Introduction: 'Such stuff as dreams are made on'

This book is about the making of movie dreams from Shakespeare's plays, the processes by which filmmakers conduct the two-way traffic between dreaming and what we take for reality. It draws more extensively than previous studies of the films in question on draft scripts and other archival sources. It also assesses the significance of the works for their makers (both corporate and individual) and the audiences of their own time. Specific scenes and sequences are discussed in detail, together with particular aspects of the 'world' created in each film which help to define the vision it imparts of the play, of Shakespeare and of the cinema itself.

The organisation is partly chronological: the book begins with the 1935 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, followed by Laurence Olivier's 1944 *Henry V*; then the final chapter brings together three *Romeo and Juliet* films, from 1936, 1954 and 1968, grouped together because they offer distinctive versions – and visions – of Renaissance Italy, and because on the basis of the same dramatic text they also articulate different notions of what constitutes a 'Shakespeare Film'. Three of the films – *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Henry V* and Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 *Romeo and Juliet* – have influenced subsequent versions, inspiring either emulation or avoidance of their approaches and methods. Traces of Max Reinhardt's *Dream* can be found in Michael Hoffmann's 1999 version, and Kenneth Branagh's 1989 *Henry V* is in some ways a respectful dialogue with its predecessor. Alongside Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (1996), with its frenetic MTV-style editing and flamboyant *mise-en-scène*, Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* now figures as a 'straight' version of the play – a paradoxical fate for a movie which addressed the youth culture of its own time and in some sequences mimicked the rapid cutting and *cinéma-verité* camerawork of the New Wave. (Nino Rota's song from the score has even become a clichéd cue signifying romantic wistfulness, employed for a long time by BBC Radio One to introduce listeners' love stories.) None of the films discussed uses the more aggressively innovative techniques of the avant-garde of its time, still less the 'intensified continuity' and faster

pace that characterise such recent works as Luhrmann's *Romeo* or Julie Taymor's *Titus* (1999) or the self-conscious references to the modern media in Luhrmann's film and the *Hamlet* of Michael Almereyda (1999).[1]

Influences sometimes flow in unexpected channels, quite apart from the small group of Shakespeare Films. As they reviewed dozens of older films and animations, Disney's animators may well have looked to Reinhardt for inspiration in the forest scenes of the studio's first feature-length animation, *Snow White* (1937), and the 1935 film seems more akin to the sinister setting of Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves* (1984) than to the relatively unthreatening woodland in Michael Hoffmann's 1999 version of the Shakespeare play. Angela Carter, on whose stories Jordan's film is based, pays her own homage to Reinhardt with the fictionalised Hollywood *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the novel *Wise Children* (1991), and the making of the 1935 *Dream* is the basis of Ken Ludwig's witty play, *Shakespeare in Hollywood* (2005). The battlefield in Olivier's *Henry V*, with its gay pavilions, fluttering pennants and green meadow, may be present in the climactic conflict of *The Chronicles of Narnia* (2005), where the newly appointed general, Peter, sits like Olivier's Henry on horseback (in Peter's case, unicornback) in shining armour with his sword raised, waiting for the moment to signal the attack. Andrew Adamson's film begins with the gloom and danger of wartime London before bringing the children as evacuees to the mysterious old house where they will find refuge and, in due course, access to a brighter and more picturesque world. The same movement, I will suggest, occurred for audiences, if not for the play's characters, in Olivier's 1944 film. Even if there is no direct or conscious influence, the narrative structures of fantasy and the raw ingredients of its imagery are so potently articulated in these older films as to be at least shared if not emulated by their successors.

Only the 1935 *A Midsummer Night's Dream* deals in the strict sense of the word with dreaming, and none of the other Shakespeare Films discussed here moves into the area of fantasy, making the viewer share the characters' disorientation or delusion in the manner of such expressionist classics as *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920) – a style whose legacy can be traced in many horror films, *film noir* thrillers of the 1940s, and (among Shakespearean subjects) Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet* (1948), Orson Welles's *Macbeth* (1949) and *Othello* (1952), Derek Jarman's *The Tempest* (1980) and Julie Taymor's *Titus*. However, in more general terms all the films may be said to participate in the relationship between movies and dreams – or rather, between the experience of watching a film and that of dreaming – which has long been the subject of critical debate and the

source of theoretical speculation. Even though he does not refer specifically to dreams, Erwin Panofsky identifies two of the key elements of reorientation that films may be said to share with them in his seminal essay 'Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures' (1934): the 'dynamization of space' and 'spatialization of time'.[2] Even when films do not engage in the overt distortions of vision and time of stylised or professedly 'visionary' works, we can identify foreshortenings of time and space in even the most determinedly realist films. The compressions of time and space expressed by montage sequences in 'classical' Hollywood movies are often equivalent in technique and effect to those of experimental films. In his recent study *The Power of Movies: How Screen and Mind Interact* (2005), Colin McGinn explores the dream/film analogy in terms of the ontology of moviegoing rather than as an argument rooted in psychoanalytic theory. Among other richly suggestive propositions, he argues that a film 'is really a dream as it aspires to be', a line of thought that coincides with a distinction made by Stanley Cavell in *The World Viewed*: 'Most dreams are boring narratives . . . their skimpy surface out of all proportion with their riddle interest and their effect on the dreamer. To speak of film adventures or glamours or comedies as dreams is a dream of dreams: it doesn't capture the wish behind the dream, but merely the wish to have interesting dreams.'[3] Citing *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête* (1946), McGinn develops his analysis of 'this dreamlike meshing of the visual and the emotional', but the proposition is held to be true of films in general rather than restricted to fantasy films: 'The right blend of realism and fantasy also maximizes the dreamlike character of a film, thus inducing that blissful state of dream immersion. A film must be rooted in reality, but it must also depart from reality and enter the realm of the imagination.'[4]

The nature or degree of an audience's assent to the world placed before them in a movie prompts Leo Braudy to argue that 'the mixture of meaning and matter' in films has an especial fascination for the 'religiously oriented director' – whether Bergman or Buñuel – because belief can only have a qualified part to play 'when everything is there', and consequently 'Coleridge's concept of the willing suspension of disbelief is irrelevant to film because the problem is not to believe in something that you normally do not. . . . If there is any problem, it is extricating yourself from the cinematic illusion that is so much more believable than your normal life – Coleridge in reverse.'[5] Of the films made from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* since Reinhardt's, that directed by Adrian Noble (1996) deals most directly in the ways and means of the dreamer. In it a little boy in striped pyjamas leaves the safety of a 'real' but in fact stylised bedroom (the

toys are all antiques, a nostalgic flea market of childhood) and follows a mysterious creature (Puck) along alarming corridors and through mysterious doors – but the shifts in point of view and manipulations of space and time seem devoid of content. At times an audience surrogate of a kind absent in Reinhardt's film and at others an object of their detached gaze, Noble's little interloper is himself too patently a nostalgic dream-figure to negotiate effectively between the mundane and the magical. Perhaps the audience needs less help than Noble, somewhat patronisingly, is offering it?

Whatever account we give of the audience's experience, whether we emphasise their psychic development or the formations of ideology or (as in theories of the 'gaze') the confluence of the two, the element of fantasy indulged and induced is brought into question.[6] Like 'magic' – a word often invoked colloquially and in academic discourse in relation to movies – as a metaphor for the experience of films, dreaming has a potency equivalent to that of the dream/theatre metaphor in Shakespeare's time and since, and is available to a comparable degree for reflections on life and illusion. From theoretical study to the output of the studios' publicity departments, the dream metaphor has been worked at relentlessly. It is the basis of one of the rueful epithets – half cynical, half admiring – attached to Hollywood, the 'Dream Factory'. It can be a proud boast of idealism, exemplified now by the company name 'Dream Works'. Among the disenchanted and hostile, it can be the basis for bitter reproach. One of the persistent paradoxes of the Hollywood phenomenon is the relationship between the seemingly contradictory elements of 'dream' and 'factory', not merely on the level of anxiety about the manipulation of the audience's consciousness, but in terms of the extent to which the industry's employees have been autonomous agents. Can an industry dream? Should we think in terms of the 'genius of the system' and locate the vision of pictures in the artistic sensibility of a producer or director supported by and responding to the facilities and imperatives of a studio?[7] In the case of the two Hollywood films discussed in the present work, I will argue that the 'vision' – attributable to different agents in each case – is as much a realisation of the studio's self-image as of the play's potential or the director's or producer's art – or, for that matter, the imaginings of an Elizabethan playwright.

A major element of the 'system' – whether in Hollywood or elsewhere – is stars, even when (as in the casting of Zeffirelli's young Romeo and Juliet) they are notable by their absence. Film stars share with familiar actors in any dramatic medium the paradox of being simultaneously themselves and the fictional characters they play, but they are also projections of otherwise inexpressible desires and ambitions harboured by their admirers. In arguments

concerning the 'gaze' (male or otherwise), a key element is the complex relationship between the audience's reception of them and the stars as representations of gender identity and fulfilment. Stars are a focus for pleasures and anxieties concerning public and private spheres, the real and the unreal and the concept of the individual.[8] Filmmakers have avoided the employment of stars for aesthetic reasons (as is the case with Italian neo-realist cinema) or in order to prevent the diversion of attention from more important matters. Stars can delight an audience by demonstrating their ability to disguise themselves, but can also give pleasure by being unmistakably themselves. 'Sean Connery,' the advertising insisted, '*is* James Bond.' Something significant and valuable about the confirmation of identity lurks in the spectator's enjoyment of such 'doubles', and several kinds of vicarious pleasure are being given and taken at once. Most of the films discussed in the following chapters have ceased to afford as much of this pleasure as they once did – the MGM stars are less potent than they were in 1936 – but in at least one case, that of Olivier, the actor's status as a signifier of cultural authenticity is arguably stronger now than it was when his performances in other movie roles (including Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* and Maxim de Winter in *Rebecca*, in 1939 and 1940 respectively, and Darcy in the 1940 MGM version of *Pride and Prejudice*) were more vivid than his Shakespearean work for cinemagoers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Shakespeare Films form a minor element of the total output of the movie industry, but attract attention not merely on account of their qualities as films, or their usefulness in opening up questions regarding the plays, but because of their ambiguous status as cultural objects. They are 'dreams' in a sense different from that we might attach (as McGinn and others have done) to the medium in general. As cultural products they exist on the borders between 'high' and 'low' culture; engender anxiety concerning their potential influence on impressionable audiences; and can seem to exemplify conflicts between commercialism and a less trammelled, more innocent realm of ideas and artistic expression. Shakespeare Films have been seen as representing an aspect of globalisation on the one hand and – though this argument is less likely to be heard nowadays – the shortcomings of popular culture on the other. In the contemporary critical responses from the 1930s to the 1960s analysed here, the discourses of gender, nationality and authenticity figure largely, together with those of movie stardom and achievement. Sometimes Shakespeare Films have been presented as the fulfilment of a dream, either of the medium's capabilities or even of the playwright's fancies, unfulfilled by his own inadequate theatres. Many Shakespeare Films have effectively returned to the staging

methods and ambitions of Victorian pictorial theatre, 'realising' the dramatist's dreams with a fullness of realistic detail he could not envisage in performance. Again, the line of influence is sinuous rather than direct: Reinhardt's and Hoffmann's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* films, some sixty years apart, have more in common with the lavish scenography of late Victorian theatre than the more radical versions of Peter Hall (1968) and Adrian Noble, but Hoffmann's fairies owe more than Reinhardt's to the work of such nineteenth-century artists as J. W. Waterhouse and Gustave Moreau and the illustrations of Arthur Rackham.[9] In this respect at least, Reinhardt's imaginings are more radical than the later director's.

There is also a connection between the terms of the films' reception and the element of dreaming *within* them. In addition to the visions as and when they occur in the films and ideal images of society and behaviour, these films articulate dreams (to speak more figuratively) of the theatre and of film itself. This is not simply nostalgia for a lost age of artistic excellence located in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Each film has generated a cluster of metanarratives, often carefully cultivated and publicised by its makers. One of this study's aims is to shed light on the ways in which these dreams intersect in and around the films.

Of prime importance in this undertaking is an understanding of the relationship between the processes of making these visions appear and the experiences of watching them: the progress from script ideas through production to exhibition and reception. Both 'process' and 'experience' are here in the plural, because I hope to capture the shifting nature of these entities, varied by the changing circumstances of the production itself and of the audiences for which the films were created. We who see them in the twenty-first century are not the cinemagoers of their own time (from the 1930s to the 1960s) and it is rare for us to be able to view these films by way of the exact medium (celluloid prints projected on a cinema screen) for which they were designed.[10] Even if we leave aside for the moment the issue of who 'we' may be, and beg important questions about the status of 'the film itself' as a joint product of the audience and what is put on the screen, we can identify major differences of experience, both of life in general and of the media in particular, that distinguish us from our equivalents in earlier decades.

Film production can be divided into four phases: development, preparation, principal photography and post-production. To these we can add promotion (also known as 'exploitation') and distribution. All produce paper trails more or less specific in kind to the activity in question: script drafts, internal memos, plans and budgets, conference notes, daily production reports, music scores, cutting notes, preview responses, publicity materials

and – in the final phase – the responses of critics, the trade press and audiences.[11] For most films, only a few elements of this paper trail are likely to be available. Few filmmakers have documented their own work as obsessively as Stanley Kubrick, voluminous selections from whose massive personal archive were published in 2005.[12] For films that can be documented more fully from surviving and available studio archives – such as the 1935 *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the 1936 *Romeo and Juliet* – the record is still unlikely to be anywhere near complete. The processes of filmmaking generate paperwork in proportion to the number of decisions taken, which during some phases of production can amount to scores of major and minor questions every day. However, we may only know (or think we know) what a director decided and why because someone who was present overheard or recalls their involvement in an exchange.

An example from personal experience of one sequence in Branagh's *Hamlet* will illustrate the point. Because I was on set, I know that the director took the advice of the camera operator, Martin Kenzie, in having Polonius close the gates of the chapel before beginning his interrogation of Ophelia (I.iii). I also know that earlier in the shooting a change in the weather at Blenheim prompted the removal of the second half of this scene (from line 57 of the text onwards) into the chapel from the location outside the palace where it begins, and that earlier the same morning the windy conditions had been responsible for the first part of the conversation between Laertes and Ophelia being shot looking towards the palace building rather than away from it and across the park – the wind kept blowing away the sheets of plastic and the foam that provided the background 'snow'. We can pursue the history of the sequence even further back: the shooting script shows that this sequence was originally to be located on a path leading towards a jetty, from which Laertes was to set off by boat, presumably joining a bigger vessel further downstream on the river represented here by the lake at Blenheim, and that subsequently Polonius would take Ophelia into a boathouse to question her.[13] The last of these statements can be verified from the script itself, and the decision to play the scene without the jetty, boat or boathouse can possibly be documented from memoranda, but the decision to change the direction of shooting may not be, unless it is reflected in the daily reports of the first assistant and the notes taken by the continuity supervisor.

Decisions of this kind, documented only when the information has a material consequence (ordering equipment, delivering personnel to the set, and so on), are the common currency of the daily activities of filming. Most of the deliberations that lead to changes of direction at one stage or another of the filmmaking process are lost to posterity. Units exist, after all, to make movies,

not to form archives. For the historian, a consequence of this is that hearsay, properly regarded as treacherous evidence, is often all that is available. Stories in the trade papers – such as the *Hollywood Reporter* – may be part of a company strategy, and gossip may or may not have been planted or created either to attract or to deflect attention.[14] This is hardly surprising, given the enormous sums of money involved in large-scale productions, but on occasion (and notoriously during the heyday of the Hollywood studios) producers have contrived to conceal events ranging from major criminal activities to the mere presence of discontent within a unit. On a less melodramatic level, we can rarely document the kind of decisions discussed above. Warner Bros. memo forms carried the reminder 'VERBAL MESSAGES CAUSE MISUNDERSTANDING AND DELAYS. (Please put them in writing).' Thanks to this policy, and to the preservation of a large part of the script materials and other production documentation for this company's films from the mid-1930s onwards, we have insight into many of the major decisions and a good many of the day-to-day activities behind the finished product.[15] However, it is difficult to form an impression as to what proportion of the paperwork has survived in the archives for a given film.

In some cases we can trace changes up to and including the screenplay as it is taken on to the studio floor on the first day of shooting, but even then 'Final' or 'Complete' stamped on a copy indicates the point reached in the schedule rather than a guarantee of authority. It is the 'Final' script that will be the basis of the 'final' budget – the costing made before filming begins for set-construction, costume design and other craft departments, and the estimates of labour, location and other costs. By the time principal photography has taken its course, there will usually have been many changes, and more will follow in the editing suite. Others may be implemented when the film is distributed, and it is likely to be adapted for showing in different national markets. In each case I have taken account of whatever shifts in the films' content and emphasis I have been able to identify, and also of complications in the textuality of what we often too complacently regard as 'the finished film'. In the case of Welles's films, including his *Macbeth* (1949) and *Othello*, the troubled relationship between the director and his financiers and distributors has been thoroughly (if not always conclusively) explored, and 'restored' versions of some films have been made available.[16] None of the films discussed in these chapters has the complex and contested textual history of the Welles *oeuvre*, but the surviving documents of their script development and production reveal choices and circumstances that bear on the interpretation of the original play, the working methods of the directors and producers, and the relationship of these factors to the films' reception.

Some further examples from Branagh's 1996 'full-length' *Hamlet* illustrate the possible (or probable) distance between drafts, 'final' shooting script and completed film, and the extent to which the vision may develop as work continues. In the case of this *Hamlet*, the changes are especially interesting because many concern 'visions' within the film, and the specific elements of its visual storytelling that move decisively into the area of dream and imagination. These are the flashbacks and illustrations, many of which survive in the completed film, and a number of special effects that were either modified or not executed. Some of the included flashbacks have proved controversial, not least those showing Hamlet's relationship with Ophelia as unequivocally sexual. Other scripted but not filmed flashbacks would have included Claudius and Gertrude making love (p. 48, sc. 43) to accompany Hamlet's 'O villain, villain, smiling damnèd villain' (I.v.106); Hamlet's visit to Ophelia's closet, as described by her in II.i; and the capture of Hamlet by the pirates (p. 167, sc. 126). None of these reached the filming stage, but they remained in the script until then. The decision to omit the suicide of Ophelia, also scripted (p. 174, sc. 130), was taken in rehearsal when it became clear that it would be better to remain with Gertrude for the speech. As for the lovemaking of Claudius and Gertrude, it would have complemented a more violent and perverse illustration (p. 45, scs. 39–40) in which Old Hamlet was watched through a two-way mirror by Claudius while the latter made love ('roughly from behind') to the queen. This notion had been left behind by the time rehearsals began, and various less overtly sexual situations were considered before the indoor game of curling, accompanied by significant looks, was decided on.[17] These elements would have contributed to the sense of a court that is like a thin layer of decorum over madness and passion, but may well have been too arresting and sensational. In some cases they also raise the awkward question of who is 'having' the flashback – a character or the all-knowing camera. (If the former, the consequences must be unravelled.) Many of the special effects originally envisaged would have enhanced the film's 'gothic' element. These included a book illustration suddenly coming to life and then 'morphing' into 'a black sinister carriage' in a transition to the scene between Laertes and Ophelia (I.ii–iii: p. 28, sc. 24).

A major script alteration in the first scene was made at a late stage, after at least one rough assembly of the film. Horatio, Barnardo and Marcellus would have seen the Ghost, and in a vertiginous crane shot (as in the completed version) we would have seen them from the Ghost's point of view, but we would not have seen the Ghost (p. 11, sc. 18). The strategy would have kept the image of the Ghost for Hamlet's first encounter with it

in the woods (p. 42, sc. 38), at the moment when (in the words of the script) 'a huge hand lifts him up by the neck and sends him crashing into tree where it holds him, strung up against the bark. We Cut for the first time to the Darth Vader-like visor and hear the rasping noise of a voice that sounds in agony.' The figure of the Ghost, in his romantic and anachronistic armour, is established in the opening moments of the film by the image of the statue. In the draft and shooting scripts, Hamlet's father, 'a Lancelot in silver majesty', would have been seen with Old Fortinbras in single combat with 'heavy broadswords' as one of a series of flashbacks illustrating Horatio's description (I.i.79–94).

None of this was filmed, and only the 'modern' part of this sequence (pp. 8–10, scs. 12–15) was retained, showing Young Fortinbras insisting on a military expedition to reclaim the lost territory. In general, the Ghost's appearances as originally scripted were accompanied by more violence and 'magic'. The purgatory from which he was temporarily released would have been shown more explicitly, with such effects as arms reaching up out of the earth to grab at him, and he would have entered Gertrude's bedroom with 'his rotting face further decayed' and a great blast of air that would send Hamlet reeling, and then sit by the window (p. 135, sc. 101). All these instances of choices refine or qualify but do not vitiate the 'vision' of the play articulated in the finished product. For better or worse, they correspond to aspects of the film which have been welcomed or disliked by its critics. All were decisions of artistic judgement, but in filmmaking that judgement may well include considerations of finance and the use of resources as well as aesthetic strategy.

The critical discussion of films can hardly be circumscribed by reference to the maker's intentions, but such intentions are in themselves of historical interest, because they reflect the circumstances – ultimately social and economic as well as aesthetic – of film production. The potency of films as dreamlike experiences is not diminished by a sense of the cooperative nature of the work that produces them. We can examine at least some of the choices not made, and in particular the imagined visions, documented by script drafts, that the filmmakers chose (or for one reason or another were obliged) *not* to effect.

Each of the films discussed in the following chapters raises the issue of authorship, which will be considered with reference to the individual films. The accounts given here are in terms of the 'dream' represented by each film, the particular circumstances of the different films, and the wider issues of cultural authority invoked by the playwright's name and status. One example: the 1935 *A Midsummer Night's Dream* celebrates