*, the director himself expressed the demanding task it signified to find the perfect casting for the film:

“The challenge was to find experienced Shakespearean actors who were unpractised on-screen and team them with experienced film actors who were much less familiar with Shakespeare. Different accents, different looks.”

(Kenneth Branagh cited by J. Fabiszak, 2015, 76)

Throughout the whole film, the audience can notice how actors use their own accents, no matter American or British. This multicultural trait became an issue in some scenes:

Don John’s line about Hero, “She’s a very forward March chick,” was cut for fear that Keanu Reeves would appear to be reverting to American slang rather than reciting Shakespeare”.

(E.Boose & Burt, 1997, 14)

One of the distinctive particularities of Branagh’s production is its colour-blind casting: it stars the multi-racial Canadian teen heartthrob, Keanu Reeves, playing Don John, and the African American Denzel Washington, playing his half-brother Don Pedro. Shakespeare is known for allowing a universality of interpretations: since the indications regarding the roles on the play were diverse, that allowed performers of any colour to act in them. The principal goal the director had, in his own words, “to be as international as possible” (Kenneth Branagh, as cited in Jacek Fabiszak, 2015, 76).

3.1.2. Location

Despite the location of the play is specified in Shakespeare’s play, Branagh brought the crew to Italy and decided to film in a villa next to the city of Messina, as it happened to have the perfect house to be Leonato’s. The house was a crucial choice to make, as this setting is where almost the whole story takes place. The characters’ encounters,

conversations and confessions occur inside this house's walls and the outside gardens on it. This spot helps to make the film vibrant and full of colourful images.

According to Samuel Crowl (2003, 69): "Branagh's film clearly seeks to highlight the play's festive elements made most apparent in his transfer of the play's locale from Messina, in Sicily, to the Villa Vignemaggio, in Tuscany—from city street to country estate."

In the original play, there are not many solid location indications. These choices are testaments to Shakespeare's "professional concern for easy transfer to different venues" (Sheldon Zitner, 2008, 18, as cited in Isabelle Lemaire, 2019). Some examples of the indications given in the play's *The New Cambridge Shakespeare* edition (not given by Shakespeare) regarding location and setting are:

"An unlocalised scene on the main stage, it is usually specified as in 'Leonato's house' (Theobald) but it could as easily be out of doors."

(Act 3, sc. 2)

"It is a large-scale full-stage scene, and requires musicians, presumably in the gallery. The hall or great chamber of Leonato's house is the usual editorial location, though Furness suggested the garden."

(Act 2, sc. 1)

"The scene is unlocalised, and editors have suggested variously a room in Leonato's house (Capell) or 'the street' (Hanmer)."

(Act 1, sc. 3)

Anne Barton, in one of her reviews for The New York Review, remarks that *Much Ado About Nothing* is one of the most “resolutely urban of Shakespeare’s comedies” and that in Branagh’s film “Messina has disappeared” to be replaced by the “boldy rural and open-air,” which entails a “virtual obliteration of Shakespeare’s carefully structured social hierarchy” (Barton, 1993, as cited in Crawl, 2003, 69).

Branagh, in a *Film 93 Report* declared he wanted the film to be something “rustic, lusty, bawdy and sexy”. The truth is, the setting is described by critical readers such as Sarah Hatchuel as a “fairy-tale world” that works as an “escape from reality”.

3.1.3. Colour

Branagh’s adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing*, produced in 1993, is a vibrant and colourful movie (Crawl, 2006, 73). As the director declared to the Baltimore Sun, back in 1993: “I wanted this film to reflect how relevant and contemporary Shakespeare is today, and as much as possible I wanted the costumes to be rather vague.”

The opening scene presents how the whole film is going to feel like. By tones of green, white and shades of brown, the spectator can observe suntanned bodies (legs, men’s pectorals and biceps, women’s necklines...) and people sitting and laying on the grass while eating and having fun. They are surrounded by olive trees while Beatrice (Emma Thompson) recites “Sign No More” (song explained in the section “Music”). The weather is sunny and the image is bright. When the soldiers arrive, the colour scheme keeps being the same: browns, black, tones of blue and white (women dresses and bedsheets).

The pictures below correspond to two scenes from the film with their matching colour palettes. One is taken from the first scene, which can be interpreted as one of the

joyous ones, and the other one from one of the darkest and gloomiest scenes (when Claudio refuses to marry Hero because of her supposed unfaithfulness towards him).

The tones are mainly shades of blue and brown and black:



Illustration 3: Examples of scenes to prove the Colour Palette

3.1.4. Costumes

Costumers such as Trystan L. Bass have analysed the details in the clothing in Kenneth Branagh's version of *Much Ado About Nothing*, as dresses and uniforms give much information about the time the film is set. At first sight, the spectator can realize that the main characters, such as Hero and Beatrice, wear slightly more detailed costumes than the rest.

Men's clothing mainly consists of military uniforms; in the case of Don Pedro and Don John's guys. Those soldier jackets are adorned with guns and swords, and the predominant colours are blue and black. A distinguishable trait from these costumes is leather trousers. Despite Branagh's film takes place in an undefined time, those uniforms indicate that it could be the mid-to-late-19th century.

Continuing with men, in the mask party, Don John, Don Pedro and Benedick dress Victorian-styled waistcoats (Trystan L. Bass, 2018). On the contrary, Leonato dresses in

an 18th-century style, with a waistcoat adorned with buttons (and eventually in white clothes and breeches).

In the case of women, they wear lightweight dresses in white, cream, beige and pale brown tones. These dresses are different from the ones that were worn in the 16th-17th Century, by the time Shakespeare wrote the play. Their hairstyles are modern: long hairs and not upswept.

3.1.5. Music

In the play's text, Shakespeare gives indications when music has to be played. The first reference he makes to music is in Act 2, sc. 3, when Leonato, Don Pedro and Claudio are in the garden tricking Benedick making him believe Beatrice loves him. The song in this act depicts a bright moment in the story.

Enter DON PEDRO, LEONATO, CLAUDIO [and BALTHASAR with] music

(2.3.7)

The second time music is mentioned is in Act 5, sc. 3, when Claudio and Don Pedro are in front of Leonato's monument epitaph, and the lyrics of the song talk about the unjust death of Hero. This song marks the scene as a really dramatic moment in the story.

Enter CLAUDIO, DON PEDRO and three or four [Attendants] with tapers [and music].

(5.3.8)

After having looked at some of the indications given by Shakespeare regarding music, this second part of the section reviews the soundtrack of the adaptation to the big screen composed by Patrick Doyle, which has twenty-four songs in it.

Sean Wilson, in his review *Much Ado About Nothing – film score by Patrick Doyle* describes Doyle's score¹³ with the words “summery”, “joyous” and “perhaps exuberant”. As the film does not have a moment of terrible darkness (despite the tough wedding scene) the soundtrack accompanies the visuals with a sensible sound.

As Wilson continues, he states that the composer roots his two central themes in a musical language that benefits their respective gender. This means he distinguishes between ‘feminine’ tracks and ‘masculine’ tracks.

An example of this contraposition among ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ tracks, could be the beginning of the film. As the film starts, the ‘feminine’ track “The Picnic” (Doyle, 1993, Track 1) sounds, accompanied with the “Sigh no more” verses recited by Emma Thompson. In opposite with this first song, the ‘masculine’ track “Overture” (Doyle, 1993, Track 2) starts playing along with the scene where the soldiers arrive at Messina riding their horses. This scene carries an atmosphere of sensuality, power and intensity.

In the final sequence of the film, we can see our characters dancing all together to the sound of “Strike Up Pipers” (Doyle, 1993, Track 24), a song that expresses happiness and makes the spectator feel the joy of the characters living their happy endings. Pascale Drouet (2019), in her paper *Branagh's Aesthetics of Sensuality in Much Ado About Nothing (1993)*, points out that the lyrics of the “Sigh no more” (Doyle, 1993, Track 9) song reminds the spectator that “bodily exultation is only a moment in time” (Pascale Drouet, 2019). The lyrics of the song talk about men infidelity and the lack of commitment they show towards women. Balthasar, the performance artist, in the songs

¹³ Score: Synonym of arrangement and composition. The musical score is the original music accompanying the film.

he plays in the story he always mentions women should not be worried about men, as they will never get rid of their unfaithful manners.

3.2. Interpretation of the text by the director

The following part of the dissertation works in an analysis of the conversion of the play's text into the script that Branagh adapted for the film. This last section of the study aims to observe the changes the director decided to make and comment on these modifications to understand their finality. In any case will those changes be judged or listed as good or bad. This part is divided into two different subsections: characters and creativity of the director.

- **CHARACTERS**

In the play, the reader finds three main storylines: the love relationship of Hero and Claudio, the witty one of Beatrice and Benedick, and finally the law, represented by Dogberry. All these three stories are connected by the idea of the relationship between the upper-class and the lower-class of the characters. Despite the plot of the film also follows those themes mentioned above, Hero and Claudio take the role of a supporting relationship to the undeniable real main characters of the story: Beatrice and Benedick.

- ❖ **CLAUDIO – HERO**

It is a fact that Claudio and Hero turn from being the protagonists in Shakespeare's text to being the supporting characters in the film, and it can be proved by seeing how a significant number of parts of their lines have been cut:

- From Act 3, sc. 2 to Act 3, sc. 3: there takes place a dialogue between Claudio and Don Pedro, and later joined Don John. Claudio's lines are eliminated in the film, despite he appears in the scene, he does not contribute to the dialogue.

- In Act 3 sc. 4, Hero has a four pages long dialogue with Margaret, Ursula and Beatrice, where she shares her nervousness and anxiety about the wedding. It is entirely cut out in the film.

Analysing Hero's parts, it can be seen how she has almost not had dialogue that refers to her and her feelings. She often appears in scenes where others, such as Beatrice and Benedick are the protagonists, and she has few lines to express her thoughts. The effects of these cuts are clear: making Hero be a backup for the girl main character: Beatrice. Despite the number of lines cut, she still figures as an important co-star as she appears on screen in almost all scenes and the spectator acknowledges she is someone that the main protagonists rely on so much. It is important to note too that the drastic plot twist of the play has to do with her, and she is the one with fewer lines than the other main characters. Branagh played with these cuts to show the subordination of Hero from the masculine roles: Claudio, Leonato and Antonio (those two last-mentioned with strong degrees of authority and very patriarchal). Hero has some good shots that speak by themselves without the need for words to understand the feelings of the characters, as it could be the wedding scene when she yells and cries (Branagh 01:03:40).

Regarding Claudio, his character has a few more interventions and dialogues than Hero, as he has the leading role in the wedding scene and it signifies a major change to his character. Almost twenty lines that appear in the text belonging to Claudio in the text from the scene previously mentioned (Shakespeare 4.1) do not appear in the film, but they are replaced by shots full of powerful tension and that show the contained anger Claudio had inside because of Hero's treachery. He is tangibly furious, and through the visual language (Branagh 01:02:42), Claudio still expresses this feeling pushing Hero with violence and breaking the wedding decoration.

❖ BEATRICE AND BENEDICK:

Beatrice and Benedick are the two characters that maintained almost all the lines from Shakespeare's real text in the film. Undoubtedly, Branagh made them be the ones with the longest dialogues, soliloquies and more appearances on screen. Despite their major role in the film, their texts also suffered from cuts. In the case of this comedy, it was written four hundred years ago. Cutting some now outdated jokes that maybe the audience would not understand, and that do not make the plot miss something important, is not just a good choice but a necessary one as Branagh's aim was to bring Shakespeare into the modern world.

As it has been mentioned throughout the dissertation, these two characters hold an exchange of witty ironies and humorous language during all of the film, which is complemented with visual gestures that emphasise the general amusing tone of the comedy. An example of this added value to the amusingly clever speeches happens on a scene that is analysed in the next part of the section: when they overhear the conversations in the garden (Branagh 00:38:40). Benedick has an extremely hilarious fight with a folding lawn chair as he is not able to assemble it, and when he has finally sat on the chair, he falls to the ground when he hears Don Pedro saying that Beatrice is in love with him. Moreover, when Don Pedro criticises Benedick's personality, he shouts "Oh!" as if he was offended, and when he realises he has been heard, he starts imitating the sound of a seagull (Branagh 00:43:43). The same happens with Beatrice in this garden scene: to spy on Hero and Ursula talking about how Benedick loves her, she hides behind bushes and naked garden statues (Branagh 00:48:10).

❖ MAIN SUPPORTING CHARACTERS:

DOGBERRY: The law is represented by Dogberry. He is the constable of Messina, and after doing his guard job one night, he discovers the truth and reveals the sham of Hero's treachery. His character makes the spectator roar with laughter with ridiculous situations, like when he pretends to be riding an invisible horse as a mode of transport, and also his mistaken vocabulary:

“They have committed false report, moreover they have spoken untruths, secondarily, they are slanders, sixth and lastly, they have belied a lady, thirdly they have verified unjust things, and to conclude, they are lying knaves.”

(5.1.191-194)

LEONATO: In the real text, Leonato is not one of the characters with the greatest number of lines, but almost fifty per cent of his interventions are eliminated in the film. Despite Leonato is present in many of the main scenes, and is the protagonist of important scenes such as the one where Dogberry and Verges bring him Borachio to confess them the truth, his role is to be a kind of a *comfort character*¹⁴ to the spectator: pleasant, likeable and nice.

DON JOHN: He represents evil in the film. Since he is aware of Claudio's intentions to marry Hero, he starts planning to fool Claudio in any ways possible to stop the wedding. In general, his script is not full of long lines and dialogues, but in the two occasions he intercedes trying to mislead Claudio from his thought of marrying, he causes discomfort in him: firstly, in the masked ball when Don John tells Claudio that Don Pedro is courting Hero for himself, and, secondly, when he plans the trickery to accuse Hero of disloyalty.

¹⁴ Comfort character: a fictional character that makes the spectator feel happy.

- CREATIVITY OF THE DIRECTOR

Theatrical representations of the play last more than two hours while Branagh's adaptation's running time is one hour and fifty minutes. We will now analyse how some scenes have been cut, how dialogues and soliloquies were modified to be shorter, and how long and stilted sentences were reduced and simplified.

- ❖ VISUAL LANGUAGE:

The director had to translate the Shakespearean text into the visual language of film, and it entails creating moments in which words and dialogues are not protagonists, but Patrick Doyle's soundtrack is. An example of it could be the part in which Beatrice and Benedick both celebrate the news they overheard: in the case of Benedick, that Beatrice loved him, and regarding Beatrice, the other way around. In the text, Act 3, scene 1 ends with Beatrice exiting from the stage after finishing her soliloquy (Shakespeare 3.1.105). In the film, the scene corresponds to the minute 00:50:35, after the words "Believe it better than reportingly" that Beatrice shouts. After these words, there starts a minute of images in slow motion from Benedick jumping with happiness inside a fountain splashing water all over the garden and making gestures of enthusiasm¹⁵ and Beatrice swinging with her foot up high and joyously while the music sets a tone of excitement, high energy and triumph¹⁶.

The technique of reducing the lines and combine them with visual language makes the film feel fluid and smooth. There are many examples of sentences that have been

¹⁵ See Appendix 1

¹⁶ See Appendix 2

replaced for images in this film, as the audience can focus on other important aspects on the screen and not just the words pronounced by the characters.

In Act 2, scene 3, Benedick says “I will hide me in the arbour”, to spy on the conversation between Don Pedro, Leonato and Claudio. In the film, the clarification of him going to hide himself in the arbour is not needed, as it is seen how he goes towards it in order not to be seen by the others.

One of the darkest moments of the play is the false unfaithfulness from Hero towards Claudio. In the text, the reader follows how Don John explains to Claudio and Don Pedro that Hero is disloyal (Shakespeare 3.2.58). As they do not believe Don John’s words at first, he suggests they go with him to prove it, as through Hero’s chamber window they will see the truth. In the film (Branagh 00:56:50), the dialogue ends with Don John telling Don Pedro that Claudio would hesitate to marry Hero after what he has to show them. After this last sentence, the image fades to black to the following scene, where the three men are under Hero’s window seeing the supposed treachery. In the film¹⁷, the audience witnesses the scene described by Don John along with the other characters, in contrast to the text.

In the wedding scene, it is worth mentioning the camera’s ability to register feelings in the actors’ faces. This scene has powerful reaction shots that express more than a million words, as is the case of Beatrice, Friar Francis, Leonato, and especially Margaret¹⁸. When Hero is accused by Claudio, and Don Pedro mentions the hour and the place they saw Hero being disloyal, she realizes the truth, which it was her with Borachio

¹⁷ See Appendix 3

¹⁸ See Appendix 4

who they saw through the window making love. Despite she does not say anything, the camera closes up to her shocked face, that is also expressing terror (Branagh 01:05:43).

Another example of visual language happens while Claudio is confessing to Don Pedro his love towards Hero and his intentions to marry her. The spectator discovers how Borachio is overhearing the whole conversation through the window without being spotted (Branagh 00:17:17). He does not speak, but by the look in his eyes and the tense sound of the music, something bad is perceived to happen. In the real text, there is no mention of the character of Borachio appearing on the scene.

❖ REORDERING AND OMISSION OF SCENES/LINES:

There are several examples of scenes placed before others that do not follow the order of the real text written by Shakespeare. An example of this reordering is Act 5, Scene 3: in the film, it is moved right after Act 5, Scene 1 (Branagh 01:28:40). When Claudio says “Tonight I’ll mourn with Hero”, there starts a procession to the monument of Leonato that ends with a solemn hymn after Claudio has read the epitaph. After a fade to black, there appears Benedick composing a song to Beatrice, which corresponds to Act 5, Scene 2 of the written text. The reason for this reordering is clearly to pass over quickly the darker scenes. If the film followed the text’s real order, it would be: 5.1, dark scene when the truth about Hero is known; 5.2, Margaret helping out Benedick to write a song to Beatrice; 5.3, return to a dark scene where Claudio reads Hero’s epitaph and 5.4, the joyous last scene of the play. This way, Branagh ordered the dark scenes one followed by the other and cutting long parts of the dialogue, to make them pass faster, and focus more on the lively scenes.

Branagh also got rid of the prolongation of the rhetoric in some scenes¹⁹, as is the case of Act 4, Scene 1 (Branagh 01:06:13). Leonato and Friar Francis' lines suffer from several cuts. An example of an eliminated scene is the case of act 1, scene 2. Leonato and Antonio converse in how Claudio is in love with Hero and eager to marry her.

3.3. Concrete analysis on a section of the film/play

The differences between the opening scene from the film and the one from the play are worth mentioning as they were one of the most criticised aspects for some and praised for others when the film was released back in 1993.

Shakespeare's first act of the comedy opens with the entrance of Leonato, Hero and Beatrice on the stage, accompanied by a Messenger who brings a letter that announces the arrival of Don Pedro of Aragon to Messina. Next, there occurs a conversation between these characters about the kindness of Don Pedro, and Beatrice interrupts it by asking if "Signior Mountanto" was also returning from war with them. In this first dialogue, the reader starts entering the Beatrice and Benedick game of ironies and witty conversations for the way she refers to him. Don Pedro, Claudio, Benedick, Balthasar and John, the bastard, enter on stage after the talk of the previously mentioned characters.

In contrast to the play's opening act, Branagh's version first scene starts with Emma Thompson's voice reciting the lyrics to "Sigh No More Ladies" (Doyle, 1993, Track 9) one of the main tracks of the film. Amidst laughs, food and a peaceful ambience, the spectator meets the inhabitants of Messina who are lying in the grass of a field surrounded by olive trees while having a picnic. When Beatrice's reading finishes, a messenger appears and gives Leonato the letter that announces the arrival of Don Pedro and his

¹⁹ See Appendix 6

soldiers. These first images of the film are not present in the play, but after them, there starts the real play's dialogue, where, as mentioned before, Beatrice, Leonato, Hero and the Messenger talk about Don Pedro and Benedick. Almost half of the text's dialogue is eliminated from the film's script. The characters, in this case, focus more on who is accompanying Don Pedro: Claudio and Benedick. This choice of cutting a part of the text is due to the upcoming scene, the entrance of the soldiers.

In the text, there is indicated that the entrance of Don Pedro should be informal but triumphal with as large a company as possible. Branagh kept this indication in mind when creating the most epic entrance for those characters. By the call of "Don Pedro is approaching!" the "Overture" (Doyle, 1993, Track 2) song starts playing for four minutes and twenty seconds straight. The arrival sequence²⁰ is in slow motion: the soldiers ride their horses towards their destination and the inhabitants run down the field to get to their town. These whole scene's images have tremendous energy in them; while the soldiers approach the other characters are seen shouting, laughing and jumping with excitement to the sound of the theme playing on the background, throwing themselves into the baths and splashing the water, in an atmosphere of enthusiasm and excitement. In just five minutes of introduction, the spectator can feel how the film is going to be: sensual, amusing and romantic because that is what the images evoke the viewer to expect.

Summarizing the whole atmosphere of the first minutes of the film that constitute the 'prologue', one could say it is a spectacle of visuals and sounds. This opening scene has been compared and believed to be a gesture to other films such as *The Magnificent Seven*, for how the soldiers arrive in the distance with their horses.

²⁰ See Appendix 5

4. CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the dissertation, there have been presented important issues regarding the adaptation of texts into films such as the matter of fidelity when adapting classics, or the process of recall the spectator suffers when the adaptation comes from a book previously known by them. Nevertheless, through all the consulted information and after analysing the polarity of the opinions this film held, it can be concluded that this production signified a tremendous success in Kenneth Branagh's career, as he is considered the originator of the return of Shakespeare's works in Hollywood and the film world.

Aside from all the background information in the theoretical framework, the analysis of the visual aspects and the comparison of the real text and the script lead this dissertation to different conclusions such as:

- Branagh, as a screenwriter, made some cuts in dialogues and rearranged, reordered and eliminated some scenes. He did not change the general form of the play, nor he did alter the plot, despite the storyline from Beatrice and Benedick seems to overtake the one from Hero and Claudio.
- Those changes and omissions in some parts of the text do not make the spectators feel they are watching some chaotic production. The variations made do not impede in any way the correct following of the story for someone who has not previously been in contact with this Shakespearean work.
- The reduction of the text and the avoided scenes were compensated with visual imagery that helped with the understanding of the story. One of the great strengths of the film is its visual language. The camera did an incredibly good job capturing the characters' feelings, making the audience understand their thoughts without the need for words.

- The theatrical representations of *Much Ado About Nothing* tend to last more than two hours and twenty minutes (the one in The Gold Globe is two hours and forty minutes long with a 15-minute intermission), and Branagh's adaptation running time is an hour and fifty minutes. As the director stated in some interviews, comedies tend to last a shorter number of minutes than other genres like epic or drama.
- After reading several books and plenty of reviews about the film, written by experts, and also investigating some of the artists' fan pages that contained comments on the film, the common opinion on the adaptation says that it is satisfactory and well-developed. It is clear that the public liked the film because every aspect was in accordance with each other: the songs, the colours, the comedy and the multiculturalism of the casting provide a rich final product. The diversity of ethnicities, the choices concerning the time of action, and the decisions of changing the places of action make the film notably bright and wonderful.

I am so glad I have been working for these six months with the Shakespearean universe and also Kenneth Branagh's world as I consider them both extraordinary creators each one in their specialization. *Much Ado About Nothing* is an amusing play to read, and despite I have only been working with one of the adaptations in this dissertation, I have also watched other versions of it, such as the BBC ShakespeaRe-Told version and Joss Whedon's one. The message of the story and characters as Hero, who suffers from patriarchal judgment, and Beatrice, that has a resemblance of the role of a woman of today, made me realize every woman in the world could identify with them. Thus, I feel pleased I have discovered this story being twenty-two years old, but I would have loved to be shown this in school, rather than other tragedies of mad-killing romantic love stories.

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APPENDICES

Examples of visual language in the film:

Appendix 1



Minute 50:36

Appendix 2



Minute 50:51

Appendix 3



Minute 58:02

Appendix 4



Minute 1:05:43

Appendix 5



Minute 5:50

ANNEXES

Annex 1. Some film and TV adaptations of *Much Ado About Nothing*.

- Much Ado About Nothing (b/w)
Director: Phillips Smalley
Year: 1913
- Much Ado About Nothing (b/w)
Director: Arthur Rosson
Year: 1926 (USA)
- Mnogo Shuma Iz Nichego (b/w)
Director: L. Samkovoï
Year: 1956 (USSR)
- Viel Lärm um nichts (East German adaptation)
Director: Martin Hellberg
Year: 1964 (DDR)
Duration: 1:37:00
- Much Ado About Nothing (TV)
Director: Franco Zeffirelli and Alan Cooke
Year: 1967
Duration: 2:05:00
- Beaucoup de Bruit pour Rien
Director: Samson Samsonov
Year: 1973 (USSR)
Duration: 1:23:00
- Much Ado About Nothing
Director: Nick Havinga
Year: 1973
Duration: 2:45:00
- Much Ado About Nothing
Director: Kenneth Branagh
Year: 1993
Duration: 1:50:56
- Dil Chahta Hai (Hindi loose adaptation)
Director: Farhan Akhtar
Year: 2001
Duration: 3:05:00
- BBC ShakespeaRe-Told - Much Ado About Nothing (TV)
Director: Brian Percival
Year: 2005
Duration: 1:30:00
- Much Ado About Nothing
Director: Joss Whedon
Year: 2013
Duration: 1:48:10
- Messina High
Director: Owen Drake
Year: 2015
Duration: 1:30:00

Annex 2. Examples of the comparison of the script and the real text from the book made to analyse the cuts in the lines of the real text in Branagh's adaptation:

135 *Much Ado About Nothing* 4.1.202

FRIAR FRANCIS There is some strange misprision in the princes.
 BENEDICK Two of them have the very bent of honour,
 And if their wisdoms be misled in this, 180
 The practice of it lives in John the bastard,
 Whose spirits toil in frame of villainies.
 LEONATO I know not: if they speak but truth of her,
 These hands shall tear her, if they wrong her honour,
 The proudest of them shall well hear of it. 185
 Time hath not yet so dried this blood of mine,
 Nor age so eat up my invention,
 Nor fortune made such havoc of my means,
 Nor my bad life reft me so much of friends,
 But they shall find, awaked in such a kind, 190
 Both strength of limb, and policy of mind,
 Ability in means, and choice of friends,
 To quit me of them throughly.

4.1.149 *Much Ado About Nothing* 134

Silent so long, and given way unto
 This course of fortune, by noting of the lady. 150
 I have marked
 A thousand blushing apparitions,
 To start into her face, a thousand innocent shames,
 In angel whiteness beat away those blushes,
 And in her eye there hath appeared a fire, 155
 To burn the errors that these princes hold
 Against her maiden truth: call me a fool,
 Trust not my reading, nor my observations,
 Which with experimental seal doth warrant
 The tenure of my book: trust not my age, 160
 My reverence, calling, nor divinity,
 If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here,
 Under some biting error.

LEONATO Friar, it cannot be,
 Thou seest that all the grace that she hath left,
 Is that she will not add to her damnation 165
 A sin of perjury, she not denies it:
 Why seek'st thou then to cover with excuse,
 That which appears in proper nakedness?

FRIAR FRANCIS Lady, what man is he you are accused of?
 HERO They know that do accuse me: I

FRIAR FRANCIS Marry, this well carried, shall on her behalf,
 Change slander to remorse, that is some good,
 But not for that dream I on this strange course,
 But on this travail look for greater birth:
 She dying, as it must be so maintained,
 Upon the instant that she was accused,
 Shall be lamented, pitied, and excused
 Of every hearer; for it so falls out,
 That what we have, we prize not to the worth,
 Whiles we enjoy it; but being lacked and lost,
 Why then we rack the value, then we find
 The virtue that possession would not show us
 Whiles it was ours; so will it fare with Claudio:
 When he shall hear she died upon his words
 Th'idea of her life shall sweetly creep
 Into his study of imagination,
 And every lovely organ of her life,
 Shall come apparelled in more precious habit,
 More moving delicate, and full of life,
 Into the eye and prospect of his soul
 Than when she lived indeed: then shall he mourn,
 If ever love had interest in his liver,
 And wish he had not so accusèd her:
 No, though he thought his accusation true:
 Let this be so, and doubt not but success
 Will fashion the event in better shape
 Than I can lay it down in likelihood.

203 Marry,] Mary Q; Marry F 217 Th'idea] Th'idea Q; Th'idea F 221 moving-delicate] Capell; moving delicate Q

BEATRICE It is a man's office, but not yours.
 BENEDICK I do love nothing in the world so well as you, is not that
 strange?
 BEATRICE As strange as the thing I know not: it were as possible for me
 to say, I loved nothing so well as you, but believe me not, and yet I
 lie not, I confess nothing, nor I deny nothing: I am sorry for my
 cousin.
 BENEDICK By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me.
 BEATRICE Do not swear and eat it.
 BENEDICK I will swear by it that you love me, and I will make him eat it
 that says I love not you.
 BEATRICE ~~Will you not eat your word?~~
 BENEDICK ~~With no sauce that can be devised to it: I protest I love thee.~~
 BEATRICE Why then God forgive me.
 BENEDICK What offence, sweet Beatrice?
 BEATRICE You have stayed me in a happy hour, I was about to protest I
 loved you.
 BENEDICK And do it with all thy heart.
 BEATRICE I love you with so much of my heart, that none is left to
 protest.
 BENEDICK Come bid me do anything for thee.
 BEATRICE Kill Claudio.
 BENEDICK Ha, not for the wide world.
 BEATRICE You kill me to deny it, farewell.
 BENEDICK Tarry, sweet Beatrice.
 BEATRICE I am gone, though I am here, there is no love in you, nay, I
 pray you let me go.

266 cannot cause be it F 281 deny it a denial

BENEDICK Beatrice.
 BEATRICE In faith I will go.
 BENEDICK We'll be friends first.
 BEATRICE You dare easier be friends with me, than fight with mine
 enemy.
 BENEDICK Is Claudio thine enemy?
 BEATRICE Is a not approved in the height a villain, that hath slandered,
 scorned, dishonoured my kinswoman? Oh that I were a man! What,
 bear her in hand, until they come to take hands, and then with
 public accusation, uncovered slander, unmitigated rancour? Oh
 God that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the market place.
 BENEDICK Hear me, Beatrice.
 BEATRICE Talk with a man out at a window, a proper saying.
 BENEDICK Nay, but Beatrice.
 BEATRICE Sweet Hero, she is wronged, she is slandered, she is undone.
 BENEDICK Beat —
 BEATRICE ~~Princes and counties! Surely a princely testimony, a goodly
 count, Count Comfert, a sweet gallant surely, oh that I were a man
 for his sake! Or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake!~~
~~But manhood is melted into curtsies, valour into compliment, and
 men are only turned into tongue, and trim ones too: he is now as
 valiant as Hercules, that only tells a lie, and swears it: I cannot be a
 man with wishing, therefore I will die a woman with grieving.~~
 BENEDICK Tarry, good Beatrice, by this hand I love thee.
 BEATRICE Use it for my love some other way than swearing by it.
 BENEDICK Think you in your soul the Count Claudio hath wronged
 Hero?
 BEATRICE Yea, as sure as I have a thought, or a soul.
 BENEDICK Enough. I am engaged, I will challenge him. I will kiss your