"I cannot rest while this history remains untold": (Re)Shaping Ophelia in Lisa Klein's and Claire McCarthy's *Ophelia*

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Abstract: The intertextual dialogue between art and literature has played a significant role over the last centuries and even more so in contemporary fiction, as evidenced by the growing number of works that explore this theme. Considering the term interfigurality as a starting point, the character of Ophelia in Lisa Klein's homonymous novel *Ophelia* (2006) may not be considered to be exactly identical to the one depicted in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1603). What Lisa Klein intends to offer is Ophelia's story from her own perspective since she had been silenced or to a greater extent, depicted by the male gaze such as her own father Polonius or Hamlet himself. That is why it is impossible to have two identical characters in two literary works by different authors. There is also a fine example of pictorial intertextuality in the film version of Klein's novel released in 2018, as it features images of Ophelia from the Pre-Raphaelite paintings.

To examine the concept of reverse ekphrasis, I will examine John Everett Millais's painting *Ophelia*, which depicts Ophelia's drowning in Act IV. There have been many references and pastiche images of the drowned woman in art, film, and photography. Klein's intertextual dialogue with this Pre-Raphaelite painting, as well as the film adaptation of this novel, demonstrates the complexity of pictorial-film intertextuality. In order to demonstrate this, Shakespeare's text produces two dialogues that are in accordance: first, this text is transformed into images leading to the Pre-Raphaelite paintings, while Lisa Klein's novel is told from Ophelia's perspective through interfigurality. The mediums of image and word then are combined into creating another image, since Klein's text and the aforementioned Pre-Raphaelite painting are incorporated into a film adaptation.

Keywords: Ophelia, Pre-Raphaelite painting, pictorial intertextuality, reverse ekphrasis, interfigurality

Introductory Remarks

Since its publication in 1603, *Hamlet* has inspired successive generations of writers. There have been several "derivative works" of Hamlet that introduce the story from the point of view of other characters or transfer the story into a new setting as sequels or prequels to Hamlet. In Ophelia's case, we have an extensive numbers of rewrites that have been written from her point of view. Although this character appears in only five of the twenty scenes in *Hamlet*, Ophelia is mentioned in two of the others – by Polonius and Laertes. Not only has she been a source of inspiration for painters and filmmakers but also she has been examined by structuralism, deconstruction, poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, and new historicism.

Does Ophelia really deserve all the attention she gets? Do they tell us everything that they say is true? As we read Hamlet for the first time, we were given scarce information about Ophelia. We learn that she is Polonius' daughter, or better yet, Hamlet's betrothed wife. We have seen in contemporary English fiction that she is more than just a secondary character in the original source and that

Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics Vol. 45, No. 4, Winter 2022 [123-132]
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she gives voice to her story from her own perspective, rather than the perspective one previously told. In the same way, the Pre-Raphaelite society has a wide range of representations of Ophelia. Moreover, this group of artists has become a repeated reference in the contemporary representations and revisions of Victorian culture. Neo-Victorian writers use Pre-Raphaelite artists and their art to comment on images and norms of femininity in the nineteenth century, as Murray states, "the prominence of womanhood and femininity is something that Pre-Raphaelitism and Neo-Victorianism have in common as cultural movements, and which act as influencers upon each other." (25). Similarly, contemporary criticism continues to examine the dialogue between literature and painting, reconsidering classical approaches to the subject such as Leonardo Da Vinci's *Paragone of Painting*. Here, Da Vinci argued that "painting is superior to poetry" and "painting surpasses all human works by the subtle considerations belonging to it" (653). What he aims to do is to contrast the direct images of the painting that are generated by the painter with the mental images of poetry that are based on the interpretation of the reader. Literature and painting differ greatly in their treatment of time in terms of persistence. What is the difference between the aesthetic reception of a text over time and that of a painting over an instant? It depends on the characteristics and limitations of each medium. Joseph Frank's argument starts from the observation that literature and the plastic arts, working through different sensuous mediums, must therefore differ in the fundamental laws governing their creation (223). That is, a painting captures a moment or a short stretch of time since it is static. As opposed to this, a written work is dynamic across time and space, with the possibility of appreciating its transition. As Joseph Frank points out, Ephraim Lessing's vision of plastics art's limitations is based on this assessment: "Form in the plastic arts, according to Lessing, is necessarily spatial, because the visible aspect of objects can best be presented juxtaposed in an instant of time. On the other hand, literature makes use of language, composed of a succession of words proceeding through time (223)"

W. J. T. Mitchell in his *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* goes further in Lessing's arguments on the temporality of the plastic arts claiming that

> Some paintings represent temporal events, scenes from a narrative, or even a sequence of images that suggests movement, one can expect one of the following replies: 1) the temporality implied in a narrative painting is not directly given by its signs, but must be inferred from a single spatialized scene; 2) such temporal inferences, and the clues which suggest them, are not the primary business of painting, which is to present forms in sensuous instantaneous immediacy, and not to aspire to the status of discourse or narrative. (101)

The fact that temporality must be inferred in a painting indicates that it cannot be represented directly by the medium. This is because a painting is both static and temporal, thus it cannot fill in the gaps of the narrative. Spatial objects can be defined in a variety of ways. What Mitchell intends to argue is that due to the static and temporal nature of a painting is difficult to fill the gaps in the story narrated. Contrarily, a written work offers a transition in which it can be appreciated the course of events to the point of completion which has been missing in a painting. Both mediums are in accordance with supplying and completing what has been missing or lacking.

Shaping Ophelia in Shakespeare's text and Pre-Raphaelite Painting

The first time Ophelia is introduced in the play is as Polonius' daughter, this detail can be insignificant but we can observe that Ophelia is subordinated to patriarchal society. She is described as being obedient and indecisive. She doesn't know whether to believe Hamlet's affections or her father's words. As Jameson comments, "she says very little, and what she does say seems rather intended to hide than to reveal the emotions of her heart". (262) Ophelia begins to lose her senses due to Hamlet's mistreatment. His behaviour is, in fact, a reflection of the aggression he feels toward his mother. Ophelia is a passive character, mainly silent, that wants to be active. She breaks her silence when madness strikes her, and her words reveal a lot about the play. Consequently "[most of]

Ophelia's representation depicted her as a gracious girl, who did not lose her beauty or her proper countenance" (Falchi 176) Gertrude reports Ophelia's death in one of the most lovely, poignant, poetic speeches in all of Shakespeare. She uses nature, water, and flower imagery to show how she is now free of the cruel human world. For that reason, "the moments before her death were typically considered appropriate for Victorian standards, as ladies could draw from it a vital lesson on the lessons of abandoning themselves to their own passions [since] the anticipation of Ophelia's tragic ending would have satisfied the converted desire for pathos" (Falchi 176). When Hamlet leaves Ophelia alone after the nunnery suggestion, she laments the decline of Hamlet and ends her lines with "O, woe is me, To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!" (William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act III, Scene V, lines 174–175). In act four, her lines are in her state of madness, yet have enough sense to them. She addresses Gertrude, Claudius, and Laertes with her words about death, burial, and mourning, and also of young girls betrayed by unfaithful lovers. She refers to her father's death and Hamlet's behaviour, and finally, her sad fate with, "Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be" (William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act IV, Scene V lines 48–49). Ophelia's final words are addressed to either Hamlet, her father, or even herself and her lost innocence:

> *And will he not come again?*
> *And will he not come again?*
> *No, no, he is dead.*
> *Go to thy deathbed.*
> *He never will come again.*
> *His beard was as white as snow,*
> *All flaxen was his poll.*
> *He is gone, he is gone,*
> *And we cast away moan.*
> *God 'a mercy on his soul.*
> And of all Christians' souls, I pray God. God be wi' you.
>
> (William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act IV, Scene V lines 213– 224).

Ophelia's treatment and representation in English contemporary fiction has been changing in the last two centuries, especially since the emergence of the modernist movement. As a result, she has been portrayed as a much more active and empowered character and certain gaps in the original text have been filled. We can also ponder the next questions. Does Hamlet really love Ophelia? Has Ophelia been seduced by Hamlet? Does she kill herself intentionally or does she really want to die? Peterson and Williams claim that

> Ophelia is a screen on which a culture projects its preoccupations and reflects its values back onto itself. In this sense, analyzing an example of Ophelian representation at a specific historical juncture is, thus, also a neat, shorthand way to examine the workings of ideology more broadly. Reinvented for every age, Ophelia tells us more about ourselves at whatever instance we feel compelled to tell "her" story. Moreover, she has become an endlessly adaptable symbol for the universality of the feminine and, more broadly, the human psychic condition in any era, across cultures. (2)

Ophelia, John Everett Millais, 1851. Courtesy: Tate Gallery, London.

She has become a model of femininity for Pre-Raphaelite artists, not only did she embodied an example of purity but she also became a prototype of many values. Many of these paintings did not represent her as a vessel; instead she became a tragic heroine and was given some agency. Ophelia's portrayal in Pre-Raphaelite art somewhat determines her later representation in contemporary English fiction. In such a case, Ophelia's image is influenced not only by Shakespeare's source text, but also by pre-Raphaelite paintings that show another side of her, or, to a significant degree, a different side of Ophelia. For instance, Ophelia's Millais represents her suicide in a beautiful portrayal surrounded by water, nature, and flowers that makes this scene full of symbolism (fig.1).

> Clearly, the moment chosen by Mr. Millais is that, when Ophelia, not yet dead, is still floating in the water, and gaily singing as she goes to her fancied bridal. Now, at this moment, Ophelia, in Shakespeare's text, is evidently not floating horizontally on the water, as in Mr. Millais's picture, but buoyed up, in the attitude of a mermaid, by 'her clothes spread wide.' Whether the graceful management of this attitude by a painter would be easy, we do not know; but certainly, if it were, a painting so conceived would strike less painfully, not to say less awkwardly, than one in which the corpse-like length of robe and figure suggests so literally the drowning woman. (Ruskin 218)

To do that, the aforementioned concept of interfigurality will be analysed and applied. As for the pictorial core, applying the above-mentioned term of reverse ekphrasis, a pictorial corpus will be offered consisting of Pre-Raphaelite paintings that introduce the presence of Ophelia. Painting and literature ought not to be treated as two separate disciplines in this paper, what this paper intends to offer is an extensive and detailed study on how this character's depiction has been represented in the last two centuries. In other words, Ophelia's portrayal in Pre-Raphaelite art somehow determines her later representation in contemporary English fiction. In such a case, Ophelia's image is influenced not only by Shakespeare's source text, but also by pre-Raphaelite paintings that show another side of her, or, to a significant degree, a different side of Ophelia. As Mary Pipher asserts in her book *Reviving Ophelia*,

> The story of Ophelia from Shakespeare's Hamlet shows the destructive forces that affect young women. As a young girl Ophelia is happy and free, but with adolescence she loses herself. When she falls in love with Hamlet, she lives only for his approval. She has no inner direction; rather, she struggles to meet the demands of Hamlet and her father. (20)

In the same line, the intertextual dialogue between art and literature has played a significant role over the last centuries and even more so in contemporary fiction, as evidenced by the growing number of works that explore this theme. Interfigurality is an umbrella term coined by Wolfang G. Müller and it is defined as "the interrelations that exist between characters of different texts" (101). According to him, interfigurality represents "one of the most important dimensions of intertextuality" (102). Before broaching the interfigural issue more deeply, a brief distinction of the two texts may be taken into account in order to bring home their uniqueness as literary works. Regarding the distinctiveness of Shakespeare's text, the character of Ophelia ought not to be considered as being entirely identical neither in Pre-Raphaelite paintings nor contemporary novel. Generally speaking, it is impossible to have two identical characters in two literary works by different authors. Ophelia in Klein is completely different from the one in Hamlet, as previously mentioned. The play describes her as an obedient and indecisive character who does not know whether to believe her father's words or Hamlet's affections. Her subordination to patriarchal society prevents her from having self-determination. Ophelia in *Hamlet* is often referred to as a femme fragile (Romanska 497) because she exemplifies the frustration and fragility of women in patriarchal societies. In contrast, she has also been hailed since the Romantic period as a cult figure that encouraged necro-aesthetics, as illustrated in numerous paintings of her corpse showing her vibrant and sensual. Despite this, she is given a voice and a sense of agency in contemporary English fiction. Muller's interfigurality explains this fact since it is impossible for two literary works by different authors to be identical. When Ophelia

is placed in a different setting, she becomes a new version of herself or a completely unique Ophelia. Similarly, Klein's continuous theme of intertextual references also has another effect that concentrates on how the character of Ophelia is received, especially by contemporary audiences familiar with the source text. Evidently, both texts, Shakespeare's play and Klein's novel are two different literally formats, which consequently results in two different receptions thereof. By pastiching Ophelia's story, various writers try to offer her so-called agency and tell her story on her own terms. Through this agency, the reader is able to change their perception of the story. This will impact on the reception of the events of the plot, including Ophelia's survival, which changes the message and possible meaning behind the trope of the dead woman since according to the definition provided by the Oxford dictionary of Reference and Allusion, Ophelia is defined as "a woman floating in water, a madwoman" (264).

Taking the concept of interfigurality as a starting point, we can observe that Lisa Klein's *Ophelia* (2006) may not be considered as being entirely identical to the one depicted in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1603). What Lisa Klein intends to offer is Ophelia's story from her own perspective since she had been silenced or to a great extent, depicted from the male gaze such as her own father Polonius or Hamlet himself. That is why it is impossible to have two identical characters in two literary works by different authors. Unlike other *Hamlet* rewritings, this novel recounts Hamlet's story from Ophelia's point of view, suggesting what might happen to her between and beyond the lines of Shakespeare's play. She is depicted as empowered and active character whose decisions have relevant significance for the plot. Her "suicide" is orchestrated by herself and we have future events following this event. The novel opens with a prologue set in November 1601 in St. Emilion, France. In it, Ophelia learns, through a letter from Horatio, of the happenings in Demark after her departure:

> The royal court of Denmark is in ruins. The final fruits of evil have spilled their deadly seeds. At last, King Claudius is dead, justly served his own poison. Hamlet slew him with a sword envenomed by the king himself. Queen Gertrude lies cold, poisoned by a cup the king intended for Hamlet. It was the sight of his dying mother that spurred Hamlet's revenge at last. (Klein 1)

The messenger commends Hamlet after Laertes and Hamlet kill each other: "Believe me, before his desire for revenge seized him, he loved you deeply" (Klein 1). Klein plays with familiar material here. In the play, Hamlet charges his friend with repairing his reputation after being poisoned:

> O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,
> Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!
> If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
> Absent thee from felicity a while,
> And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
> To tell my story.
>
> (*Hamlet*, Act V, Scene II, lines 335–344)

In Hamlet's Shakespeare, Gertrude reveals Ophelia's death to Laertes and Claudius in Act 4, scene 7, and Laertes and Hamlet leap into her grave in Act 5, scene 1, At this point, we might wonder how Ophelia escaped death. What is the purpose of Horatio's letter to her? Ophelia tells her side of the story in the pages that follow, answering some of these questions. During her narrative, she offers certain insights into her relationship with her father and why she is compelled to leave both Hamlet – they are even married in this version – and Elsinore's court behind. In explaining this to Horatio, she says: "I tried and failed to change his bloody course. There can be no peace or good in being yoked to a husband who is intent upon revenge. Therefore I go" (Klein 230–231).

Before going deeper in the analysis of the painting selected for the corpus, the representation of certain Shakespearean heroines in artistic styles may be tackled. To do that, the concept of ekphrasis will be analysed to establish the relationship between word and image. As it is offered in the Classical Dictionary, ekphrasis is defined as "the rhetorical description of a work of art". Although this term

was initially restricted to the interaction between painting and poetry and its backward process, for many critics this term has been redefined including the tableau vivant, theatricalization and filmic ekphrasis. When examining how literary texts are transferred from one medium to the other, it is necessary not to thrust aside the fact that the target visual text, having originated through reverse ekphrasis, ought to be dealt with both in terms of their artistic greatness and in terms of their conditions as transpositions of literary source texts. English painting has a vast list of images based on literary texts from William Shakespeare, Lord Tennyson, John Milton or John Keats, what is significant is that these literary texts have been depicted by different artists, as it will be analysed in this paper. As Benton and Butcher argue on the treatment of paintings based on Shakespeare's plays,

> Painting a Shakespearean scene is itself an interpretation; as it best, it can open up elements of the literary text and be viewed as a sort of performance that offers a form of understanding akin to that reached through watching a scene in production [...] The traditional literary critical argument over Shakespeare has been whether to treat his plays as extended poems or as acting scripts. (54)

A literary text usually borrows for a visual image, more specifically for a painting, a certain theme or moment that is going to represent the ground for a transposition resulting in a "literary art". Conversely, through reverse ekphrasis, the painter is a mediator between the written text and the visual code. During the nineteenth century the dialogue between literature and art was quite close, determining certain critics to define that a dramatist is the person responsible for making good pictures; consequently, painters were quite often viewed as artists who possessed the skills required in order to render the "dramatic potential of a poet's imagined picture", as Martin Meisel (69) remarks. Peterson and Williams argue that

> Ophelia is not the subject of these artistic explorations but John Everett Millais is with Ophelia remaining as an index for Pre-Raphaelite notions of feminine beauty, death, lack of agency [...] Millais' floating Ophelia is a marvellous accident of her painters' aesthetic prescriptions that post-nineteenth-century artists have wished to reinterrogate critically, just as the Pre-Raphaelite movement had done before them. (4)

To examine the concept of reverse ekphrasis, John Everett Millais's painting Ophelia will be examined, and its latter transposition in another image in Claire McCarthy film. In such a case, the painting depicts Ophelia's drowing in the play though such scene is not seen on stage. The episode is instead referred to by Queen Gertrude and Ophelia's brother Laertes in a conversation whose events shown in the canvas are not actually seen on stage. They are instead referred to in a conversation between Queen Gertrude and Ophelia's brother Laertes. Gertrude describes how Ophelia fell into the river while picking flowers and slowly drowned, singing all the while. Most of the flowers in Ophelia are included either because they are mentioned in the play, or for their symbolic value. In Act IV scene 5, Ophelia delivers flowers, implying she's not insane and hiding a specific message to her audience. Among the flowers she delivers, it can be found: rosemary (remembrance), pansies (thoughts), fennel (flattery, false love), columbine (faithlessness, forsaken love), rue (repentance, bitterness), daisies (unhappy love, innocence) and violets (modesty, faithfulness) to express her feelings. In this monologue, she makes a series of very specific accusations out of extreme grief, not just a chaotic ramble about flowers. There is meticulous botanical detail put into depicting the plants, many of which hold symbolic meaning. In response to her brother Laertes's praise of Ophelia as 'rose of May,' she is probably surrounded by roses, along with a field rose on the bank. A willow, nettle, and daisy represent forsaken love, pain, and innocence, while pansies represent love in vain. Violets, which Ophelia wears as a necklace, symbolize faithfulness, chastity, and the death of the young. In addition to this, there are also forget-me-nots floating in the water and a poppy that represents death. As it will be observed in both the novel and its film adaptation it can be also noticed that the representation of Ophelia does not correspond to a madwoman but an empowered character whose decisions are solid and determined.

Two Mediums in Accordance

The dialogue between poetry and painting has been identified since ancient times and it has occupied the scope of study for many scholars. This interaction, which is known under the name of *ut pictura poesis*, has divided the opinion of several critics and artists. For instance, we have previously mentioned Leonardo Da Vinci's views on such matters in his *Paragone of Painting*. Others such as the German philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing considered that painting and poetry might be treated as separate artistic disciplines. Nevertheless, we have to go further in this argument considering another concept that is crucial to understand this paper. We have to take into account the backward process of ekphrasis, known as reverse ekphrasis and is described as the visual representation of a written work. At the other extreme, Garret Stewart defines it as "the visual representation of a verbal representation" (89). Therefore, when are examining how literary texts are transferred from one medium to another, it is necessary not to thrust aside the fact that the target visual text, having originated through reverse ekphrasis, ought to be dealt with both in terms of their artistic greatness and in terms of their conditions as transpositions of literary source texts. Notwithstanding the debate between the different opinions about poetry and painting, it might be argued that neither of both disciplines is superior to the other since what the poem offers is a written description of a piece of art. By contrast, the painting offers the visual description of that poem and it may fill some gaps that were not displayed to the extent of providing additional details. In Wendy Steiner's argument, ekphrasis represents the verbal equivalent of the "pregnant moment" in art, where "a poem aspires to the timeless eternity of the stopped-action painting". (13–14) When we discuss temporality, it is essential to understand the "pregnant moment" of an action since it is the arrested point which indicates what came before and what will follow. Time and space are unified visually in art and their qualities are complementary. Jeoraldean McClain suggests that "[exemplifying] this point we have only to remark that Lessing's polarization of literature and painting in *Laocoon* resulted from a confusion of the sister arts in the doctrine of *ut pictura poesis"* (45). At this point, I would like to add Claus Clüver's definition who releformulated the description of ekphrasis, as he writes "the verbal representation of a real or fictitious text composed in a nonverbal sign" (32). He highlighted that both the representing and the represented text may be no artistic, that the represented text may belong to an extensive range of media types, and that the represented text may be fictitious. In this way, he has managed to provide a definition that covers all kinds of ekphrastic objects, whether they be actual or imagined, visual or auditory, artistic or mundane.

The significance of Klein's novel is worthy to remark within the current trend of pictorial interxtuality springs from the fact that the novel later results in the making of a film adaptation. Considering the interaction between word and image, it is worthy to quote McFarlane and Hutcheon on their vision of adaptation as a way to explain how both mediums interact in the film *Ophelia*:

> According to the fidelity approach, the resulting target text mainly performs asort of 'copying' of the source text, adaptations that explicitly deviate from the original should be reconsidered in terms of "offering a commentary on or, in more extreme cases, a deconstruction … of the original." (22)

Linda Hutcheon in her *Theory of Adaptation*, asserts that an adaptation may be regarded "as a creative and interpretative transposition of a recognizable other work or works", which comes to be perceived as "a kind of extended palimpsest" requiring a "transcoding into a different set of conventions" (Hutcheon 33). Klein's novel, which was adapted into a movie in 2018, is also a fine example of intertextuality, specifically pictorial intertextuality since it features the Pre-Raphaelites with images of Ophelia. Klein's novel is the source material for Claire McCarthy's film of the same title (2018). Notwithstanding the fact that the film recounts Hamlet's story, it is Ophelia who is given to agency to tell her own point of view "[giving] greater complexity to her as a three-dimensional character, formerly only limited, subordinate, and tragic" (Ue 208). As Claire McCarthy admits,

> [her] intention is for this retelling to give much more dimension and gravitas to Ophelia than she was afforded in Shakespeare's original story. It is my hope that an audience can re-experience the Hamlet that they know and love with added delight and whimsy due to the shift of the narrative axis. (208)

Lavinia Hulea reflects on McFarlane and Hutcheon's arguments considering

> [A] target text relying on a literary source text must reinterpret the source text and not only reproduce it, their theoretical approach differs in terms of alteration of the source text: where McFarlane sees the target text as entirely different, Hutcheon implies that the source text continues to be recognizable within the target text. (3)

Therefore, Klein's intertextual dialogue with Pre-Raphaelite paintings, and its film adaptation of that dialogue by the film industry, hints at a complex process of pictorial-filmic intertextuality. As Lara argues, "the idea that intertextuality should be restricted to purely textual works […] attest to this renewed interest in the creative possibilities of aesthetic cross-fertilisation" (97). In order to demonstrate this, Shakespeare's text produces two dialogues that are in accordance: first, this text is transformed into images leading to the Pre-Raphaelite's paintings, while Lisa Klein's novels, among others, are told from Ophelia's perspective through the concept of interfigurality. We can observe that Shakespeare's text produces two dialogues that are in accordance: first, this text is transformed into images leading to the Pre-Raphaelite's paintings, while Lisa Klein's novel is told from Ophelia's perspective through interfigurality. The mediums of image and word then are combined into creating another image, since Klein's text and the aforementioned Pre-Raphaelite paintings are incorporated into a film adaptation. Thus, Claire McCarthy's film is based on both Lisa Klein's Ophelia and some Pre-Raphaelite paintings. It can be argued that we got a different Ophelia since the film produces two Ophelias that are simultaneously static and dynamic. On the one hand, the one offered by Klein is dynamic since she gradually evolves from the very beginning of the story and her transition empowers her to the extent that she orchestrates her own "suicide". On the other hand, Ophelia's Millais is static as the canvas reproduces such scene in which there is no possibility to discern what drove her to end up in such state. It is however interesting to consider the following question: Which Ophelia is introduced in the film? It can be observed that every time Ophelia is placed in a different setting and a distinct medium she is transformed due to the changes and limitations of each medium. Klein's book shows Ophelia becoming Mechtild's apprentice, during which she honed her flowers expertise she displays in the original play. The potion, which that recreates death, and mocks it at the same time, is given to Ophelia by Mechtild, enabling Ophelia to fake suicide and survive beyond Shakespeare's "muddy death". For this reason, it is worthy to remark how Ophelia recounts her suicide in Klein novel and this scene is offered in the film adaptation:

> I tried to feel the potion working. Nothing happened yet. I sought some pleasant sensation, a comforting memory, but felt only growing panic. Suddenly I feared the coming oblivion. [...] My breath grew short as terror rose in me. I pushed against the earth, trying to stand, and found my fingers tangled among the cool, waxy leaves of the mallow plant that clung to the marshy verges of the river. [...] The branch bent under my weight as if delivering me to the deep, and I murmured, "I come to you, waters of death and life. Take me from this world of madness and strife." (Klein 135)

Ophelia, Claire McCarthy (2018). Courtesy: *Vogue*.

Considering this latter idea we can observe that this scene is placed at the very beginning of the film. It does not follow a linear sequence with a clear beginning, climax, and conclusion. In lieu of this, it offers a circular structure introducing "Ophelia's suicide", or what we know about her and by using flashbacks and flash-forwards we are given details about her previous life prior meeting Hamlet and the events that follow her suicide. For that reason, she utters the following quote to anticipate the viewer "You think you may know my story [...] But I was always a wilful girl and followed my heart and spoke my mind. And it is high time I should tell you my story myself" (00:01:03) (fig. 2). It can be assumed that the way Ophelia introduces from such point intends to offer what led her to arrange her death. For that reason, the novel is placed in St Emilion and recounts what happened to her after her "alleged drowning".

Conclusions

In light of this analysis, the detailed evocation of Millais's painting in this passage has its counterpoint in this scene of the film, which offers a close-up of Ophelia "floating" in the river that turns the verbal visualisation in Klein's novel back to the primary visual form of the original picture and Gertrude's description in *Hamlet*. In this context, the treatment of the major Pre-Raphaelite referent for both novel and film stands as a clear example of the process whereby Klein's narrative and its film version portray a journey through Pre-Raphaelite artistic universe that reveals the rich interaction between word and image.

Asides from that, the characteristics and limitations of each medium play a significant role. Interfigural and ekphrastic dialogue aims to differentiate Shakespeare's Ophelia from the later representations of her in Pre-Raphaelite painting and British contemporary fiction. Secondly, Pre-Rapahelite paintings are seen as a visual reading of Shakespeare's source text through reverse ekphrasis, while Lisa Klein's novel is told from Ophelia's perspective through interfigurality.

And last but not least, Klein's intertextual dialogue with Pre-Raphaelite paintings, and its film adaptation hint a complex process of pictorial-filmic intertextuality. In order to demonstrate this, Shakespeare's text produces two dialogues that are in accordance: first, this text is transformed into images leading to the Pre-Raphaelite's paintings, while Lisa Klein's novel, among others, is told from Ophelia's perspective through the concept of interfigurality. As we have observed, Shakespeare's text produces two dialogues that are in accordance: first, this text is transformed into images leading to Millais's painting while Lisa Klein's novel is told from Ophelia's perspective through interfigurality. The mediums of image and word then are combined into creating another image, since Klein's text and the aforementioned painting are both incorporated into a film adaptation.

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