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“The ordinary joys and sorrows
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Declaration of Authenticity

I confirm to have conceived and written this thesis in English all by myself. Quotations from sources are all clearly marked and acknowledged in the biographical references either in the footnotes or within the text. Any ideas borrowed and/or passages paraphrased from the works of other authors are truthfully acknowledged and identified within the text.

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Abstract

As a result of the current hype about the author there has been a steady increase in the production of film biographies in recent years. The author that Roland Barthes had declared dead has been resurrected. It is suggested that the method applied in prioritizing the person behind the author in film is one that highlights the ordinary aspect about the author as star. Consequently, an extraordinary individual turns into someone ordinary and close to the audience. This study specifically addresses the question as to how biopics depict the ordinary aspects concerning an author's life with the example of the screen biographies *Becoming Jane* and *Shakespeare in Love*.

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1. Introduction

Who or what is the author, is it just a name on the cover of a book, or does it represent the person who holds the keys to a creative story and decided to share it with the world? This study focuses on the issue of the current hype about the author, portrayed by the prioritization of the person, who produced a piece of literature and then were manifested into a character for the new film biographies. It intends to explore the nature of this hype and the way film biographies work, for example, how an author and his/her life are portrayed. To be more precise, it departs from the assumption that film biographies highlight the aspect of normality of an author. Based on this hypothesis, two biographical films will be analysed concerning the way the ordinary and everyday is portrayed.

Initially, the concept of the author will be approached from an etymological perspective. The lexical and semantic considerations serve to present a clear picture of the notion of the author. What follows is an outline of Roland Barthes's main claims concerning the concept of the author, which he brought forward in his famous essay titled *The Death of the Author*. This section will be followed by a discussion of the current phenomenon to prioritize the author. As a result, the main part of this study focuses on the implications of the resurrected author. In doing so, the Barthesian view of the author and the reader serves as a basis for the description of this trend and its manifestation within film biographies. The genre of the biopic will be discussed and possible reasons for the current focus on the author will be summarised. In addition, the issue of stardom will be analysed in terms of its relevance to the concept of the author. This section will then be concluded by an examination of the nature of documentary literary history.

The remainder of this thesis focuses on the following two aspects. First, the hype about the author will be analysed with the example of two literary English icons, namely Jane Austen and William Shakespeare. This includes

an outline of the film biographies, *Becoming Jane* and *Shakespeare in Love*, respectively, as well as a comparative analysis of these motion pictures. The second aspect represents the focus of this thesis and concerns a close analysis of each of the two films. Thus, the motion pictures will be looked at regarding the question of how the ordinary and everyday is portrayed in each. That is, the analyses are based on the question of how the film manages to turn the extraordinary aspect about the author into something seemingly ordinary.

2. Etymological considerations of the term *author*

The notion of the author plays an essential role concerning the issue of the representation of the writer in popular culture. Consequently, the concept of the author could be considered to form the basis of this study. Therefore, in order to gain a better understanding of it and of what it implies, the term *author* will be looked at in terms of etymology and possible definitions. As a result, this chapter serves to provide a brief overview of the term itself and its meanings. To begin with, it should be pointed out that the usage of the term initially and predominantly referred to the realm of literature. Nevertheless, over the years, the meaning and signification broadened and, the term now even goes beyond literature.

In general, it can be maintained that the notion *author* originated from the medieval term *auctor*, which defined a writer whose words commanded respect as well as belief, thus implying authority. (Pease 264) For a closer analysis of the term a brief overview presented by Seán Burke in his collective reader titled *Authorship* will be shared. Burke argues that the term *auctor* from which *author* derives was only very recently associated with the term originality. This connotation of originality is nowadays considered as being an inherent concept of the author. It is believed that the etymological sources of the term *auctor* are to be found in three Latin verbs as well as one Greek noun. First, the verb *agere* is more accurately translated as ‘to act or perform’. In this, Burke considers it to resemble medieval ideas as well as those presented by Barthes, in so far as the ‘scriptor’ is thought to act “through a text which in some sense precedes its performance” (Burke xviii). This Barthesian view of the scriptor and author will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3. Second, the Latin verb *augere*, which means ‘to grow’, is thought to lie at the roots of the term *author*. Based on this, it has been argued that the text does not originate with its author. Rather, the idea of growth suggests a development independent of the producer of the text. Third, *auire* in the sense of ‘to tie’ refers to the connective tissue used by

poets to structure verses. Thus, it is closer to the idea of the author as someone who assembles codes rather than someone with creative power. Fourth, the Greek noun *autentim* is thought to constitute the origins of the term *author*. *Autentim* is translated with 'authority' and in this, suggests the dominance of authorship, in other words, the authority the author has over his work. Nevertheless, the idea of authority here is disconnected from the notion of autonomy. In other words, the authority of the ancient authors was, in the first instance, dependent on their relation to tradition and ultimately on the authority of God, rather than their own authority. (Burke xviii)

Concerning its origins, the term *author* still raises questions about authority, not least by the word's resemblance to the term *authority*. In addition, it poses the question of whether the individual is the source or rather affected by the authority. (Pease 264) As far as the issue of authority is concerned, it can be maintained that the considerations regarding authority have raised ceaseless debates about the concept of the author on the whole. This concept – albeit only considered from a literary point of view - has always been and most probably will always be subject to debates and frequent reconsiderations. A historic event that has essentially altered the conception of the author has been the invention of the printing press. The advent of printing generally has been considered to have fundamentally changed the relations of writer and reader. As a consequence, the classification of the author, which seems so familiar to us, has also changed (MacCabe 104). The introduction of the printing press has facilitated easier access to texts on the whole. In this, the increased accessibility of literature most probably could be considered to lie at the roots of the changes in relation to the writer – reader relationship. Before the age of printing an individual text had to be transmitted in order to be read, whereas, printing in contrast,

suddenly produce[d] an audience with whom the author [was] not, even in the attenuated relation of individual copying, directly related.(MacCabe 104)

In other words, the author and the reader entered into a relationship characterized by distance. This distance allows for speculations on behalf of the reader as to the meaning implied by the text. In other words, the reader tries to make meaning of a text whereby the creator of which mostly remains unknown to the reader. Thus, with the emergence of ever-new modes of communication the role and significance of the author changes in the same way as the conception.

The literal definitions of the term differ slightly as to the purported meaning of the word. The Longman Dictionary, for instance, records the following two descriptions for the term. Besides the well-known definition of the *author* as “the writer of a book, newspaper article, play, poem, etc.”, (Longman) another, more open definition is offered. According to this, the author is referred to as “the person who creates or begins something, especially an idea or plan” (Longman). Similarly, the Concise Oxford English Dictionary contains an entry that refers to the author as a literary writer and another entry describing the term as denoting “the originator of a plan or idea” (COED). Yet another lexicon, the Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, opens the non-literal definition for interpretation by stating that the *author* is “one who originates or creates” (Merriam-Webster). Thus, the act of creating is not restricted to an idea or plan, as it is suggested in one of the previous definitions. Based on the last definition, it might be claimed that the connotation of creator can also be applied to various aspects besides literature.

It has been argued that today’s conception of the term *author* goes beyond the realm of literature. In other words, in common usage this word refers to a wide range of activities apart from producing literature. In addition to referring to someone who writes a text, the term is thought to designate a person who invents something, or starts up a game, or creates a new formula or even someone who affirms political freedom (Pease 263). As a result, the term can have different connotations depending on the activity it designates. Donald

Pease suggests that it can imply authority or originality as well as inventiveness, initiative, and creativity (263). What these different activities have in common, according to Pease, is the “procedure whereby an anonymous agent turns into an individual” (263). In other words, the term *author* denotes the result of a process where anyone in general turns into someone in particular. (Pease 263) As a result, a person who ‘authors’ something is then considered to be someone particular, special or someone who stands out from the crowd.

Despite these quite broad definitions of the term *author* the present study is based on the narrow definition, namely designating someone who originated a piece of literature. As far as the originator of the medium text is concerned, there have been ceaseless debates about his role in the production and consumption of texts. Roland Barthes, a French literary critic, probably represented the most radical viewpoint concerning the role of the author. He outlined his ideas in an essay, which bears the provocative title *The Death of the Author*. It is probably the most influential and provocative work concerning the issue of authorship in the literary sense. Due to the fact that Barthes’s announcement of the death of the author seems to be in contrast to the representation of the author in popular culture, it will be discussed in relation to its basic propositions and therefore the role of the author within literary theory will be discussed in more detail.

3. *The Death of the Author*

In his famous essay *The Death of the Author* which was published in 1967 Roland Barthes questions the role of the author in a radical way (Bently 973). Overall, Barthes offers a description of the author starting with the birth, through the rise of the author and ending with the alleged death.

As far as the birth of the author is concerned, Barthes claims that the birth took place in medieval times (142). Thus, he assigns a certain date to the emergence of the author. Peter Lamarque argues that Barthes (as well as Michel Foucault) considers the author to be

a manifestation of the rise of the individual from the Reformation through to the philosophical Enlightenment (68).

It can be maintained that, before the birth of the author there have been times when the audience was not in any way interested in the personality of the artist. Therefore, works of literature did not bear the name of the actual author but the customer or the printer. Similarly, paintings were not signed by the artist but by the patron. (Tomaševskij 82) Following the birth of the author as concept, however, comes a period which, according to Barthes,

is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions. (Barthes 143)

In other words, Barthes criticises that the author, or rather the author's personality, had become the centre of attention for criticisms during a certain period in history (Lamarque 68). He criticises the fact that the author with his tastes, passions and his life, forms the centre of attention in ordinary culture of his time. Concerning the postulated fact that the person of the author is in the centre of criticisms, Barthes critically asserts the following.

The explanation of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the author 'confiding' in us. (Barthes 143)

Barthes heavily criticises the practice of drawing on the author's personality when trying to make meaning of a text. He calls into question the belief that the explanation of a work can be found via the allegorical aspect of fiction. In addition, he criticises the critic and reader for presuming that the author's intention was to 'confide' in the reader, as if the author felt the urge to entrust the reader with his innermost passions, tastes and beliefs. In this, the critic is accused of considering him- or herself to be a possible confidant of the author.

Following the discussion of the focus on the author which is to be found in ordinary culture, Barthes turns to the main argument of his essay, namely, the alleged death of the author. Despite the fact that Barthes employs the term 'death', he does not negate the fact that people write texts of different styles. What Barthes asserts in his provocative essay is that the authors of texts such as plays, novels, and poems are unimportant concerning interpretation. (Irwin ix) The idea that what matters most in interpretation is the text rather than the author, is not new but can already be found in New Criticism's 'intentional fallacy'¹. Barthes, however, goes even further and declares the author as dead. (Irwin xii) He argues that the author has lost authority over his work (Miller 194); an authority which had been ascribed to him based on the meaning of the Greek root *authentim*. (Burke xviii) Thus, Barthes denies the author any authority over the text. As a result of the suppression of the author, emerges a disembodied and ownerless writing. (Miller 194)

¹ Intentional fallacy is a "term used in 20th-century literary criticism to describe the problem inherent in trying to judge a work of art by assuming the intent or purpose of the artist who created it". (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

In contrast to the literary tradition that he describes in the citations which were discussed earlier, Barthes maintains that the author is redundant. He even provocatively claims that the author is dead. Barthes ascribes the author's redundancy to the nature of the writing process (Lamarque 77) whereby writing, in his point of view, is

that [...] space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost. (Barthes 142)

In this, Barthes questions the conception that ordinary culture (in his point of view) regards the author as someone on whom the text and its explanation depend. He suggests that the author is dead and is replaced by a figure that he calls the 'modern scriptor' who "no longer bears within him passions, humours, feelings, impressions" (Barthes 147). Thus, Barthes excludes the personal traits and characteristics of the author from the writing as a whole. The replacement of the author could then be considered as a "depersonalization of author into scriptor" (Krukowski 144).

Apart from discussing the concept and role of the author and ultimately announcing the death of the author, Barthes also analyses the writing process on the whole. In other words, *The Death of the Author* could also be regarded as a critical reflection and discussion of the interrelationship between various aspects such as the writing process, the author, and for this study most importantly, the reader.

3.1. The writing process and the text

As to the writing process, Barthes provocatively claims that "writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin" (142). In other words, he argues that when a text is being written the originator of it is being 'deconstructed', thus emphasising his assertion that the originator of the words is insignificant to the text itself. This brings us to Barthes' view of the author

which will further be discussed following this sup-chapter. Barthes describes the text as something

made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation. (148)

As can be seen, Barthes does not in any way refer to the author and his personal history when defining the notion 'text' but rather to the impersonal notion of culture. Thus, he excludes the author from the end product of the writing process. In order to underline his view of the author as being redundant he states that

writing can no longer designate an operation of recording, notation, representation, 'depiction' [...]; rather, it designates exactly what linguists referring to Oxford philosophy, call a performative², a rare verbal form (exclusively given in the first person and in the present tense) in which the enunciation has no other content than the act by which it is uttered. (Barthes 145,146)

The terms 'recording', 'notation', 'representation' and 'depiction' all bear a connotation of subjectivity and something personal. That is, all actions involve an agent who performs them. Since they involve an agent, thus a person, they inevitably have a personal aspect to them. Therefore, it might be argued that when we record, represent or depict something in a written form, our subjective viewpoints, experiences, and history inevitably pour into the writing. In order to strip the writing of the subjective trace, Barthes highlights that writing is a simple verbal form (145), thus pointing to the objective character of this act.

² "being or relating to an expression that serves to effect a transaction or that constitutes the performance of the specified act by virtue of its utterance" (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/>)

3.2. The author and authorship

As far as the role of the author is concerned, Barthes clearly limits it to the process of writing. (Bently 973) Barthes argues that the author is irrelevant once the text is written. That is, as soon as a text is written the author no longer has control over it (Bently 973). To quote Barthes

It is language which speaks, not the author; to write is [...] to reach that point where only language acts, 'performs', and not 'me'.
(Barthes 143)

Thus, in the interests of writing, Barthes suppresses the author and puts emphasis on the language, the text itself. (Stopford 59) Barthes even ascribes a human character trait to the text, namely the ability to perform, to act, and thus to create something, to create meaning. This view resembles the meaning of the Latin verb *agere* from which, among others, the term 'author' is thought to derive. (Burke xviii)

Barthes asserts that the author has disappeared and questions the "very identity of the author as privileged subject and originator of literature" (Stopford 59). Thus, he resurrects the author as 'scriptor' (Stopford 61) and offers the following definition of these two concepts in *The Death of the Author*.

The Author is thought to nourish the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child. (Barthes 145)

In complete contrast, the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate. (Barthes 145)

These definitions present two distinct ways of considering the role of the creators of texts. For instance, the author is the traditional concept that we have of someone who mainly originates literature by means of his or her imagination and creativity (wordreference.com). Barthes, however, presents us with a figure which he calls the “scriptor”. The scriptor’s task is simply to combine pre-existing texts in new ways (Barthes 145). In contrast, the author “stand[s] automatically on a single line” (Barthes 145) with the book and consequently no longer exists outside the text (Stopford 61) but rather exists before the text. Hence, the author, according to Barthes, is “conceived of as the past of his own book” (145), the one who nourishes the text, with the book representing the ‘present’ (Barthes 145). In order to clarify the role of the modern scriptor, Barthes argues that,

for [the scriptor] [...] the hand, cut off from any voice, borne by a pure gesture of inscription (and not of expression), traces a field without origin – or which, at least, has no other origin than language itself, language which ceaselessly calls into question all origins. (Barthes 146)

This statement is probably the best summary of what Barthes considers to be the role of the ‘modern scriptor’. By means of separating the hand from the voice he again emphasises that the scriptor is not in any way influenced by personal thought, experience and feelings; since the voice is considered to be something personal. Moreover, defining the process of writing as a “pure gesture of inscription (and not of expression)” (Barthes 146), the writing process is stripped of all subjective aspects. Thus, the only focus lies on inscribing, rather than expressing. As far as the origin of the text is concerned, Barthes eliminates the personal aspect entirely by stating that the ‘voiceless hand’ “traces a field without origin” (146). Thus, he argues that the only origin is language. As a consequence, the personal aspect is eliminated from the writing process altogether, from the agent as well as the origin of the text.

To sum up the distinction between the scriptor and the author, one can say that the scriptor is attached to the text whereas the author is detached from the text and only exists *before* the text, in other words, he dies as the text emerges. According to Barthes, the author is abolished and the focus exclusively lies on the product of literary production itself. This leads us to the discussion of Barthes' view of the reader.

3.3. The reader - from authorship to consumption

As discussed earlier, Barthes defines a text as consisting of multiple writings which are based on many cultures and characterized by mutual relations of different kinds. (148) This is where Barthes brings in the reader as the "one place where the multiplicity [of different cultures entering into mutual relations] is focused" (148). Instead of viewing the author as forming the centre of the text, Barthes totally neglects the author and places the reader at the centre. Moreover, he ascribes the unity of the text not to its origin, the author, but to its destination, hence the reader. (Barthes 148) In this, there is a notable shift in emphasis in Barthes from authorship to consumption, whereby reading becomes the centre of attention, in other words "the universal activity" (Stopford 64). During this 'universal activity', according to Stopford,

the principle by which the author tyrannized literature is unmasked and replaced by the image of a reader whose task is no longer to decipher but to disentangle. (64)

This clearly shows the shift in emphasis from production, thus the author, to consumption and in this, highlights the role of the reader as interpreter (Stopford 64). The interpretation of a text lies with the reader and is totally disconnected from the actual producer of the text. With the removal of the author the intent to decipher and interpret a text becomes useless, according to Barthes (147). He heavily denounces the critic whose self-imposed task is

to discover the author by looking at aspects connected to the originator of a text such as society, history, liberty and his psyche (147). Therefore, when interpreting a text, the author's life, experience, ambitions and thoughts must not be considered but rather neglected.

Barthes even condemns classic criticism for neglecting the reader and for considering the writer as the only person in literature. Furthermore, he states that in order to give writing a future one has to pay attention to the reader. At the end of his essay he states that

the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.
(Barthes 148)

Judging from this, the concept of the author and the reader cannot stand in one line but seem to be mutually exclusive in that, one can either pay attention to the one or the other. Stopford offers a felicitous summary concerning the implication of the postulated death of the author by stating that the

cancellation of the author coincides with the installation of the reader in a textual field "without origin," as an interpreter who is unconstrained by a prior order of meanings. (61)

In other words, due to the cancellation of the author and the subsequent cancellation of the subjective aspect in writing, the reader is now free from any possible restrictions in interpretation. What is more, the focus then lies on the reader. According to Jason Holt, the textual meaning of a text can therefore proliferate. Furthermore, he argues that none of the manifold interpretations is privileged and even much less canonical. Therefore, such thing as *the* meaning of a text simply does not exist. (Holt 66) Coming back to the reader, it can be stated that he is autonomous and no longer dependent on the author (Krukowski 143). In other words, the reader's

interpretation is no longer being judged as to whether the interpretation is consistent with authorial meaning or not (Krukowski 143). Due to the death of the author, the text is separated from any “contamination by an author” (Pease 271). Parenthetically it should be remarked that Barthes’s approach takes the view of New Criticism to an extreme in that

New Criticism [merely] sought to liberate the text’s meaning from the unfortunate contingencies of an author’s time and place. (MacCabe 103)

Barthes, however, attempts to liberate the text from meaning altogether. (MacCabe 103) Due to the fact that he considers the author to be the “privileged social instance of this meaning” (MacCabe 103), he simply abolishes the author.

To conclude the discussion of Roland Barthes’s essay *The Death of the Author*, I briefly want to comment on Barthes himself as an author figure. As far as the publication of Barthes’s essay is concerned, it most certainly can be maintained that his provocative statements did not in any way harm his position and reputation as an author. On the contrary, he became even better known thanks to declaring ‘the death of the author’. (Holt 65) What we get is an ironic interrelationship between the author position that Barthes postulated and his own position as an author. Jason Holt offers a happy description of this fact by arguing that as an author, Barthes has enlarged his “own importance by denying that of authors generally” (65) and has cemented his “own practically unassailable intellectual authority” (65). While it would be incorrect to claim that Barthes aimed at enhancing his own position as an author by “assailing authorial privilege” (Holt 65), this mutual influence between the essay and Barthes’s reputation as an author cannot be denied.

Despite Barthes's declaration of the death of the author, the ideas concerning the author's role in the production of texts and in interpretation, on the whole, have not faded away. On the contrary, in recent years the role of the author has experienced a revival. The importance attributed to the author is no longer restricted to the realm of literature. Rather, since about the middle of the 20th century the role of the author, that is the literary author, has attained a considerable significance as a subject in film. In order to shed light on the interrelationship between literature and the motion picture concerning the concept of the author, the next chapter will be devoted to the discussion of the author as subject in film.

4. The resurrection of the author

The revival of the author which has taken place in the last couple of decades has been of such an extent that one could even describe this strengthened emphasis on the author and authorship as the 'resurrection' of the author. There is evidence to suggest that the author Barthes had declared dead has arisen to new life, both in literature as well as in film. For example, following the period in which the author was considered to be redundant comes a period in which the "identity of the author as privileged subject and originator of literature" (Stopford 59) again becomes the focus of attention. While Barthes argued against the prioritization of the author, a notable shift has taken place in popular culture away from the works, as the main points of interest, towards an emphasis on the author's life. Therefore, it could be claimed that the emphasis on the author that Barthes criticises in ordinary culture has become an essential aspect of popular culture. In general, today's phenomenon to prioritize the author clearly mirrors Barthes's claim of the tyrannical focus as well as his assertion that the explanation of a work is sought within the author (Barthes 143).

The current emphasis on the person of the author not only concerns the realm of literature but in addition includes the film, music and fashion industry. Thus, the study of biographies is no longer restricted to the study of famous authors, meaning, producers of literature but also includes personalities from other entertainment sectors as its subject of investigation. Generally speaking, there has been a notable increase in publications of documentary films and, above all, biographical films in recent years. 'Biopics', as they are often called, focus on authors in the broadest sense of the word, namely, people who create or originate something (Merriam-Webster). Thus, this film genre focuses on literary authors as well as musicians, actors and fashion icons, just to mention a few. Due to the fact that the current hype about the author manifests itself in ever new film productions based on an author's life, this genre of film biography will be discussed further. Since its

hey-day in the 1930s, this sub-genre of the drama and epic-film genres, has experienced another revival and thus, is still prominent today (filmsite). The subsequent chapter aims at providing a close account of this type of film, which celebrates the individual. Thus, the biopic will be discussed concerning its definition and characteristics as well as its history. This will serve as a basis for the specific analysis of two screen biographies.

4.1. Film biographies

In film criticism we find various synonyms for what has been commonly known as 'biographical film'. Apart from this term, Daniel Lopez also mentions 'bio', 'biog', 'biography', 'biopic', 'film biography' and 'screen biography' as synonyms for this kind of genre. (Lopez 25) It should be pointed out that the term 'biopic' initially only referred to film biographies, which were published in Hollywood. In contrast, today it is used to denote screen biographies in general. (Taylor 2002: 20) For this reason, the fore mentioned terms will be used interchangeably throughout this study.

4.1.1. Definitions of the biographical film

As far as a definition of this type of genre is concerned, Daniel Lopez offers the following description.

The biographical film centers generally on the life, on the formative years, or on the most relevant period of a well-known individual. Biographical films have mostly been about historical figures (rulers, conquerors, revolutionaries, politicians, courtesans, explorers, war heroes, spies, outlaws, religious leaders), scientists (doctors, inventors), artists (painters, writers, composers, entertainers), and sportsmen. (Lopez 25)

Therefore, according to Lopez, for a film to be categorized as a biographical film, it has to focus on the life of an individual, whether it focuses on a short

but significant period in life or their entire lifespan. The focus lies on the actual life rather than on what the famous person has achieved or accomplished. What is more, the person on whom the film is based has to be well-known. Lopez clearly does not define the meaning of the words 'well-known'. It is not clear what degree of high profile is needed for a person to be considered as 'well-known'. Thus, it could be argued that the definition offered by Lopez lacks precision. In contrast to this, Henry Taylor provides a definition of the biopic which does not address the issue of fame and therefore, does not pose the question of what defines 'fame'.

According to Taylor,

Biopics behandeln in fiktionalisierter Form die historische Bedeutung und zumindest in Ansätzen das Leben einer geschichtlich belegbaren Figur. Zumindest wird deren realer Name in der Diegese verwendet. Dabei muss nicht eine ganze, geschlossene Lebensgeschichte von der Geburt bis zum Tod) erzählt werden; vielmehr genügt es, wenn der <<rote Faden>> der Handlung durch einen oder mehrere Lebensabschnitte einer historischen Person gebildet wird, deren *Porträtierung* im Mittelpunkt steht. Geht es im Historienfilm um einen Sachverhalt, so konzentriert sich die Biographie auf eine zentrale Persönlichkeit. (Taylor 2002: 22)

As can be seen, Taylor simply mentions the historical significance of a person as a character trait of the biopic and leaves aside the issue of fame. In this, the emphasis is put on the achievement of a person and most importantly, on the person himself/herself rather than the degree of fame s/he enjoys. Concerning the issue of fame, one has to keep in mind that the so-called 'celebrities' often come to fame for reasons other than great achievements. In other words, fame and stardom today can generally be considered to be independent from the actual achievement of a person. That is, stardom and famousness most probably cannot be thought of as objective concepts. Leaving aside the issue of fame, Taylor offers a distinction between the historic film and the biopic. He emphasises that the focus in film biographies relies on the central person rather than on the description of

facts, which he considers to be central to the historic film. Therefore, the main concern of the biographical film is the portrayal of a historic person. Due to the fact that the person is in the foreground, the faithful representation of actual facts of life takes a back seat. What counts is the portrayal of the person and thus, it can be a rather fictional portrayal of the facts surrounding that life.

As far as the types of film biography are concerned, Daniel Lopez distinguishes two clearly defined tendencies in film biography. As to the first type, he describes it as

the numerous Hollywood or studio versions which are made of highly fictionalized and fabricated facts meant to suit dramatic content.
(Lopez 25)

In other words, according to Lopez, bios that pertain to the first category are only loosely based on actual facts. This is due to the fact that their aim is not so much to present life as it is or was but to create dramatic effect. The second type that Lopez defines refers to

the few films which try to adhere to known facts and follow detail as accurately as knowledge permits. (Lopez 25)

Thus, the second category describes films that aim at presenting a most accurate depiction of a person's life. To sum up, the focus of the latter type primarily relies on an accurate depiction of a person's life whereas the former type essentially aims at maintaining and achieving dramatic content. In addition, to these main types, Lopez mentions yet another tendency in the production of biopics. This other tendency could be considered an outgrowth of the before mentioned types, in that it is characterized by pseudo biographies as well as biographies of fictitious characters. In addition, it includes productions of a biographical nature which, however, change the

names of the characters so as to disguise their reference to real people. This kind of film biography typically comes with a disclaimer asserting that the film has no resemblance to real people, known or living. (Lopez 25)

Despite the fact that biographical films vary in the degree at which they reflect reality, film biographies tend to have one basic characteristic in common. That is, they practically never portray a whole life from birth to death. Rather, biographical films concentrate on those years and stages in the life of a person that form or are thought to have formed the point of origin of fame. Similarly, often the historical achievement that represents the starting point of an individual's stardom is anticipated in the bio. The restriction concerning the time span is characteristic of all screen biographies and, in this they clearly distinguish themselves from written biographies, which do not put a time limit on the text. (Taylor 2009: 15)

As far as the classification of the screen biography is concerned, it needs to be mentioned that it is neither characterized by a particular iconography, nor by a certain stylistic 'look'. Rather, the overall appearance of a biopic is shaped by, what Taylor calls, 'aid genres' or styles. Therefore, biopics cannot easily be assigned to one single genre type. Taylor aptly describes them as 'chameleon texts'. However, despite the chameleon like style inherent in the biopic, it nevertheless bears close resemblance to melodramas. In other words, the fact that the drama focuses on finding one's own identity is generally inherent in the biopic, and therefore underlines the strong resemblance to melodrama. (Taylor 2002: 20, 21) Having outlined the main characteristics of film biography I will now turn to the question of how realistic film biographies really are. Due to the fact that a biopic naturally lacks objectivity, the reason will be discussed in the following chapter.

4.1.2. Authenticity of biopics

In an attempt to give an answer to the question concerning the "realness" or "authenticity" of the biopic, George Custen does not attribute the realness of

Hollywood biographies to the fact that they are believable. Rather, he postulates that they are real because many viewers believe that they are real. In other words, despite the fact that film biographies tend to distort reality, the fact that many believe that they are real forces one to treat them as real. (Custen 7) Drawing on ideas put forward by Hayden White, Custen claims that they do not represent

a concrete illustration of history, a literal recapitulation of physical cause and effect, but rather types of behaviour and explanation that comprise the category "history". (Custen 7)

In this, the biopic reflects the concept of history that a certain society has. This concept or category is made up of specific types of behaviour and explanations. As a result, this view of the screen biography and its representation of history mirror the fact that the definition of the biopic shifts anew with every generation. (Custen 7) Throughout film history the attention that film biography received has changed as well as the range of people the bios are commonly based upon. Despite the fact that screen biographies are thought to reflect a society's concept of history, which itself is subject to constant change, there is a certain tendency, or effect which is inherent in all types of biographical films. That is, Doris Berger suggests that screen biographies - be it about politicians, scientists, sportsmen and women or artists - shape the knowledge people have concerning historical people. What is more, she claims that they create their own reality, a reality that refuses judgment as to what is true and false with regards to history. (Berger 35) Consequently, film biographies contribute largely to the view that all people have of history. In other words, as Ralph Waldo Emerson most rightfully claimed,

all history resolves itself very easily into the biography of a few stout and earnest persons (cited in Custen 1).

Due to the fact that Hollywood still represents probably the largest movie making enterprise, it could be argued that the view of history that Hollywood depicts will come out on top. What is more, Hollywood plays a significant role concerning the characteristics of the biopic. Therefore, in what follows, the Hollywood biopic will be analysed in more detail.

4.1.3. The Hollywood biopic

Henry Taylor affirms that the US-American biopics of the 30s, 40s, and 50s have fundamentally influenced the genre of the screen biography overall. (2002: 13) According to him, the biopic in general gained the most distinctive characteristics during the classical Hollywood period. (2002: 13) Therefore, despite the fact that Custen's study was published in 1992 his findings concerning the Hollywood biopic most likely still apply today. Custen investigates the question of how 'public history'³ is created through the Hollywood biographical film. He starts from the assertion that

the biographical film (the "biopic") routinely integrates disparate historical episodes of selected individual lives into a nearly monochromatic "Hollywood view of history." (Custen 3)

Thus, Custen argues that screen biographies à la Hollywood aim at constructing a Hollywood version of history. In this, he implies that these biographical films can be lumped together as to their basic modules. According to Custen, the integration of the Hollywood view of history can be achieved in two different ways. On the one hand, it takes place by means of constructing a perception of history that is highly conventionalized. The conventions of the constructed view of history, which is depicted in biopics, concern the selected profession, the role of gender as well as the choice of the historical settings. On the other hand, the integration is attributed to the

³ According to Custen, "'public history' refers both to the product and the process in which members of the mass public – the "public-at-large" – obtain their definitions of the symbolic universe from watching and talking about the communications media." (12)

fact that the studios strategically make use of star performers when creating the stories of famous people. (Custen 3) This statement underlines the fact that the study of the star industry is indispensable in a discussion about the genre of the screen biography. Before turning to the issue of stardom however, the Hollywood biopic will be further discussed and some possible reasons behind the hype about the author will be presented.

Following the discussion of the Hollywood biopic and its influence on the screen biography as a whole, the subsequent chapter provides an overview of the history of the film biography in general. In this, it portrays the development of this genre from 'just another' type of film to a genre that could be considered as pre-dominating. Thus, the overview of its history serves to further illustrate the current hype about the author as subject in film.

4.1.4. The history of the biopic

As far as the history of the biopic is concerned, it has been argued that the biopic has been a "known commodity" (Custen 6) almost from the beginning of the film era. In addition, it has been argued that the film biography has a long and rich tradition. Surprisingly, it enjoys this long tradition despite the fact that it has never been among the most popular and widespread film genres. (Taylor 2002: 26) Among the traits that have been typical of the biopic throughout its history is the characteristic that it is at least to some extent composed of the life, or parts of the life of a real individual and, what is more, whose real name is employed. (Custen 6, 7) By means of using the real name of the person, the biopic proves to be open to historic scrutiny. Moreover, the use of the real name is indicative of the attempt to "present the film as the official story of a life" (Custen 8). While the afore mentioned characteristics of the biopic did not notably change throughout its history, the definition of what constitutes the biopic has always been subject to change and redefinition. For instance, each generation has different ideas concerning fame and what counts as fame, which is why the inherent components of the biopic likewise change. The types of careers and people that form the

primary focus of public curiosity at a given point in time tend to change within each generation. In addition, the mode by which the life of those people is explained alters significantly. What has been depicted in one way some time ago would be depicted differently today. In this, the study of biopics in history reveals an ever changing public notion of fame. (Custen 6, 7)

Concerning the production of screen biographies, it appears that there had been a steady increase in the number of biopics released between the earliest days of the cinema to the end of the studio era. (Custen 2) George Custen who published a study on Hollywood biopics in 1992, attributed the popularity of biographical films during that time to the fact that the biopic showed the version of a life that many viewers held to be the truth. In addition, he claims that the lack of first-hand information and exposure to people and events nourished the viewers' desire for watching biographical films. Based on his 1992 study, Custen argues that the biopic reached its peak, to be more precise its numerical peak, in the 1950s when the studio mode of production was no longer applied. (Custen 2) Similarly, Henry Taylor suggests that the biographical film has experienced its absolute peak in the 1950s with the release of films of various artists. (Taylor 2002: 35) During its classical period between the years 1927 and 1960, nearly three hundred biographical films were released by the major studios. (Custen 3) Following its heyday in the 1950s the biopic, according to Custen, had faded away to a minor form since the 1960s. (Custen 2)

In contrast to Custen's findings in 1992, more recent studies show that the heyday of the biographical film is a current phenomenon, which is still present today. Sigrid Nieberle, for example, rightly argues in her study on biopics published in 2008 that the film biography still flourishes. In the last couple of years, news concerning future cinema productions announced a wave of biographical films which has not ceased to stop. (Nieberle 1) As far as the dominant or preferred subject matter of those kinds of film is concerned, Nieberle argues that a major paradigm shift took place in the 1970s as to the types of people who were depicted. For a long time the

biopic was primarily based on people from the gentry and nobility as well as politicians. During the 1940s, nevertheless, a shift has taken place towards the depiction of the famous within the arts and entertainment sector. In the 1970s, this was replaced by a tendency towards making film biographies about the deviant anti-hero, thus including topics such as drug abuse, psychosomatic instability as well as the failure to succeed in the regarded social, familial and occupational fields. (Nieberle 149, 150) To sum up, today's biographical films depict heroes and heroines as well as antiheroes and antiheroines, scientists, musicians, artists, poets and writers, thus, including people from different arts, not only authors with the pen. (Nieberle 1)

As far as the numbers of published screen biographies is concerned, there has been an enormous increase in the number of screen biographies published as well as programmes that deal with the topic of biography on television. Beside numerous film biographies, which were released in cinemas in recent years, television too has experienced an increase in biopic broadcasts. Even back in 1999, Paula Backscheider pointed out that the A&E television show titled 'Biography' denoted one of the four highest ratings of cable programme in the States. Furthermore, she claims that the demand for biographic programmes on television created what has been called 'a mini industry in biographical programming'. As a result, programmes that deal with biography appear increasingly frequently. Among the biography related programmes mentioned by Backscheider are, for example, "Intimate Portraits" on Lifetime, "The Life and Times" on Nashville Network, "Legends" and "Celebrity Bio" on E!. What is more, MTV launched a biography show titled "BIOrhythms" and A&E added another three biographical programmes: "Biography: This Week" which is based on a person in the news, "Biography for Kids" and "Biography International". (Backscheider xiii) Within the last two decades or more, incredible attention has been paid to the genre of the biopic and it is still prominent to this day, not only in Hollywood but around the world.

As has been shown, the genre of the biographical film, be it in cinema or television, is still in its heyday. In other words, immortalizing people in film is more popular than ever. Following the considerations concerning the alleged death and the apparent resurrection of the author in popular culture, two crucial questions remain. First, the question of what has caused this trend toward the personage of the star and the author, in the first place. In other words, what is the source of this hype about the author? The second question concerns the genre of the biopic, to be more precise, it is a question of how a person's life is depicted within biopics. In other words, the question of what makes biopics so appealing to an audience? In an attempt to answer the first question, the next chapter is dedicated to a discussion of possible reasons for the hype about the author. Based on the literature available concerning this topic, it became quite evident that no single study has been conducted as to the motivations behind the prioritization of the figure of the author in general, and the appeal of biography in particular. Therefore, the below-discussed aspects represent a compilation of different ideas taken from various studies on the biography. They are possible reasons and motivations behind the emphasis on the figure of the author and the heightened interest in the biography of famous people on the whole. Some aspects not only concern the issue and concept of the author but are more broadly based. Nevertheless, they are relevant to the discussion concerning the prioritized role of the literary author. According to the basic assumption of each of the reasons, they are grouped into three main categories which will be discussed hereafter. What is more, they primarily focus on the audience, hence the consumer, so to speak. In this, these considerations reflect Barthes idea of the reader being the centrepiece (Barthes 61).

4.2. Possible reasons for the hype about the author

As mentioned above, some of the reasons for the hype about the author do not exclusively refer to the author but rather to the general issue of biographies, celebrities and the spectator. However, due to the fact that nowadays a famous author is commonly considered a celebrity, the following reasons arguably also apply to the concept of the author and the audience's perception of him/her.

4.2.1. Longing for security

Henry Taylor claims that the newest wave of biographical films could be understood as a conservative phenomenon, to be more precise, the result of longing for security. He bases this claim on the assumption that the recent (as well as past) phases of cultural, economic and information technological upheaval could be interpreted as phenomena of crisis. Taylor cites Zygmunt Bauman, who suggests that the feeling of unease and insecurity results from the liberty that we enjoy in the postmodern world, which, however, does not tolerate or allow individual security. As a result, we lack security despite the liberty that we gained through the progress that has been achieved in various aspects of life. (Taylor 2002: 378) The idea that life stories convey a certain feeling of security has been continued by Cary Bazalgette and Jim Cook who suggest that biographies often give the impression of unity. They attribute this to the fact that

seen from the outside, [biographies] form a whole. While our life, seen from the inside, is all bits and pieces. Once again, we run after an illusion of unity. (Bazalgette, Cook 2 cited in Taylor 2002: 379)

Thus, it has been claimed that biopics have a comforting effect on the audience because they offer a seemingly coherent story of someone's life. (Taylor 2002: 379) Similarly, Manfred Mittermayer points out that the current

hype about biographies both written and on screen, springs from the fact that they offer the illusion of a coherent and consistent life story. This illusion is the result of the elements which are characteristic of a biographical portrait. According to Mittermayer, a biographical account typically contains ideas concerning an autonomous and sovereign individual as well as the division of human activities into inner and outer, private and public spheres. (Mittermayer 7) All these elements then add up to the illusion of a coherent life.

Concerning the economic upheaval mentioned earlier, one should also mention the role that globalization plays in relation to the emphasis on biography. There is a general consensus about the fact that the globalized world creates a desire for the authentic. It can be claimed that lack in general produces desire. In other words, globalization threatens authenticity and therefore, the desire for something authentic is created. Since biographies offer the illusion of an authentic representation of life, they function as a means of satisfying the desire for the authentic (as discussed in class).

Apart from the idea that the interest in biography stems from a crisis situation, another possible explanation has been put forward. That is, the star is seen as having a religious function. The following chapter serves to illustrate this claim further.

4.2.2. Religion

Benjamin McArthur argues that in the nineteenth century it was the church and the establishment that defined “matters of value and taste for the public” (141). Due to the rise of the actors, however, film stars then took on these functions and thus became “exemplars of morality and lifestyle” (McArthur 141). In this, the figure of the star came to embody social values and identities that were under reconstruction. (Gledhill 214) Similarly, it has been claimed that there are many parallels between the belief and practice of religion and celebrity cultures on the whole. (Rojek 58) Based on these

assumptions, stars could be considered as 'secular saints'. In other words, they take on the function of saints and are treated as the same with the only difference being that this is done in the secular realm. Jane Austen and William Shakespeare, the star authors, serve as examples of this claim that stars have a religious function. An internet search for these names generates a myriad of results of websites which are full of adoration and praise for these famous authors. On the whole, the numerous Jane Austen and William Shakespeare societies seem to share a common purpose, which is to worship and adore the writer. One could even provocatively claim that in the same way that believers go to church, 'Jane Austen believers', for example, meet in tea houses to hold their 'service'. In doing so, they satisfy their longing to be close to Jane Austen by means of having a cup of tea à la Jane Austen or just like Austen used to have tea. What is more, in the same way that the church has relics of saints, Jane Austen fans have their own 'janeite' relics. The relics range from original Jane Austen tea cups to garments and furniture which Austen used personally. As far as the reliquary is concerned, Chris Rojek asserts that "the organizing principle behind the reliquary, from the standpoint of the fan, is to diminish the distance between the fan and the celebrity" (58). In addition to the reliquary fever concerning Jane Austen, the so called 'Jane Austen tourism' should not remain unmentioned. Thus, one can even embark on a Jane Austen pilgrimage. In the same way that strong believers go on pilgrimages to visit places in which a certain saint has once lived or been productive, some Jane Austen fans visit the places that bear traces of Jane Austen's life. The saint in the latter case, however, is a secular person, an authoress rather than what is commonly understood by 'saint'. In the case of William Shakespeare, the male icon of English literature, one can make equivalent observations. Thus, the admiration for Shakespeare manifests itself in similar ways to the one concerning Jane Austen whereby both have strong religious connotations. Judging from this, the famous author or star seems to act out a certain kind of authority. In the same way that the church or religion in general are thought to have and act out authority, the star too, holds a certain degree of authority even if he/she is dead. The star embodies certain values and therefore gains authority. Consequently, in the

case of the author, the authority an author enjoys due to fame does justice to the term 'author' and its etymological roots. Graeme Turner aptly summarizes the idea concerning the religious function of stars by stating that it has been claimed that

the gap left by the decline in the cultural purchase of organised religion has at least partly been filled by celebrity. (Turner 25)

In this, the role of celebrities is more influential than one would think. In the study on celebrities titled 'Understanding celebrity', Graeme Turner, points to the social function of a celebrity among other things. His ideas concerning the social role of stars closely resemble the aforementioned issue concerning religion and celebrity. That is, stars have come to serve as subjects of identification. Concerning the issue of the social function of stars Turner states the following:

some of our closest social relations seem to be in decline. [...] Among our compensations for the loss of community is an avid attention to the figure of the celebrity and a greater investment in our relations with specific versions of this figure. (Turner 6)

In other words, by means of identifying with a star, one is able to compensate for the lack in social relations or changes in social relations on the whole. In this, stars can be seen as a means of compensating for qualities that people lack in their lives. (Dyer 23) As a result, we construct a new dimension of community by means of the celebrity. (Turner 6) One way of identifying with a star is to learn more about her/his life, that is, to watch or read biographical books and films, respectively. This importance of the person of the author has already been addressed by Roland Barthes. It is he who offers a further explanation for the hype about the author, namely society.

4.2.3. Society and Individualism

Barthes attributes the existence of the concept of the author to society and its prevailing concepts and claims that as a product of our society the author is a modern figure that

discovered the prestige of the individual, of, as it is more nobly put, the 'human person'. [...] in literature it should be this positivism, the epitome and culmination of capitalist ideology, which has attached the greatest importance to the 'person' of the author. (143)

As can be seen, Barthes makes society and its trends responsible for the appeal of the author. According to him, positivism, the ideology that only what can be perceived with the senses is real, positive knowledge, and the capitalist ideology form the basis for the celebration of the author, rather the 'person' of the author. Thus, based on this claim, the emphasis on the author was triggered by a factor external to us, namely society.

Paula Backscheider turns to a more specific and personal issue in relation to the emphasis on the author, namely the appeal of biography. Thus, she attributes the fact that we find biographies appealing to the failure of theories of personality. (Backscheider 123) For instance, theories of personality cannot serve as a basis for making a biography. This is due to the fact that, the combination of elements, which make up a persuasive connection between actions and the thoughts, feelings and motives, cannot be attributed to a single theory of personality. (Backscheider 121, 122) Backscheider begins with the assumption that "we want to believe that we are unique individuals, that we have some control over our 'destiny' and what kind of people we are" (Backscheider 123). According to her, Biographers look for a meeting point between "what biological characteristics a person has, who a person wants to be, and what the world will allow him or her to be" (122). These are thought to be the building blocks of a biography and in turn of biographical films. They include given facts such as the biological characteristics as well as internal issues, namely what somebody wants to be

as well as external factors that the person is determined by the world. In order to find a meeting point, Backscheider asserts that biographers

reinforce not only what we want to know about human life-how others have coped with it [...]but what we want to believe about ourselves, that we are unique, that a meeting point is ours alone, not one shared by the masses but attained at least in part by our biological selves and by our will. (Backscheider 123)

Judging from this, the meeting point could be somewhere in-between what makes us human, i.e. what we share with others and what makes us unique individuals. Thus, it has been suggested that the appeal of biographies lies in the fact that they emphasise two important aspects. On the one hand they focus on what we share with others, the struggle of life. On the other hand, biographies aim at highlighting the fact that we are unique individuals.

The afore mentioned possible reasons behind the prioritization of the author, including other issues connected to it, form a background to the more specific analysis of the way authors are depicted in film biographies. In other words, the motivations behind the hype about the famous person reflect issues that are inherent in all human beings. Thus, the longing for security, the need to have models to look up to and the wish to be unique are aspects of human nature. In relation to the hype about the author, the study of how authors are portrayed in film is inextricably linked to the study of stardom. In other words, authors can be considered stars in so far as they are stars in their own film biographies. They become the stars in their own life story, depicted by another star. Therefore, some of the basic ideas concerning stardom, which have been analysed by Richard Dyer will be discussed concerning their relevance to the question of how authors are depicted in film.

4.3. Stardom

In the book titled 'Stars' Richard Dyer thoroughly analyses the issue of stardom. Despite the fact that Dyer restricts himself to the study of film stars, his main arguments concerning stardom also apply to the issue of literary authors as subjects in film. According to Taylor, there is an important link between film stars and people who have become the subject of a film. In other words, while characters in film biographies are often played by stars, the famous person, in turn, can be considered as a star herself/himself, i.e. as a star in reality. (Taylor 2002: 15; 106) Therefore, it could be claimed that Dyer's main ideas equally apply to the realm of literary authors as stars as well as to the author as subject in film.

Dyer defines stardom as "an image of the way stars live" (Dyer 35). Therefore, stardom is considered to be the backdrop for the star's individual personality as well as the events of her/his life. That is to say, stardom combines the spectacular, thus the lifestyle of stars, with the everyday, hence the particularities of the star. It is thus a combination of the special mixed with the ordinary. Based on this assumption it has been claimed that stardom could be regarded as a version of the American Dream, in so far as anyone can get to the top regardless of her/his background. To be more precise, since stardom comprises the issues of consumption, success and ordinariness it is thought to resemble the American Dream. (Dyer 35) From the three building blocks of stardom, it is the issue of ordinariness that deserves special attention. In this, Dyer's ideas concerning this issue will be discussed in detail in connection with documentary literary history.

In a study on literature and biography, Boris Tomaševskij suggests that there is a heightened interest in the ordinary facet of a star's life today. Thus, he claims that the study of biography is gaining more and more importance nowadays. (Tomaševskij 81) The ideas he expresses closely resemble and could even be seen to complement Dyer's claims. While Dyer talks about the film star, Tomaševskij focuses on the literary author as a star. Thus, their views are seen to complement each other as both are based on the image of

stardom on the whole. The following chapter serves to describe Tomaševskij's main ideas concerning the heightened interest in biography.

4.4. Documentary literary history

The enormous interest in the person 'behind the pen' generally, has brought about a shift in interest away from literature studies towards the study of biographies. In other words, the personality of the writer which had been of no interest to the reader for a long time gradually became the main point of interest. Boris Tomaševskij assigns the beginning of the phase "the reader's interest reached beyond the works to its creator" (82) to the eighteenth century and its great writers. Due to what Tomaševskij calls 'the individualization of creativity', the name as well as the personality of the author gained importance. Before that time literary production was characterized by a tendency toward anonymity. As has been mentioned earlier, works were signed by the patron or master rather than the author himself. As a result, the personality of the author remained hidden. Similarly, anecdotes and bits of gossip about a specific author that circulated in society were not used to create a biographical image of the same. The eighteenth century, however, which "cultivated subjectivism in the artistic process" (Tomaševskij 82) made way for the new approach towards creativity, thus the heightened interest in the originator of literature. (Tomaševskij 82)

It can be claimed that the relevance of biographic documents is attributed to the study of the author as person rather than to the history of literature or to literature itself (Tomaševskij 81). Tomaševskij ironically states, that it could even be considered a study of the author's brothers and aunts rather than a study of the author (81). In this, he critically points out that some studies of an author's life are a study of the family rather than a study of the author himself, as they are excessively pursued. Furthermore, he criticizes that fact that biographers often consider every artistic work to be a fact regarding the author's biography. (Tomaševskij 81)

Generally speaking, the interest in diaries, biographical findings and the curiosity concerning unpublished documents has lead to a heightened interest in documentary literary history (Tomaševskij 81). To be more precise, a history

that is concerned with mores, personalities, and with the interrelationship between writers and their milieu (Tomaševskij 81).

Judging from this, it could be claimed that there is a heightened interest in the personal aspect of the author. In other words, instead of highlighting the 'genius side' of the author, the focus has shifted to investigating the writer's personality, his lifestyle and manners. In addition, the interaction and interdependence of the author with his milieu is being looked at in detail. Today, one can find a considerable number of studies that primarily focus on exactly the aspect of the lifestyle of a famous person in relation with the milieu in which s/he lived. In particular I want to refer to two studies of this kind; an encyclopaedia in relation to Shakespeare's world and another on Jane Austen's world. The latter, parallels the one with Shakespeare in terms of organization. Each of them constitutes a two volume series, which was published by Kirstin Olsen. In an attempt to make an author's work more accessible, these studies show how her/his writings are embedded in the circumstances surrounding the activity as a writer. Thus, they cover aspects ranging from history to religion, food and even language, just to mention a few. What is more, these studies look at an author's life concerning contemporary events. (Olsen: Austen xii) As far as the study concerning Shakespeare is concerned, it could be defined as a vivid illustration of his physical world. (Olsen: Shakespeare xi) This detailed study has a predecessor in the form of a book titled *Shakespeare's England*, which was published in 1916. Despite the fact that the latter is still useful, the recent study, *All things Shakespeare*, stands out insofar as it incorporates the latest historical findings about Renaissance England and, what is more, contains specific information in even greater detail. (Olsen: Shakespeare xii) Thus,

this book aims to explain “what the *things* in Shakespeare’s works are” (Olsen: Shakespeare xii) rather than what they mean. In this, it is a more or less descriptive study of the world surrounding Shakespeare works and in general the world he knew. Concerning the encyclopaedic study of Austen’s world, it can be maintained that this, too is a descriptive study, emphasizing the circumstances concerning Austen’s writings. The overall aim of this kind of documentary literary history is, according to Olsen, to allow readers to “grasp the basics of many of her [Austen’s] references through context” (xi) and thus, get a better understanding of the world she lived in and who was the person Jane Austen. Next to precise information concerning the type of ink used for writing, one finds peculiar details about the importance of care of the teeth as well as the difference in use of umbrellas and parasols (Olsen: Austen 658, 693). It offers fascinating historical details concerning the form as well as the function of everyday objects, which Austen refers to in her novels (Olsen, back of book info). Based on this information the reader draws conclusions to Jane Austen and her life and it allows us to “gaze into Austen’s world” (Olsen, back of book info). This ‘gold mine’ for Jane Austen fans has been complemented by a book titled *Cooking with Jane Austen* which appeared in a new series, *Feasting with Fiction*, and has been published by the same author. It could be interpreted as yet another attempt to familiarize the reader with Jane Austen and her world. In general, the focus of these kinds of studies clearly relies on helping the reader understand the author’s world and consequently the writings. Boris Tomaševskij addressed this issue by stating that

Creative writing exists, not for literary historians, but for readers, and we must consider how the poet’s biography operates in the reader’s consciousness. Here we shall not regard ‘biography’ as a self-sufficient class of historical writing; [...] instead, we shall consider the ‘literary functions’ of biography as the traditional concomitant of artistic work. (82)

Thus, what counts is the way the biography of the author operates in the mind of the reader. In this, Tomaševskij puts the reader in the foreground and

hence, his view somewhat parallels Barthes's in that he places the reader at the centre. As mentioned earlier, Barthes attributes the unity of the text to its destination, namely the reader. (Barthes 148) .The emphasis, therefore, lies on consumption rather than production. (Stopford 64) There is, however, a fundamental difference between the view expressed by Tomaševskij and Barthes's claims. That is, according to Barthes's claim of the death of the author, the reader's birth is only rendered possible by the author's death. (Barthes 148) In this, the reader and author cannot be next to each other and therefore, are opposed and somehow mutually exclusive. Tomaševskij, on the other hand, offers a different picture of the author-reader relationship. He presents us with two agents who are on equal terms, no longer opposed. It could even be claimed that they enter in a kind of communication with each other. Hence, in reference to the previous citation by Tomaševskij, it can be stated that the author produces creative writing for the reader; rather than the critic. During consumption, the reader's consciousness is, in turn, influenced by the author's biography. Moreover, the literary function of a biography is inextricably linked to artistic work. (Tomaševskij 82) As a result, the reader is encouraged to make up his own mind about the 'literary functions of biography', its significance concerning the work. Similarly, Kirstin Olsen states that her intention with the encyclopaedic study concerning Shakespeare was simply to explain the things in Shakespeare's works and then leave it up to the reader to determine their meaning (Olsen: Shakespeare xii).

As can be seen, the heightened interest in the author and his world is being satisfied by studies concerning documentary literary history. Today's interest in biographic documents is most probably nourished by an urge to unveil the person behind the author. That is to say, special emphasis is put on the author as a person, to use Richard Dyer's idea, the ordinariness of the star is being highlighted (Dyer 42). It is exactly this emphasis on the ordinariness of an author portrayed in film which forms the focus of this thesis. Before turning to a detailed discussion and analysis of the representation of ordinariness in two specific biopics, the subsequent section serves to illustrate the different

manifestations of the resurrection of the author. In doing so, the focus lies on the concept of the author in the narrowest sense, namely, the author who produces a text. As a means of exemplifying the current trend further, the prioritization of the author will be discussed using the examples of the hype about two famous English icons, namely the writer Jane Austen and the playwright and poet William Shakespeare.

5. The rebirth of the literary author in film

In general, it should be pointed out that the hype about the author in popular culture serves to illustrate what might be considered today's version of the tyrannical focus on the author, which Roland Barthes criticized. In what follows, the so called 'rebirth' of the authoress Jane Austen and the playwright William Shakespeare, will be discussed in detail. As a means of explaining the current celebration of these authors, some preliminary information will be presented as to the manifestation of the hype about each of these authors. The introduction to the hype about these literary icons is then followed by a thorough discussion of the famous film biographies, *Becoming Jane* and *Shakespeare in Love*. Hereby, I will start with the discussion of the most recent one, namely, *Becoming Jane*. A brief discussion of the basic information regarding each film will then be complemented with a comparative analysis of these screen biographies. Following the specific analyses of the films in this chapter, the subsequent chapter serves to examine the films in detail concerning the way the respective author is portrayed. Thus, the main focus in chapter six lies on a thorough analysis of the question of how the authors are depicted so that the audience finds the film appealing.

5.1. Jane Austen

Today's fascination, one might even call it an obsession, with the brilliant novelist Jane Austen and her life in general, can most probably be regarded as the source of what has been commonly known as the 'Jane Austen industry'. In regards to Austen's reception, it has been claimed that her reception has followed the footsteps of Shakespeare. (Cano López, García-Periago) It has to be pointed out, however, that the history of Austen as a literary character is shorter than that of Shakespeare. (Cano López, García-Periago) Christina Wald attributes the creation of adaptations of Jane Austen's novels throughout the 1990s to the "long-standing tradition of

‘Austenmania’ and ‘Janeism’” (43), a trend which is still present today. In other words, the reason for the numerous revisions of Austen’s novels is rooted in the current hype surrounding the author Jane Austen rather than in the novels themselves. The tireless adoration of Austen is so strong that Richard Woods in one of his newspaper articles even asserts that it has become “almost a cosmological constant” (Wood), thus adding to it an image of infinity and limitlessness. Furthermore, he employs the term ‘devotion’ to refer to the phenomenon that Jane Austen has inspired (Wood). The term ‘devotion’ bears a religious connotation and therefore, it resembles the idea of the star having a religious function which has been discussed in a previous chapter.

The hype about the female author Jane Austen manifests itself in various forms such as in the existence of numerous Jane Austen societies as well as in ever new film productions concerning herself, her life and her works. One of the latest film productions concerning Jane Austen is a biographical film with the title *Miss Austen Regrets* which was first released in the USA in February 2008. Together with the biopic *Becoming Jane*, which was released a year earlier, it offers a more or less fictitious picture of the life of Jane Austen. While the latter focuses on the life of the pre-fame Jane Austen, the former centres on Austen in the later years of her life. That is to say, *Miss Austen Regrets* is mainly preoccupied with the adult life of Austen and her role as an advisor to her niece. *Becoming Jane*, on the other hand, deals with Austen’s formative years as an authoress. (imdb) Thus, the issue of authorship and writing is central to *Becoming Jane* but at the same time dominated by the film’s preoccupation with the person behind the author. Thus, the issue of authorship and of Austen as a writer is not necessarily in the foreground. On the whole the film serves as an illustration of the hype about the author - in this case the literary authoress Jane Austen - which is present in popular culture. Judging from this, and drawing on Barthes’s declaration of the death of the author, Jane Austen could be considered to be one of the most alive dead authors there are.

5.2. *Becoming Jane*

This award winning film biography is set in 1795 England. As far as the plot summary is concerned, this film is described as providing a “biographical portrait of a pre-famous Jane Austen and her romance with a young Irishman” (imdb). The most telling plot summary of the film is taken from the title of a review article by Evelyn Hartogh. According to Hartogh, this film biography could be summarized by the following phrases - “Girl meets Boy, Girl loses Boy, Girl finds Career” (Hartogh). This three part summary mirrors the idea of development, which could be considered as forming the backbone of the movie. What is more, it clearly reflects the romantic nature of the film. That is, the main plot so to speak is the relationship between Jane Austen and Tom Lefroy. Concerning the development of Austen as an author, it could be argued that this forms the sub plot, thus is overshadowed by the events surrounding her fictional romance with Mr Lefroy.

This film biography, as is the case with many other biopics, has raised considerable controversy among film reviewers and Jane Austen fans. Thus, it has been both highly praised and heavily criticized. Some film critics, such as Evelyn Hartogh, consider it to be a film with “much relatively accurate biographical detail [...] a dramatic, moving and deeply film”. This opinion goes in line with Marsha Huff’s excitement over *Becoming Jane*, who is convinced of the film’s entertaining quality that balances out the fact that the plot is more fictional than factual. Lisa Mullen promotes a more radical view by claiming that the film is “based very loosely on Jane Austen’s life” and adds that it is “a wildly suppositional version of the events that inspired *Pride and Prejudice*”. Thus, Mullen puts strong emphasis on the issue of fiction which she considered to be the lesser evil when compared with the ambiguous aim of the movie. As far as the purpose of the film is concerned, Mullen argues that one does not get a clear picture of whether it is supposed to contribute to the heritage industry or is a serious attempt to provide an impression of the early life of Jane Austen the novelist. Despite the controversy concerning the aim of the motion picture, there is a shared belief among film and literary critics that the motion picture *Becoming Jane* closely

resembles the novel *Pride and Prejudice* (Huff, Woods, Berardinelli). This resemblance represents a key to the film analysis which will follow and will therefore be readdressed in a later chapter. The subsequent chapter is dedicated to a description of the hype about the playwright and poet William Shakespeare.

5.3. William Shakespeare

There is evidence to suggest that William Shakespeare figures among the most significant English cultural icons. As a result, his name still ‘resounds throughout the land’ despite the fact, that this brilliant playwright died more than 400 years ago. Drawing on the notion of ‘Jane Austen Industry’ it most rightfully could be claimed that the ‘William Shakespeare Industry’ is as productive as the one relating to Austen. Thus, according to Steve Neale, the origin of what he calls the “tradition of commercial Shakespearean production and adaptation” (4) stretches as far back as the 1890s. In this, Shakespeare in film has a rather long tradition. While there is abundant information about his works, only little is known concerning his personal life (absolute Shakespeare). Consequently, the hype about this famous playwright and poet primarily circles around his literary achievements. Hereby, it should not go without mention that there are still ongoing and controversial debates about whether Shakespeare indeed is the author of all the plays that have been ascribed to him. Despite these controversies, Shakespeare remains famous for 40 plays, which range from comedies to histories to tragedies as well as a large number of poems, or sonnets rather. (Ember) Besides being well known for his works of literature, Shakespeare is also famous for his contributions to the English language. To be more precise, he coined a wide range of words, some of which are still used today, among them the noun “assassination” (absolute Shakespeare⁴).

⁴ <http://absoluteshakespeare.com/index.htm> (“William Shakespeare Facts”)

In the same way that the hype about Jane Austen manifests itself in various ways, the fascination with Shakespeare also takes on different shapes. Thus, there is an enormous number of films that draw on Shakespearean material, which in turn enhances, what Jackson calls, the “within cinema” (Jackson 2). In addition, there are many film recreations of his famous plays. As regards Shakespeare on film, Kenneth Rothwell, in his article titled *Viewing Shakespeare on Film*, attributes the emergence of the golden age of Shakespeare movies to the late 1960s. Next to films related to his life and work, there is a seemingly infinite number of Shakespearean fan clubs and communities. The activities offer a range from discussion clubs to Shakespearean festivals.

Concerning the relevance of Shakespeare today, Michael Anderegg asserts that there is no need to make him and his work relevant to the audience as his durable relevance is exactly what makes Shakespeare “Shakespeare.” Moreover, Anderegg suggests that the strategy applied in showing Shakespeare’s relevance is to take the audience back to his time by bringing the playwright to them. (Anderegg 43) Similarly, Steve Ember points to the universality of Shakespeare’s stories, which “show all the human emotions and conflicts” (Ember) so that today his works are as fresh as ever. Kenneth Rothwell’s claim is similar to the previous ideas, i.e., he also suggests that the “flourishing body of work is a singular testament to Shakespeare’s universality and humanity” (Rothwell). Thus, he attributes the high commercial value of this great playwright to his ability to captivate the audience, be it readers, theatre or movie goers and even filmmakers (Rothwell). Moreover, it has been argued that Shakespeare reveals our humanness and at the same time helps us see our commonalities. (EB Guide Shakespeare)

Concerning Shakespeare’s fame it has been argued that hardly any other author can match him “for broad appeal and sheer endurance” (EB Guide

Shakespeare⁵). In other words, Shakespeare managed and his works still manage to inspire a great number of people, thus his popularity seems to be a constant power. As a result, it has been argued that Shakespeare still has an extraordinary influence on cinema (Christopher). This certainty is mirrored in the fact that at least half a dozen new versions of Shakespearean films are published annually (Christopher). One characteristic that most Shakespearean films share is the inclusion of exactly the same words that the author himself used in the plays. (Anderegg 2) Thus, Michael Anderegg claims that, with some exceptions, “Shakespeare films [...] exhibit an almost mystical devotion to Shakespeare’s words” (2). This intertextuality is also visible in the biopic *Shakespeare in Love* which closely resembles the story of the play *Romeo and Juliet*.

5.4. *Shakespeare in Love*

The motion picture *Shakespeare in Love* was released in 1998, hence ten years earlier than Austen’s biopic, and is considered a romantic comedy, which “wittily puts the dramatist into the world of show business” (Jackson 1). It is a screen biography which, nevertheless, is only very loosely connected to actual biographical details, thus not a serious reconstruction of Shakespeare’s life. It has been claimed that *Shakespeare in Love*, along with another costume film titled *Elizabeth*, provides a highly fictionalized version of the bard’s life and the times he lived in. The quasi biopic portrays the playwright in a difficult situation of writer’s block while trying to write a play called *Romeo and Ethel, the Pirate’s Daughter*. Shakespeare is freed from the writer’s block in the person of Viola De Lesseps who auditions before him cross-dressed as a male actor. (EB Guide Shakespeare) Thus, it is again a romantic portrayal of an author’s life just like the biopic regarding Austen. On a deeper level the film even makes allusions to Shakespeare’s debt, a literary debt, to the writer Christopher Marlowe. (EB Guide Shakespeare)

⁵ <http://www.britannica.com/shakespeare>

One of the most outstanding features of the motion picture *Shakespeare in Love* is probably its resemblance to Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*. This intertextuality has been achieved by adding parts of the actual dialogue from the play. Thus, Marina Cano López and Rosa García-Periago have claimed that Shakespeare becomes the hero of his own play in this film just as Jane Austen in the film *Becoming Jane* becomes the heroine of her own novel. The fact that both writers, Shakespeare and Austen, become the heroes of their own works in film has been regarded as the main intertextual connection between the respective biopics. (Cano, García) Apart from this, there are other similarities between the two film biographies that have been discussed in an essay with the telling title "Becoming Shakespeare and Jane Austen in Love". Thus, the title already implies the fact that these film biographies are interrelated to some extent. The following chapter serves to highlight the main ideas concerning the films' similarities. That is, the close resemblance between these two films will be discussed in more detail based on the findings by Cano López and García-Periago.

5.5. Becoming Shakespeare and Jane Austen in Love⁶

It can be maintained that the resemblance between the biopic *Becoming Jane* and the screen biography *Shakespeare in Love* is twofold. On the one hand, both motion pictures bear significant intertextual references. On the other hand, they are also mutually related on an intertextual basis. Concerning intertextuality, the different intertextual connections are proof of the fact that these biopics mirror Roland Barthes's idea that there is an unavoidable connection between texts. In this, they refer to ideas expressed by Barthes concerning his intertextual theory, according to which "meaning comes from the intertextual quality of language" (Cano, García). Consequently, the meaning in the afore mentioned biopics comes from their resemblance to one of Shakespeare's plays and one of Austen's novels, respectively. In the case of the Shakespeare movie the plot of his famous

⁶ headline taken from the title of an article by Marina Cano López and Rosa García-Periago

stage play *Romeo and Juliet* is being mirrored. The Austen movie, in contrast, builds upon her most loved novel *Pride and Prejudice*. In addition to the films' resemblance to the writers' work, there are other interrelationships between the films worth mentioning. That is, it could be claimed that meaning is also created by means of the fact that *Becoming Jane* clearly mirrors *Shakespeare in Love*. The former is thought to parallel the latter screen biography in various ways. According to Cano and García,

the connections between the two films' respective beginnings, middles and ends reveal that Shakespeare as a literary character paves the way for the representation of Jane Austen. (Cano, García)

Thus, the two critics suggest that the depiction of Jane Austen in *Becoming Jane* is modelled on the Shakespeare biopic. In this, the two film biographies engage inner textually on various levels. The inner textual connection between them is primarily based on the fact that both employ the true and the false in the same way. That is, the beginnings and the endings, which are very similar indeed, can be considered a most truthful portrayal of the historical records surrounding the life of the respective writer. In other words, the openings and endings portray the truth factor surrounding the writers' actual lives based on biographical information available. Concerning the 'false factor', it should be pointed out that both biopics alike deceive the viewer in the middle of the film. In other words, the part in-between is characterized by an invented and imagined portrayal of the respective writer's life. This can be attributed to the fact that we lack information and evidence concerning Shakespeare and Austen's lives, respectively, above all, regarding details of what their lives were like between birth and death. (Cano, García)

As far as the openings of the films are concerned, there is an obvious similarity in that both writers are depicted as suffering from writer's block. In addition, each film opens with an image of the frustrated author writing but not writing anything useful. The beloved of the writers have an inspiring

influence on the writers so they can eventually overcome the creative block. In the case of Shakespeare, it is Viola de Lesseps who evokes the necessary inspiration, whereas in the Austen biopic the inspiration appears in the figure of Tom Lefroy. The lovers serve as inspiration to compose the masterpieces, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Pride and Prejudice*, respectively. Thus, both biographical films suggest that Shakespeare's famous play and Austen's much-loved novel are autobiographical in part. In other words, the biopics imply that "they have an origin in life" (Cano, García). As far as the middle is concerned, it has been argued that the deceit is based on four main lies that are shared by both motion pictures. Cano and García mention the following lies, namely, the writer's "encounters with fellow writers, the balls, the goodnight scenes, and the writing processes themselves" (Cano, García). It has been claimed that these lies connect the authors' love relationships with the writing practices as well as with their truthful beginnings and ends. Concerning the lie relating to the encounter with fellow writers, the films suggest that both encounters spur the writing, thus have a positive effect on the writers' creation. As far as the balls are concerned, in both cases their essential function is thought to rely in the fact that they allow the lovers to interact socially. Moreover, the two films closely resemble each other in the way they depict the couples dancing. Similarly, the goodnight scenes are portrayed in an analogous fashion. Concerning the writing processes, there is an obvious analogy between the motion pictures in that successful writing begins shortly after their first encounters with their beloved. This then also marks the beginning of them composing their praised and famous works, *Romeo and Juliet* and *First Impressions*, which is the original version of *Pride and Prejudice*, respectively. Beside these two masterpieces, the films also incorporate allusions to other plays by Shakespeare and novels by Austen. Thus, the intertextual dialogue is even continued within each of the movies. In regard to the endings, both films are characterized by a truthful portrayal of the sad ending of the love stories. The writers are inevitably separated from their beloveds, who are forced to marry others in order to secure their families' financial future and in the case of Shakespeare to comply with the

Queen's command. What is more, the last scene in both films depicts the author at the writing table, this time during a creative burst. (Cano, García)

As has been shown, the two biopics engage intertextually by means of the common lies and, what is more, through the texts in the middle of the films. In addition, they are characterized by a rather complex interrelationship based on the actors. That is, many actors who have played a role in a Shakespeare adaptation have also starred in Austen movies and vice versa. This interrelationship on the level of acting is being added by the fact that the actress who played Jane Austen in *Becoming Jane* is named after William Shakespeare's wife, Anne Hathaway. (Cano, García) What is more, Jane Austen, the authoress, read works by William Shakespeare when she was a young woman. (Auerbach 67) There is evidence to suggest that Jane Austen was very fond of Shakespeare's plays. Consequently, she referred to them in her own writings and letters. (Olsen 667) According to Kirstin Olsen, Shakespeare turns out to be *the* most-mentioned playwright in her works. (587) Again, this underlines the extraordinary parallels that are to be found between the biopics concerning these great English literary icons. Much more could be said concerning the parallels between these films. However, due to the fact that a thorough discussion of their resemblance does not represent the focus of this paper and, therefore, would exceed the limitations of it, the discussion will be left at that. A last comment should be made concerning the core of the discussed biopics. As regards a brief description of the screen biographies, Cano and García state the following

Shakespeare in Love and *Becoming Jane* are stories of frustrated love in which the playwright and the novelist channel their suffering through their creative activities, producing some of the most important masterpieces in English literature. Their fictional suffering is used to define their artistry. (Cano, García)

This felicitous summary of the two partly fictitious film biographies highlights the fact that they bear a close resemblance. Thus, both motion pictures are

based on an invented representation of the events that could have surrounded the early years of the writers' careers. What is more, both are centred on a love story, a fact which will be focused on subsequently. Despite the fact that *Becoming Jane* clearly mirrors *Shakespeare in Love* the success of the former is more or less on equal terms with the one of the latter. This poses the question of what exactly is so appealing about these biopics and eventually of film biographies in general. They follow the same pattern and still both attract a broad audience. In other words, the question is how these biopics represent the main characters, Austen and Shakespeare, respectively, and the events surrounding their lives. Due to the fact that these authors can most rightfully be considered stars, this question is closely linked to the representation of stardom which will be discussed hereafter.

6. Extraordinarily ordinary

In regards to the way biographical films depict and treat stardom, Richard Dyer argues that the Hollywood biopic charts the rise of a person to fame by means of illustrating this so-called success myth. (Dyer 42) This success myth is thought to be constituted of four seemingly contradictory cornerstones, whereby Dyer cites the following:

that ordinariness is the hallmark of the star; that the system rewards talent and 'specialness'; that luck, 'breaks', which may happen to anyone typify the career of the star; and that hard work and professionalism are necessary for stardom. (Dyer 42)

These are the elements on which the American Dream is thought to be partly based upon and, consequently, these cornerstones are reflected in the depiction of a star's life, above all in Hollywood screen biographies. Due to the fact that the Hollywood biopic has fundamentally shaped the overall appearance of film biography, it rightfully can be claimed that the above-mentioned cornerstones apply to screen biographies overall. For the purpose of investigating how a famous author's life is depicted in film, so that it is appealing to the spectator, I shall concentrate on the first cornerstone mentioned by Dyer, namely, the issue of ordinariness. Dyer describes the ordinariness of the star as a 'hallmark' of him/her. In this, the ordinary aspect is thought to be inseparably connected to the figure of the star, a characteristic so to speak. (Dyer 43) In an analogous manner, Christine Gledhill suggests, that stars could be considered as representing

ordinary people whose ordinary joys and sorrows become extraordinary in the intensity stardom imparts on them. (213)

In other words, Gledhill attributes the extraordinariness of stars to the fact that stardom emphasises the ordinary aspects of people to such an extent that they appear outstanding and exceptional. I shall transfer this view to the realm of film biographies. As a consequence, it could be said that this view supports my assumption that biopics highlight the ordinary aspect which causes the extraordinary about a person to turn into something ordinary. But before addressing these points directly, it is necessary to explore and explain the concept of the ordinary aspect in more detail. In regards to ordinariness, Dyer asserts, that the star is a representation of a person, and therefore s/he relates “to ideas about what people are (or are supposed to be) like” (20). In this, he points to the fact that the issue of ordinariness is thought to be inherent within the star. The dichotomy between the ordinary and the extraordinary creates an ambiguity, yet even contradiction concerning the star as someone ordinary versus the star as someone special. (Dyer 43) Dyer offers a possible solution to this ambiguous relationship in that he claims that “human attributes exist independently of material circumstances” (43). In other words, next to the star’s fame, lifestyle and the star-as-special, is left the person behind the star with all his/her human qualities, therefore the ordinary person. As has been claimed by Dyer, biopics emphasise this ordinariness, which is the hallmark of the star (42). Based upon this, it can be asserted, that screen biographies resurrect the author by means of highlighting what is ordinary, familiar and everyday rather than what is extraordinary about him/her and his/her life. In other words, the author is being emphasised, however, that which is used to set the writer apart is something common, normal. Thus, light is shed on the everyday life and ordinary aspect of the author, namely that which makes him/her one of us, or normal.

It could be argued, that the motivation behind this emphasis on the author is not aimed to trigger adoration but, instead, to enable the audience to relate to him/her. Thus, it could be argued that it is the portrayal of the common, the familiar that fascinates the audience the most. In other words, the portrayal of the ordinary and everyday allows us to identify with and relate to the star,

which in turn raises the film's appeal. The star turns into someone who is closer to the audience. To sum up, it could be claimed that people watch biopics because they are interested in the ordinary, everyday and human aspects of a person who (for various reasons) is regarded as someone special, a star. In order to be able to relate to the famous person we need to believe that the star is just like us with normal, human characteristics. This issue of the ordinariness, as has been claimed earlier, is suggested to form the backbone of the majority of film biographies and therefore also of the two biopics in question. Thus, having discussed the issues such as authorship and stardom on the whole, the hype about Austen and Shakespeare, and the issue of ordinariness in specific, I will now proceed towards a close analysis of the two biopics. The motion pictures *Becoming Jane* and *Shakespeare in Love* will be analysed concerning the way they portray the ordinary, everyday aspect, that is, the author as an ordinary person. In this, the analysis should serve to prove or else declare as void the hypothesis that these biopics or even screen biographies in general, highlight the ordinariness of the author star as opposed to the star as someone special. As has been indicated, the following two chapters start with the hypothesis that the screen biography depicts the star in a way that highlights the ordinary aspect of the respective person and their life. Thus, the chapters proceed to explore this proposition by investigating the representation of the ordinary and everyday in *Becoming Jane* and *Shakespeare in Love*, respectively. Since the former is the most recent screen biography of the two, I shall start with the analysis of the same. In what follows, the film *Becoming Jane* will be abbreviated by the initials *BJ* and *Shakespeare in Love* will be referred to by the letters *SL*.

6.1. The ordinary aspect in *Becoming Jane*

As far as the film's purported focus on portraying ordinariness is concerned, I want to comment on a crucial key characteristic of this film. It is a hallmark that allows for interesting speculations concerning the film's appeal. In a review article about the motion picture *BJ*, the author, James Berardinelli, provides an accurate definition of the film's core by claiming that

Becoming Jane looks at the life of Jane Austen through the prism of her novels. (Berardinelli)

Thus, Berardinelli claims that there is a close resemblance between this film and Austen's actual writing. In other words, the film is seen to portray her life by drawing on her creative writing. It could even be argued that, the film induces the authoress' life from her literary production. That is, the film 'looks' for Jane Austen in her novels. As a result, the biopic could be considered to be a portrayal of the biographical facts concerning her life, which is then 'flavoured' by her own writing. To some extent this reverses Boris Tomaševskij's idea of the "'literary function' of biography" (82) in that the film draws biographical conclusions from her writing. Consequently, one could speak of the 'biographical function of Austen's literature', hence, her writing. This poses the question of what is so appealing about Austen's novels that the directors and screen writers have used them as prisms for portraying her life. The answer to this question is crucial to the issue of the ordinary aspect within this film because it is a key issue to this discussion. Marsha Huff, for example, the president of the Jane Austen Society of North America, argues that

there could be a Jane Austen revival at any time because her novels deal with such universal themes and her characters are so modern. (Huff)

As can be seen, Huff attributes the novels' appeal to the fact that they cover universal themes. They address themes that are considered common and familiar, hence, they could be described as ordinary. First and foremost, as has already been indicated, the novels are about love and romance. Hereby they deal with all aspects of love, including fortunate as well as unfortunate love. Moreover, family and family relations play an important role in the characters' lives. In addition, the novels display the characters' personalities

in detail. Similarly, it has been claimed that Austen was *the* English literary author

who first gave the novel its distinctly modern character through her treatment of ordinary people in everyday life.⁷ (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

Thus again, the key to success is thought to lie in the fact that her works depict ordinary people in ordinary situations of life. This view offers a concise explanation for the novels' appeal and as a consequence, Jane Austen's status as an English literary icon. Huff aptly states that the story of the film makes Jane Austen a "heroine in one of her own adaptations" (Huff). In this, she emphasises yet again the parallels concerning the nature of the novels and the biopic *BJ*. Going back to Berardinelli's claim that *BJ* looks at Austen's life "through the prism of her novels" the following conclusion can be drawn.

I shall depart from the assumption that the novels with their modernity and their ordinary characters constitute the basis for the portrayal of the writer's life in film. As a consequence, the film inevitably mirrors the basic building blocks of the novels. It could rightfully be claimed that the film, therefore, portrays the ordinary and the everyday. That is, not only do the novels deal with universal themes and ordinary people as characters, the film also mirrors and addresses these issues. In short, while devising this biopic the filmmakers used Austen's writing for their basis. How the ordinary aspect of ordinary people in ordinary life is portrayed in *BJ* will subsequently be examined. For the purpose of analyzing this, three main themes that illustrate the ordinariness will be analysed. The themes and aspects that dominate the film and that are ordinary, everyday and familiar in regards to the character are love and romance, her personality, and the monotony of everyday life. In order to shed light on the way the respective aspect is portrayed, the film will be analysed from these three perspectives.

⁷ <http://www.britannica.com> ("Jane Austen")

6.1.1. Ordinary love

In general, romantic love can be characterized as an omnipresent phenomenon, which is strongly familiar and inextricably linked to everyday life (Redman 56). That is, romantic love is a feeling that is typically human, a sentiment that hopefully almost everyone experiences in life. Judging from this, love constitutes a highly ordinary type of human experience, a sentiment that almost everyone can relate to. Thus, it is hardly surprising that romantic love constitutes a favourite topic within all kinds of media. It is also the primary topic in the screen biography *BJ*. For instance, romantic love serves as the basis for the filmic portrayal of Jane Austen's life. As a result, the ordinary is already portrayed by means of the love motif. The authoress is portrayed as a young woman who falls in love whereby this common experience eventually triggers a creative process of writing. It could be argued that this biopic is primarily a love story and only secondarily about the birth of a writer. In spite of the fact that the writing constitutes a basic element of the film, the romantic love theme forms the frame upon which the film depends. According to its classic form, it typically consists of a heterosexual union (Redman 57). The film starts with a direct presentation of her writing and ends with an indirect portrayal of it by part of a novel being read out aloud. In addition, there are several writing scenes presented during the course of the narrative and the characters frequently talk about it in general, especially Austen's writing. Nevertheless, the production of texts does not form the basic module of the film. Rather, it is the romantic love that is in the foreground and which serves as the catalyst for the action to occur. While the first encounter of the couple does not begin until the first 15 minutes of the film, love and marriage as themes are present from the very beginning, thus they are omnipresent. Mr and Mrs Austen as well as the sisters talk about marriage and romantic love, respectively. Even Jane's reading during the family reunion is about the romantic love between her sister and her fiancée. It is during this reading of hers that she first encounters Thomas Lefroy who bursts into the family gathering and interrupts her reading. This is the moment when the typical classic romance starts. That is, it marks the

beginning of a classic romance that is commonly organized according to a narrative pattern, which

involves a linear narrative progressing, via a series of 'hurdles' or 'setbacks', towards love's attainment and/or loss. (Redman 57)

In other words, it is characterized by the fact that the lovers have to overcome some problems before they can attain their love or, as is the case with *BJ*, eventually lose it. In addition, the makers of this film have added a so called 'repulsion attraction theme' in order to spice up the story (Huff). Consequently, the narrative of this romance does not progress in a linear manner but starts with mutual dislike. The initial repulsion then turns into attraction and ultimately into love. This is a common and well-known pattern in all kinds of representations of love and romance, and the viewer might even know this from one's own experience. As a result, the audience is confronted with a familiar situation to which it can relate, a situation taken from life itself. From their first encounter, Jane obviously feels irritated by Mr Lefroy's presence and snobbish behaviour. When Thomas interrupts her reading, she is highly irritated and loses the thread (*BJ* ch.3). The portrayal of her confusion is supported by the use of a close up camera shot which focuses the attention on Jane's facial expression and in between put a shot of the person who caused her confusion, Thomas Lefroy (*BJ* 0:16:22 – 0:16:36). His arrival stirs up her life overall. Her tranquil life in the country clashes with the utterly contrary world of the young law student Tom - as do their character types. The repulsion Jane feels towards Tom right from the beginning is being reinforced by a comment she overhears, in which Tom claims that she has an "extended juvenile self regard" (*BJ* 0:18:07). Shortly after their first encounter they meet again by accident in Selborne Wood where both went for a walk (*BJ* ch.4). It is possible that the audience could view this as being a pivotal scene, where the repulsion becomes very obvious through numerous shrewish comments made by Jane as well as by Tom. At the same time it suggests that the resentment starts to turn into

attraction, at least for Tom, since he tries to keep the conversation going. It is again Tom who bursts into her life, this time in the woods, when he sees her from a distance and approaches her. The clash of the two worlds, and thus their repulsion, is perfectly illustrated by means of two different types of music for strings. While Tom's walking is accompanied by staccato music for strings, Jane's strolling, though to the same melody, is marked by music that is played in a soft and gentle manner (*BJ* 0:20:12 – 0:20:46). In order to make this standard situation of repulsion and attraction more true to the life of the 18th century England, the issue of a woman walking alone is being addressed by the characters. Therefore, the moviegoer is being reminded that the story actually takes place in the 18th century despite its modern theme. Thus, the ordinary love theme is being made 18th century like with allusions to the fact that the ordinary situation depicted does not take place in modern times. Similar to the walking scene, the first dancing scene also bears significant importance concerning the portrayal of the growing attraction between the two (*BJ* ch.4). It is during their first dance, it seems, that Jane unconsciously and 'secretly' falls in love with Tom and the repulsion, though still there to some extent, slowly but steadily turns into attraction from that point onwards. Nevertheless, Jane does not admit it to herself, nor notices it, and indulges in snappish comments. The encounter with Tom at the ball is shown to spur her writing. Thus, although she has not really fallen in love yet, the encounter with him at the ball definitely occupies her mind and also inspires her creative writing. Jane's hidden attraction to Tom becomes obvious to a certain degree after the cricket match when Jane and her cousin follow Henry (Jane's brother) and Tom down the hill to the river (*BJ* ch.5). Their running downhill is accompanied by a cheerful music which could be seen to mirror Jane's heightened feelings towards Tom. Having chased after them, the two then hide in the bushes near the river bank to observe the men going for a swim. The third time that Jane and Tom meet each other without the presence of anybody else is in her aunt's library (*BJ* ch.6). This scene serves to outline their growing affection according to the proverb 'the quarrel of lovers is the renewal of love'. Nevertheless, in this instance it would have to be rephrased to 'the quarrel of lovers is the

beginning of love', so to speak. Jane is upset by Tom's provocative statements concerning her reading as well as his claim that he knows more of the world and that her "horizon must be widened" (*BJ* 0:35:32 – 0:35:35) angers her even more. It is in the library scene that the writing theme comes to the surface again when Tom shares his views on writing and recommends Jane to read *A History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* by Henry Fielding. Jane's affection for Tom begins to be displayed in the scene following Tom's boxing when she is concerned about his health (*BJ* ch.7). At this point the audience would expect for their relationship to develop. However, in order to point to the degree of otherness inherent in their romance, namely a romance set in the Regency years, the issue of arranged marriages or marriages for money is addressed. That is, the ordinariness of their romance is being tinted with the reality of the 18th century. As a result, the viewer is introduced to the idea that in the 18th century, choice of a husband was *the* most important decision for a woman, as marriage implied a complete handing over all control to the spouse (Olsen: Austen II, 428). In addition, the financial value of love was vital to the future of the woman's family (Olsen: Austen II, 428). The otherness of the ideas concerning marriage is aptly summarised by Mrs Austen who claims that "affection is desirable [pause] money is absolutely indispensable" (*BJ* 0:46:48 – 0:46:57). Then follows some instances in which the importance of marriage for money is being highlighted during a conversation between Mr Austen and Jane and one between Eliza, Jane's cousin, and Jane (*BJ* ch.8). These scenes already foreshadow the 'hurdles' that Tom and Jane will have to overcome in the course of the film. Thus, they anticipate the setbacks the two will have to face and the film then proceeds in the ordinary fashion of a love plot. The trouble the two will have to face is already foreshadowed in the melancholic music that accompanies the introduction to the ball scene at Lady Gresham's manor house. Upon arrival Jane walks about the rooms in search of Tom, thus her attraction towards him becomes obvious. During the dancing Jane and Tom show their affection towards each other by means of exchanging telling smiles and looks (*BJ* ch.8). What is more, they even kiss in the garden and eventually talk about their feelings for each other. These quite intimate moments are emphasised

by the use of close-ups. While the kissing would have been very unlikely to happen in Regency England, it nevertheless is portrayed in order not to destroy the course of the modern classic romance plot. Kissing in those times, most probably, belonged to the intimate sphere of an already married couple. Therefore, the kissing scene between Jane and Tom does not conform to the rules of conduct of that time period. Parenthetically it should be pointed out that almost all Jane Austen film adaptations, including biopics, portray kissing in a modern and familiar way. That is, kissing as an expression of affection between two lovers independent of the prerequisite of the status of a married couple. Thus, what is portrayed is the method of showing affection between lovers, which is 'ordinary' and familiar to a modern audience. Moreover, the two express their feelings for each other, which could be regarded as something unusual in the 18th century but is, however, very familiar to a modern audience. Moreover, the kissing scene is embedded in a common romantic setting, that is, they are in front of a fountain with the silver moonlight emphasising the romance. Spurred by their love for each other, Jane and Tom happily go to London with a mission to convince Tom's uncle of her eligibility. Inspired by the prospect of a future together with Tom Lefroy, Jane starts writing *First Impressions* (BJ ch.10). Due to his uncle's refusal to give consent, the first major setback occurs in regards to their romance (BJ ch.10). Since Tom is totally dependent on his uncle and with him all his family in Ireland, he is forced to comply with his uncle's decision. This issue of fortune and dependence again points to the 18th century character trait of this otherwise so modern romance. Jane continues her journey to visit her sister at the seaside and ultimately returns home to Steventon. The parting scene in London is portrayed from Tom's perspective, that is, it starts with an image of the back window of the coach which gets smaller and smaller moving away from the camera, thus emphasising the loss (BJ 0:14:14 – 0:14:19). Jane's parting is accompanied by a highly melancholic and ponderous type of music. The news of Tom's engagement to someone else reinforces the setback and the audience gets the impression that the romance is finally lost between the two (BJ ch.11). This impression is emphasised by the image of the dark and cloudy night

sky, which follows the scene in the wood (*BJ* 1:21:47 – 1:21:51). Jane who is struck by disappointment eventually accepts Mr Wisley's marriage proposal (*BJ* ch.12). This event which is typical of the eighteenth century and therefore most probably seems foreign to the modern audience strengthens the idea that all is lost. Nevertheless, the plot goes back in track of an ordinary love story and the setback is resolved once more when they meet again in Selborne wood this time in the presence of one of Jane's brothers (*BJ* ch.12). This scene in the wood brings the two back together again and they decide to elope to Scotland. Their heightened emotions are reflected in a soft, romantic and crescendo version of exactly the same melody that accompanied their first encounter in the wood (*BJ* 1:27:42 – 1:28:13). In addition, the emotional turbulences are emphasised by the employment of close-ups of Jane and Tom, respectively. Their plan to head for Scotland mirrors a historical fact of that time according to which a couple under the age of twenty-one needed the permission of the parents to get married unless they married in Scotland (Olsen: Austen II, 429). Since Jane and Tom knew that their parents would not approve of their marriage they opted for an elopement. This incident raises the question of age of the characters depicted. Thus, judging from biographical information on Jane Austen she was 20 years of age when she had the brief flirtatious relationship with Thomas Lefroy (Pyne). In the film, however, both Jane and Tom are portrayed as being in their mid-twenties or even older. This again shows that the film makers compromised about the age issue in order to appeal to a modern audience by portraying an ordinary girl - age wise. That is, the actual facts had to be altered in order to comply with today's ideas about the age of marriage for an ordinary couple. The elopement, nevertheless, is short-lived as Jane finds a letter from Tom's mother in which she thanks him for sending money and expresses how much they depend on it (*BJ* ch.13). Forced by her sensibility Jane heartbrokenly decides to go back to Steventon (*BJ* ch. 13). Their second parting is portrayed in a similar way as the first, however, this time with the shot from the inside of the carriage through the back window focusing on Tom who is left behind, thus the camera moving away from him. Their eyes meet through the window of the cabin and the melancholic music increases, reflecting their

deep yearning for each other. Their love is lost and while Jane never marries, Tom has an arranged marriage. The end, therefore, not only complies with the structure of a romantic love plot but also with actual factual information according to which Jane Austen never got married.

In conclusion, it could be claimed that *BJ* is an ordinary, everyday-like love story, which is set in 1795 England. Consequently, the film portrays a romance in all of its ordinariness whereby small adjustments are made to make it suit an 18th century England setting. In addition, this universal theme proves to have an inspiring effect concerning creative writing. That is, the main protagonist, Jane, is spurred by her romance with Tom. Thus, it could be said that the classic romance, which is depicted as a common love story with all its setbacks and eventual loss has an extraordinary and productive effect in the end, namely the writing process.

6.1.2. Ordinary young girl

As has already been mentioned in an earlier chapter, Richard Dyer argues that in stars “human attributes exist independently of material circumstances” (Dyer 43). Reversing this idea to the famous writer, it could be claimed that human attributes exist independently of fame. As will be argued, it is exactly these qualities that are emphasised in biopics. Thus, the respective writer is portrayed as an ordinary person with “ordinary joys and sorrows” (Gledhill 213). In the case of the film biography *BJ* the emphasis clearly relies on the portrayal of the heroine as an ordinary young woman. Not only is the film protagonist involved in the classic version of ordinary love but her character is also portrayed in a way that emphasises her ordinariness. This normality of the main protagonist is generally depicted by means of showing how ‘ordinarily’ Jane Austen coped with and reacted to the everyday so to speak. To use Tony Bennett and Diane Watson’s ideas concerning the star’s appeal it could be stated that Jane is depicted “as being caught up in the mundane aspects of everyday life pretty much like everyone else” (x). Faced with everyday difficulties she shows typical human reactions such as anger, joy,

and disappointment, just to mention a few. Thus, the film puts considerable emphasis on the portrayal of Jane's ordinary and human emotions as well as her character. This emphasis allows the spectator to gain a perfect image of the protagonist as a person. It seems that the picture we get of Jane in film closely resembles the description that Marsha Huff offers of Elizabeth Bennet, the heroine in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*. According to Huff, Elizabeth Bennet

is a smart mouth, she's athletic she charges across the field and arrives at Netherfield with her cheeks blushed and looking beautifully and Mr Darcy can't take his eyes off her. She stands up to authority, she does not let Lady Catherine de Burgh tell her whom she should marry or whether she should turn Darcy down should he propose, she's so modern. (Huff)

By means of replacing the names with 'Jane', 'Tom', and 'Lady Gresham', respectively, this statement would deliver a well suited description of the heroine in *BJ*. That is, the qualities listed in this description of Elizabeth interestingly enough also apply to the portrayal of Jane Austen in the biopic. On the whole, the audience gets a complete and quite complex, yet fictional, portrayal of Austen's personality and character. In general, it could be stated that the personality of Jane in film mainly becomes apparent in everyday life and ordinary situations rather than in scenes depicting her during writing, with one exception. In chapter 10 we find quite a long scene in which the process of writing is primarily depicted. That is, Jane who is spurred by her love for Tom and her hopes to become his wife, starts devising her first novel titled *First Impressions*. Despite the fact that this scene more or less exclusively focuses on the writing itself, it nevertheless is embedded in an everyday situation. Meaning, it shows Jane in her nightgown with her hair down looking like an ordinary young girl. Before that, she is shown unable to fall asleep due to her exhilarated feelings, which is a situation that the audience can relate to.

In general, Jane is shown to react in a familiar and, from the point of view of the spectator, understandable manner. For instance, when she overhears Tom rating her reading as “well, accomplished enough, perhaps”, objecting that “a metropolitan mind [referring to his own mind] may be less susceptible to extended, juvenile self-regard” (*BJ* 0:18:00 – 0:18:09) she shows impetuous reactions. Hurt and agitated she runs up the stairs into her room and tears up what she had read aloud and even burns the pieces. Enraged, Jane moans and looks through some other pieces of writing that she hastily pulls out of a box. (*BJ* ch.3) Her reaction is so utterly human and familiar that the audience can perfectly relate to her. Moreover, Jane’s feelings are well presented by the camera focusing on her facial and body expressions. The audience is the only one in the room to observe her, which makes the situation appear even more authentic and intimate. The depiction of her in the room alternates with images showing Tom sitting calmly in the living room with the others, sipping a cup of wine. (*BJ* 0:18:17 – 0:19:14) The contrast between Jane who is shown to be very upset and the portrayal of Tom, who is completely at ease, emphasises the portrayal of her anger and disappointment. Next to the portrayal of Jane’s ordinary feelings of anger she is also depicted as someone who displays childlike, yet very common, behaviour when faced with a situation from which she wants to escape. For example, when Jane spots Lady Gresham and Mr Wisley, who have come to visit the Austens, she shows a well-known reaction of trying to escape an unpleasant situation. That is, Jane simply runs to the side of the house and hides in the bushes (*BJ* ch.7). Similarly, in the same chapter, when Mr Wisley proposes to her she childishly tries to divert the conversation to another topic as she already senses his intentions. Thus, Jane interrupts him in his introduction to the proposal by stating that “The garden is so affecting in this season [...]. The flowers particularly” (*BJ* 0:44:42 – 0:44:54). This kind of behaviour is common and familiar in embarrassing and unpleasant situations and underlines Jane’s ordinariness.

As far as Jane’s relationship with her mother is concerned, she is shown to deal with arguments in a highly familiar way. For example, the dispute

between Jane and her mother in the vegetable garden regarding marriage clearly mirrors the idea that we have of a genuine argument. Thus, Jane not only raises her voice but also contradicts her mother and eventually angrily parts from her (*BJ* ch.7). Moreover, each of them insists on her point of view and the dispute is not resolved. Their arguing is shown from the point of view of an observer with camera pans between a close up of Jane and one of her mother. (*BJ* 0:46:09 – 0:47:17). The shots are static which draws the focus upon the persons involved and the argument. It is in this scene that Jane proposes the idea of living by her pen, which infuriates her mother even more. The dancing scene at the ball at Lady Gresham's offers another portrayal of Jane's ordinary behaviour (*BJ* ch.8). That is, she does not disguise her boredom during her dance with Mr Wisley. Jane often looks down at the floor and avoids looking at Mr Wisley. Moreover, her dancing appears forced instead of wholehearted. However, when Tom is able to dance with her, Jane's spirit is obviously heightened and she dances with great passion. With Tom appearing in the dance, the pace of the melody increases, mirroring their shared excitement of seeing each other. Tom's joining comes to the surprise of the audience in that Jane is shown in a close up with Tom moving in, his back facing the audience. Immediately follows a shot of Tom's smiling face revealing that it is him who causes Jane to rejoice (*BJ* 0:53:22 - 0:53:28). While the dance between Jane and Mr Wisley is primarily depicted with medium and long shots, close shots dominate the depiction of the dance of Jane and Tom. By means of these shots, attention is directed to their facial expressions and the exchange of meaningful looks. Moreover, the close shots mostly depict the two at the same time, thus focusing on the silent dialogue between them. (*BJ* 0:53:23 – 0:54:19) Compared to the first dancing scene at the public ball, they do not get to talk with one another. Nevertheless, a lot of emotion is being communicated via voiceless talking by means of glances and touch, i.e. body language. After their first setback, Jane and Tom meet again in Selborne wood in the presence of her brother George. Jane's reaction towards Tom's attempt to offer an explanation for his conduct depicts her reacting in a most understandable manner. She does not display her disappointment openly but

rather hides her feelings behind sarcastic comments. Jane, for instance, ironically asks Tom about his 'lady' and what won her as if she was interested in finding out more about her. Thus, she hides her true feelings of hate and love towards Tom. (*BJ* 1:25:38 – 1:26:27) Only when her brother by gestures asks whether she liked Tom, her true feelings become obvious and with a shaky voice she denies the question (*BJ* 1:26:27 – 1:26:45). The couple's emotional turbulences during this encounter are emphasised by means of the use of subjective-shots from Jane's point of view and close-ups of the two protagonists in general. When Tom suddenly pulls her towards him and kisses her, she can no longer moderate her emotions and openly demonstrates her anger by punching Tom on the chest (*BJ* 1:26:53 – 1:26:57). Similarly, when Mr Warren attempts to ask her to marry him upon her return from her short elopement with Tom she cannot disguise her anger. She rushes out of the room and enraged asks him whether there were no other women in Hampshire (*BJ* 1:40:05). Judging from his behaviour it dawns on Jane that it was Mr Warren who had written the letter to the judge that had caused Tom and Jane's first setback. When Mr Warren admits that he had sent the letter to Tom's uncle, Jane can no longer repress her anger and distress and approaches him with her arm raised ready to hit him (*BJ* 1:40:27 – 1:40:38). The strong emotion in this scene is enforced by the fact that there is no music to accompany it. As a result, the focus exclusively lies on what is depicted and since the emotions are portrayed openly and clearly, there is no need for music to emphasise the emotions. Jane is, thus, shown to be an ordinary woman who can no longer disguise her disappointment due to the fact that her feelings have been extremely hurt. Instead of depicting a great writer who is above the situation she is portrayed as an ordinary girl reacting in an ordinary manner. Another example of her ordinariness is to be found in the scene concerning the lovers' second setback (*BJ* ch.13). Having discovered the letter from Tom's mother in which she thanks Tom for sharing his uncle's allowance (*BJ* 1:32:25) Jane understands the consequences their elopement would have for Tom's family and eventually for their love. At a welcome break Jane talks to Tom about the letter and her concerns regarding their relationship's future. Her sensible reasoning shows her

affection for Tom as well as her deep concern that in the face of the circumstances their love would not last. Jane sensibly and in tears argues that “[...] if our love destroys your family, it will destroy itself [...] in a long, slow degradation of guilt and regret and blame” (*BJ* 1:35:51 – 1:36:02). Again, the use of close-ups emphasises the intense emotions felt by the two characters. Despite her deep love for Tom, Jane manages to think ahead and her sensibleness conquers. The struggle between feelings and sensibility is perfectly depicted in this scene and Jane eventually takes the coach back home bidding Tom farewell for good.

Moreover, Jane’s actions and reactions are very modern and correspond to what could be regarded as the modern idea of a young woman. That is, a young woman is expected to have a mind of her own, to think and be independent. That is, the character Jane is portrayed as a young self-confident woman who is not shy to do something, which is considered to go against the grain. This character trait can be seen within different situations in the film, some of which will be emphasised here. When the Austens are on their way to visit Lady Gresham after church, for example, Jane’s reluctance to pay her a visit is very well depicted (*BJ* ch.1). Her behaviour mirrors a familiar pattern concerning the expression of dislike. She is shown to walk behind the others and upon her mother’s request to hurry up she angrily murmurs “When Her Ladyship calls, we must obey” (*BJ* 0:04:41 – 0:04:43). In addition, like a grumpy child she throws a stone in the pond to express her bad mood about the situation (*BJ* 0:5:20). Similarly, she does not disguise her indignation concerning Lady Gresham’s impertinent enquiry about Mr Fowle’s financial prospects. A close-up of her face reveals her throwing a telling glance of outrage at her sister (*BJ* 0:06:37). Furthermore, her self-confidence is depicted during the cricket match when she suddenly takes the bat and joins the game saving Mr Wisley from having to play. Her joining the game is perceived as something unusual and unexpected by the bystanders. She seems to enjoy offending sensibilities by means of exhibiting forms of conduct that are considered improper for a young woman. Nevertheless, Jane is uninhibited by their reactions and, surprisingly for the bystanders,

scores the last points to win the game. (*BJ* 0:29:19 – 0:30:35) Her joining the game could be interpreted as an attempt to surprise and maybe even impress Tom with her cricket skills. When Tom comes up to her to comment on her cricket skills, the camera zooms in on them and Jane is shown to smile at him proudly and provocatively without saying a word (*BJ* 0:30:47 – 0:30:51).

In addition, Jane is a modern “smart mouth” (Huff) with a ready tongue. When she meets Tom in Selborne wood her ready wit is very well demonstrated. In this conversation Jane is shown to be quick on the trigger concerning Tom’s comments, especially when she feels offended by what he says (*BJ* 0:21:34 – 0:22:58). For instance, when Tom claims that they have been introduced and therefore it should not be a problem that they are alone in the woods, Jane angrily argues “what value is there in an introduction when you cannot even remember my name? [pause] Indeed, can barely stay awake in my presence” (*BJ* 0:21:36 – 0:21:43). Thus, Jane not only criticizes his comment but also his previous behaviour, namely the fact that he did not disguise his boredom during her reading. In addition, she gets really emotional when Tom mockingly suggests that the book about Selborne wood that she talks about might be a novel. Hereupon, Jane harshly gives a summary of the description of the novel, which she believes Tom would give and then contradicts that by her own definition of the novel. Thus, she states “[novels as] being poor, insipid things, read by mere women, even, God forbid, written by mere women? [...] As if the writing of women did not display the greatest powers of mind, knowledge of human nature, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour and the best-chosen language imaginable?” (*BJ* 0:22:16 0:22:35). This scene in the wood is a happy portrayal of her self-confidence, which is even more emphasised by the fact that it is not accompanied by music so that all attention is directed to their conversation. At times, however, Jane’s impulsiveness causes her embarrassment. For instance, when she complains about Tom to her brother and snidely asks where he comes from in Ireland. Tom, who happens to stand behind her, answers and Jane turns around with blushed cheeks (*BJ* 0:25:02). This so

common and familiar reaction adds to the perception of Jane as an ordinary young woman. What is more, Jane proves to be unimpressed by Tom's cheeky remarks during their dance together at the first ball and wittily contradicts him or answers back (*BJ* ch.4). Her heated mind and rather aggressive arguing is reflected in the fast type of country music and the fast dancing steps (*BJ* 0:25:30 – 0:26:01). Following Tom's claim according to which he thinks that Jane "considers [herself] a cut above the company [pause] secretly" (*BJ* 0:26:19 – 0:26:30) Jane is truly upset and gobsmacked. She even forgets to dance for a short time, which demonstrates her hurt feelings, thus her reaction is deeply human. This event eventually triggers her first flow of writing in which she obviously puts down her anger and disappointment. The library scene where Tom and Jane accidentally meet serves as another example of Jane's quick-wittedness (*BJ* ch.6). Having recovered from her initial astonishment regarding the text that Tom reads aloud to her, she quickly picks up courage again and wittily contradicts him. She even shows sarcasm in her reaction to his advice on writing and his claim that he knows more of the world, upon which she sarcastically laughs. She stands up to Tom's remarks and his attempts to tease her with provocative statements.

Because of her self-confidence, she is also a frank woman who is always ready to share her opinion on certain issues. She does so, even if she runs the risk of being frowned upon for her openness and often contrary ideas. It seems that Jane is even more encouraged to share her opinion and objections if the person she addresses is of higher rank. In the visiting scene at Lady Gresham's, for example, the Lady's claim that her nephew cannot abide balls causes Jane to share her views on these dancing events. Her bold behaviour and the fact that the attention of the others rests on her is reflected in the use of a close-up of Jane talking (*BJ* 0:07:01 – 0:07:19). Similarly, when Tom's uncle criticizes Jane for her irony, she boldly expresses her disagreement with his view on irony. The inappropriateness of her contradicting him is reflected in a close-up shot showing Tom's face with an expression of warning as well as the depiction and noise of cutlery being

put aside. (*BJ* 1:03:44 – 1:04:11) Jane, however, unperturbed continues with expressing her view further on this matter. Likewise, Jane in film, like Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice*, is also shown to “stand up to authority” (Huff). When Lady Gresham takes her aside at the ball to exhort her for declining her nephew’s proposal, Jane demonstrates courage (*BJ* ch.8). She does not seem very intimidated by Lady Gresham and the gothic atmosphere of the house and the Lady. Thus, she contradicts her boldly by stating that she is mistaken in thinking that her father was in financial difficulties. (*BJ* 0:57:55 – 0:58:32) Likewise, Jane’s courage to stand up to authority is nicely depicted when Lady Gresham condemns the fact that Jane had been on a journey (*BJ* ch.14). Jane immediately and wittily, even sarcastically, responds by asking “Her Ladyship considers travel a crime?” (*BJ* 1:42:15 – 1:42:17). Furthermore, Jane also contradicts Lady Gresham concerning her claim that Jane was someone “without family, fortune, importance and fatally tainted by suspicion” (*BJ* 1:42:25 – 1:42:32). Thus she answers back that “importance may depend upon other matters than Your Ladyship can conceive. [pause] As to fortune, a young woman might depend upon herself” (*BJ* 1:42:38 – 1:42:47). Impressed by her contradicting Lady Gresham, Mr Wisley asks Jane to accompany him for a walk. Their conversation is another portrayal of Jane’s determination to follow her heart. Thus, she self-confidently states that she will live by her pen which already points to the end of the film where the authoress is depicted reading a passage out of one of her novels.

To sum up, Jane’s behaviour and reactions seem very familiar to the audience, even modern and so the spectator can relate to her. Her character is portrayed as utterly normal, modern and her reactions are highly understandable. The fact that the spectator can identify with the protagonist increases the audience’s interest. In addition to the ordinary portrayal of her personality, her inner life, so to speak, the portrayal of the protagonist is embedded in everyday situations and life.

6.1.3. Ordinary everyday life

In order to examine the ordinary aspect of everyday life and how it is depicted in *BJ* one first has to look at the concept of the everyday and what it implies. According to Bennett and Watson, “everyday life is [...] how we get along on a day-to-day basis” (x). This concept bears connotations of commonness, as well as of ordinariness, something that all people share. Probably the most evident characteristic of everyday life is the division in working days and weekends for example. In addition, this concept implies the contrast between everyday time and special events such as holidays or celebrations. (Bennett, Watson x) In the biopic *BJ* the ordinary aspect of everyday life can be found in various ways. Already at the beginning of the film, the spectator is introduced to the start of an ordinary Sunday in the life of the protagonist and her family. One could even say that it is the portrayal of a normal morning in the life of an ordinary family. In the opening credits there are images of the landscape in the morning, of animals grazing, the noise of a clock ticking, of water dripping and flowing down a river as well as the depiction of life inside the house, namely, people asleep and others waking up, busy servants, just to mention a few (*BJ* ch.1). All these aspects work together to create an image of an everyday situation in life. Nothing extraordinary happens and everything seems to follow a well known routine. The audience is presented with a situation that seems familiar and close to their own experience, something one can relate to. Embedded in these images, even the depiction of Jane writing as well as her voice coming from the off appear to be something ordinary, part of the daily routine so to speak. However, in about two minutes into the film, the everyday appears to be interrupted when Jane suddenly, in a trace of contentment, starts to play the piano rather loudly (*BJ* 0:02:30). This is when the everyday life is suspended for the sake of introducing the main character and at the same time offering a glimpse at her character, so to speak. The following scenes portray a Sunday church service, the obligatory Sunday walk, as well as the custom of paying a visit on this day (*BJ* ch.1). As will be shown, these mundane situations are depicted more than once in the film. In addition, the spectator is presented with the daily routine of the main character, in that Jane is portrayed in

various situations involving mundane events. Some scenes portray her in a sleeping gown before going to bed and after getting up, respectively, others show her getting ready for a ball. These scenes serve to show the everyday character of the life of the protagonist. The division between weekdays and Sundays shows the ordinariness of Jane's life in so far as her life is depicted as being subjected to the weekly routine, as it were. Moreover, like any other ordinary woman of her time, Jane attends church service. Despite the fact that the church service, the visits and the walks might not characterize the average Sunday of the audience, these situations constitute ideas of the concept of the everyday, which can be regarded as something familiar. That is, these situations and habits are more or less commonplace in the Western world and therefore it could be argued that the audience can relate to them. Concerning the aspects of the everyday I shall point out two facets thereof, namely everyday practices and everyday social relations (Bennett, Watson xxii).

Among the everyday practices that are depicted in relation to the main protagonist Jane, I want to mention the Sunday walks, plus walks on the whole, visits, housework, as well as special events such as balls. As far as the walks are concerned, they are depicted as a commonplace practice, which mainly serves two purposes. On the one hand a walk serves to overcome a long distance (Olsen: Austen II, 705). On the other hand, as is the case in the first pivotal scene between Jane and Tom, it was quite a common pastime (Olsen: Austen II, 705). Still today a Sunday walk or a walk in general is considered a familiar pastime and is often practiced as a hobby. Based on the biographical information available on Jane Austen it can be maintained that she was an avid walker herself (Olsen: Austen II, 705). Thus, the walking scenes in *BJ* not only mirror walking as an everyday experience but in addition, also reflect the fact that Austen herself enjoyed it and that this activity plays a major part in most of her novels. In the biopic, this ordinary activity often serves as the basis upon which the plot is developed. In other words, as has been mentioned earlier, some pivotal scenes are embedded in situations showing the protagonists taking a walk. The first encounter

between Jane and Tom each walking alone happens during a stroll in Selborne Wood (*BJ* ch.4). Jane's walking through the woods is portrayed in a way which mirrors her enjoyment and it creates the impression that it is an everyday activity for her. The depiction of Tom taking a walk, on the contrary, clearly shows that this is not something he usually does. He walks cross-country instead of following the path and is not at all amused. This sentiment, as has already been mentioned, is also reflected in the music accompanying the scene. In order to give this ordinary activity of walking an 18th century touch, references are made to the fact that Jane walks alone in that scene. Women commonly were expected to have a companion at their side when going for a walk, hence, someone to guard them (Olsen: Austen II, 706). Tom addresses this unfamiliar aspect of a familiar activity and the scene, eventually, can be understood as the beginning of their romance. There is another walking scene that is significant concerning their romance, or rather the end of their romance. It shows Jane walking with her brother Henry and her cousin shortly after they had found out about the death of Cassandra's fiancée (*BJ* ch.11). Henry and Eliza, respectively, break the news of Tom's engagement to her, which emphasises the fact that the love is permanently lost. Despite this seemingly definite fact, the loss of their love is once more resolved, namely in yet another walking scene. Thus, Jane is portrayed a third time taking a walk, this time accompanied by her other brother. Again, this pastime activity is of great significance to the development of the plot. That is, while Jane signs to her brother about her decision to accept Mr Wisley's proposal, Tom shows up to her surprise and stirs up her emotions anew. (*BJ* ch.12) It is also at this encounter that the two decide to elope, which represents a turning point in the story line.

Another aspect of everyday practices is constituted by the portrayal of the cricket match, which yet again underlines an ordinary aspect of Jane's life rather than focusing on the depiction of her writing skills. For instance, it depicts her in a more or less mundane situation of 18th century life in England. Family and friends come together to play a game of cricket, thus, Jane is simply part of this event. Her decision to join the game, despite the

fact that it was only men playing, adds some extraordinariness to it (*BJ* 0:25:30). In this, Jane's character, which has already been discussed in a previous chapter, is tellingly depicted and, what is more, it mirrors an actual fact of her life, i.e., Jane was a keen cricketer herself (Bernstein). The pleasure that the character Jane takes in this game is very well depicted by shots, showing her run and having scored the points, she happily hugs her brother (*BJ* 0:30:12 – 0:30:39). She smiles all over her face "with her cheeks blushed and looking beautifully", to use Huff's words. In addition, to the cricket scene, there are numerous other scenes which primarily serve to portray the everyday life of the great novelist. Take for instance, the scene in which the boredom of everyday life is portrayed. Thus, the women sit in the front of the house waiting and chatting while the men are out hunting (*BJ* ch.5). Jane passes the time reading and eventually explores her aunt's library as she is fed up with Lucy's behaviour and her cousin's, as well as aunt's comments on Lucy's puppy love for Tom. Her emotions are well portrayed by the use of close-ups revealing Jane's thoughts (*BJ* 0:32:18 – 0:32:35). In the library Jane meets Tom and their romance experiences another spark (*BJ* ch.6). Next to these quite entertaining practices of everyday life the audience also gets introduced to the duties that the protagonist has to perform. Thus, throughout the film Jane is seen to help her parents not only to feed the animals (*BJ* ch.7) but also housework (*BJ* ch.11). The duties themselves and the performance of the same routine, point to the ordinariness inherent in the depiction of the protagonist. Despite her talent she is portrayed as the girl next door, so to speak.

As far as the portrayal of special events in everyday life is concerned, the ball represents a typical celebration of this kind. In *BJ* two balls are depicted and both are highly significant regarding the progress of the story. What is more, they highlight the ordinary side of Jane's life, namely, the fact that she – like any other young girl back then and today – attended and enjoyed these special events. Balls in the eighteenth century might be comparable to today's balls and dancing parties. While the nature and core of these events is similar more or less, the shape is different. To be more precise, the ball

and dancing parties in general have always been and still are significant concerning meeting people from the opposite sex. As a result, the spectator recognizes the ball in *BJ* as something familiar and therefore is not estranged by the 18th century character of it. Especially in Regency England times balls represented an important element of courtship and were highly enjoyed (Olsen: Austen I, 198). It was *the* chance for young people to “mingle with the opposite sex in a controlled environment, displaying their charms to potential marriage partners” (Olsen: Austen I, 198). The dance offered an opportunity to talk to the opposite sex without being overheard by others, to touch each other and even flirt (*BJ* Gibson; Jarrold: bonus - dance). The film depicts these aspects of the ball and dancing in various ways whereby there is a significant difference in the depiction of the two balls (*BJ* Gibson; Jarrold: bonus - dance). The first one, which is a public ball, is different to the second ball which is private and held at Lady Gresham's house. The former is held in an assembly room with the dance being accompanied by fast and joyful music, which requires quick dancing steps (*BJ* ch.4). These aspects support the image of a relaxed atmosphere. In contrast to this, the latter is held in a rather gothic atmosphere at Lady Gresham's with slow and ponderous music and the whole atmosphere is shown to be quite tense (*BJ* ch.8). In addition, the balls differ in the way the interaction between Jane and Tom is portrayed. While a lot of talking is done during the dancing at the first ball, the two do not talk at all while dancing at the second ball. Nevertheless, a lot is being communicated at the second one by means of the exchange of touches and contact. Thus, close shots of Jane and Tom dancing closely (*BJ* 0:53:23 - 0:53:26), of Tom's hand resting on her lower back (*BJ* 0:53:50 – 0:53:54) as well as of them gazing at each other (*BJ* 0:54:07 – 0:54:13), depict the sexual tension between them. In general, the two balls in *BJ*, which are common practices as such, play a significant part concerning the development of the romance between Jane and Tom. What is more, they constitute a major part in the telling of the story (*BJ* Hathaway: bonus - dance). The fact that the couple dance together more than twice in the first dancing scene is criticized by Jane's mother and already points to the growing affection between Jane and Tom. That is, in the 18th century it was not considered appropriate to

dance with the same partner twice, and more often even less, as this “indicated a marked romantic preference” (Olsen: Austen I, 200). Above all, this scene depicts Jane as an ordinary girl who is struck by ‘secret’ affection towards Tom and therefore understandably dances with him more than twice. The second ball is crucial in respect to their relationship as it is at this event that they confess their love to each other (*BJ* chapter 8). Similarly to the dancing scenes, the portrayal of the funfair also reflects a special event in everyday life. However, in contrast to the ball, the protagonists in this instance are mere observers rather than participants. This scene again demonstrates that Jane, like any other young woman too, enjoyed this kind of event. In addition, it advances the storyline in that it renders possible a quite undisturbed conversation between Jane and Tom. On the whole, the ordinary aspects of everyday life in film are mingled with some ordinary aspects from life in Regency England. Thus, balance is kept between the features that are familiar to the audience and those that are new and unknown in a way that helps the spectator relate to the film.

Concerning the social relations in everyday life, the film portrays an ordinary nuclear family, that is, a family that consists of a father and a mother and a couple of children. In addition, the broader family circle is also depicted which, however, plays a minor role concerning the narrative. The relationship between the members of the immediate family is quite close whereby the relationship between Jane and her sister Cassandra is clearly the most intimate. In line with the factual information regarding Jane Austen’s life and the considerable number of letters that passed between the sisters, the film portrays Cassandra as her closest companion and confidant. Their friendship reflects a longing which is deeply human and commonplace. That is, it depicts the desire to have a person, whom one can confide their most intimate thoughts. Thus, Jane is portrayed as someone ordinary for whom the close relationship to her sister and the possibility of getting advice from her is vital. The importance of Cassandra’s role as Jane’s closest companion is already mirrored in the beginning of the film when Cassandra is the second character to be depicted (*BJ* ch.1). In the same way that Jane confides in her

sister, Cassandra too confides in Jane, thus, their relationship is characterized by mutual support. The sisterly comfort and encouragement are nicely portrayed at different points in the film, such as in the scene when Jane consoles Cassandra who is worried about her fiancée leaving (*BJ* ch.3). Their close relationship is underlined by camera shots portraying the two directly and then via the mirror image hiding Eliza who is also in the picture, thus focusing on the sisters (*BJ* 0:13:30 - 0:13:44). Moreover, Jane's love for her sister is expressed in words during her reading during a family reunion titled "Advice from a young lady on the engagement of her beloved sister Cassandra" (*BJ* ch.3). Letters from Jane addressed to her sister are mentioned or read throughout the film and they are full of details concerning the protagonist's most intimate feelings and sentiments. In most instances the content is read by Jane's voice coming from the off, thus functioning as a voice-over. This, for example, is the case after the first ball scene when Jane complains about Mr Lefroy (*BJ* 0:26:53 – 0:27:06). Another such instance occurs when the audience learns about Jane's plans to go to London, which is achieved exclusively via the reading of a letter addressed to Cassandra (*BJ* 1:01:33 – 1:02:7). A triumphant type of music that mirror's Jane's excitement and happiness accompanies this other example of a voice-over being used. The sister's reunion at the south coast after Jane's distressful time in London again portrays their closeness. They are depicted in a long shot walking along the coast and the contrast between the ample coast and them walking next to each other emphasises yet again their closeness (*BJ* 1:15:12 – 1:15:26). However, despite Cassandra's attempts to comfort Jane, she is inconsolable and returns home heartbroken. A similar situation occurs when Cassandra learns about her fiancée's death but this time it is Jane who takes on the role of the comforter (*BJ* ch.11). Shortly after this incident Jane finds out about Tom's engagement to another woman and the sisters are shown to once again comfort one another (*BJ* ch.11). The close relationship between the two is again depicted when Jane gets ready for her elopement with Tom. Cassandra tries to talk her out of it to save her from a troubled life but Jane is determined to follow her heart. The close shot of them saying good-bye supports the strong emotions of the scene and enforces the image

of their deep friendship (*BJ* 1:29:18 – 1:29:23). This scene nicely demonstrates the sisterly care and mutual understanding despite their different views. In this, their relationship mirrors the common image we have of a close friendship between two sisters as it contains all aspects inherent in the idea one has of a loving sister relationship. Similar to the portrayal of the sisters' bond, the film also shows the ordinary and everyday character of the relationships among the other members of the nuclear family. The welcome scene that takes place about fifteen minutes into the film, for example, clearly shows the affectionate relationship between the family members when they welcome Henry Austen, Jane's brother, back home (*BJ* ch.3). They embrace and are truly delighted about seeing one another. In the film, the relationship between Mrs Austen and her daughter Jane is of considerable importance as it again portrays and brings out Jane's ordinariness. Thus, it depicts a rather typical mother daughter relationship with her mother's main concern being the daughter's future which results in arguments concerning the choice of men. This constitutes a common concern among mothers in general and in the film it is simply depicted with an 18th century touch by addressing the issue of marriage for money. Mrs Austen's care for Jane is portrayed right at the beginning of the film when she expresses the need for Jane to get a husband (*BJ* ch.1). In another scene, Jane overhears a conversation between her parents whereby her mother tries to press Mr Austen to persuade Jane to marry Mr Wisley (*BJ* ch.7). Moreover, familiar and common instances of disagreement between mother and daughter are depicted next to the portrayal of motherly love. When Jane returns home from London and the south coast, respectively, she is depicted as being full of remorse about not having followed her mother's advice (*BJ* ch.11). Upon this, her mother thinks that she would accept Mr Wisley's proposal at last. However, Jane elopes with Tom and when this fails she returns home and is greeted with genuine motherly affection. The shot is depicted in close-up of Mrs Austen's face and Jane's respectively and her mother is shown to kiss her on the hair while embracing her (*BJ* 1:41:25 – 1:41:44). Moreover, she expresses her relief that Jane has come back, without asking question concerning the how and why. What is more, Mrs Austen even defends her daughter when Lady

Gresham insults her (*BJ* ch.14). The audience gets a nice picture of the common and exemplary pattern of a mother daughter relationship. That is, a relationship characterized by concern, at times by lack of understanding but overall by deep and unconditional love. In contrast to this, the relationship between Jane and her father is characterized by a much larger understanding as can be seen in chapter 7, however, by a lesser display of affection on the whole.

Based on the discussion of the common aspects in *BJ*, it can be claimed that the film primarily focuses on presenting Jane as an ordinary girl. Julian Jarrold, the director of this biopic, affirms this impression by stating that the producers “very much wanted to present [...] a sort of lively, young, provocative, very bright early 20-year-old girl who everyone can relate to, but, at the same time, you can understand and feel her become this great writer.” (*BJ* Jarrold: bonus - behind scenes 0:03:33 – 0:03:47) Thus, her writing skills and her turning into a great novelist are indirectly depicted through the portrayal of herself as an ordinary girl. That is, most of the scenes are not at all or only loosely connected to writing but rather depict everyday and ordinary aspects. As a result, the definition that Jane states of the novel can be transferred to the film. According to her, “A novel must show how the world truly is, how characters genuinely think, how events actually occur. [pause] A novel should somehow [pause] reveal the true source of our actions” (*BJ* 0:37:30 – 0:37:45) Thus, the film could be seen to reveal the true source of Jane’s actions, with her actions being her writing. Her ordinariness and the everyday aspects depicted in film could be considered to be the true source of her creative genius. Similarly, in *SL* the creative genius of Will is also depicted as being rooted in rather ordinary circumstances and aspects of his life, which will be discussed subsequently.

6.2. Ordinary aspect in *Shakespeare in Love*

Based on the hype surrounding the playwright William Shakespeare, which was discussed earlier in the thesis, it can be conjectured that Shakespeare remains relevant to this day. That is, there is consensus over the fact that his works are universal and so they are still relevant today. (Anderegg 43, Rothwell, Ember) Thus, despite the fact that very little is known concerning the man William Shakespeare (absolute Shakespeare) he nevertheless, remains highly popular, above all for his literary productions. His immanent relevance, according to Anderegg, is achieved by bringing Shakespeare to us, rather than taking us back in time to him (43). Anderegg transfers this idea to the quasi biopic *SL* and argues that it demonstrates this strategy in that it “take[s] us back to Shakespeare by bringing Shakespeare to us” (43). In order to find out how the ‘bringing of Shakespeare to us’ is achieved one has to look at the structure of the film. Based on the setup of this motion picture, it could be argued that the film brings this great literary icon to us through his works. To be more precise, *SL* is generally considered a story within a Shakespeare story. That is, the motion picture is closely built upon and also fuses together with the plot of *Romeo and Juliet*. What is more, it even includes the same words that the writer used in his plays. Judging from this, it seems reasonable to claim that *SL* partly portrays Shakespeare through his works. His stories are considered to “show all the human emotions and conflicts,” (Ember) which is why they are thought to be universal and appealing to a broad audience. As a result, in depicting a version of Shakespeare’s life, the film could be seen to focus upon the universal aspects of Shakespeare’s works. Undoubtedly, one of *the* most important and universal themes in many of his works is love and romance. Love and romance are typically human and thus, commonplace aspects of life that everybody can relate to. As has already been mentioned in the discussion of the biopic *BJ*, love in general constitutes a highly ordinary aspect of human life. Despite the fact that Shakespeare is not known to have had a romantic relationship like the one which is depicted in *SL*, the love theme plays a major role in the film. In this, the audience gets the story of a

fictitious love attachment between Shakespeare and a lady called Viola de Lesseps. While Viola de Lesseps is a fictitious character, the name Viola, however, is taken from the main character in Shakespeare's play *Twelfth Night*.

Before turning to the analysis of the film, it should be pointed out that *SL* most certainly is not a typical biopic as it is only very loosely based on actual facts concerning Shakespeare's life. The director, Tom Stoppard, is reported to have stated that he did not want to provide an authentic portrayal of the bard's life but rather a fictionalized version of it (French 147). Apart from its fictional character, the film closely resembles one of his plays, which gives the impression that *SL* is more a reworking of the play *Romeo and Juliet* rather than a portrayal of the playwright's life. This, of course, can be attributed to the fact that hardly anything is known concerning the facts of the playwright's life. Therefore, the screenwriters might have turned to Shakespeare's works to find inspiration for the creation of a film biography concerning this literary icon. Judging from this, the lack in biographical material could be considered to be the reason behind the fact that *SL* so closely mirrors and even merges with the previously mentioned play. The film's close resemblance to the play, however, could also be ascribed to the fact that love is a common and familiar aspect of life. That is, despite the fact that only little is known about Shakespeare's actual life, it is most likely and therefore can most probably be assumed that he has been subject to the human emotion of being in love. It is likely that the fictitious portrayal of the love attachment in general has some truth to it. In this, the quasi-biopic manages to create a clever portrayal of the ordinary circumstances that could have inspired Shakespeare's life and the creation of the play *Romeo and Juliet* which will henceforth be abbreviated by *RJ*. Thus, the film makers used the ordinary character of the romance theme to bring Shakespeare to us, so to speak. In general, the film's focus primarily lies on the development of the love plot and only secondarily on the portrayal of other aspects surrounding his life. As a result, Shakespeare's private life is being highlighted, especially his love attachment. This portrayal is embedded in the scenery of England

during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Concerning the question of how the ordinary aspect is portrayed in *SL*, I will look closely at three themes which best illustrate the ordinariness. The themes and aspects that characterise the ordinary and familiar involve love and romance, Will's personality, and ordinary aspects in everyday life. Thus, in the subsequent chapters, the film will be analysed concerning these aspects.

6.2.1. Ordinary love

As has already been indicated, romance can be defined as a "familiar, ubiquitous, everyday phenomenon" (Bennett, Watson xx), thus it is omnipresent and a commonplace aspect of life. Consequently, it is a sentiment that the audience can relate to and thus functions as a tool to present the author star in such a way that makes him ordinary rather than a genius. In *SL* the portrayal of romance, this familiar and ordinary sentiment and experience forms the primary theme upon which the portrayal of this great playwright and the coming into his genius is based. In the film, the love attachment frees Shakespeare from writer's block and ultimately inspires him to write *Romeo and Juliet* as well as *Twelfth Night*. There are even allusions to a comedy by the playwright titled *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. As can be seen, similarly to the portrayal of Jane Austen in *BJ*, *SL* also suggests the process of writing as the result of the ordinary and familiar sentiment and experience, hence, love. The act of writing, which is the extraordinary aspect about Shakespeare and his skill as a playwright is woven into a portrayal of him as an average man who is subject to ordinary feelings. Although the act of writing is portrayed, literary production nevertheless does not form the focus of the film. Rather, the flow of writing and the inspiration to write are portrayed as the result of a commonplace emotion, that is, love. In general, it could be claimed that the portrayal of Will and Viola's love attachment follows the same classic form as the one in *BJ* in that it also follows the classic romance formula. That is, it is again a heterosexual union whereby the development of the romantic relationship follows the typical narrative pattern of the classic romance (Redman 57). As has already been pointed out in the

previous discussion, it “involves a linear narrative progressing, via a series of ‘hurdles’ or ‘setbacks’, towards love’s attainment and/or loss” (Redman 57). In this, the audience is confronted with two lovers, who like many other lovers as well, have to overcome hurdles and setbacks but unfortunately eventually lose their love. Thus, the film ends with the eventual loss of love of the star-crossed lovers. In *SL*, love cannot triumph due to circumstances that cannot be influenced by the lovers. That is, the rival lover who appears in the figure of Lord Wessex eventually obtains Viola as his wife.

The beginning of the romance discussed in the film is characterized by love at first sight. When Will sees Viola at a ball at her parent’s mansion, he falls head over heels in love with her (*SL* ch.10). Will’s instant attraction to the young lady becomes apparent when he cannot take his eyes off Viola once he has caught sight of her (*SL* 0:27:09). Like a predator who sneaks upon its prey, Will slowly draws near the dance floor and joins the dance to get closer to her. The commonplace feeling of attraction to another person is perfectly depicted by means of two types of camera shots. There is a pan shot starting with a point-of-view-shot from the perspective of Will, thus looking at Viola dancing, to a shot following Will, who approaches the dancing couples (*SL* 0:27:25 - 0:27:36). Will eventually gets to dance with Viola and when she finally lifts her head and notices who she is dancing with, she is astonished and the look in her eyes reveals deep attraction towards him. Their first encounter is rather brief as the couples change again and Viola dances with the Lord Wessex. This incidence already foreshadows the fact that Lord Wessex will be Will’s rival in love. Following this, Will and Viola dance together again and the way they look into each other’s eyes reveals the intense passion they feel, they do not cease to stare into one another’s eyes (*SL* 0:28:19 – 0:28:32). Their mutual attraction is emphasised by the string, which accompanies the shot and nicely expresses their deep longing for one another. It is Viola who first finds words and astonished remarks that he is “a poet [pause] but a poet of no words” (*SL* 0:28:35 – 0:28:43). This statement wittily mirrors the dilemma that Will is in concerning his writing, namely that he is suffering from writer’s block. While he does not know who she is, Viola

already knows that he is Shakespeare, the handsome writer and the poet in front of whom she auditioned disguised as a boy. This brings in the issue of cross-dressing, which was very popular and necessary in Shakespearean times, as women were not allowed to perform on stage. As a result, the universal and classical love theme receives an Elizabethan England touch. The fact that Will does not know that he is actually dancing with the boy Thomas Kent who had impressed him at the audition, adds some humour to the scene. Going back to the dancing scene, when Will finally recovers from his enchantment, the first setback occurs. He is being dragged off the dance floor by Lord Wessex who briefs him that she is his property and emphasises his words by holding his knife against Will's neck. The weight of this setback is mirrored in the melancholic type of pipe music that accompanies the shot (*SL* 0:28:44 – 0:28:50). In the preceding scene the fact that William will have to yield to Lord Wessex as his rival in love was already introduced. In an attempt to follow the young 'Thomas Kent,' Will went to the De Lessep's estate but was unable to meet with him. As Will was leaving the estate he was forced to give way to Lord Wessex who hastily rode down the path towards the estate, but after a chance encounter he returned to attend the ball (*SL* ch.10). The introduction of the rival in love also brings up the issue of arranged marriages. Thus, in Shakespearean England, "courtship was likely to be more like a business deal than a romance" (Olsen: Shakespeare I, 147). Similarly, in *SL* Viola's father, Robert De Lesseps, arranges for his daughter to be married to Lord Wessex, thus trading money for a title. In this, Robert De Lesseps gains a title for their heirs and Lord Wessex who is short of cash, gains fortune in return. The harshness and mercantile character of this marriage business is reinforced by the portrayal of Lord Wessex's emotional coldness. Although he likes Viola, he is very much focused on what this marriage would bring him. Already the way he informs Viola about the marriage deal shows his even callous attitude towards their settled marriage. During the dance, he coldly informs Viola that he has spoken with her father, insinuating that they have talked business, namely marriage business. Sensing what he is aiming at, Viola both greenly and angrily replies "So my Lord? I speak with him every day." (*SL* 0:28:13 – 0:28:16). This

reaction is understandable from the point of view of a modern audience, however, in Shakespearean times, women of nobility knew that courtship mostly meant a business deal (Olsen: Shakespeare I, 147). Eventually, Viola and Will stand helpless in the face of the men's deal, which is why their love is lost in the end. Going back to the development of the love plot, in chapter 11 the audience is confronted with one of the first actual allusions to the play *RJ* in terms of images. The plot could be seen to serve as the backbone of the film, despite the fact that it is only referred to in words until chapter 11. From this chapter onwards, the plot plays a rather important part in the progress of action and eventually fuses with the primary love plot, namely that between Will and Viola. On the whole it can most rightfully be claimed that Romeo and Juliet represent the most popular lovers in western culture and the story is a universal love story. In this, Romeo and Juliet could even be regarded as the archetypal image of lovers. The balcony scene, which is inextricably linked to the story of these famous star-crossed lovers, bears great importance in the development of Will and Viola's romance. Despite the fact that there are no literal intertextual references in the first balcony scene (*SL* ch.11), it is an unmistakable reference to the play. Viola who is lost in thought concerning herself as an actor in Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Ethel the pirate's daughter* even mentions the name 'Romeo'. Upon her calling 'Romeo' and mentioning the play's title and its author, William Shakespeare, Will appears in the garden below. Viola, overwhelmed by her feelings for him expresses her admiration of him. The balcony scene allows the couple to talk to each other, nevertheless, their first encounter at the balcony is of short duration as Viola's nurse finds Will at the balcony. In general, the balcony scene already points to the fact that their romance resembles Romeo's and Juliet's nevertheless; the two plots have not yet merged. The liberating and inspiring effect that Will's encounter with Viola has on his writing is portrayed at length in chapter eleven. Spurred by his love for Viola the writer's block is overcome and the "words [...] flow like a river," to use Doctor Moth's words, the priest of psyche who Will calls on concerning his writer's block (*SL* 0:8:58). Will is depicted at his desk busily writing with a facial expression of romantic contentment. The spurring effect

that his encounter with Viola has on his creative writing is reflected in the triumphant type of music as well as in the rather quick sequence of different camera shots (SL 0:30:52 – 0:31:23). There is a quick sequence of close-ups depicting Will's hand writing, the quill in the ink pot, his content face, and the completed pages piling up, thus every single detail of the writing process is closely portrayed. Even the sharpening of a new quill is depicted, which again emphasises the fact that he is enjoying productive time writing and, moreover, his hands are covered with ink. These are the circumstances under which it is suggested that Will wrote the beginning of his play *RJ*. At the first rehearsal Viola and Will meet again, however, Will does not know that Thomas Kent, who plays Romeo, is actually his beloved Viola disguised as a boy. The issue of cross-dressing adds some tragic emotion to this scene. Viola in the person of Thomas Kent obviously finds it difficult to disguise her passion for Will. Will eventually leaves the rehearsal to write a sonnet for his beloved Viola, which turns out to be the actual Shakespeare sonnet 18 titled *Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?* The writing of the sonnet closely resembles the contemporary idea of writing a love letter, tinted with the touch of Elizabethan England, thus, it is familiar to the spectator. The sonnet is partly read out loud by Viola disguised as Thomas Kent who is eventually interrupted by the loud and angry voice of Lord Wessex (SL ch.12). The fact that his voice interrupts her reading of the love poem, again foreshadows that Lord Wessex will be the one who destroys any possibility of their love. The passion between the young lovers is reinforced by the portrayal of the way Lord Wessex informs Viola of their forthcoming wedding. His comments and lack of comprehension concerning her feelings stand in complete contrast to Will's poetic and passionate words. The coldness of this scene is even mirrored in the absence of music and the difference between Viola's telling facial expressions and Lord Wessex's motionless face (SL 0:37:00 – 0:38:12). Despite the fact that arranged marriages were common in Elizabethan England, Viola does not seem to accept her fate. That is, she reacts in a, for the modern audience, most understandable way by contradicting him and expressing that she does not love him. Will learns about the setback when he is given Viola's letter by Thomas Kent in a boat

on the river Thames (*SL* ch.13). The scene in the boat has a key function concerning the plot as Will confesses his love for Viola to Thomas Kent, without knowing that it is actually Viola who is behind the boy Thomas. He even asks advice from Thomas, which adds a comical trace to the tragedy inherent in the scene. Will is so smitten by his love for Viola that he does not notice that Thomas acts rather strangely for a boy as he is touched by Will's words. That is, at first he acts cool but when Will starts to ask him about Viola's feelings and expresses his own, Thomas finds it hard to disguise his real identity. Thomas is 'really carried away' so to speak and admits to Will's praises for Viola. The intimacy and importance of that scene is reflected in the use of pans between over the shoulder shots of Will and of Thomas, which are applied as soon as they begin to talk about emotions (*SL* 0:41:25 – 0:42:50). In addition, it is accompanied by soft romantic music, which emphasises the unmistakable emotion in the scene. Thomas is totally ravished by his poetical words and only when Will's praises for Viola become overly exaggerated and unrealistic, he finds himself again. He expresses his doubt that any lady could live up to his expectations "when her eyes and lips and voice may be no more beautiful than mine" (*SL* 0:42:57 – 0:43:01). Thus, he offers a glimpse at his true identity and leaves Will puzzled. The dialogue is continued by Will explaining the true nature of love, namely, that "love knows nothing of rank, or riverbank" (*SL* 0:43:12 – 0:43:14) thus, a universal truth. Before Thomas gets off the boat he gets overwhelmed by his disguised love for Will and kisses him. (*SL* 0:43:28 – 0:43:38). This key scene in the boat, apart from the comedy stemming from the cross-dressing, is embedded in the depiction of a highly common idea of a romantic boat trip; highlighting two lovers out on the water in a boat, at night with the lantern to give light. Will recovers from his astonishment when he overhears the boatman addressing Thomas with 'my lady'. Having found out who Thomas really is, he chases after her and again the balcony serves to bring Viola and Will together. Will finds Viola in her room still dressed in Thomas' clothes however, without the wig and they eventually consume their love (*SL* ch.14). The fact that they have intercourse without having had a betrothal is rather unusual to happen in 16th century England. While sexual activity was

somehow tolerated in the time between a betrothal and the wedding, it was not at all considered appropriate for it to take place before an engagement (Olsen: Shakespeare I, 149). Sexual activity prior to engagement was especially dangerous for the woman should she become pregnant (Olsen: Shakespeare I, 149). To a modern audience their sexual activity seems understandable and a quite normal, familiar consequence of the lovers' feelings for each other. Thus, the love scene is made to suit the ordinary idea of the development of a romance rather than the real historical circumstances. Nevertheless, the language the lovers use reminds the audience that it is set in 16th century England. The romanticised version of Viola having sex for the first time as well as her claim "I would not have thought it. [pause] There is something better than a play." (SL 0:46:14 – 0:46:19), mirror the popular romantic idea of 'the first time'. Following their first night together, the lovers meet again at the rehearsal and Will's heart melts when he watches Viola, disguised as Thomas Kent, perform the part of Romeo. Will is completely taken away by the sight of her acting on stage, he tightly embraces the wooden pillar against which he is leaning and his yearning, in addition, is reflected in the melancholic type of music for strings (SL 0:48:00 – 0:48:15). When Will watches the acting of the kissing scene between Romeo and Juliet he can no longer hide his longing and jealousy and is shown all nervous. He interrupts the scene with the pretence that the kissing should be done differently and to the amazement and irritation of the bystanders, he gets up the stage and repeats the kissing scene with Romeo. It is at this moment in the film that the two love plots merge. That is, Will who plays Juliet kisses Viola who plays Romeo, with the difference to their relationship in real life being that the roles are exchanged due to cross-dressing. This instance triggers another flow of writing and the portrayal of Will writing merges with Viola's voice coming from the off, citing what he writes (SL 0:50:22 – 0:53:30). Here again the words of the play join the two love plots together. Subsequently, the scenes from the rehearsal of the balcony scene, which depict Viola as Romeo and another actor as Juliet, merge with scenes portraying Viola and Will in bed. The two scenes are joined by the fact that the couples, in turn are shown to cite the coherent lines

of the play, hence the dialogue carries the sequence. There are only a few instances when the dialogue deviates from the play's dialogue; for example, when Viola answers her nurse's calling using Juliet's lines. Due to the cross dressing, Viola cites Romeo's lines and Will takes on the role of Juliet. As a result of this merging, the romance of Will and Viola is shown to resemble the universal love story of Romeo and Juliet, thus their relationship attains a universal and common character so to speak. By means of intertwining the famous love story between the archetypal couple Romeo and Juliet with that of Will and Viola the border between the two plots becomes blurred. The power of this sequence is highlighted by the portrayal of Mr Fennyman (the moneylender) who is totally taken in by the rehearsal. The words from the play suit the situation that Will and Viola are in and Viola's fear is perfectly reflected in her citing the lines of Romeo "I am afeard. Being in night, all this is but a dream. Too flattering-sweet to be substantial" (SL 0:53:14 – 0:53:25). These concerns are reinforced by Will sharing his ideas concerning how the play *RJ* would end. He talks of a "broad river that divides [his] lovers. Family, duty, fate [pause] as unchangeable as nature." (SL 0:55:53 – 0:56:04) In this, he actually unconsciously already talks about their fate, the eventual separation of love. When reality haunts them in the person of Lord Wessex who has come to pick up his Lady and head for Greenwich to get consent of the Queen, these worries are confirmed. The setback is complete and the spectator gets the impression that all is lost for good. This impression is reinforced when Viola sorrowfully sums up her fate and duty. She claims that "As Thomas Kent, my heart belongs to you, but as Viola, the river divides us, and I must marry Wessex a week from Saturday." (SL 0:57:15 – 0:57:24). This scene is accompanied with a slow and melancholic type of music, which emphasises the impression that all is lost. The comparison with the river, again points to the resemblance between the fate of Romeo and Juliet and that of Will and Viola. Will is determined not to give her up like this and thus, accompanies her cross-dressed as a chaperone which adds some comic relief to the otherwise tragic scene (SL ch.17). At Greenwich, a provocative comment by the Queen causes Viola to impulsively contradict Her Majesty. The Queen claims that "Playwrights teach us nothing about love. They make

it pretty, they make it comical or they make it lust. They cannot make it true.” Having experienced that plays indeed can show the true nature of love, Viola cannot help herself and expresses her disagreement with the Queen’s claim, which is an utterly improper thing to do. Lord Wessex tries to save the day and supports the Queen’s view by stating that “Nature and truth are the very enemies of playacting. I’ll wager my fortune”. This casual comment causes the Queen to suggest for a bet to be made concerning the question of whether a play can show the very truth and nature of love. The only one to accept the bet is Will, disguised as Viola’s chaperon. He offers a wager of 50 pounds and thus challenges his rival in love to the bet. The wager could be interpreted as some kind of virtual duel whereby the rivals never actually meet to fight it out. It could be seen as foreshadowing the real duel the two will have later in the film when Lord Wessex comes to challenge Will (*SL* ch. 23). Despite the actual loss of their love, which is caused by Viola’s future wedding with Lord Wessex, the lovers hold on to their love for each other and refuse to accept their fate. However, the end of their romance seems certain when Viola by chance finds out that Will actually has a wife in Stratford. Viola hastily leaves the tavern but Will, who wants to chase after her, is stopped by the news of Christopher Marlowe’s death. When Viola learns about a poet’s death she thinks that it was Will who died. Despite her anger about the fact that Will did not tell her that he had a wife, she is deeply grieved by the news. To her surprise she sees Will in church and they are reunited again for a short while (*SL* ch.20). This intimate encounter is portrayed with close shots of the couple embracing and talking. At a river side, Will talks to Viola about Marlowe and eventually they get to talk about their relationship and the impossibility of them being together (*SL* ch.21). The fact that they sit next to a river emphasises the image of the river of duty and fate that divides them. The scene at the river is a pivotal scene in that there is a turning point in their conversation. They first express their mutual anger at each other for having been deceived but eventually, their love for each other conquers and the record is set straight. It is in this scene that Viola confesses her love for Will, for the person behind the writer. At the same time, she expresses the impossibility of them being together and predicts the end of their romance by

stating “I saw our end, and it will come.” (*SL* 1:13:29 – 1:13:31). Thus, she refers to the fact that she had already seen the end when she thought that Will was dead. The more intimate the conversation gets, the closer the camera shots are which portrays their inner bond so to speak. What is more, soft, romantic music sets in as soon as Viola confesses her love to Will and it gradually changes into melancholic music when she talks about their forthcoming end (*SL* 1:13:06). Their contrary outer appearances emphasise their love for each other but at the same time also illustrate that they will not be able to stay together. Viola is dressed in precious clothes and Will, on the contrary, is shown in his everyday clothes and with a dirty face and hands. Despite their diverse looks they appear to be united by a strong love. Viola expresses this bond when she states that she “will go to Wessex as a widow from these vows” (*SL* 1:13:44 – 1:13:47), thus emphasising the fact that her heart belongs to Will. Following the portrayal of the end of Will and Viola’s love, the audience learns about the type of end that the romance between Romeo and Juliet will take when Will sums up the end of the play. Thus, the end of both classic romances is revealed, namely, the tragic end to love. When Will hands a script of the completed play to Viola, the two love stories merge again. Will and Viola cite the lines of the play and it is implied that they spend the night together, just as Romeo and Juliet consumed their love before their death (*SL* ch.22). This romantic encounter turns out to be a fateful one as they have been watched and therefore, Thomas’s real identity is uncovered at the end of chapter 23. Before the outcome of the cross-dressing, the important duel between Will and Lord Wessex takes place in the Rose theatre. The settling of rivalry by means of a duel was common in Elizabethan times (Austen: Shakespeare I, 208) and so the audience gets an idea of how the commonplace situation of rivalry was resolved back then. That is, the situation of two men fighting over a woman, over honour, represents an ordinary issue that in film is tinted with aspects from Shakespearean times and therefore solved by means of a duel. The duel ends with the unveiling of Thomas’s true identity as a woman and the consequent closing of the Rose theatre. This marks the apparent end of the play as well as the end of Will and Viola as a couple. While the first problem

is resolved by the fact that Mr Burbage offers his theatre for the performance of *RJ*, the final loss of Will's beloved cannot be resolved. The wedding business between Robert De Lesseps and Lord Wessex is settled and Viola unwillingly abandons herself to her fate. Will hastily sets off towards Robert De Lesseps's estate driven by his love for Viola but he arrives too late as the wedding carriage is leaving when he gets there. The final loss of Viola is emphasised by a point-of-view shot from Will's perspective watching the carriage drive off (*SL* 1:27:09 – 1:27:16). This is then followed by a close-up of Will's deeply grieved face (*SL* 1:27:17 – 1:27:21). The cheerful tolling of the church bells harshly opposes Will and Viola's deep sadness and thus emphasises their grief. It is used as a sound bridge, which joins the portrayal of Will looking at his love's carriage departing and of Viola leaving the church as Lady Wessex walking next to Lord Wessex (*SL* 1:27:17 – 1:27:40). Before boarding the carriage, Viola finds out about the fact that *RJ* will be staged at the Curtain theatre, and thus unnoticed by Lord Wessex she elopes through the other side of the carriage to head for the theatre to watch the play. The portrayal of Will behind stage when he gets prepared for his role as Romeo clearly shows that he is utterly devastated. The impact that the loss of Viola has on him is mirrored in his motionless, sad face and the depiction of him lost in his own world (*SL* 1:29:01 – 1:29:05). In addition to his great grief over love, he finds out that the narrator cannot utter a single word and that they no longer have a suitable Juliet, because the actor's voice changed due to puberty and no longer sounded feminine. Thus, Will thinks that all is lost, not only his love but also the play. Nevertheless, all his concerns are forgotten when he hears Viola's voice on stage playing Juliet. The camera zooms in on him to reveal his alleviation and joy over seeing her. This shot alternates with a subjective shot of Viola on stage from Will's perspective (*SL* 1:34:24 – 1:35:01). Everything around Will moves to the background and the focus exclusively lies on Will looking at Viola. Even soft string music comes in to reinforce the tension and alleviation that is present in this scene. For a short moment, their gazes meet and they tellingly smile at each other. Their heightened feelings and amorousness looks are reflected in the use of close-ups as well as in the fact that the music increases in volume (*SL* 1:34:49 –

1:34:53). Shortly after this scene, the two meet in person behind the stage and their encounter merges with a scene on stage when the couple kisses. The two stories merge completely as Will plays Romeo who kisses Juliet acted by Viola. As a result, the final kiss between Will and Viola is also the final kiss of the two lovers they are playing. There is no more cross-dressing and the two play the roles with great passion. That is, they act out the universal and archetypal love story of *RJ*. In the roles of Romeo and Juliet, Will and Viola act out their own story so to speak, seemingly forgetting that they are only play acting. Two scenes from the play are shown in length, namely a balcony scene and the death scene, which are probably also the most famous or best well known scenes of the play (*SL* ch.27). When the audience finally applauds, Will and Viola take the chance and kiss on stage, somehow hidden from the audience by the other actors. They embrace for great length without saying a word before they join their fellow actors, bowing in front of the audience. Having successfully brought a version of their own love story on stage, the Queen is convinced of the fact that this play indeed showed the true nature of love. Thus, the issue with the wager comes up again and Lord Wessex has to hand the wager to 'Thomas Kent' who gives it to Will. The romance between Will and Viola ends "as stories must when love's denied. With tears and a journey." (*SL* 1:46:25 – 1:46:30), using the Queen's words. This comment highlights the fact that the end of their romance is a common and ordinary one. The lovers' fate is certain and their parting is inevitable (*SL* ch.29). The farewell scene which marks the final end of their romance suggests that Viola, his lost love, serves as inspiration to Will and spurs his writing even in the saddest situation (*SL* 1:47:50 – 1:50:37). Together they think up a story based on their own experience which eventually results in Will writing *Twelfth Night*. One gets the impression that the classic romance between Will and Viola produces another classic love story, kind of following the principle of Russian nesting dolls, so to speak. However, in *Twelfth Night* love is not denied. When Viola departs from Will in *SL*, the melancholic music sets in and the camera moves away from Will, emphasising his devastation and the pain of having lost his love (*SL* 1:50:36 – 1:50:44). Will's final farewell words to Viola are a highly romantic

declaration of love “You will never age for me, nor fade, nor die.” (*SL* 1:50:10 – 1:50:15). This statement could be transferred to the real playwright William Shakespeare and to the fame that he enjoys today. That is, he has not aged, nor has faded nor has died but rather is kept young, fresh and alive by portraying him in a highly ordinary and everyday manner, which makes the film appealing to the audience.

In short, based on the analysis of the love plot it can be claimed that *SL* portrays a classic love story with typical aspects such as ordinary and universal feelings of affection, setbacks and a well known classical ending, namely, the tragic loss of love. In this, Shakespeare is placed in an ordinary situation in which the audience is most likely able to relate. The love story is recognized as something familiar with aspects pointing to the fact that it is set in 1593 London. What is more, the extraordinary characteristic of the real Shakespeare, namely the fact that he was a brilliant Playwright and poet, is embedded in the story of a highly familiar human experience. Gwyneth Paltrow sums this up by stating that “it is about the importance of overwhelming love in everybody’s life that’s incredibly empowering and can be, in many ways, defining.” (*SL* Paltrow: bonus - on film 0:06:48 – 0:06:55). Thus, she refers to the fact that the film treats a topic that is essential to everybody, and therefore, also highlights the universality and ordinariness that is inherent in the film. As a result, the film portrays Will’s genius as being the result of his romance with a woman called Viola De Lesseps.

6.2.2. Ordinary young man

As has already been asserted, the existence of human qualities in stars is independent from material circumstances (Dyer 43), one could most rightfully add that they also exist independently of fame. The audience shares these human qualities with the star and therefore, depicting the human attributes in film helps the spectator relate to them. Consequently, as has already been mentioned and argued in the discussion of *BJ*, biographical films highlight the humanness, hence ordinariness of the person of the author star. In the case

of the 'biopic-comic-romance' *SL*, the ordinariness of the person behind Shakespeare is nicely depicted next to the portrayal of a classic love plot. The primary focus depends on the depiction of a romance that follows the familiar classic pattern. Nevertheless, significant emphasis is also placed on the portrayal of Will's humanness in everyday life. Faced with everyday problems and challenges, and even extraordinary situations, Will is portrayed to react to circumstances in a familiar way. His reactions and emotions are commonplace and very understandable and therefore show this great writer from an ordinary perspective. This way, even the portrayal of a writer such as William Shakespeare, who has been dead for more than 400 years, can be made relevant and interesting to a modern audience.

The main character, young Will Shakespeare, gets introduced to the audience a couple of minutes into the film following a scene that portrays the harsh world of business in theatre. After Mr Henslowe, the owner of the Rose theatre, has assured Mr Fennyman, the moneylender, that the play is being completed the very moment, Shakespeare is depicted at his desk (*SL* ch.3). He is shown sitting at his desk, however, instead of writing words, he simply practices writing his name. Nevertheless, he is not satisfied with the outcome and is shown to cross out his signature, crumpling some sheets of paper, which he then angrily throws somewhere in the room (*SL* 0:04:12 – 0:04:44). His disappointment and infuriation are mirrored in a close shot of him stony-faced with an expression of deep annoyance (*SL* 0:03:56 – 0:03:59). Thus, he is portrayed as an impulsive young man who openly shows his anger about the fact that he is having a really hard time, meaning, he suffers from writer's block. Despite the fact that Will is portrayed writing, he is not composing great poetry, but rather, simply scribes his name on a piece of paper in various forms. Just like a school child practicing their signature, trying to make it look nice and not being satisfied with the outcome. The fact that he repeatedly writes his name because nothing comes to his mind, shows him as an ordinary writer who is, as all writers are, subjected to such things as writer's block. Tom Stoppard, supports this idea by claiming that Will, "the young writer was just like us when we were young writers. He

happens to be called Will Shakespeare and he's a lot better but roughly speaking he has our problems." (*SL* Stoppard: bonus - on film 0:02:38 – 0:02:46). Stoppard affirms the impression that the audience gets the picture of an ordinary young writer. Like anyone facing an onerous problem, Will looks for something or someone to help him. He consults a 'priest of psyche' to get advice, which nicely illustrates his despair over his lost gift. At the priest's, he lies down on the couch and talks about his problem (*SL* 0:07:24 – 0:07:44). His lying on the couch and sharing what he feels, closely resembles the common modern image of the Freudian couch. The fact that the 'priest of psyche' draws the conclusion that the source of his problem could have something to do with sexuality also bears Freudian allusions. Freud's ideas, of course, were not known back in 16th century England. As a result, this scene with its modern and familiar character enhances the image of an ordinary man. Its 19th century character is most probably familiar to the majority of the spectators and so they can relate to the character's situation. Moreover, Will's superstitious nature reflects a typically human type of behaviour, according to which one looks for something to hold on to in a situation of despair. Will in his desperate situation puts all his hope into a brown bangle that he has been given by the priest of psyche. Thus, when he finds his muse, whom he had given the bangle, in bed with Mr Tilney, the Master of the Revels, he loses all his hope of recovering his gift. The familiar picture that the audience gets concerning Will is reinforced by the fact that he is portrayed to tell a lie in order to take advantage of a situation. That is, he lies to Mr Burbage saying that he has nearly completed a comedy, which in fact he has not even started to write. Moreover, he lies about the money he allegedly had been paid by Mr Henslowe for that comedy (*SL* 0:09:45 – 0:09:56). The scene perfectly mirrors the merciless character of theatre business and at the same time depicts Will showing an utterly human form of behaviour. For instance, in order to achieve something, he does not tell the truth. Similarly, when Lord Wessex threateningly asks him for his name Will lies and pretends to be Christopher Marlowe (*SL* ch.10). That is, he lies in order to save his own life, which is a clever thing to do but at the same time an act of cowardice. Later he deeply regrets this lie as he thinks that Marlowe

died because of it. When Will finds out about Marlowe's death, he shows a rather common behaviour of someone afflicted by feelings of guilt. Upon hearing the news that Kit was stabbed he leaves the tavern and falls to the ground asking God for forgiveness. The following scene depicts Will in church, kneeling in front of the altar, praying and repenting (*SL* 1:08:46 – 1:09:43). The portrayal of his grief and feelings of guilt is reinforced by the use of rather loud melancholic and sad music, as well as dark lighting conditions. For example, the gothic atmosphere created by the lighting conditions emphasises his emotional state and the scene ends with a close-up revealing Will's sorrowful face (*SL* 1:09:42). The fact that Will, who is not particularly depicted as a religious person, turns to God to ask for forgiveness, mirrors a common human behaviour. That is, in times of trouble even someone who is not necessarily a believer tends to turn to God for help.

Throughout the film Will is portrayed to be very sensitive concerning his writing and is easily irritated by critical comments regarding it. When Will is backstage at Whitehall and hears the Queen and other members of the audience cough during a performance of one of his plays, he gets really upset. He angrily and ironically states "Will Shakespeare has a play, let's go and cough through it" (*SL* 0:11:20 – 0:11:22) and infuriated takes his leave. Thus, rather than showing a self-confident author who is above such things, Will is obviously offended by it. The emotions are emphasised by the use of a two-shot of Will and Rosaline whereby selective focus is put on Will's angry facial expression. Similarly, Will's insecurity concerning his skill is well portrayed in chapter 16 when he hands some pages to a fellow actor and asks him for his opinion. His self-doubts are, on the one hand, mirrored in the fact that he asks another actor for his opinion. On the other hand, they are also reflected in the portrayal of his disappointed face when the actor gives the devaluing answer that "It's all right." (*SL* 0:53:48). He sighs, sadly looks away and apologetically utters "I know, I know" (*SL* 0:53:53 – 0:53:55) while resting his head on his arm. When Ned states that the play is good, Will looks up in surprise, obviously relieved and glad. This scene portrays Will as a writer who is very much dependent on other people's opinion about his work

rather than a writer who is convinced of his genius. We get a very down to earth depiction of this man. There is also an instance when Will is portrayed as being self confident and satisfied with what he does, a sentiment which is, nevertheless, short-lived. That is, in chapter seven Will happily and contentedly runs towards Mr Burbage's to hand in the first scene of his new play. He bumps into Mr Henslowe and proudly tells him of his achievement adding "God, I'm good!" (SL 0: 16:49). His exhilarated feelings about the completed scene are reflected in the triumphant type of music that accompanies him as he runs (SL 0:16:44 – 0:16:57). The excitement, however, is short-lived when instead of meeting Mr Burbage, he finds Mr Tilney in bed with Rosaline. At the same time that Will's excitement vanishes, the music fades out and his face reveals deep disappointment about the fact that he finds Rosaline there (SL 0:17:00 – 0:17:09). Thus, frustrated and angry he leaves the house and throws the script into an open fire on the street. His acting on impulse and destroying his work, mirrors a rather ordinary reaction to disappointment. Will retreats to a tavern to stomach his disappointment but at first he has to pretend a good mood and assure Mr Henslowe that he has nearly completed the play, which of course he has not. While the wannabe actors cheer and leave the tavern to head for the theatre to audition for the play, Will is left behind and a close up of his face reveals his despair (SL 0:18:24 – 0:18:31). The cheerfulness of the others who do not even notice Will's sad face and thus do not realize that something is wrong, reinforces the impression of Will's gloom and misery. When they have left the tavern he goes to the bar to lighten his sorrows with a drink. Going for a drink to stomach problems is a highly common behavioural pattern and therefore, the audience can perfectly relate to the situation the protagonist is in. Will sits at the bar resting his head on his hand and before Will notices it, the audience sees Christopher Marlowe near him. Upon him hearing Kit's voice, Will again pretends that everything is fine and overrides his despair exclaiming that everything is "wonderful, wonderful" (SL 0:18:54). In the course of the, at times boastful, conversation between the two competitors, his despair, nevertheless, becomes apparent when he talks about the play he is working on titled "Romeo and Ethel the pirate's daughter". His insecurity is

revealed when he nearly excuses himself for the title upon noticing Kit's unimpressed reaction to it. Thus, Will shows his real feelings and finally admits that he has not even started to write the play. His honesty pays off when Kit gives inspiring suggestions concerning the pirate story and Will leaves the tavern exhilarated and happy. During the audition, Will gets rather upset about the fact that all of the contestants cite Christopher Marlowe. His annoyance about the fact that Marlowe is already well known while he is not also becomes obvious in the scene on the river when he chases after Thomas (*SL* ch.9). The boats man asks Will whether he was an actor and then boasts about the fact that he has already had Christopher Marlowe in his boat once whereupon Will, who is quite annoyed, looks away. On another occasion, he is again portrayed very annoyed regarding a comment made by Mr Fennyman, who suggests, "there's no one like Marlowe" (*SL* 0:34:07 – 0:34:10). Judging from his reactions to comments about the brilliant Playwright Marlowe, his insecurity about his own skill becomes obvious, which again emphasises his ordinariness. Going back to the audition, the fact that there was no Romeo among the contestants increases Will's sulkiness. When Thomas Kent enters the stage and states that he "would like to do a speech by a writer who commands the heart of every player" (*SL* 0:21:19 – 0:21:23) Will thinks that Thomas would refer to a speech by Marlowe and thus acts in a highly understandable way. He rolls his eyes and turns his head away in a displeased manner. Only when he recognizes his own writing he slowly gets up, impressed by the boy's performance. Will's enthusiasm is mirrored in a camera shot zooming in on Thomas from a high angle to eye-level (*SL* 0:21:43 – 0:22:10). This shot alternates with another one portraying Will starting with a low shot angle and ending with a close shot of him, revealing his exhilarated face. This scene somehow resembles the balcony scenes in the film and thus, could be seen to already point to the romance that will develop between Viola, disguised as Thomas, and Will. What is more, music begins slowly and in this highlights the emotions felt by all.

The scene of the ball at Sir Robert De Lesseps's when Will falls in love with Viola, is another portrayal of his normality as a young man who falls head over heels in love (*SL* ch.10). He is so ravished by Viola's beauty that he at

first does not realize the gravity of the situation that he finds himself in. That is, Lord Wessex drags him off the dance floor and the change in music already forebodes that trouble is approaching, thus the melody goes down and the volume increases (*SL* 0:28:42 – 0:28:48). Will who is smitten with the sight of Viola replies to Lord Wessex in a way which gets him into even more trouble. He thoughtlessly states “I was a poet till now, but I’ve seen beauty that puts my poems at one with the talking ravens in the Tower.” (*SL* 0:28:50 – 0:28:55). His behaviour reflects the typical behaviour of someone who has his head in the clouds, being so carried away by love that one does not realize the danger of a situation. This image is reinforced by the use of a camera shot focusing on his face, his staring at Viola (*SL* 0:28:50 – 0:28:53). Only when Will feels the cold blade of Lord Wessex’s knife against his throat does he ‘wake up’ from his dream, so to speak, and puzzled asks how he has offended. Despite the fact that the prospects for a future together with Viola are more than hopeless, Will does not give in (*SL* ch.17). In the face of the insurmountable circumstances he is determined not to give her up. Thus, the audience gets confronted with a character that determinedly fights for a lady who he, in fact, has already lost (*SL* 0:57:05 – 0:57:20). That is, Will cross dresses as a chaperon and hovers over Viola during her audience at the Queen (*SL* 0:57:38 - 0:58:05). His determination, which results in him making a fool of himself and, what is more, at the risk of being detected, mirrors the common romantic image of a lover who would even accept death only to be near his beloved. In this, the audience is presented with the typical image of an ordinary hero, a textbook example of a lover, who does not cease to fight for his true love. Similarly, when Lord Wessex comes to the theatre to challenge Will, his determination is equally portrayed. Will immediately accepts the challenge and fights for his love and life. In addition, he fights to take revenge for Marlowe’s death as he thinks that Lord Wessex had him killed. His courage and resolution are depicted by means of camera shots showing the bound and determined look on his face when he fearlessly approaches Lord Wessex (*SL* 1:18:25 . 1:18:34). This again confirms the idea, which is conveyed of a man in love who is brave and resolute.

The farewell scene between Will and Viola is another felicitous portrayal of the playwright's ordinariness (SL ch.29). That is, the familiar feelings in the light of the inevitable loss of his love are depicted at length, which again highlight the humaneness of the great writer within the film. Close-shots of Will reveal his sorrowful face and his despair; and with a sad voice he greets Viola by her married name (SL 1:48:50 – 1:48:95). Will is deeply devastated about the fact that he has lost Viola. He even thinks about giving up writing and states that he is "done with theatre. [pause] The playhouse is for dreamers." (SL 1:48:18 – 1:48:23). Despite the fact that he could join the Chamberlain's Men with the 50 pounds wager and would no longer have to be a hired player, he sees no other way except to give up. The impression that nothing seems to make sense in the light of his beloved's parting is a deeply human sentiment and reaction to the loss of a loved one. The depiction of this pessimistic reaction clearly mirrors a perfectly common and understandable behavioural pattern. The absence of music and direct sound to accompany the beginning of the scene reinforces the realness of it and the emotions displayed. Viola encourages him not to give up and inspires him to write *Twelfth Night*, and thus the film goes back on the factual track and displays a rather truthful ending, namely that Will did continue to produce literature.

In short, Will, the person behind the author, is generally portrayed as a normal young man whose ordinary reactions are most likely familiar to the spectator. His normality is nicely summed up in a comment by Mr Henslowe. When Mr Fennyman angrily asks Mr Henslowe who Will was, he simply states "Nobody. [pause] He's the author." (SL 0:32:06 – 0:32:09). In other words, Will is described as nobody special, as just another playwright. The ordinary depiction of Will is also supported by the portrayal of aspects concerning normal everyday life. Thus, the following section serves to illustrate those aspects in the film that show the normality of everyday life in SL.

6.2.3. Ordinary everyday life

As has already been discussed regarding the depiction of the everyday in *BJ*, everyday life typically involves highly familiar and ordinary aspects, aspects in which people are generally subjected. One of these ordinary facets of everyday life is the division of working days and weekends (Bennett, Watson x). The relationship between Will and Viola is shown to be included in this division. The Sundays depicted in film are often of key significance concerning the romantic love plot. For example, it is on a Sunday morning after a night together that a major setback happens. It is the day that Viola has to report to the Queen as Lord Wessex asks for the consent of Her Majesty to get married (*SL* ch.16). Similarly, Viola finds out about the poet's death, thinking that Will is dead, on a Sunday before attending church (*SL* ch.20). It is also the day that the lovers meet again, this time during the day and they meet as themselves, not disguised (*SL* ch.20). Their encounter is connected to a rather familiar and (in the occidental culture area) commonplace practice on a Sunday, namely, a Sunday Mass attendance. The most serious setback and definite loss of their love also happens on a Sunday, namely Viola has to accept her duty and marry Lord Wessex (*SL* ch.24). In addition, to the division in weekdays and Sundays, Will and Viola's love relationship proves to be highly determined by the natural division in day and night. They can generally only consume their love as Will and Viola during the night, as this is when Viola's time as Thomas Kent ends and she can be herself. Their first time together at the De Lesseps' estate is equally set during night (*SL* ch.14) as are most other scenes showing the lovers in bed (*SL* ch.15 & 22). On several occasions, reality breaks in on them through the inevitable fact that there is always morning after night. This is often reinforced by the use of direct sound marking the passing of time. After their first night together it is the rooster who calls them back into reality (*SL* ch.14). In a later scene it is the tolling of the church bells which makes Viola sit up straight in bed as she thinks it was a weekday and they would have rehearsals (*SL* 0:55:20 – 0:55:24). When Will calms her saying that it is only Sunday, she is all relieved and lies down again. However, upon hearing Lord Wessex's angry voice she remembers the duty that this day would bring and

frightened sits up in bed (0:56:18 – 0:56:21). As can be seen, familiar aspects concerning time are used as a basis for the portrayal of the romance. In addition, the film depicts Will as being subject to the time aspect in the same way that the audience is, thus it ties in with the spectator's experience. Concerning the depiction of everyday life on the streets, it can be stated that Will's life and his activity as a playwright is generally embedded in the portrayal of everyday life and business in London's streets. Several scenes depict Will moving around in the busy streets and the daily routine occurring upon London's streets. This presents the main character as simply one out of many people in London. He can move about in the streets without being recognized, which again reinforces the idea of an ordinary young man. The conversation between Mr Henslowe and Will, for example, about the theatre business and their roles in it takes place on the busy streets. In this quite long scene the audience gets a perfect picture of the business as usual in London with the bustling activity of builders, merchants, people chatting and attending to their own business, just to mention a few (*SL* 0:05:26 – 0:06:36). Even though the camera mainly focuses on the two talking; the audience gets a good picture of the everyday hustle and bustle in the streets. At times the camera pans toward these ordinary happenings. The use of direct sound, such as the noises of animals, the babble of voices, emphasises the impression of business as usual. In this, the conversation about issues concerning the theatre business, something which might not be familiar to the audience, attains an everyday character in the light of the portrayal of everyday life in London. In chapter seven the tough world of the theatre business is equally imbedded in the everyday business in London. Similarly, Will's chasing after Thomas Kent is also set in the busy streets and traffic on the river (*SL* 0:22:44 – 0:23:33). As a result, the situation which is out of the ordinary for Will is represented in ordinary and everyday surroundings. Beside the direct sounds, a hasty type of music that mirrors the chase after Thomas Kent accompanies this scene. Therefore, the depiction of business as usual, the ordinary run of things serves as a basis for portraying the ordinary beginnings of an extraordinary writer. In *SL* the everyday is also depicted by means of the portrayal of day-to-day practices such as going to a

tavern. In the same way that a pub nowadays is “a site of social, political and economic exchange” (Bennett, Watson xxii), it could be claimed that the tavern served a similar purpose in Elizabethan times. The tavern could therefore equally be understood as an “icon of the everyday” (Bennett, Watson xxii). As such it serves to portray yet another aspect of the everyday in the life of young Will Shakespeare in film. The first tavern scene in chapter eight depicts the tavern as a site of economic as well as of social exchange (SL 0:17:56 – 0:20:15). To be more precise it depicts Will being amidst economic activities when he actually retreated to the tavern to stomach his sorrows. That is, Mr Henslowe announces an up-coming audition for a play which actually has not even been written. Moreover, this scene also serves a social purpose, that is, when most of the others had left, Will is shown sitting at the bar where he meets Marlowe. The social interaction between the two competing playwrights in a common and familiar place has an inspiring effect on Will as he gets advice from Kit. As a result, the scene serves to illustrate the social importance of this everyday practice. The use of direct sound adds to the common and familiar character of the tavern scene. Following the fight between the two playing companies, namely the Admiral’s Men and the Chamberlain’s Men, the former retreat to a tavern to celebrate their victory (SL ch.19). They celebrate together with other actors from the play *RJ*. Thus, the scene shows Will who is more or less at home in a tavern together with Thomas Kent who, on the contrary, has never been inside a tavern, let alone in a place of prostitution. This second tavern scene primarily serves a social purpose, namely, to celebrate and get drunk. Nevertheless, business still proceeds as usual in that Mr Henslowe talks about Will’s play and how it would end. The tavern scene alternates with another scene showing a man running through the dark streets of London, which is accompanied by melancholic and an ominous type of music. The two scenes are combined by means of a sound bridge whereby in the tavern scene the direct sound predominates. It is in the quite commonplace situation of a tavern visit that Thomas finds out that Will is married and therefore he leaves the tavern distressed. His leaving coincides with the entering of the man who had been seen running, thus the two alternating scenes merge. Will’s misery is great as

he has not only lost Viola but also thinks himself responsible for Marlowe's death. As a result, this scene in the tavern unites the common and familiar with the tragic, thus an everyday practice becomes a turning point in the story. The common practice of going to the tavern is again portrayed towards the end of the film when Mr Tilney closes the Rose theatre. Thus, the theatre crew is depicted drinking in a tavern, trying to drown their sorrow about the lost play (SL 1:24:03 – 1:25:15). In this, it again shows a typical and familiar way of dealing with problems, whereby the emotions are emphasised by the use of a sad type of music. Their depressive state, however, does not last very long, as Mr Burbage enters the tavern and offers his theatre to Will. This way the story gets back on track and allows Will to be depicted as a successful playwright.

To conclude, it can most rightfully be claimed that the principal impression that the audience obtains of the main protagonist and his life is one characterized by ordinariness and familiarity in many respects. Already the fact that the film is primarily based on the plot of *RJ*, the archetypal couple of Romeo and Juliet, shows that the film makers aimed at making Shakespeare the hero in one of his own plays, so to speak. Thus, the film portrays the great writer from a familiar and commonplace perspective. Joseph Fiennes, the actor who plays Will, stated that the film "humanizes the man [Shakespeare] to such an extent that he becomes enormously accessible" (SL Fiennes: bonus - cast & crew 1:20:56 – 1:21:00). In this, his statement really gets at the heart of this quasi film biography. That is, it is not the extraordinary skill of the literary English icon that is in the foreground but rather, common aspects which are supposed to have triggered the genius of William Shakespeare. This way the audience gains an understanding of how the young man who is portrayed scribbling his own name at the beginning of the film, ends up composing world literature such as *RJ* and *Twelfth Night* at the end of the motion picture. Consequently, the writing, that for which the real Shakespeare is best known, is given an ordinary touch. Therefore, the film depicts the man in a way which allows the audience to relate to him and his genius.

Conclusion

In general, the representation of the author and authorship in popular culture is characterized by a heightened interest in the person behind the author. That is, the author who Roland Barthes had declared dead has arisen to new life and is prioritized, above all in film biographies. The increasing number of biopics released in recent years, bears witness to this fact. In analysing the hype about the author, this study departs from Barthes idea according to which the author is redundant and the reader is in the centre of attention. While Barthes's declaration of the death of the author seems to contradict current developments, his postulation that the reader takes the place of the author in terms of importance, confirms the hype regarding the author. To be more precise, in resurrecting the author in film biographies, the reader or viewer nevertheless, is in the centre of it all. That is, the respective life is portrayed in a way that allows the spectator to relate to it.

Judging from the film analyses, it can most rightfully be concluded that the ordinary and everyday indeed form a major part in *BJ* as well as *SL*. What is more, these aspects constitute the frame on which the respective lives are depicted. As a result, the assumption that biopics highlight the ordinary aspect of a person in order to turn the extraordinary about her/him into something ordinary, most probably applies to these films. That is, the film biographies in question describe the authors' development towards becoming great writers by means of depicting ordinary events and aspects concerning their lives. What is more, they convey the idea that this extraordinary gift is the result of familiar, common circumstances, so to speak. In other words, the commonplace issue such as romantic love together with the depiction of the writers as normal young people living an ordinary life, prove to have a productive effect in the end, that is, the creation of great literature. Based on this, it could even be argued that they suggest that anyone could become a great writer. While the focus of both films appears to rely on the depiction of the ordinary behind the great writer, this impression is achieved differently in each film. That is, *BJ* primarily highlights the ordinary about Jane and her life

by means of situations which generally pertain to the private sphere, so to speak. Jane's ordinariness is mainly portrayed in connection to aspects traditionally related to women. Thus, she is depicted as a very social person with close family ties. On the contrary, *SL* presents a protagonist who is very much at home in the public sphere. Thus, he is depicted in the world of business. As a result, these considerations leave space for further thought and analysis regarding the dichotomy between the private and the public sphere in these two biopics. Despite the different approaches of the films in regards to the portrayal of the protagonists, both motion pictures are strongly based and dependent on the universal theme of romantic love.

A close analysis of other author or artist based biopics would probably reveal that the afore-discussed assumption equally applies to biopics in general. Thus there is room for further investigation to find out in how far the particular findings apply to film biographies overall. Regarding the present study, it can be claimed that *BJ* as well as *SL* have achieved the fact that the authors on whose lives they are (fictionally) based, "will never age [...], nor fade, nor die" (*SL* 1:50:10 – 1:50:14) for audiences to come. Rather, they themselves and their lives will remain relevant for all.

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Summary

This study deals with the issue of author and authorship in general and its representation in popular culture in particular, especially in film. Concerning the notion of the author, it should be pointed out that this study departs from the literal understanding of the author as someone who produces literature. Its main concern is connected with the current hype concerning the producer of literature, which manifests itself, among other things, in the production of film biographies. What is more, it explores the way the author is portrayed in film biographies using the example of two biographical films. For instance, it examines the portrayal of the novelist Jane Austen in the biopic *Becoming Jane* and then it analyses the depiction of the playwright William Shakespeare in the film *Shakespeare in Love*. Both analyses depart from the assumption that screen biographies aim at highlighting the ordinary and everyday aspects concerning a person and their respective lives.

In general, the study is divided in two parts, whereby the first part focuses on the ideas concerning the role of the author, which were presented by the French literary critic Roland Barthes. In an essay with the telling and provocative title *The Death of the Author* Barthes declares the author is dead and at the same time puts the reader in the centre of attention. The second part builds upon the implications of Barthes's claims and concerns the current emphasis on the person of the author in popular culture. It considers the nature of the quasi genre of film biographies and suggests possible reasons for the hype regarding the author. Most importantly, it describes this trend using the example of the hype about Jane Austen and William Shakespeare. The main focus of this study is apparent in the analysis of the way each of these authors is portrayed in their respective biopics. As has already been indicated, the analyses are based upon the hypothesis that biographical films emphasise the ordinary aspect concerning life and person depicted. The study examines the biopics under discussion concerning the way the ordinary and everyday is portrayed. Both biopics manage to

orchestrate the depiction of common, universal and everyday aspects with the portrayal of life back in the 18th and late 16th century England, respectively. The result is a fictional portrayal of Jane Austen and William Shakespeare as ordinary young people. These extraordinary authors become extraordinarily ordinary people and thus the viewer can relate to them.

Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Betrachtung der Person des/der Autors/Autorin und der Autorenschaft im Allgemeinen und speziell mit ihrer Darstellung in der Populärkultur. Dabei bezieht sich der Autorenbegriff ausschließlich auf das Medium Text. Die Arbeit behandelt primär die derzeitige Tendenz wonach die Person des/der Autors/Autorin und sein/ihr Leben betont werden. Das heißt, sie beleuchtet den allgemeinen Trend den/die Autor/in hervorzuheben, was unter anderem auch besonders in der Produktion von biografischen Filmen Ausdruck findet. Es wird der Frage nachgegangen, wie Filmbiografien die Figur des/der Autors/Autorin darstellen. Anhand von zwei konkreten Filmbeispielen, *Geliebte Jane* von Julian Jarrold (Orig.: *Becoming Jane*) und *Shakespeare in Love* von John Madden, wird die Darstellung der Schriftstellerin Jane Austen sowie die des Bühnendichters William Shakespeare untersucht. Diese Filme werden insbesondere hinsichtlich der Annahme untersucht, dass Filmbiografien das Alltägliche und Gewöhnliche im Leben, und in der Person des/der Autors/Autorin hervorheben.

Die Arbeit lässt sich in zwei Teile gliedern. Der erste Teil der Abhandlung beschäftigt sich ganz allgemein mit dem Autorenbegriff und Roland Barthes' grundsätzliche Theorien bezüglich der Rolle des Autors, die er in seinem Aufsatz mit dem Titel „Der Tod des Autors“ (1967; Orig.: *La mort de l'auteur* 1968) formuliert hat. Der zweite Teil baut auf diesen allgemeinen

Überlegungen auf und befasst sich mit dem momentanen Trend, den Fokus auf die Person des/der Autors/Autorin zu legen. Neben der Beschreibung des Genres der Filmbiografie werden auch mögliche Gründe für die Hervorhebung des Autors besprochen. Darüber hinaus wird dieses Phänomen anhand der Beispiele des Rummels um Jane Austen und William Shakespeare beschrieben. Basierend auf der Annahme, dass biografische Filme die Aspekte des Alltäglichen, Vertrauten und Gewöhnlichen hervorheben, liegt der Schwerpunkt dieser Arbeit auf der Analyse derselben in der Darstellung der Personen und ihres Lebens.

Die Analyse hat bestätigt, dass beide Filme die alltäglichen, gewöhnlichen und dem Zuseher vertrauten Aspekte bezüglich des Lebens und der Person des/der jeweiligen Autors/Autorin hervorheben. Diese Aspekte sind gekonnt mit der Darstellung des Lebens im 18. bzw. 16. Jahrhundert gekoppelt. Jane Austen und William Shakespeare, werden als bodenständige, junge Leute gezeigt, mit denen sich der Zuseher identifizieren kann. Diese außergewöhnlichen Schriftsteller werden also außerordentlich gewöhnlich dargestellt.

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