

AN EXAMINATION OF THE FILMMAKING
METHODS OF KENNETH BRANAGH IN HIS
DIRECTORIAL FILM WORK ON *THOR*, *JACK
RYAN: SHADOW RECRUIT* AND *CINDERELLA*
WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO HIS
STATUS AS AUTEUR

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the methods that director Sir Kenneth Branagh employs in his approach to directing his films and questions whether the consistency of methods adopted by Branagh across the scope of his films and their recurring themes support the status of Branagh as an auteur. Much scholarly attention has been given to Branagh's Shakespeare films, yet there is a deficit of such attention to his later work. Using personal and published interviews, empirical evidence of the films, and text-to-text analysis, the thesis focuses upon analysis of his later films *Thor*, *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*, and *Cinderella*.

The thesis takes an approach based upon the criteria of Sarris (2008) and Leitch (2008) to determine whether Branagh could be classified as auteur based upon his directorial oeuvre. In doing so, the thesis identifies the key components of Branagh's methods and style and investigates his rehearsal techniques, research into the history and intertextuality of his projects, relationships with actors, and whether he uses elements of *mise-en-scène* as cues to reveal intertextuality.

The thesis discusses Branagh's role in semiotic coding in his films, informed by the concept of selective perception, wherein viewers tend to recognise elements in media which align with their expectations (Klapper 1960). It argues that memory of the hypotexts plays a key role in film adaptations (Ellis 1982), that their ability to evoke recall is a means of communication (Grant 2002) which can be achieved through the use of elements of *mise-en-scène*, (Geraghty 2008) and that the viewer and director are collaborators in producing meaning in film (Wollen 1972).

This study contributes to the field of adaptation by adding scholarly literature on the films of Branagh in his post-Shakespeare era and to the subjects of auteurship and audience recall achieved through use of camera technique, intertextuality and *mise-en-scène*.

Key words: Branagh, Auteur Theory, Recall, Intertextuality, Adaptation, Marvel Comics, Marvel Films, Thor, Clancy, Jack Ryan, Disney, Cinderella

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This thesis proposes that there are particular methods that Sir Kenneth Branagh, as director, consistently employs during his filmmaking process, and that these methods have served to identify his role as author and to establish him as an auteur. In order to define these methods, the thesis examines Branagh's rehearsal techniques, his research into the history and intertextuality of his projects, his working relationships with his actors, and how his involvement is manifested in his *mise-en-scène*. It argues that Branagh uses elements of *mise-en-scène* as channels to reveal the intertextuality of the work.

The categorisation of a director as an auteur has been a subject of debate since its inception, as the criteria for making such an assertion is subjective and based upon personal evaluation by the evaluator. American film critic Andrew Sarris remains one of the few who have proposed criteria by which such evaluations could be made. This thesis therefore adopts Sarris' premises for evaluative purposes. The premises that Andrew Sarris (2008) proposes in his discourses on the categorisation of directors as auteurs is examined as a means of evaluation of Branagh's status, and as a means of analysing and isolating Branagh's intent and individual influences, thereby enhancing the ability of the researcher to recognise patterns across his films. The criteria presented by these three premises include that a director should have a degree of technical competence in filmmaking, the director's style or personality should be discernible in the director's work, and there should be an inner meaning in the films derived from the tension between the director's personality and his material. Thomas Leitch (2007) is another who has proposed criteria for the determination of auteurial status. These include the working habits of the auteurs, victory in conflict with others, and success in establishing their name as a brand. This thesis also adopts Leitch's criteria for evaluative purposes.

It further proposes that one of Branagh's methods in his filmmaking process in the films that he chooses to direct, is an attempt to use intertextuality to evoke audience recall wherein the audience, through selective perception of the semiotic

codes instilled into the film, recalls the various hypotexts and hypertexts of the film. This recall, the thesis argues, thereby creates an experience that is personal to each individual viewer, connected to the endogenous mindset of that individual in which the personal life experiences of the viewer influence his/her understanding of the film, establishing the viewer as a co-producer of meaning of the film.

The thesis examines the role of Branagh in the semiotic coding that appears in his films, and discusses his authorial intent with an understanding that said intent is examined based upon what Branagh says is his intent, thereby designating himself as author, and that when Branagh talks about authorial intent, it is an example of the author function, as described by Foucault (2006), in action, as is discussed in further detail later in this thesis. The final evidence, however, are the films themselves, rather than what the director says about the films and, in many instances, what he says about his films is tested against the evidence in the films themselves, being mindful that what he says about his films can shape, as Foucault suggests, how these films are perceived.

The study is informed by the concept of selective perception, wherein it is suggested that viewers are more likely to recognise or perceive those elements presented in media which align with their beliefs or expectations (Klapper 1960). The intention of triggering audience recall is predicated upon this notion, that some audience members will recognise semiotic codes in an adapted film, often because they might approach the film with the expectation of being able to locate and recognise some of these codes. The study is further informed by the concept that memory of the hypotexts plays a key role in the creation of film adaptations (Ellis 1982) and that the ability of film adaptations to evoke recall of the hypotexts is an important means of communication (Grant 2002). Christine Geraghty builds upon these concepts with her theory of audience recall in which she suggests that this recall can be achieved through the use of elements of *mise-en-scène* which include direction, camera and performance, costumes, set, and music. The thesis draws upon Christine Geraghty's (2008) research upon audience recall of the source texts in film adaptations. Another concept that informs this thesis is that the

viewer as well as the author or director are collaborators in producing meaning in film as proposed by Wollen (1972), challenging the assertion by Barthes (1990) concerning the “death of the author” while accepting his argument of the viewer as producer of meaning.

The thesis incorporates a text-to-text comparison of the films with their hypotexts and hypertexts, much in the manner suggested by Bluestone (2003). However, the researcher does not do this as a means of evaluating the film’s fidelity to its sources in an effort to determine the superiority of either. Rather, the researcher takes this approach because Branagh’s methods in filmmaking include extensive research into the history of the subject matter of his films and he makes contributions to his films based upon this research, appropriating elements from a range of sources, including his own personal influences. Knowledge of the hypotexts, hypertexts, and transtexts allows the researcher to more readily recognise the semiotic coding in the films. In addition, a study of Branagh’s early life is undertaken since he references films and events that were influential to him in his life, such as his experience of watching Derek Jacobi perform in *Hamlet*, which is further discussed in Chapter Four. The researcher conducts such research as a means of seeking out said influences and challenging statements made by Branagh or/and cast and crew of his films. Although it may seem that the approach to the research is diachronic, auteur-structuralism somewhere between structuralism and post-structuralism, with such scrutiny, this approach is taken as a tool to understand the approach that Branagh adopts.

This thesis thus approaches the research from a theoretical framework including Wollen’s proposition that the viewer is a producer of meaning in a film (1972), Geraghty’s furthering this position in her theory of audience recall in which memories and personal experience contribute to the unique understanding of each individual viewer (2008), Bazin’s theory of the use of *mise-en-scène* as a means of contributing to the meaning of a film (1975), Sarris’ premises concerning auteur theory (2008) and Leitch’s criteria for determining auteurial status. The *Introduction*

is divided into three sections dealing with the *Aims of the Study*, the *Relevance of the Study* and the *Structure of the Thesis*.

1.1 Aims of the Study

The study focuses primarily upon the analysis of each of three feature length films directed by Kenneth Branagh, *Thor* (2011), *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* (2014) and *Cinderella* (2015), in terms of the methods that Branagh employs during his filmmaking process, examining the intertextuality of each film and the influences of the source texts upon the film adaptations in terms of content as well as the mise-en-scène categories of direction, camera, performance, costume, setting and music of each film. This study examines the methods that Branagh uses to work and rehearse with actors, as well as various aspects of Branagh's film production and mise-en-scène, in order to determine the consistencies that exist in Branagh's methods across his body of work.

One of the aims of this investigation is to discover the specific historical and intertextual information of which Branagh was in possession concerning each of these directorial projects and to what extent he put that information to use, whether it affected the choices he made while directing his films, in order to determine whether his goal was to elicit audience recall of the hypotexts and hypertexts. For this purpose, the thesis examines the intertextuality of his films and identifies the various hypotexts and hypertexts from which the screenplays are derived in order to be able to discover what elements, if any, can be decidedly categorised as influences upon Branagh's directorial style as well as specific contributions made by Branagh, as discussed by his cast and crew, to the final versions of his films.

The thesis examines the mise-en-scène of each film discussed in the case studies, including the costumes, sets, music, and cinematography, in an attempt to discover the extent to which Branagh's influence can or cannot be seen across the elements of mise-en-scène in order to discover whether he has a specific set of methods when working with these elements of production. It is examined to further determine whether these aspects of mise-en-scène are used by Branagh to add intertextual elements into the film as a means of eliciting audience recall,

deliberately incorporating elements from the hypotexts with which an audience may be familiar into various parts of the mise-en-scène.

It aims to define the qualities of what Branagh, in a *Guardian* Live event, termed “the live element” and to discover whether Branagh attempts to capture this “live element” in the films he directs and if so, whether it is achieved through these methods.

It also incorporates analysis of the methods and techniques used by Branagh throughout his work and whether these methods may have contributed to creating a distinctive directorial style that can be identified not only in his earlier films, including his adaptations of Shakespearean plays, but throughout all of his subsequent franchise film directorial work, including the superhero action blockbuster *Thor* (2011), spy thriller *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* (2014) and his film adaptation of *Cinderella*. When analysing elements such as the sense of recall and the live element of performance on film, the reason for this choice of materials is that this subject matter allows for the ability to look at material that is not identified commonly as theatre material in order to be able to determine the qualities associated with it and whether or not the element of live performance can be detected outside of adaptations of stage plays, thereby lessening the argument that the element of liveness lies in the material itself.

This thesis proposes to uncover whether Branagh has discernible directorial techniques that he employs in directing films and if so, what these are, and to what extent they contribute to his status as an auteur. It delves into the question of whether commonalities, patterns, or recurring themes exist between his earlier films directed prior to the case studies. It includes an examination of key events or works in his life that may have influenced his filmmaking processes or may be referenced in his films, as suggested by McFarlane (1996). It analyses Branagh’s artistic journey and development across his earlier feature films. It also examines the context in which these films were released, as further suggested in McFarlane (1996) and Stam (2005).

Although the focus of this thesis is upon Branagh's post-Shakespeare phase of work, his Shakespeare films can be seen as encompassing his developmental phase as a director and the beginning of his brand or authorial stamp, and are therefore examined as a means of deducing the methods that Branagh employs in directing his films. These filmmaking techniques will then continue to be examined to discover which, if any, are also used by Branagh throughout the case-study films.

1.2 Relevance of the Study

Academy Award-nominated Sir Kenneth Charles Branagh is an Irish actor and director known, among other work, for his Shakespeare adaptations, including his 1989 Oscar-nominated (Best Director, Best Actor in a Leading Role) and BAFTA-winning (Best Director) and nominated (Best Actor) *Henry V* (1989) and his 1996 Oscar-nominated (Best Writing, Adapted Screenplay) adaptation of *Hamlet* (2006). He has imprinted his mark on Shakespeare at the cinema to such an extent that author and scholar Samuel Crowl has gone so far as to refer to the last decade of the twentieth century as being "the Kenneth Branagh Era" (2003).

The works of Kenneth Branagh are worthy of study because he is well established both in the medium of film and the medium of theatre and has made significant contributions to both fields. His extensive experience in adaptation exemplifies his relevance to the focus of this research.

The film works of Branagh also constitute a verdant topic for this study due to Branagh's openness and personal acknowledgment of and insight into the intertextuality of his work. He is a director who openly identifies many of the hypertexts and hypotexts that inform his films and many other influences across a variety of sources and media. As a current director and actor of both film and theatre, there is a wealth of primary sources available in the form of interviews and DVD commentaries, as well as books authored by him discussing his work, attitudes and methods, which are examined in conjunction with the films in order to discover whether evidence in the films support his statements. In addition, secondary sources are available in the form of film reviews, articles and books

concerning his work and his life. A number of academics and scholars have also written about Branagh's work and his contributions to the field of Shakespeare adaptation. The abundance of analysis and research that exists on topics concerning Branagh's Shakespeare adaptations, however, is one of the reasons that this project focuses instead upon Branagh's later directorial feature films. These later films have not been subjected to the same type of academic scrutiny. Analysis of these films reveal whether his methods pertain only to his Shakespeare films or whether his methods are consistent throughout his body of work and can thereby contribute to his identification as auteur.

The choice of audience recall as another element of the research is the result of early investigations into the methods used by Branagh in his directorial films. It became evident that the study of intertextuality played a significant role in Branagh's process and evidence pointed to the possibility that one of his intentions in his films is to use intertextuality as a means of evoking audience recall. Due to the lack of an abundance of academic research on the methods and techniques used for achieving recall, the researcher sees this as another area of interest for study.

The study hopes to make a contribution to the subject of audience recall, to the ability of film to evoke this recall and to how this recall might be achieved through the use of camera technique, intertextuality, and elements of *mise-en-scène*. This study additionally hopes to contribute to the subject field by adding original literature concerning attempts to capture liveness, or "the live element", on film through the use of *mise-en-scène*. Although Geraghty (2008) discusses the element of audience recall, she does not go into depth concerning the means in which this may be deliberately achieved. This study hopes to provide information to fill that gap by evaluating the methods the Branagh uses to trigger this recall.

The study hopes to contribute to the field of adaptation by adding research on the intertextuality of the case studies including their most significant hypotexts and hypertexts, providing research across the different genres of the films and their

variety of types of source materials which are outside of the realm of novel-to-film adaptations.

It hopes to contribute new literature on the study of the later films of Branagh in his post-Shakespeare era which are under-researched. The study of the film *Thor* is of particular significance because of its position within the context of the rapidly expanding Marvel cinematic universe, a recent area of potentially rich research that has developed within the last ten years. The relevance and significance of *Thor* as a subject of academic research is strong because of its position in the transmedia Marvel universe and its position as a precursor in the intertextual alliances that Marvel is attempting to create by overlapping, interweaving and intertwining storylines across a spectrum of individual films working in parallel with each other and often crossing over between the various films being developed as projects. These projects are not always prequels or sequels and the timeframes of some are established to be taking place simultaneously within the same universe. The thesis hopes thereby to make a contribution to the academic study of the transmedia Marvel universe.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into eight chapters, each further subdivided into several specific topics of focus. The first four chapters define the elements that form the foundation of the research. The next four chapters include the case studies and the *Conclusions*. The first chapter is the *Introduction* herein presented, discussing the premise and scope of the thesis as well as its structure.

The second chapter contains the *Research Design and Methodology* of the thesis. This chapter describes the process of how and why the methodological framework was chosen for this study. It presents the initial design of the research and the methods used to explore Branagh's directorial film work. It also illustrates the ways in which the initial focus of the research was shifted in response to the early findings. It describes the mixed-methods approach used and discusses some of the challenges faced while using this approach, as well as some of its strengths. The chapter describes the theoretical framework and how and why it became

important to incorporate the theory of Geraghty concerning the significance of audience recall. It further presents the list of films chosen as the focus of the research and the reasons their selection.

The third chapter *Literature Review* presents a brief discussion of some of the significant early works in adaptation studies and their theoretical concepts. It also presents a discussion of some of the changes that have taken place in the field of film theory in more recent years. It further presents a discussion of the relevant scholarly literature that is of particular significance to the subject matter of this thesis. This chapter presents the *Theoretical Framework of this Study* and discusses the major literature that was of primary import for the formation and development of this study and the theoretical framework from which it proceeds. This includes a presentation of the theories of Andrew Sarris (2008) and Thomas Leitch (2007), C. Paul Sellors (2010), Peter Wollen (1972), T. S. Eliot (1982), Christine Geraghty (2008), André Bazin (1975), and Bordwell and Thompson (2009). This section is divided into five subdivisions which focus upon auteur theory, semiotics, intertextuality, audience recall, text-to-text analysis and mise-en-scène.

The fourth chapter *The Filmmaking Methods of Branagh* examines the factors that have been influential upon Branagh as a filmmaker and have contributed to his methods in his directorial work. This chapter proposes to uncover whether Branagh has particular directorial methods that he employs in directing films and if so, what these are, and to what extent these contribute to his status as auteur. It delves into the question of whether commonalities, patterns, or recurring themes exist between his earlier films directed prior to the case studies. It includes an examination of key events in his life that may have influenced his filmmaking processes and analyses his artistic journey and development across his earlier feature films. Although the focus of this thesis is upon Branagh's post-Shakespeare phase of work, his Shakespeare films can be seen as encompassing his developmental phase as a director and are therefore examined as a means of deducing the methods that Branagh employs in directing his films. These methods

will then continue to be examined to discover which, if any, are also used by Branagh throughout the case-study films. The chapter is divided into six sections outlining the methods of Branagh, dealing with Branagh's research methods, casting methods, rehearsal techniques, camera techniques, and use of mise-en-scène, as well as the recurring themes that appear in his films.

The fifth chapter *Thor* includes the analysis of this first film in the case studies. It begins with a look at the *Intertextual Relationships of Thor*, which incorporates a comparison of the components that are appropriated in the film from its various hypotexts and hypertexts which include the *Poetic Edda* and *Prose Edda* of Sturleson, a variety of Marvel comic books, and the Marvel films based upon the comic books. The section on *Direction, Camera, and Performance* analyses these elements of mise-en-scène and whether they are used to evoke audience recall. This analysis is continued in the sections entitled *Costumes, Set, and Music*, each examining that specific element of mise-en-scène. The *Conclusion* analyses and interprets the results of the research on this film.

The sixth chapter *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* includes the analysis of the second film in the case studies. It begins with an investigation of the *Intertextual Relationships of Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*, which incorporates a comparison of the components that are appropriated in the film from its various hypotexts and hypertexts, such as Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan novels and the film *The Hunt for Red October*. The section on *Direction, Camera, and Performance* analyses these elements of mise-en-scène. This analysis is furthered in the sections entitled *Costumes, Set, and Music*, each examining that specific element of mise-en-scène. The *Conclusion* analyses and interprets the results of the research on this film and compares and contrasts the similarities and differences between this film and *Thor*.

The seventh chapter *Cinderella* includes the analysis of the third and final film in the case studies. It begins with an investigation of the *Intertextual Relationships of Cinderella*, which incorporates a comparison of the components that are appropriated in the film from its various hypotexts and hypertexts such as

Perrault's fairytale, Grimm's fairytale, and the Disney animated film *Cinderella*. As in the previous two chapters, it includes sections on *Direction, Camera, and Performance, Costumes, Set, and Music*, each examining that specific element of mise-en-scène. The *Conclusion* analyses and interprets the results of the research on this film and compares and contrasts the similarities and differences between this film and the two previously-mentioned case-study films. It further includes a comparison of Branagh's earlier work and the three case-study films.

The eighth chapter *Conclusions* reiterates the results and conclusions of the research and offers potential areas of interest for continuing research. Evidence presented in the study indicates that Branagh uses the elements of mise-en-scène to establish audience recall. He achieves this through the use of intertextuality incorporated not only through the storyline and text of the film itself, but also through its incorporation into the elements of mise-en-scène, encouraging the position of the viewer as producer of meaning in the film. It further proposes that the methods used consistently by Branagh have served to establish him as an auteur in his directorial film work.

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, as demonstrated in a series of lectures presented in Heidelberg and Berlin from 1818 to 1829 and later compiled by his student Heinrich Gustav Hotho in 1835, divided the world of art into five categories, those of architecture, sculpture, painting, sound as exemplified by music, and speech as exemplified by poetry (1975, p. vii-xi). In 1911, Italian film theoretician Ricciotto Canudo published his work *The Birth of the Sixth Art*, therein proclaiming the cinema to be the sixth art (1988a). Canudo later altered this categorisation in 1923, proclaiming dance to be the sixth art and cinema to be the seventh art (1988b), an appellation by which it is still sometimes referred.

The research involved in this project is a study of the seventh and the fifth arts, encompassing the field of Adaptation Studies due to the nature of and relevance to the research topic. It includes discussions of adaptations from different media such as novels, stage plays, films, and comic books, contributing to the need for a mixed-media approach. It includes various topics of relevance within this field, including adaptation versus appropriation, intertextuality, and auteur theory and authorship in film.

As an element of the research component in this study, the researcher investigated the primary and secondary sources available in the form of interviews, broadcasts, articles, and books available online, in print, on DVD and video, and in live performances. Like Christine Geraghty, who states, “in the analysis, I have examined the various ways in which the work of drawing attention to a source is carried out in extratextual activity: in the publicity practices, reviewing conventions, and DVD commentaries that accompany the films” (2008, p. 197), all of Branagh’s directorial films were viewed and studied. Branagh’s own personal commentaries on such items as the DVD and Blu-ray extra features of his films and his companion books to many of his films, including *Frankenstein*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and also *Henry V*, were of use in that they allow some insight into the intentionality that Branagh chooses to project.

In determining the sources from which the films were derived when studying their intertextuality, the hypotexts and hypertexts for the films were investigated, including tracing the belief systems of the Norse mythology, as well as the Marvel comic books, on which *Thor* was based, the novels of Tom Clancy from which the character of Jack Ryan was taken, and the history of the Cinderella legends from its earliest version which Branagh references, as will be demonstrated in the seventh chapter, and includes the adaptations that can be seen as hypertexts for the film.

As part of the research, this researcher was also able to conduct a personal interview with Haris Zambarloukos, the cinematographer who was engaged as the Director of Photography/cinematographer on the three above-mentioned case study films, as well as on Branagh's earlier film *Sleuth*. This interview incorporated questions concerning his collaboration with Branagh. Because of his long time collaboration with Branagh, Zambarloukos was very informative concerning his experiences on and off set with Branagh and the methodology employed by Branagh in his approach to the processes of filmmaking and the amount and types of preparation and research that Branagh conducts in advance before the actual filming begins. Zambarloukos was of value to this research as he provided insight into the use of cinematographic techniques used in Branagh's films and insight into the goals that Branagh tried to achieve throughout the production process. The interview also allowed the researcher to ask specific questions concerning the filmmaking processes that were not discussed in the literature available.

In addition, this researcher was also given the opportunity to question Branagh personally as to whether there was a conscious method to which he resorted when trying to capture the element of live performance. His response to this questioning is discussed later in the *Conclusions*.

The research project began with the study of the current status of academic literature in the fields of Film Studies and Adaptation Studies and the study of the work of Branagh as a director, including an examination of what he described as the creative influences upon his work. The purpose was to identify possible

determinants on Branagh's filmmaking approach and whether patterns could be detected in the process in which he works. His work was examined across media. Empirical analysis was continued of additional films that Branagh claimed were influential in his creative development, the various films viewed in the search for evidence that may or may not support his claims, in order to determine whether there were elements in his films that may have been appropriated from these earlier films.

Branagh's personal writings and commentaries on his projects were studied and the wealth of material of this nature was a reason for choosing the works of Branagh as a topic of research. The technical aspects of his filmmaking were examined and the contributions he makes to the various areas of production such as screenwriting and the different areas of *mise-en-scène*, in order to uncover any types of similarities or patterns that might emerge throughout his film work. With such information, it is possible to compare and contrast the case studies with each other as well as with his previous work with the aim of being able to discuss the similarities or differences in his approaches to each film, as well as being able to isolate Branagh's personal contributions to his films in spite of the collaborative nature of the filmmaking process.

The approach for this study was to research the history and origins of each of the main characters and the stories or legends upon which the three case-study films were based since it became evident early in the research that this is what Branagh does when approaching his films. In order for this researcher to recognise any paratexts, texts incorporated into the films from other sources, and/or other influences, it was necessary to first research the sources from which such borrowing would have been taken. The purpose of this research was for this researcher to be able to later recognise any elements in the films that reference such material.

Due to the spectrum of types of media involved in the research, it was essential to adopt a mixed-methods approach for the research. The approach incorporates the personal interview with Zambarloukos, numerous director, actor,

and crew interviews from a variety of sources including online interviews, DVD commentaries, writings by the director, and direct questions, academic publications on relevant issues, and an analysis of the director's film work as well as other films that have been influential on his development as a director, as well as responses by Branagh live to questions posed by members of the audience, including this researcher, during a personal appearance in a public academic forum. As another part of the research design, when examining personal interviews as well as previously produced cast and crew interviews related to the films studied, efforts were made to verify, support, or challenge statements made by those involved in the films through further examination of the films themselves in search of the specific elements mentioned.

This research project uses three films from Branagh's post-Shakespeare phase for the case studies. It also looks at the wide variety of comic books and the films that constitute a part of the intertextual alliances of *Thor* and the Marvel universe. This approach was chosen because of the lack of academic research on certain aspects of the topic such as the intertextuality of films written parallel to each other and it was necessary to go across media due to the overlaps in the topics themselves. It also seemed the most appropriate way to analyse the material.

When the design for this project was first developed, it was developed with a different approach and focus. The initial focus of the thesis was to be on Branagh's filmmaking process, looking specifically at camera movement, camera and lens choice, and other technical elements of the filmmaking process. The intention was to not focus on such aspects as intertextuality in terms of the content of the film story and text-to-film adaptation.

The initial premise of the study was that Branagh, in his film directorial work, was attempting to adapt the theatre medium to the film medium, questioning whether there were elements of the stage and theatrical mise-en-scène that could be seen in his film work. This topic for the research was initially adopted because Branagh's early films, especially the Shakespearean films, evoked in this

researcher a sense of immediacy often associated with live theatre, which brought to mind the question of whether the triggering of this reaction was a deliberate intention of Branagh in his films, and if so, what were the technical processes he used to achieve this. This was further chosen for exploration because his films leading up to the case studies all had a stylistic consistency that one might argue is frequently associated with classical theatre, such as dramatic lighting, heightened style of movement, and a symmetrical proscenium-influenced framing for the setting and camera placement.

The initial research design was to examine Branagh's filmmaking processes, looking at the technical aspects of the process to determine whether there were actual technical and mechanical means in which this was achieved, with the hope of trying to remove the argument that the material itself upon which the film was based, such as the Shakespeare stage plays, had an effect on whether or not the final film had aspects of theatre in it. The intention of this project was to analyse Branagh's technical filmmaking methods in order to determine whether these processes directly impacted his ability to capture elements of theatre on film. However, the research conducted in this study in the design stage did not support this premise that capturing theatre on film was achieved only through the filmmaking process nor that this was an actual goal of Branagh when making his films.

Hatchuel further quotes Branagh as stating, "In all my adaptations of Shakespeare, my intention has been to illuminate things I always wished had come across more strongly on stage" (Hatchuel 2000, p. 41). This can be seen as indicative of Branagh's finding his earlier theatrical productions lacking in their ability to fully realise his vision of how these adaptations could be better realised. Rather than theatrical influences, this research supports the premise that the major influences upon his directorial style are derived from the world of cinema, primarily other films and cinematic genres, and that Branagh chooses instead to explore the cinematic influences that can be used to expound the theatrical texts, as he says,

“to maximize what film can offer by looking at the play through a different kind of prism” (Crowl 2006, p. 169).

Branagh points out that the influences upon him were not those of theatre during his upbringing. As he states:

My upbringing was not filled with the experiences of live theater but was filled with watching films, watching films on television, watching television . . . The films I watched when growing up were much more conventional and mainstream . . . The films I remember watching early on are things like *The Great Escape*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, and *The Sound of Music*. (Crowl 2006, p. 170)

The initial preliminary research revealed that the question of intertextuality was a more significant issue in Branagh’s films because of Branagh’s personal emphasis upon this. The researcher discovered that Branagh devotes much time to researching the history of his film topics and then uses elements of that research to inform his films, incorporating his findings into the areas of mise-en-scène and sharing with his cast and crew details of his research that he feels might be of significance or inspirational in their work. The researcher therefore discarded the initial premise of the thesis because research into the history of his film topics and their intertextuality was demonstrated to be a major component of Branagh’s filmmaking process. As a result, the focus of the thesis was changed, as were the questions initially posed by the thesis.

Branagh did provide running commentaries on some of his films, available on the DVD and Blu-ray copies of the films. This type of information has strengths as well as limitations for the researcher. One of its strengths is that the commentaries set the framework that Branagh chooses for the audience viewing the film. This type of information allows for some weakness, however, in the research due to the epistemological nature of these commentaries, and that the reflections consist of information that was provided after the fact, long after the completion of the filmmaking process, and are sometimes focused on what is shown in the final product wherein unplanned circumstances may have altered the original intentions of the director. This can mean there is a possibility that the comments made are more likely to be molded to contribute to the image that the

person interviewed wishes to project and how that person wishes to be perceived by the audience than they are a complete reality of the choices made at the time of filming. Such changes due to unplanned circumstances are an accepted and expected part of film production. Unless documented at the time by a member of crew or someone on set, most decisions such as these happen without record and, seemingly insignificant, are often forgotten, left to possibly be interpreted later as a deliberate artistic decision by the director with the intention of producing a particular effect. However, in either case, the statements made are examined in relation to the film itself.

A challenge that arose over the course of the study was the difficulty of conducting personal interviews with key people involved in the filmmaking process on the case-study films. Such interviews may have been useful in allowing this researcher to address specific questions to the people personally involved in the filmmaking process concerning issues of particular relevance to the study. Though attempts were made throughout the process of conducting the research, few of these key personnel replied in response to requests for personal interviews. Nevertheless, much information was available in the form of published and online interviews that offered a view of the events, attitudes and opinions of the key participants.

When conducting or viewing interviews, the boundaries set consisted of the choice of topics that referred specifically to the issues of import to this research, which included the attitudes of those interviewed concerning their views on adaptation, working with Branagh and questions about Branagh's methods and production aspects of the films. There were previously recorded interviews with cast and crew members in which they did talk about topics that were relevant to the topic of this research. However, the nature of this type of previously recorded interviews dictates that specific questions of interest that the researcher would have posed could not be asked.

Another challenge encountered by the researcher was the difficulty in finding unbiased sources of information so that it was essential to continually verify

various statements. In addition, there was a lack of academic writing that focuses upon the case-study films chosen for this study. Another challenge was the newness of the material chosen for the case studies. Both *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* and *Cinderella* had their premieres and release dates in the cinemas during the course of this study. It became necessary therefore to wait for their releases in order to be able to watch and analyse their content.

Regardless of the limitations mentioned above, the research is relevant as it contributes to less researched topics, as mentioned earlier, such as its contributions to the areas of audience recall, the academic study of the Marvel universe films, academic analysis of Branagh's directorial work outside of his Shakespearean films, and the in-depth research into the intertextuality and historical adaptations of the case-study films. In addition, the study establishes a means to identify methods of deliberately creating audience recall with some emphasis on an approach to assess the way in which the element of live performance can be achieved on screen. It further adds research concerning the categorisation of Branagh as an auteur.

The films that became a part of this research project included all of Branagh's directorial feature films and the Marvel comics adaptation films, as well as films that Branagh specifically mentions as having been influential in his development as an actor and filmmaker. The films chosen for the case studies are Branagh's most recent three feature films from his post-Shakespearean phase.

The theoretical framework for this study builds upon Sarris (2008) and Leitch's (2007) criteria for auteurship and Geraghty's (2008) theory of audience recall. Findings in the research demonstrated the significance of extensive research and of audience recall for Branagh and the importance that he places upon it across his film work.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the scholarly literature that has been influential in determining the direction of the field of Adaptation Studies and identifies some of those texts and terminologies that are essential for the study of topics in this field of research. The texts that are included herein are significant to this researcher as a means of understanding the topography of research in the field and of identifying the most appropriate approach for analysis for this project.

Robert Stam, in his work *Film Theory: An Introduction* (2000), presents a detailed overview of the progression of the various movements in the study of film theory from its earliest beginnings in the late nineteenth century when film was used as a tool to “laud the colonial enterprise” (2000, p. 19), to the end of the twentieth century, when he sees film theory as “a little less grand, a little more pragmatic, a little less ethnocentric, masculinist, and heterosexist, and a little less inclined toward overarching systems, drawing on a plurality of theoretical paradigms” (2000, p. 330).

Film studies as an academic field received impetus with the publication of George Bluestone’s 1957 work, *Novels into Film*, which ushered in an era of adaptation studies focusing on text-to-text analysis and discourses concerning the fidelity of films to their literary hypotexts and/or hypertexts, analysis which generally led to the assumption of the superiority of the literary works. Adaptation theory has undergone several transitions and shifts in focus in the decades since the publication of Bluestone’s seminal work. The emphasis of early discourses on fidelity were soon joined by the movement towards auteurism which began to dominate film theory during the 1950s and 1960s, as is discussed in more detail later in the section of this thesis on auteur theory. As stated by Robert Stam:

Auteurism must be seen partially as a response to (a) the elitist putdowns of the cinema by some literary intellectuals; (b) the iconophobic prejudice against cinema as a “visual medium;” (c) the mass-culture debate which projected the cinema as the agent of political alienation; and (d) the traditional anti-Americanism of the French literary elite. (2000, p. 87)

Auteur theory focused attention away from discussions of fidelity towards discussions of the film itself and the role of the director's contribution to a film. As Stam further states:

By forcing attention to the films themselves and to *mise-en-scène* as the stylistic signature of the director, auteurism clearly made a substantial contribution to film theory and methodology. Auteurism shifted attention from the "what" (story, theme) to the "how" (style, technique), showing that style itself had personal, ideological and even metaphysical reverberations. It facilitated film's entry into literature departments and played a major role in the academic legitimization of cinema studies. (2000, p. 92)

Discontent with the lack of agreed upon criteria and the subjective nature of the process of determining who would or would not be considered an auteur led to the rise of new approaches in adaptation. Structuralism gained popularity as an approach to film analysis in the late 1960s and 1970s, grounded in the linguistic structuralism of writers such as Ferdinand de Saussure and the structural anthropological movement of anthropologist Lévi-Strauss (Stam 2000, p. 106). Structuralism can be defined as "a theoretical grid through which behavior, institutions and texts are seen as analyzable in terms of an underlying network of relationships, the crucial point being that the elements which constitute the network gain their meaning from the relations that hold between the elements" (Stam, Burgoyne, and Flitterman-Lewis 1992, p. 18). A significant development in the structuralist movement was the study of semiotics, which focused film criticism on the meaning of signs or cinematic codes in films. Semiotics in film theory proposed that the meanings of films could be understood through the identification of its signs, involving textual analysis and interpretation of the texts. According to Stam:

In terms of film, the structural approach implied a move away from any evaluative criticism preoccupied with exalting the artistic status of the medium or of particular filmmakers or films. Auteur-structuralism in the late 1960s built on Lévi-Strauss's concept of myth to speak of genre and authorship. In terms of directors, semiology was less interested in the aesthetic ranking of directors than in how films in general are understood. Just as Lévi-Strauss was uninterested in the "authors" of Amazonian myths, so structuralism was not particularly interested in the artsmanship of

individual auteurs. While auteurism valorized specific directors as artists, for semiology all filmmakers are artists and all films are art, simply because film's socially constructed status is that of art. (2000, pp. 106-107)

By the late 1960s, however, critics of structuralism rose to attack structuralist semiotics, criticizing its "concepts of the stable sign, of the unified subject, of identity and of truth" (Stam, Burgoyne, and Flitterman-Lewis 1992, p. 29). In the forefront of this movement, known as post-structuralism, was Jacques Derrida. Post-structuralism, also known as deconstruction when dealing specifically with the works of Derrida, "gave voice to a radical skepticism about the possibility of constructing an overarching meta-language, since the signs of the meta-language itself are themselves subject to slippage and indeterminacy, as unstable signs move ceaselessly outward within a proliferation of allusion spiraling from text to text" (Stam 2000, p. 180). This movement of the late 1960s and the 1970s included such theorists as Julia Kristeva, Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes. According to Stam, "Poststructuralism destabilized textual meaning, shaking early semiology's scientific faith that analysis might definitively capture the totality of a film's meaning by delineating all its codes" (2000, p. 183). Textual analysis and interpretation, too, Stam points out, came under attack during the 1980s with critics such as David Bordwell claiming that such analysis in the approach to film criticism "attests to the powerful role of literature departments in transmitting interpretative values and skills. Academic humanism's omnivorous appetite for interpretation rendered cinema a plausible text" (1989, p. 17). Film analysis is seen as doing "little more than illustrat[ing] preconceived ideas" (Stam 2000, p. 195).

Film theory thus consisted of a series of new approaches suggested, supported, denied, then replaced. According to Cartmell and Whelehan, "there has been a tendency among scholars of screen adaptation to announce their own perspectives on the field as some kind of corrective to what has gone before. In order to emphasise what is new, challenging and refreshing, it has been felt

necessary to debunk older theories, adjust the partial vision (as they are seen) offered by others and propose new modes of perception” (2010, p. 10).

Jørgen Bruhn, in his article *Dialogizing adaptation studies: From one-way transport to a dialogic two-way process*, identifies in particular Robert Stam’s work as adding “an important contribution to the field” (p. 74) of adaptation studies. Bruhn points out that “whereas the first wave of modern adaptation studies (starting with Bluestone) was very interested in medium specific discussions of adaptation, another wave, from around 1980, perhaps inaugurated with Dudley Andrew’s essay on adaption...focused on, in the words of Andrew, a “sociological turn” [(2012, p. 70)] of adaptation studies”. Bruhn goes on to then suggest that “Stam and other writers are about, I believe, to open up yet another dimension, namely an ‘intertextual turn’ of adaptation studies; a turn widening the idea of a one-to-one relation in adaptations...which could be developed into an even more radicalized idea of a dialogic adaptation analysis strategy” (p. 75).

The 1980s witnessed an ‘intertextual turn’, a decline in the study of textual analysis and a rise in interest in the study of intertextuality. “Rather than focus on specific films or single genres, intertextuality theory saw every text as related to other texts, and thus to an intertext” (Stam 2000, p. 201). Led by such writers as Stam, discourse on film analysis then took a more “transtextual turn”, focusing upon the multitude of different factors that contribute to the creation of a film, not simply the source texts.

New approaches to the study of film have continued to arise throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium, emphasising various aspects of cinema, including the rise of cultural studies which “calls attention to the social and institutional conditions under which meaning is produced and received. It represents a shift from interest in texts *per se* to an interest in the processes of interaction between texts, spectators, institutions, and the ambient culture” (Stam 2000, p. 225). Analysis of sound in film also developed as a topic of study. Barthes “birth of the reader” (1977a, p. 148) influenced the development of a range of studies throughout the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s that were concerned with the role

of the spectator and audience in the film-making process. More contemporary approaches have been grounded in such diverse foundations as feminine studies, queer theory, racial studies, multiculturalism, post-colonialism and contextual studies focusing upon the political, social or economic context, for example, in which films were made. The status of contemporary film theory thus ranges across a wide variety of approaches and discourses in the post-modernist era.

The aesthetics of post-modernism in cinema is described by Stam as being that of “pastiche, a blank, neutral practice of mimicry, without any satiric agenda or sense of alternatives, nor for that matter, any mystique of “originality” beyond the ironic orchestration of dead styles, whence the centrality of intertextuality of what Jameson calls the “random cannibalization of all the styles of the past.”” (2000, p. 304). This is of interest to this study as Branagh is an example of the post-modernist tendency to practice such “cannibalization of all the styles of the past”.

3.1 Early Discourses on the Nature of Adaptation Studies

Adaptation Studies is an essential part of this research project in that all of the three films in the case studies are adaptations from other media. In the field of Adaptation Studies, there are several discourses that have existed since the early development of this field as a discipline of academic study. These include the definition of the elements that constitute a meritorious adaptation, the debate concerning the relationship of the final product to its source material, and the fidelity of the production to its source.

In his *Novels into Film*, George Bluestone examines what he sees as an almost magical process of adaptation from the novel to the film, a process to which he refers in an earlier article as “the mysterious alchemy” (1956, p. 171). In his book, Bluestone examines the various changes that occurred when six different classic novels were adapted to film, pointing out that “a comparative study which begins by finding resemblances between novel and film ends by loudly proclaiming their differences” (2003, p. vii).

These differences, Bluestone says, are to be expected as “changes are *inevitable* the moment one abandons the linguistic for the visual medium . . . the

end products of novel and film represent different aesthetic genera . . . [and] The film becomes a different *thing* in the same sense that a historical painting becomes a different thing from the historical event which it illustrates” (2003, p. 5).

The role of *Novels into Film* in the validation of film adaptation as a field of scholarly research is significant not only in establishing film adaptation as a respected field of study but also establishing film as a recognised art form in itself. In regards to how one must view an adaptation, Bluestone emphasises “the contrast between the novel as a conceptual and discursive form, [and] the film as a perceptual and presentational form. In these terms, the film-maker merely treats the novel as raw material and ultimately creates his own unique structure” (2003, p. vii). Because Bluestone envisions a novel and its filmic adaptation as completely different categories of art forms, the academic study of each should denote two separate academic fields of research. His work was thereby influential in the development of film studies as an academic discipline in the decades following its publication. His work also laid the fundamental ground work for later approaches to adaptation, such as the influence of his text-to-text approach on the discourses on fidelity, the question of superiority of the text, and the debate on fidelity to the “letter” or “spirit”.

Stam approaches the concept of fidelity from a viewer perspective, equating it to being a product of the response of the viewer. As he states:

When we say an adaptation has been “unfaithful” to the original, the term gives expression to the disappointment we feel when a film adaptation fails to capture what we see as the fundamental narrative, thematic, and aesthetic features of its literary source. The notion of fidelity gains its persuasive force from our sense that some adaptations are indeed better than others and that some adaptations fail to “realize” or substantiate that which we most appreciated in the source novels. Words such as infidelity and *betrayal* in this sense translate our feeling, when we have loved a book, that an adaptation has not been worthy of that love. (2000, p. 54)

The theoretical debate of fidelity in adaptation studies has undergone changes in emphasis in recent years. The initial argument proposed by researchers in terms of fidelity concerned consideration of the fidelity of a film to

its hypotext. As Gibson and McDonald state, “The ability to discuss an adaptation from the informed perspective of having read the book confers still more cultural capital on the viewer” (2012, p. 297). This discourse also included the valuation judgment of the superiority or inferiority of each. The valuation of such debate was invariably that the original text was superior and the value of the film could be judged based upon its fidelity to that text. In their discussion of this debate, Cartmell and Whelehan explain this valuation judgment, commenting that “Literature is seen to have a higher moral calling than its younger, and some have argued, lesser sibling” (2010, p. 13). Also a topic of debate was the concepts of fidelity to the “letter” versus fidelity to the “spirit” of the original text. In explaining the concept of the latter, Whelehan comments that “the main purpose of comparison becomes the measurement of the success of the film in its capacity to realize what are held to be the core meanings and values of the original text” (Whelehan 1999, p. 3).

As Thomas Leitch writes, “Despite innumerable exceptions to the rule, adaptation theorists have persisted in treating fidelity to the source material as a norm from which unfaithful adaptations depart at their peril” (2007, p. 127). However, the current focus of the debate has broadened with some critics focusing instead upon the approaches for critical analysis of adaptations and the question of whether the subject of fidelity is an appropriate tool in terms of evaluating the merit of a film. Some modern analyses begin from a standpoint of recognising the value of both film and original source in equal measure, although Thomas Leitch, in his *Twelve Fallacies of Contemporary Adaptation Theory*, questions whether it is the role at all of researchers of adaptation studies to even make such evaluations (2003).

This assumption of the superiority of the original text, however, was challenged by André Bazin as early as 1948 with the first publication of his article *Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest* who also questioned the necessity of such comparisons. In this article, Bazin states:

All things considered, it is possible to imagine that we are moving toward a reign of the adaptation in which the notion of the unity of the work of art, if not the very notion of the author himself, will be

destroyed. If the film that was made of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* [1940; directed by Lewis Milestone] had been successful (it could have been so, and far more easily than the adaptation of the same author's *Grapes of Wrath*) the (literary?) critic of the year 2050 would find not a novel out of which a play and a film had been "made," but rather a single work reflected through three art forms, an artistic pyramid with three sides, all equal in the eyes of the critic. The "work" would then be only an ideal point at the top of this figure, which itself is an ideal construct. The chronological precedence of one part over another would not be an aesthetic criterion any more than the chronological precedence of one twin over the other is a genealogical one. (Bazin 2000, p. 26)

In reference to the notion of fidelity, François Truffaut, in the article published in *Cahiers du cinéma* in 1954 entitled *Une certaine tendance du cinéma français*, translated into English as *A Certain Tendency in French Cinema* (2009), criticises the films that represent the "Tradition of Quality" (2009, p. 39).

In his article, Truffaut challenges the tendency of screenwriters to take liberties in adapting literary masterpieces to film, the scriptwriters "who were behind the emergence of poetic realism in the Tradition of Quality movement" (2009, p. 41), in particular, the screenwriting team of Jean Aurenche, who specialised in writing adaptations for the screen, and Pierre Bost, a novelist. In his discussion of the adaptations done by these screenwriters, Truffaut claims that:

Everyone now realises that Aurenche and Bost rehabilitated the art of adaptation by challenging the notion of what was generally meant by it; in other words they are said to have replaced the old prejudice that required one to be faithful to the letter by the opposite requirement to be faithful to the spirit . . . The touchstone of adaptation as practiced by Aurenche and Bost is the so-called process of equivalence. This process takes for granted that in the novel being adapted there are filmable and unfilmable scenes, and that instead of scrapping the latter (as used to be done) you had to think up equivalent scenes; in other words, ones that the author of the novel might have written for the screen. 'Invent without betraying' is the watchword that Aurenche and Bost liked to cite, forgetting that one can also betray by omission. (2009, pp. 41-42)

Truffaut claims that screenwriters such as Aurenche and Bost believe that "When they hand in their script, the film has already been made; in their view, the

metteur-en-scène [the director] is the person who decides on the framing” (2009, p. 54).

Truffaut then precedes to denounce these screenwriters as having a specifically “constant and deliberate determination to be *unfaithful* to both the spirit and the letter” (2009, p. 46) of the original novels they adapt, rejecting the films from this “Tradition of Quality” in favour of a “*cinéma d’auteur*” (2009, p. 56). He further states that the works worthy of admiration are “the work of men of the cinema, not scriptwriters, of directors, not men of letters” (2009, p. 59). Truffaut thus becomes a leading advocate of auteur theory. As Robert Stam points out:

For Truffaut, the new film would resemble the person who made it, not so much through autobiographical content but rather through the style, which impregnates the film with the personality of its director. Intrinsically strong directors, auteur theory argued, will exhibit over the years a recognizable stylistic and thematic personality, even when they work in Hollywood studios. In short, real talent will “out” no matter what the circumstances. (2000, p. 84)

In the article *Adaptation*, originally published in 1984 and adopting a structuralist approach, Dudley Andrew describes the distinctive feature of adaptation as being “the matching of the cinematic sign system to prior achievements in some other system” (Andrew 2000, p. 28), along the lines of the work by Bluestone. Like Bluestone, Andrew respects the film adaptation as a separate art form, while still acknowledging the original novel as a necessity for the adapted film. Like Bluestone, Andrew also focuses on the adaptation specifically of novels to film. He draws upon the work of Bluestone in regards to fidelity and the question of capturing the spirit of a novel on film, which he says that Bluestone argues is ultimately impossible. Andrew operates under the assumption that there is a meaning in the novel that can be separated from the literary signs that are used to create it, and because of this, the meaning can still be captured in a different way through the use of cinematic signs so that capturing the spirit of a novel is indeed possible. As he states, “while the material of literature (graphemes, words, and sentences) may be of a different nature from the materials of cinema (projected light and shadows, identifiable sounds and forms, and

represented actions), both systems may construct in their own way, and at higher levels, scenes and narratives that are indeed commensurable” (2000, p. 424).

He builds upon the work of Bluestone by examining the relationships that a film can have with its original text, defining the texts as being either a signifier or a referent. As he explains, “Adaptations claiming fidelity bear the original as a signified, whereas those inspired by or derived from an earlier text stand in a relation of referring to the original” (2000, p. 28), thereby also implying that these constitute an intentional relationship between the film and its original source text based upon the intentions of the filmmaker. In discussing these relationships and its concept of fidelity, Andrew divides the nature of adaptation into three forms, those of borrowing, intersecting and transforming sources.

“Borrowing” he identifies as being the most frequent type of adaptation, stating, “Here the artist employs, more or less extensively, the material, idea, or form of an earlier, generally successful, text” (Andrew 2000, p. 30). In reference to “intersecting”, he states, “Here the uniqueness of the original text is preserved to such an extent that it is intentionally left unassimilated in adaptation” (Andrew 2000, p. 30). His third category, which he refers to as “unquestionably the most frequent and most tiresome discussion of adaptation” (Andrew 2000, p. 31) is that of transformation. As he states:

Here it is assumed that the task of adaptation is the reproduction in cinema of something essential about an original text. Here we have a clear-cut case of film’s trying to measure up to a literary work or of an audience’s expecting to make such a comparison. Fidelity of adaptation is conventionally treated in relation to the “letter” and to the “spirit” of a text, as though adaptation were the rendering of an interpretation of a legal precedent. (Andrew 2000, p. 31)

Andrew posits that people, in general, have the tendency to identify and match “the cinematic sign system to prior achievements” (Andrew 2000, p. 28) and that filmmakers therefore intentionally incorporate such signs into their films. Building upon this assumption, this study examines the intentions of the filmmaker Branagh in his selection of specific cinematic codes and their possible or expected connections for the viewer as a means of ascertaining the signs and clues which

Branagh incorporates into his films in his effort to establish a relationship between the viewer and the film and to evoke recall. As such, it examines the hypotexts and hypertexts of Branagh's films and identifies those signs that have been appropriated from the source materials for the purpose of triggering recall.

Whelehan, in her article *Adaptations: The Contemporary Dilemmas*, also focuses on the value of both of these media, literary text and film, challenging the assumptions that the text is necessarily superior to the film as critics such as Gabriel Miller claimed when he proposed that film cannot deal with the depth of a character the way that a novel can. As Miller claims in his book *Screening the Novel: Rediscovered American Fiction in Film*, "The novels' characters undergo a simplification process when transferred to the screen, for film is not very successful in dealing either with complex psychological states or with dream or memory, nor can it render thought" (2016, p. xiii). Cartmell suggests that "What is clear is that certain features of novelistic expression must be retained in order to guarantee a 'successful' adaptation," and goes on to point out that "the markers of success vary depending largely on which features of the literary narrative are deemed essential to a reproduction of its core meaning" (Whelehan 1999, p. 7). Like Andrew, Whelehan operates from the assumption that there does exist a core meaning that transcends the semiotic codes of both the novel and the film.

The idea of there being such a core meaning does not contradict the idea of the reader or viewer as a producer of meaning since texts can have multiple layers of meaning. The layers of meaning and interpretation that one person may give to a text may differ from those given by another person, yet it is likely that these two would agree upon an essential "core" meaning based upon the themes, the characters and the action that takes place within the text.

Whelehan's claim that the "success" of an adaptation be based upon the retention of essential features of the original text and its core meaning, however, is open to challenge. Films can be radically different from the original texts in terms of their core meaning, and the valuation and definition of "success" is subjective and itself a subject of debate.

Whelehan also suggests that rather than focusing on fidelity to the original text, adaptation studies would be better served should critics choose to focus instead upon, “among other things, the choices made by the adapter, the conditions of those choices, other possible options and their possible effects” (1999, p. 17). This thesis follows the suggestion of Whelehan, focusing upon the choices made by the adapter Branagh and the possible effects of his choices.

Whelehan further adds that “It also may be fruitful to investigate how the historical ‘authenticity’ of the period represented by the literary text’s setting is approached, and whether the ideological perspectives offered seem to echo those of the literary narratorial perspective” (1999, p. 17). The need for examination of this type of historical ‘authenticity’ as a part of fidelity is reiterated by McFarlane and Morris Beja in his book *Film and Literature*, quoted by McFarlane as:

In ‘period’ films, one often senses exhaustive attempts to create an impression of fidelity to, say Dickens’ London or Jane Austen’s village life, the result of which so far from ensuring fidelity to the text, is to produce distracting quaintness. What was a contemporary work for the author, who could take a good deal relating to time and place for granted, as requiring little or no scene-setting for his readers, has become a period piece for the film-maker. (1996, p. 9)

This issue is discussed in the case studies chapters in relation to the settings of Branagh’s films. This question of historical authenticity informs the analysis of the choices made by Branagh in relation to this element of the mise-en-scène and their connection to the hypertexts of the films.

Approaches to fidelity have thus undergone a transition from assumption of the original text as superior to the acceptance of the merit of both text and film. In the book *True to the Spirit: Film Adaptation and the Question of Fidelity*, Colin MacCabe discusses this transition, recognising the question of “truth to the spirit” as being an important issue but dismissing the questions of whether a book or its adapted film is better, referring to such questions as “intellectually dull and unproductive” (MacCabe 2011, p. 8). He points out that the premise that unifies all the case studies collected in his book is that “the books and films considered are

of real value, a value in most cases that has been augmented by the process of adaptation” (MacCabe 2011, p. 8).

However, some advocates of the theoretical discussion of fidelity are questioning the validity of fidelity as a legitimate focus at all in adaptation studies. Thomas Leitch, in his book *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents: From Gone with the Wind to the Passion of the Christ*, challenges the notion that any film can be completely fidelitous to its original text and further challenges the idea that fidelity is a common or even good trait of a film.

As Leitch presents his analyses of various films, he contends that fidelity to the text is an exception rather than the norm that is predominately applied in adapting literary texts to cinema. This opinion is also reflected in Bazin’s above-mentioned article when he says, “most of the films that are based on novels merely usurp their titles” (Bazin 2000, p. 22). Leitch suggests that rather than questioning how faithful a film is to its original text, the question should be posed as to why an adaption aims to be faithful. This reversal of the questioning, Leitch says, is preferable because it represents a more accurate depiction of the reality of adapting texts to film. He further states that another reason for this is that:

It pointedly implies that the main reason adaptations rarely achieve anything like fidelity is because they rarely attempt it. A third, perhaps the most important, is that it acknowledges that every case of attempted fidelity is exceptional not only because faithful adaptations are in the minority but because they are so likely to be different from one another. Renouncing the unsupported assumption that all adaptations are, or ought to be faithful reveals more clearly that the motives for undertaking a particular faithful adaptation are likely to be as distinctive as the results. (Leitch 2009, pp. 127-128)

In this way, Leitch provides support for the merits of analysing the intentions and motives behind the production of an adapted film. The intentionality of the adapter is seen to be a valid topic of discourse due to its ability to highlight the uniqueness that an adapted film has based upon the intentions of the adapter. This thesis supports this contention and researches the intentions of Branagh that inform his films.

The eighth fallacy in Leitch's *Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory* states that "Fidelity is the most appropriate criterion to use in analyzing adaptation" (Leitch 2003, p, 161). In this article, Leitch points out that, in adaptation studies, the question of fidelity of cinematic adaptations to their original source materials is incorrect in continually assuming that the original is of necessity superior because "the source texts will always be better at being themselves" (Leitch 2003, p. 162). Describing this continuing need to analyse and evaluate the value of cinematic adaptations based upon their fidelity to source materials as "indefensible", Leitch claims that reasons for this continual need can be traced to the pervading assumption that classic texts are superior to modern texts, that literature is necessarily superior to cinema, which causes the proponents of this attitude to ignore the "theoretical poverty of fidelity as a touchstone of value" (Leitch 2003, p. 162).

Leitch further questions why commentators on adaptation continue to see their role as being the evaluators of the merits of adaptations when other areas of film studies have moved beyond this to focusing instead upon "analytical and theoretical problems" (Leitch 2003, p. 161).

In this study, while the intertextual hypotexts and hypertexts of Branagh's films are identified and discussed at length, including their fidelity to the source materials and the differences and similarities that exist between the films and their respective sources, it is not the intention of this study to propose that these enumerations be used as a means of discerning the value of either the filmic adaptation or its source materials or that such fidelity or lack thereof be used in judgment as to the superiority or inferiority of either. Rather, the purpose for including such analysis stems from the need to identify those elements that Branagh has appropriated from these texts and to be able to demonstrate how Branagh uses them within the *mise-en-scène* to trigger recall.

Geoffrey Wagner, in his work *The Novel and the Cinema*, approaches adaptation from a taxonomical angle, categorising adaptation into three basic types, those of transposition, commentary and analogy (1975, p. 222).

Transposition refers to the act of taking one text and transposing it somewhere else, in a different place, different media, or context. Transposition describes adaptation in which the film remains close with little change from the original source. As an example of this, Branagh's adaptation of *Hamlet* (1996) could be considered a transposition because, though he updates the setting and costumes to a more 19th century look, he takes the entire literary text of the play and transposes it to film. *Commentary* refers to the act of taking a text and making a social or political commentary on the text or the new mise-en-scène or context. This is usually done by alteration or addition. Commentary adaptation refers to the case in which aspects of the film are changed to meet the desires of the filmmaker, referencing the significance of authorial intent. Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby* (2013) is an example of commentary because of the numerous changes Baz Luhrmann makes from the book. *Analogy* describes adaptations that are substantially different from the original source text. An example of this would be the film *Clueless* (1995), adapted from Jane Austen's *Emma*.

Adaptation scholars Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan, however, urge caution in using such a taxonomical approach, proposing that "The danger of posing such a model of approach is whether such taxonomies risk privileging the notion of 'closeness to origin' as the key business of adaptation studies; additionally, the boundaries between the various classifications are impossible to define and an adaptation can fit into a number of categories at once" (Cartmell and Whelehan 2010, p. 6).

This project employs the taxonomy of Wagner as a valid means of distinguishing different types of adaptations. While the cautionary advice of Cartmell and Whelehan has some merit in its questioning the emphasis on fidelity in Adaptation Studies, it does not undermine the advantages of having such a taxonomical system for describing adaptations. The possibility that an adaptation can be classified into more than one category does not detract from the classification itself. The use of such a taxonomy is of value in providing an understanding of the degree of information that a film incorporates from its earlier

sources and its usage within the film, as well as providing an indication of the film's relationship to its sources.

3.2 Discourses on the Nature of Adaptation Studies beyond the Topic of Fidelity

The latter decades of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries witnessed a significant amount of expansion discussing existing gaps in the scholarly literature regarding film adaptation and what is needed to fill them. As Cartmell and Whelehan point out, the field of Adaptation Studies “is young and has, relatively speaking, suddenly become crowded with a heady mix of critical voices who all do indeed have something new to offer” (2010, p 10).

Simone Murray describes such gaps or “lingering blind spots” in her book *The Adaptation Industry: The Cultural Economy of Contemporary Literary Adaptation*, which focuses on the way in which the literary industry is affected by the current converging media industry. “And yet, for all the sense of a discipline joyfully kicking over the traces of previously dominant and long-outdated thinking, there is much that stays obdurately the same” (2012, p. 3).

With the help of many scholars such as Murray, Cartmell and Whelehan, Adaptation Studies have progressed considerably since George Bluestone's *Novels into Film*. Cartmell fights for the validation of the film media itself and the importance of film adaptation, recognising the need for the study to catch up to current times. She strongly targets the literary community, arguing that literary studies are possibly slow to recognise the disappearing boundary between “high” (literature) and “low” (film) culture in society (1999, p. 45). Cartmell argues that adaptations should be appreciated in their own right and not simply regarded as parasitic upon their literary counterparts. She argues that the field must open up to acknowledge the influence of film on literature as well.

In his work *From Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*, Brian McFarlane, adopting a post-modernist approach, suggests an area of investigation that he deems worthwhile to study is investigating what key factors other than the source novel have exercised an influence on the film version of the

novel” (1996, p. 22). This line of investigation is significant for this thesis, as discussed in the case study chapters, because of the nature of the films as bricolage and the multiple types of texts that serve as hypotexts, hypertexts and transtexts for these films, including novels as well as comic books, fairy tales and elements of *mise-en-scène* from earlier films.

McFarlane also finds it of value “to consider the kinds of transmutation that have taken place, to distinguish what the film-maker has sought to retain from the original and the kinds of use to which he has put it” (p. 23). McFarlane advocates the investigation of the intentions of the director of a film and the cultural or political circumstances that existed when the film was premiered, as well as its target audience, in approaching adaptation.

Robert Stam, in his introduction to *Literature and Film*, discusses the hostility that exists toward film in many adaptation studies, the continued assumption that the literary source is superior, and the roots of such prejudice. These roots he lists as “the a priori valorization of historical anteriority and seniority . . . the dichotomous thinking that presumes a bitter rivalry between film and literature . . . iconophobia . . . logophilia . . . anti-corporeality . . . the myth of facility a subliminal form of class prejudice . . . [and] the charge of parasitism” (Stam 2005, p. 4-8). Stam, like McFarlane, supports the narratological approach to adaptation, saying “Narratology is an indispensable tool for analyzing certain formal aspects of film adaptations” while reiterating the significance of the context in which the films were made (Stam 2005, p. 41). The significance of the context in which a film is made, as proposed by both McFarlane and Stam, is an integral element in this project with particular reference to the film *Thor* and its position within the expanding Marvel film universe, the position of *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* within the Jack Ryan series of films, and the position of *Cinderella* in the Disney plan of creating live action versions of its classic animated features, as well as such additional factors as the significance of casting of the films, the cultural and the political contexts, of particular interest in the production of *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*, as is discussed in the case chapter studies to follow in the thesis.

Thomas Leitch, in his work *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents: From Gone with the Wind to The Passion of the Christ*, claims that a breach developed between the “aesthetic approach of literary studies and the analytical approach of film studies” (2007, p. 5). This breach resulted in the isolation of “adaptation studies from film studies . . . [and] the rift widened between the theory and the practice of adaptation studies” (2007, p. 5).

Like McFarlane, Leitch further suggests that films should be analysed in reference to the political, economic, cultural and even technological climate in which they were created. He further proposes, like Wagner, a taxonomical approach that incorporates categories ranging between the hypertextual adaptation and the intertextual allusion, which he sees as occupying opposite ends of the spectrum. This approach can be helpful but ultimately, he admits, it fails because films are difficult to exclusively categorise. “Even apparently straightforward adaptations typically make use of many different intertextual strategies” (Leitch 2007, p. 126).

This study employs a taxonomical approach towards the research despite the difficulty, as Leitch describes it, of exclusively categorising film. Taxonomy provides an initial framework or level of understanding for the type of adaptation which can serve as a springboard from which further discussion can proceed. The researcher acknowledges that different strategies can exist simultaneously in one adaptation, but it is not problematic. There can exist a multitude of strategies, possibly even contradictory strategies, that diverge from the taxonomical label or labels placed upon the adaptation but it does not distract from the initial label. It is possible to have multiple labels which describe the same adaptation and there is no necessity for such labels to be exclusive.

Leitch further discusses the challenges of adapting films from sources that are not literary, which is of value to this thesis in its analysis of Branagh’s *Thor*, for which comic books serve as a major hypertext. In discussing the hostility that has existed towards films based upon other types of media, Leitch points out that:

Neither reviewers nor theorists have developed a way of talking about postliterary adaptations that has progressed much beyond

sarcasm or outrage. The problem is especially acute in the case of movie whose sources are not only nonliterary but nonnarrative. Michael Wilmington, reviewing *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003) for the *Chicago Tribune*, observed that “this is a movie based not on a novel, history or even another old movie, but on a theme park ride . . . and that means we’re lucky if we get any wit, imagination or character at all,” as if such a source placed the film beyond the pale of civilized discussion. The summary dismissal of such adaptations is evidently based partly on a literary bias that assumes cinema should adapt only originals more culturally respectable than cinema itself and partly on a narrative bias that assumes that stories are the ingredients that make the best movies. (2007, p. 258)

3.3 Literature Review Specific to this Study

This section reviews the major scholarly literature that informs this research and has been influential in determining the direction of the discourse on authorial intent and function, the roles of both director and audience as producers of meaning in film, the semiotics of film and its role in *mise-en scène*, and the text-to-text analysis required to determine elements used to evoke audience recall. It identifies those texts and terminologies that are essential for the study of topics within the field of Adaptation Studies. The texts that are included herein are significant to this research as a means of understanding the topography of research on this topic and of identifying the most appropriate approach for analysis for this project.

For this study, it is useful to differentiate between what would be considered an adaptation, which “signals a relationship with an informing sourcetext or original” (Sanders 2006, p. 26), and what would constitute an appropriation, which “frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain” (Sanders 2006, p. 26).

According to Julie Sanders, who offers clear and concise definitions of terms in her book *Adaptation and Appropriation*, both “adaptation and appropriation are dependent on the literary canon for the provision of a shared body of storylines, themes, characters, and ideas upon which their creative variations can be made. The spectator or reader must be able to participate in the play of similarity and difference perceived between the original, source, or

inspiration to appreciate fully the reshaping or rewriting undertaken by the adaptive text” (2006, p. 45). Sanders emphasises the frequency in which “adaptations adapt other adaptations” (2006, p. 13) and makes the point that appropriations are not always explicit in their intertextual connections (2006, p. 59).

This idea that the spectator or reader participates in identifying and differentiating between the original sources and the film adaptation forms the crux of the research for this thesis. The conceptual framework is based upon the assumption that there exist audience members for the case-study films who will participate in this “play of similarity and difference” and that Branagh directs efforts towards addressing these audience members. The idea that “adaptations adapt other adaptations” is demonstrated in the research through the study of the intertextuality of the case-study films and through the examination of Branagh’s filmmaking processes, as is discussed in the case study chapters and in Chapter Four dealing with Branagh’s methods.

As an example of these categorisations Sanders provides the musical *West Side Story* as an analogue type of adaptation as analogues can stand alone as works of art without the necessity of awareness of the hypotext from which it is appropriated. *West Side Story* can be considered an analogy adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* because of its ability to stand alone for readers or viewers who have no knowledge of the hypotext upon which it was based, while also being considered an appropriation as it is “a fine example of the more sustained reworking of the source text which we have identified as intrinsic to appropriation” (2006, p. 28).

Sanders divides the process of appropriation into two categories, those of embedded texts and of sustained appropriations. The term embedded text refers to repetition or quotations of actual text from the hypotext embedded within a hypertext. The use of embedded text is an adaptation strategy that Branagh uses throughout his films and is explored in the study for the films *Thor*, *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* and *Cinderella*. Sustained appropriations refer to parallels in the

hypertexts to the hypotexts, another strategy used by Branagh, as is discussed in the case study chapters.

Another term of relevance to this study, as defined by Sanders, is the term *bricolage*, which refers to “those texts that assemble a range of quotations, allusions, and citations from existent works of art” (2006, p. 4), an engagement that she compares to the art form of collage. The term *pastiche* in the literary sense is defined as “those works which carry out an extended imitation of the style of a single artist or writer” (2006, p. 5), a term that may be used to describe Branagh’s *Love’s Labours Lost*. “Pastiche’ refers more specifically to a medley of references to different styles, texts, or authors” (Sanders, 2006, p. 106).

In its taxonomical approach, this project employs these definition of Sanders in its discussions of the film works of Branagh as all three of the case study films may be classified as bricolage. The thesis further approaches its topic with an understanding of the multitude of hypotexts and hypertexts that surround Branagh’s adaptations.

French literary theorist Gérard Genette, in his book *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, offers the following definitions, which are employed in the analysis for this project: “Hypertextuality refers to any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary” (1997, p. 5). In this way, the hypotext refers to the initial texts studied, the texts which may serve as sources from which subsequent texts may be transposed, though such transpositions are not necessarily mentioned or made explicit in the subsequent hypertexts. The hypertext refers to a text that is based upon or influenced by an earlier text and is thereby derived from a hypotext.

For this study, the hypotexts are the primary texts upon which the films of Branagh herein evaluated are derived. These include the Norse mythology upon which *Thor* is based, the novels of Tom Clancy upon which *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* is based, and the early Cinderella legends whose influence is seen in Branagh’s *Cinderella*. The Norse mythology provides the film *Thor* with some of

the characters and plot developments, as well as the realm and world view in which the film is based. The Clancy novels provide *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* with characters and significant elements of the plot. The Cinderella legends provide *Cinderella* with characters and the plot.

The hypertexts herein involved include the additional intermediary sources from which the films are derived. These include the Marvel comic books depicting the character of Thor which provide *Thor* with additional elements of the plot, the previous film adaptations of the Jack Ryan novels which provide *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* with elements of the plot, and the fairytale of Charles Perrault, *Ashputtel* of the Brothers Grimm and the Disney animated feature of *Cinderella* which provide Branagh's *Cinderella* with additional elements of the plot, ideas for costuming, framing of scenes and musical selections.

In addition, also of use in this research is Genette's classification of generic architextuality, used to define the genres to which particular texts may belong. This identification is significant for the impact that it may have had in the making of Branagh's films because such identifications contribute to "the readers' [viewers'] expectations, and thus their reception of the work" (Genette 1997, p. 5). These architextual classifications include the superhero action thriller, the spy thriller, and the family film, or in this case more specifically. the Disney family film which in itself has an element of meaning, connotation and understanding that can be argued as occupying a particular space within this broader category of family film.

Genette, in *The Architext: An Introduction*, further discusses the concept of "*textual transcendence* – namely, everything that brings it into relation (manifest or hidden) with other texts. I call that *transtextuality*" (1992, p. 81). Genette further elucidates this term, stating, "under transtextuality I put still other kinds of relationships – chiefly, I think, relationships of imitation and transformation . . . I put under transtextuality that relationship of inclusion that links each text to the various types of discourse it belongs to" (1992, p. 82). Both hypotexts and hypertexts are thus included as types of transtextuality, but this term has a broader meaning, encompassing as well other sources that may have influenced a particular text in

other types of relationships, such as, in the case of Branagh's *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*, the imitation of stylistic or formulaic aspects of other films, as is discussed in Chapter Six.

Graham Allen offers a further classification that is useful for this study in distinguishing the films, themselves hypertexts, from the other hypertexts upon which they draw, as is defined below:

The systems, codes and traditions of other art forms and of culture in general are also crucial to the meaning of a work of literature . . . They are what theorists now call intertextual. The act of reading, theorists claim, plunges us into a network of textual relations. Meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates . . . The text becomes the intertext. (Allen 2011, p. 1)

This project for reasons of clarity adopts this more specific classification of Allen in identifying the films of Branagh. Herein the films are identified as the intertexts. The transtexts for this study, again for reasons of clarity, are herein defined as all the other sources that are neither hypotexts nor hypertexts which influence the production of the film and Branagh's methods, such as earlier films and performances that Branagh uses for inspiration in his films.

3.3.1 Theoretical Framework of this Thesis

The theoretical framework of this thesis is based upon the theories proposed by Andrew Sarris (2008), Thomas Leitch (2007), C. Paul Sellors (2010), Peter Wollen (1972), T. S. Eliot (1982), Christine Geraghty (2008), André Bazin (1975), and Bordwell and Thompson (2009), as is discussed below. It incorporates an examination of the areas of authorship in film, semiotics, intertextuality, and *mise-en-scène*. As is indicated below, these areas are the cornerstones of the research.

3.3.1.1 Authorship in Film, Auteur Theory and Author Function

The question of authorship in film became a significant subject of debate in the field of Adaptation Studies. The idea of the filmmaker as the author of a film was first introduced by French film critic and director Alexandre Astruc in his article *Du Stylo à la camera et de la camera au stylo*, first published in 1948 in the

magazine *L'Écran français* and published in English as *The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Caméra-Stylo* (2009). In this article, while pointing out that “There is always an *avant-garde* when something new takes place” (2009, p. 31), Astruc discusses a new transformation taking place in cinema at that time in which “the cinema is becoming a means of expression, just as all the other arts have been before it” (2009, p. 31). Proposing that cinema is becoming a language in its own right, Astruc says:

By language, I mean a form in which and by which artists can express their thoughts, however abstract they may be, or translate their obsessions exactly as they do in the contemporary essay or novel. That is why I would like to call this new age of cinema the age of *caméra-stylo* (camera-pen). This metaphor has a very precise sense. By it I mean that the cinema will gradually break free . . . to become a means of writing just as flexible and subtle as written language. (2009, p. 32)

In creating this new language of cinema, Astruc proposes that:

. . . the screenwriter ceases to exist, for in this kind of filmmaking the distinction between author and director loses all meaning. Direction is no longer a means of illustrating or presenting a scene, but a true act of writing. The film-maker/author writes with his camera as a writer writes with his pen. (2009, p. 35)

This idea of filmmaker as author was adopted by certain film critics throughout the 1950s, leading to the development of what has since become known as “auteur theory”. Auteur theory can be defined as a theory in film criticism that identifies the director as the creator or author of a film because it is the director’s personal vision that is realised in the production of a film. Proponents of auteur theory posit that, although film production is a collaborative creative process with many different types of input from many different sources before the final product is created, there are some directors whose distinctive style, creative voice and personality are influential enough in the production to make such a director worthy of the term “author” of the film or the French equivalent “auteur”. Such a distinction was historically an important aspect of film criticism because “If film is

to be seen as an art form, and more than just entertainment, it is essential to be able to locate film artists” (Sellors 2010, pp. 6-7).

The elevation of a director to the status of auteur does not signify that all films made by said director are good or that good films are not made by directors who would instead be considered *metteurs-en-scène*, those “frequently, though not always, highly competent directors, but their personalities generally are not evident in the films they direct” (Sellors 2010, p. 6).

In his article published in 1955, *Ali Baba et la ‘politique des auteurs* (*Ali Baba and the ‘Policy of Auteurs’*), François Truffaut, a leading proponent of auteur theory, coins the phrase *politique des auteurs* and exemplifies the policy regarding the criticism of auteurs by demonstrating that the judgment or evaluation of the works of auteurs and the elevation of directors to the status of auteur be based upon their body of work rather than upon one particular work. Using this *politique des auteurs*, Truffaut proclaimed Jacques Becker, the director of the film *Ali Baba et les quarante voleurs* (*Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*), an auteur on the basis of his previous films in spite of the negative reaction to that particular film, explaining that he would defend it in spite of its failures “*en vertu de la Politique des Auteurs*” (1955, p. 47), by virtue of the *politique des auteurs*. In support of his idea of the *politique des auteurs*, Truffaut quotes renowned French novelist and playwright Jean Giraudoux as saying “Il n’y a pas d’œuvres, il n’y a que des auteurs” (There are no works, there are only auteurs).

The idea of the director as the author and the *politique des auteurs* was adopted and expanded upon by numerous critics who wrote critiques for *Cahiers du cinéma* during the 1950s and has since become one of the norms for devising criteria for the classification of directors as auteurs.

André Bazin, a proponent of the director as author, states, “Today we can say that at last the director writes in film. The image – its plastic composition and the way it is set in time, because it is founded on a much higher degree of realism – has at its disposal more means of manipulating reality and of modifying it from

within. The film-maker is no longer the competitor of the painter and the playwright, he is, at last, the equal of the novelist” (2005, p. 40).

He describes the act of identifying a director as an auteur as “choosing the personal factor in artistic creation as a standard of reference, and then of assuming that it continues and even progresses from one film to the next” (2009b, p. 143). In his article *La Politique des auteurs*, originally published in 1957, Bazin cautions against the excesses of the *politique des auteurs* by claiming that not every film by the so-proclaimed auteurs can be judged to have equal value, pointing out that “It is unfortunate to praise a film that in no way deserved it, but the dangers are less far-reaching than when a worthwhile film is rejected because its director has made nothing good up to that point” (2009b, p. 145). He also points out the limitations of the auteur theory by stating that “the criteria of the *politique des auteurs* are very difficult to formulate . . . It is significant that our finest writers on *Cahiers* have been practicing it for three or four years now and have yet to produce the main corpus of its theory” (2009, p. 144).

Andrew Sarris tries to remedy that situation in his 1962 article entitled *Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962* (2008), in which he coined the term “auteur theory”, saying “Henceforth, I will abbreviate *la politique des auteurs* as the *auteur* theory to avoid confusion” (2008, p. 37). In this article, Sarris proposes three premises upon which the determination of auteur should be based.

The first of these is the premise that a director must have a degree of technical competence. As he states, “A great director has to be at least a good director. This is true in any art” (2008, p. 43), and a director can only be good with an element of competence in the technical side of filmmaking. The second premise proposed by Sarris concerns “the distinguishable personality of the director as a criterion of value. Over a group of films, a director must exhibit certain recurrent characteristics of style, which serve as his signature. The way a film looks and moves should have some relationship to the way a director thinks and feels” (2008, p. 43). Sarris’ third premise “is concerned with interior meaning, the ultimate glory

of the cinema as an art. Interior meaning is extrapolated from the tension between a director's personality and his material" (2008, p. 43).

Sarris does, however, like Bazin, caution against the potential excesses of the auteur theory, explaining that the idea that the work of all auteurs must intrinsically be considered as superior films and films made by directors who are not considered auteurs must be inferior is unsound. As he says, "Now what could be sillier than this inflexible attitude? Let us abandon the absurdities of the *auteur* theory so that we may return to the chaos of common sense" (2008, p. 36).

The auteur theory has remained an approach to the discussion of film criticism since its inception, although the valuative judgment of a director's status as auteur is seen to have fallen out of favour among what Simone Murray describes as the "new wave" of adaptation theorists in recent years (2012, p. 3). Some recent scholarly literature questions the role of scholars as purveyors of such judgmental evaluations, such as Thomas Leitch, in his *Twelve Fallacies of Contemporary Adaptation Theory*, who questions whether it is the role of researchers of adaptation studies to make such evaluations (2003). However, the premises proposed by Sarris do offer a means of analysing the role of the director in the filmmaking process in terms of the director's contributions to the film. As such, this thesis does discuss the question of Branagh's technical competence, which he is quoted as saying he acquired through his experience in directing, stating that the process "did equip me with more information and experience than I was quite understanding, but it also allowed me to literally benefit there and then" (Galloway 2015). Further in line with Sarris' premises, the thesis also discusses the patterns that may be detected across the scope of Branagh's films, such as recurring themes, and the contributions he makes to his films that stem from his own personal experiences.

American film critic Pauline Kael, in her article *Circles and Squares*, first published in 1963, furthermore challenges the premises set forth by Sarris as being flawed, postulating that "a new great film director may appear whose very greatness is in his struggling toward grandeur or in massive accumulation of detail"

(2008, p. 49). Tackling the first premise of Sarris's auteur theory, Kael argues that technical know-how is not an essential element of what defines a great director since that technical aspect, that "business", is outside the scope of the director's responsibilities. Kael asks "does it matter when that "business" has little to do with what they want to express in films?" (2008, p. 49).

While this is a valid argument to a certain extent in that there surely may be directors who do not have a great deal of technical competence but, through the collaborative nature of filmmaking, manage to produce what might be called a great film, this argument can still be challenged in that research should be done to demonstrate that such "great" directors exist, and that greatness need not be a pre-requisite of authorship. Film schools are designed to teach students competence in all major areas of pre-production, production, and post-production, producing graduates with basic knowledge of technical aspects such as lighting and sound. Prominent modern directors such as Steven Spielberg, Francis Ford Coppola, and Martin Scorsese attended film school where, it may be assumed, they attained such competence. Directors such as James Cameron, Quentin Tarantino, and Stanley Kubrick, who did not go to film school, likely still had a degree of technical competence when directing their films, although such research is outside the scope of this study. Nevertheless, research into great directors who did not have such competence would be needed in order to accept Kael's argument as valid. This thesis argues that Branagh, as is discussed in Chapter Four, does possess the type of technical competence to which Sarris refers in his discussion of the criteria for determining the status of a director as an auteur.

In her challenge to the second premise, Kael argues that the ability to detect the director's personality in his films does not necessitate that these films are great films. She thereby proposes that this premise is not an acceptable criterion for determining the value of a film, pointing out that "Often the works in which we are most aware of the personality of the director are his worst films – when he falls back on the devices he has already done to death" (2008, p. 49).

The argument that Kael thus makes, however, is not actually relevant to Sarris' premise in that Sarris does not argue that the ability to detect the director's personality in a film makes it a great film, but rather that such an ability is a "criterion of value" as a means of evaluating a director as an auteur, nor does he argue that all of an auteur's films are necessarily great films, in contrast to Truffaut. Kael's argument may be valid but it argues a different point and therefore does not actually challenge Sarris' premise. As is discussed in Chapter Four, this thesis argues that the personality of Branagh can be seen in his films in the choices he makes in terms of such aspects as recurring themes or film settings.

Kael decries the third premise of Sarris as a fallacy, claiming that it disqualifies writer-directors from attaining the status of auteur because "They can't arrive at that 'interior meaning, the ultimate glory of the cinema' because a writer-director has no tension between his personality and his material, so there's nothing for the *auteur* critics to extrapolate from" (2008, p. 53). This is the opposite of the attitude Truffaut displays when he points out, in his praise of a number of *auteurs*, that "it so happens – by a curious coincidence – that they are auteurs who often write their own dialogue and in some cases think up the stories they direct" (2009, p. 56).

Richard Corliss, in his article *Notes on a Screenwriter's Theory*, originally published in 1974, also puts forth a challenge to the auteur theory and the idea of the director as the author of film. While admitting that "the director *is* right in the middle of things" (2008, p. 142), Corliss quotes Orson Welles as saying, "In my opinion, the writer should have the first and last word in filmmaking, the only better alternative being the writer-director, but with the stress on the first word" (2008, p. 143).

Corliss endorses the idea put forth by Welles that the role of the writer must be taken into account when determining the authorship of a film. While admitting that it is a common practice for numerous writers to be brought onboard to modify and improve any given screenplay, Corliss points out that these writers often go unacknowledged. Corliss proposes therefore that screenwriters should be given

the same amount of consideration and study as directors, proclaiming, “a screenwriter’s work should and can be judged by analyzing his entire career, as is done with a director. If a writer has been associated with a number of favorite films, if he has received sole writing credit on some of these films, and if we can decipher a common style in films with different directors and actors, an authorial personality begins to appear” (2008, p. 146).

In 2006, film critic David Kipen published his book *The Schreiber Theory: A Radical Rewrite of American Film History* which also claimed to challenge the auteur theory. In it, Kipen proposes that, giving “credit where credit is due” (2006, p. 29), the true author of any film must be the screenwriter who writes the original script.

Both Corliss and Kipen make a valid point in endorsing the merits of the writer and the credit that is the writer’s due in the writer’s contributions to a film. However, this question of the role of the screenwriter of the screenplay in the production of the film opens the way for further discussion when dealing with adaptations. This begs the question of who exactly is the screenwriter, the actual screenwriter or the original author of the work upon which the adaptation is based, particularly when much of the dialogue and plot development is appropriated directly from the original work. Academy Awards are given to screenwriters for adapted screenplays, but this award is never shared with the writer of the hypotext from which the film was adapted. The proposals set forth by these critics reveal that they are not actually challenging the fundamental premise of author theory, but are merely asserting that author theory should be identifying the writer as the author rather than the director.

Cartmell comments on the position of the author of the hypotext in her introduction of *Adaptations from Text to Screen and Screen to Text*, stating that “Implicitly, the role of the author of the literary text in a film adaptation can be no more than that of a cameo” (1999, p. 24). Yet this cannot negate the contribution made by the author of the hypotext who may provide the characters and define their relationships, as well as elements of plot, sections of dialogue and settings,

although these may be altered or transposed in the film adaptations. In the same vein, the recognition of the director as performing the author function in a film does not negate the contribution of the screenwriter as author of the screenplay.

Truffaut, in his article published in *Cahiers du cinéma* in 1954 entitled *Une certaine tendance du cinéma français*, translated into English as *A Certain Tendency in French Cinema* (2009), decries screenwriters who believe that “When they hand in their script, the film has already been made” (2009, p. 54) because, in the end, a screenplay is not a film. It is only the process and multiple steps and decisions involved in taking that written word and putting it up on the screen that creates a film.

Cinematographer Haris Zambarloukos, in the personal interview conducted by the researcher of this thesis, made a point, in discussing the process of adaptation, that a “film has to become an original work. The minute it stops becoming a book, it becomes an original work.” As such, the writers of both the adapted screenplay and its hypotexts can be credited as authors of the work they create. However, they do not create the film, a completely separate work of art. It is the director who is responsible for overseeing this creative process and who makes considerable impact upon the finished film. Often, once the screenplay is written, the screenwriter has no further input into the actual production of the film. Recognising the written hypertext and hypertext as works of art distinct from the film as a separate work of art, the challenge proposed by Corliss and Kipen does not really constitute a challenge to auteur theory.

Peter Lehman discusses the relation between performance, theatre, and the screen in regards to auteur theory in his work *Script/Performance/Text: Performance Theory and Auteur Theory* (2008). He points out the difficulties involved in determining authorship in film, demonstrating this difficulty through comparison to musical authorship, stating:

We generally agree, for example, that theater and music are performing arts. And we generally agree on what that means. If a music critic goes to hear Leonard Bernstein conducting the New York Philharmonic in a “performance” of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, he/she feels secure in knowing who is responsible for what. What

Beethoven did and what Bernstein is doing are taken to be known entities. Praise and blame are easily distributed. If the critic hates the performance, he/she doesn't confuse that with hating the work created by Beethoven. In other words, a clear notion exists of what constitutes the aesthetic text and what constitutes a performance of the text. We know how to attribute critical praise and blame for authorship of the text as well as for performance of the text . . . Unfortunately, in film we have not yet learned how to do these things. (2008, p. 158)

C. Paul Sellors, in his book *Film Authorship: Auteurs and Other Myths*, tackles this difficulty in establishing authorship in film, proposing that neither the director nor the writer can be specifically described absolutely in all films as the author since filmmaking is such a collaborative effort. Sellors argues that "the concept of a film author is indispensable, but that most of our established means for understanding authorship do not provide robust methodologies for analyzing the practical importance of authorship for film production, criticism and history" (2010, p. 2). He goes on to add that "A director, or any member of a film's production team, is an author if, and only if, her or his work on the film meets the criteria of the definition" (2010, p. 2).

Sellors contends that "To simply equate a director with a writer and call the director the author of a film avoids understanding what part of writing constitutes authoring, and therefore what aspects of film production are authorial acts" (2010, p. 58). He adds that "film theorists and critics have questionably characterised film authorship as an act of individual expression, despite the collective nature of production" (2010, p. 111). Sellors thereby suggests that the better approach to film criticism is through the assertion of a collective authorship involving different people who contribute to the creation of the film although "the author(s) of a film cannot be identified simply by looking at a film's credits" (2010, p. 126). Sellors further adds that "Identifying who is and is not a member of the authorial team of any film is essentially an empirical and critical exercise relying on the best available evidence, rigorous interpretation of this evidence, and coherent reasoning and argumentation, and is always open to refinement and challenge" (2010, p. 126).

Despite the validity of Sellor's argument concerning the collaborative nature of films, discourse surrounding films continues to focus upon the director being understood as the author, which has an impact on how the audience views the films, as suggested by Michel Foucault, who points out that an author's name "performs a certain role with regard to narrative discourse, assuring a classificatory function. Such a name permits one to group together a certain number of texts, define them, differentiate them from and contrast them to others. In addition, it establishes a relationship among the texts" (2006, p. 284). In essence, the name of an author can in itself become a distinctive element recognisable by an audience to represent specific features or themes that have come to be associated with that particular author. For example, the name of Shakespeare confers to an audience a particular set of cultural preexisting identifiers that may include such aspects as heightened dialogue, rhythm and rhyme of speech, or even, for modern audiences, presumed difficulties in comprehension. A name can thus confer an immediate classification or expectation for an audience of what a work will likely constitute. Identification of the author can thereby indicate that a particular work "must be received in a certain mode and that, in a given culture, must receive a certain status" (Foucault 2006, p. 284).

As an example in the study of films, one might wish to discuss a suspense thriller. However, if one began that discussion with the statement that the film to be discussed was a Hitchcock film, the identification as suspense thriller might be immediately assumed, as well as such additional assumptions as unusual camera angles, the presence of a beautiful blond, or plot twists at the climax of a film. In this way, authors can have what might be seen as the equivalent of "brand recognition" as seen in the advertising field.

This thesis argues that the name of Kenneth Branagh has such brand recognition and conjures up a specific connotation in modern culture, based primarily upon his earlier cinematic adaptations of Shakespearean plays, as discussed in the *Introduction*. The identification of Branagh as "author" of his films, designating each as "a Kenneth Branagh film", therefore confers upon his works

“a certain status” (Foucault 2006, p. 284). As Will Brooker explains in his *Hunting the Dark Knight: Twenty-First Century Batman*, “the names are not used to refer so much to the real individuals or their biographical histories, but as an indication of brand values and a guarantee of quality and status” (2012, p. 11).

Thomas Leitch offers a differentiation between the terms “authorship” and “auteurship”, adding additional criteria to the definition of auteurship when he states that:

Given the difference between film authorship [playing a leading role in creating a film] and auteurship [establishing a claim to authorship that is widely recognized], how do adapters establish themselves as auteurs outside the film industry and the academy? What determines who is to count – director Simon Langton? screenwriter Andrew Davies? novelist Jane Austen? the BBC? – as the auteur of the 1995 mini-series *Pride and Prejudice*? The careers of three unquestioned auteurs whose body of work consisted almost entirely of adaptations – Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Kubrick, and Walt Disney – suggests that the auteur status of filmmakers depends at least as much on their temperament and working habits, their triumphs in conflicts with other aspiring authors, and their success at turning themselves into brand names as on their aspirations or any textual features of their films. (2007, p. 237)

Leitch goes on to add:

Rising from the ranks of metteurs-en-scène to the status of auteur depends on an alignment of several marketable factors: thematic consistency, association with a popular genre, an appetite for the coordination and control of outsized projects, sensitivity to the possibility of broad appeal in such disparate media as movies, television, books, magazines, and T-shirts. Perhaps the most indispensable of these factors is a public persona – Hitchcock’s archly ghoulish gravity, Kubrick’s fiercely romantic quest for control, Disney’s mild paternalism – that can be converted to a trademark more powerful than the other authorial trademarks with which it will inevitably compete. (2007, p. 256)

This thesis argues that, by Thomas Leitch’s definition of auteurship, Branagh can be considered both the author and the auteur of his directorial films. The thesis further acknowledges that the name of Branagh is used herein according to Foucault’s concept concerning the function of the author’s name in

discourse. In this project, the name of Branagh is identified as performing the author function since the thesis is concerned with the image that Branagh chooses to promote through the use of interviews, public forums and DVD commentaries, and Branagh's actions and statements are consistent with that performance in that he acts and speaks as though he were the author of his films.

The thesis is concerned with the social construct that has developed of "Branagh the director" as opposed to Branagh the actual man. The use of Branagh's name is not used to limit the meaning of his films, as Foucault claims, but to uncover the multiple meanings of his films and demonstrate their expansive hypertextuality rather than their singularity.

Despite the move away from discussions of authorship in film in recent academic criticism, discourse at large among society continues to focus upon the director as author which continues to influence the way a film is viewed by the audience, so that seeing a film as a Branagh film, for instance, shapes their response to the film. Sellors further contends that one of the major problems to be dealt with when discussing authorship in film is the tendency of critics to "locate meaning not intended by the authors" (2010, p. 5). He suggests "an intentionalist view of authorship" to combat this tendency, proposing that films be examined based upon the intention of the people involved in the filmmaking process.

Whelehan also supports the emphasis on authorial intent, stating that adaptation studies would be better served should critics choose to focus upon, "among other things, the choices made by the adapter, the conditions of those choices, other possible options and their possible effects" (1999, p. 17). This thesis follows the suggestion of Sellors and Whelehan concerning authorial intent, a concept constructed within the discourse, of which this thesis is a part.

The way in which Branagh's films and the discourses that surround them seek to suggest authorial intention on the part of Branagh further adds significance to Sellors' argument for this thesis. Using Sellors' proposal for "an intentionalist view of authorship" for this study, the thesis approaches the study from an intentionalist view, investigating the intentions that Branagh claims to have during

his filmmaking process, presented through the choices he makes, as is discussed below in the *Audience Recall* section.

3.3.1.2 Semiotics

Cinema, by its nature, is a culmination of signs and codes designed to communicate with the viewer. As such, an understanding of semiotics in cinema is useful in understanding not only a film, but the character and intentions of the author, as proposed by Sellors (2010), represented by the author's choice and types of signs that the author employs. This research proposes that in semiotics is of particular interest to Branagh, as Branagh incorporates such semiotic signs within the *mise-en-scène* of his films. Semiotics is therefore of particular interest in this study of the works of Branagh.

Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, in his seminal work *Course in General Linguistics*, proposed a structural study of language that would incorporate both the diachronic and the synchronic dimensions of language. In his work, he suggests that language be viewed as a system of signs in which both the speaker and the listener are participants in establishing meaning in the language. Saussure's work served as a catalyst to further study into the semiotics of language and its use as a sign-system (1998).

In discussing the significance of semiotics for the study of aesthetics of film, Peter Wollen says:

Firstly, any criticism necessarily depends upon knowing what a text means, being able to read it. Unless we understand the code or mode of expression which permits meaning to exist in the cinema, we are condemned to massive imprecision and nebulosity in film criticism, an unfounded reliance on intuition and momentary impression. Secondly, it is becoming increasingly evident that any definition of art must be made as part of a theory of semiology. (Wollen 1972, pp. 16-17)

Wollen goes on to describe the means in which a reader, or in the case of cinema a viewer, becomes an active producer of meaning by means of using personal experience and understanding to decode the signs presented by a text or film, in an active collaborative relationship with the author to create meaning:

The text is thus no longer a transparent medium; it is a material object which provides the conditions for the production of meaning, within constraints which it sets itself. It is open rather than closed; multiple rather than single; productive rather than exhaustive. Although it is produced by an individual, the author, it does not simply represent or express the author's ideas, but exists in its own right. It is not an instrument of communication but a challenge to the mystification that communication can exist. For inter-personal communication, it substitutes the idea of collective production; writer and reader are indifferently critics of the text and it is through their collaboration that meanings are collectively produced. (Wollen 1972, p. 163)

In this way, Wollen points out, the reader or viewer becomes an active producer of meaning and not merely the consumer. This study operates in agreement with this theory of viewer as producer and collaborator and uses this to determine the degree to which Branagh encourages the audience to be a producer, a theory that is evidenced in the films of Branagh in his decisions to incorporate signs or clues within the *mise-en-scène* to challenge the viewer. The theoretical framework for the thesis thus incorporates Sellors' authorial intent in film (2010) and Wollen's theory on the collaborative nature of film in producing meaning (1972).

3.3.1.3 Intertextuality

"Any exploration of intertextuality, and its specific manifestation in the forms of adaptation and appropriation, is inevitably interested in how art creates art, or how literature is made by literature" (Sanders 2006, p. 1). In order to better understand a work of art or literature, it is useful to understand the factors that contributed to and influenced the creation of that work of art or literature. Such a study could be termed an exercise in intertextuality, approaching and evaluating a work from the position of its intertextual history and relationships, because "On a subconscious level, the writer of postmodern fiction always and inevitably falls prey to Intertextuality, in the sense that no written or spoken utterance can possibly be free from the influence of (all) other texts" (Jacobmeyer 1998). This is the approach that this study takes, examining the case-study films of Branagh from an intertextual perspective, approaching his work "from the position of its intertextual

history and relationships” in order to investigate Branagh’s use of hypotexts, hypertexts and transtexts to inform his films.

Robert Miola, in his *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca*, discusses the concept of originality of authorship and the relationship that a text may have with its source text, stating that:

The variety of substitutes for ‘source’ in our current critical lexicon suggests this range of possibilities: deep source, resource, influence, confluence, tradition, heritage, origin, antecedent, precursor, background, milieu, subtext, context, intertexts, affinity, analogue. The word ‘source’ can now signify a multitude of possible relations with a text, ranging from direct contact to indirect absorption. (Miola 1992, p. 7)

Graham Allen, in his book *Intertextuality*, asserts that “Intertextuality is one of the most commonly used and misused terms in contemporary critical vocabulary” (2011, p. 2), so widely used and interpreted to have so many different meanings that it is “in danger of meaning nothing more than whatever each particular critic wishes it to mean” (2011, p. 2). He goes on to explain that:

Intertextuality seems such a useful term because it foregrounds notions of relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence in modern cultural life . . . it is not possible any longer to speak of originality or the uniqueness of the artistic object, be it a painting or a novel, since every artistic object is so clearly assembled from bits and pieces of already existent art. (2011, p. 5)

The term *intertextuality* was first coined by renowned linguist Julia Kristeva in her article *Word, Dialogue and Novel*, first published in 1966. In this article, discussing the works of Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin and the semiology of language, she states that “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity” (1986, p. 37). Thus, “There are always other words in a word, other texts in a text. The concept of intertextuality requires, therefore, that we understand texts not as self-contained systems but as differential and historical, as traces and tracings of otherness, since they are

shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures” (Alfaro 1996, p. 268).

French linguist and literary theorist Roland Barthes continues this line of thought, applying it to literary criticism, when he states in his article *Death of the Author*, “We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning . . . but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture” (Barthes 1977a, p. 146).

Harold Bloom, in his book *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1997), posits that the creativity of poets is impeded by their “anxiety of influence”, their concern with being too influenced by the poets who came before them to produce something that is original and of lasting value.

However, T. S. Eliot, in his essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, originally published in 1919, addresses this question of originality and notes that “One of the facts that might come to light in this process [of literary criticism] is our tendency to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles anyone else. In these aspects or parts of his work we pretend to find what is individual, what is the peculiar essence of the man” (1982, p. 36). Eliot then proceeds to argue that “if we approach a poet without this prejudice [the search for originality] we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously” (1982, p. 37).

In this essay, Eliot suggests that the influences upon the poet from previous work is an element that greatly affects the meaning of a poem, the meaning of which can be derived from its relationship to other texts. In this way, Eliot criticises the necessity of placing such high value on “originality”, or rather questions the accepted definition of the term and where to find it. He is thereby, indirectly, proposing the study of intertextuality. As Eliot suggests, originality is not necessarily a question of uniqueness, but of how or to what extent authors draw upon the work

of previous authors and then use that in their own work. Their originality thus, paradoxically, rests in their use of intertextuality.

This paradox created by the idea that originality lies in the borrowing from previous works is examined in the case studies of this thesis. Eliot's interpretation of originality forms a key element of the conceptual framework of the thesis. By looking at Branagh's use of intertextuality, the choices he makes, and the ways that he plays with the relationships between the hypertexts and his films, it is possible to determine the elements and contributions that are uniquely Branagh's.

Barthes, however, proposes that the significance and the true meaning of writing is not based in the meaning or intention of the author of the work, but rather in the understanding of the particular reader. "A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author . . . a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination" (Barthes 1977a, p. 148).

According to Barthes, the study of the author's background, history, influences, et cetera becomes irrelevant to the understanding of a text. As he claims, the direction of literary criticism that focuses on the factors that influence the writer of a text constitute a myth due to the inability to reconstruct all of those elements that have served as influences on the author.

This study, however, challenges this assertion because the inability to discover all the factors that influence an author does not negate the ability to identify some of those major influences which can afterwards be seen as reflected in the author's work. Analysis of such influences can aid in deducing evidence of authorial intent and of why certain choices were made by the director in a film.

Barthes further states, "the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text" (1990, p. 4). Barthes thereby proposes that the focus for understanding should be on the elements that influence the receiver of the text and effect how that receiver interprets the text. As Barthes puts it, "to give writing its future, it is necessary to

overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (Barthes 1977a, p. 148).

While the approach proposed by Barthes concerning the birth of the reader signifying the death of the author offers much territory for debate in the field of literary criticism, it is not the approach adopted for this study because it is herein argued that any analysis of the reception of the reader must de facto imply a study of authorial intent. Rather than negating the validity of studying authorial intent, it rather demonstrates the importance of what the author places in the work for the reader to receive. Therefore, by studying the elements that influence the reader and his understanding of the text, it still implies the significance of authorial intent because it is the author who chooses to incorporate those elements into the text for the reader to receive and interpret. How the meaning is interpreted by the receiver of the semiotic signs chosen by the author is relative to each receiver and it is to the receiver, this thesis argues, that Branagh directs his signs in his *mise-en-scène* with the intention of creating an experience that is unique to the individual receiver.

The approach for this thesis is therefore founded on the theory of Wollen who suggests both author and receiver as collaborators in producing meaning and the proposal of Sellors in the discussion of author intent. The thesis is further “written from a conviction that intertextuality is and will remain a crucial element in the attempt to understand literature and culture in general” (Allen 2011, p. 7). This research proposes to examine those elements and those transtexts, hypertexts and hypotexts that influenced the creation of the films directed by Branagh, comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences that exist between the hypotexts and hypertexts, and determining the means through which meaning may be shaped by the earlier texts.

3.3.1.4 Audience Recall

John Ellis states, “Adaptation into another medium becomes a means of prolonging the pleasure of the original representation, and repeating the production of a memory” (1982, p. 4). “The adaptation trades upon the memory of the novel,

a memory that can derive from actual reading, or, as is more likely with a classic of literature, a generally circulated cultural memory. The adaptation consumes this memory, aiming to efface it with the presence of its own images. The successful adaptation is one that is able to replace the memory of the novel with the process of a filmic or televisual representation” (1982, p. 3).

This discussion of memory is of interest to this study in that it emphasises the significance of the recognition factor of the hypotexts in film adaptations for the audience. Adaptation as “a means of prolonging the pleasure of the original representation” (Ellis 1982, p. 4) is an important viewpoint that forms a cornerstone for the theoretical framework for this study. This thesis however disagrees with Ellis’ idea that a film adaptation’s success is based upon the film’s ability to replace the memory of the hypotext, since the definition of “successful” is a relative term open to individual evaluations based upon personal sets of criteria. The argument that “the adaptation consumes this memory” and is trying to replace the memory of the original source with the memory of the film in the minds of the audience is a further point of disagreement in this study. This study argues instead that Branagh’s intention, contradictory to Ellis’ proposition, is to enhance the memory of the film adaptation’s hypotexts rather than to replace it in the memories of the viewers familiar with the hypotexts and that his intention is to allow these viewers the opportunity to recall their own experience with those hypotexts, thereby creating a more personal connection with the film. His intention, it is argued, is thus not to replace the memory, but to evoke it.

Catherine Grant, in her article *Recognizing Billy Budd in Travail: Epistemology and Hermeneutics of An Auteurist ‘Free’ Adaptation*, states that “film adaptations acquire their meaning, as well as at least part of their intrinsic cultural and economic value, through an openly acknowledged and socially sanctioned form of imitation of, or borrowing from, an earlier text” (2002, p. 57). In her work, she emphasises the significance of how a film adaptation is received by a specific audience and, building upon Ellis’ idea of the importance of memory, points out that “the most important act that films and their surrounding discourses need to

perform in order to communicate unequivocally their status as adaptations is to (make their audiences) *recall* their adapted work, or the cultural memory of it” (2002, p. 57). This importance on making the audiences recall the adapted work is, this thesis argues, shared by Branagh and he incorporates elements into his films to encourage this recall. How he does this is one of the focuses for this study.

Building upon this premise, Christine Geraghty, in her book *Now a Major Motion Picture: Film Adaptations of Literature and Drama*, argues that film, especially adaptation, is sensory and the reaction of the audience has to do with the individual’s sense of recall and memories. “Classic adaptations are set in the past and so present some kind of relationship with our attitude to that past” (2008, p. 15). Geraghty leads the reader away from arguments about loyalty to the text to focus more on the specificities of the film itself. As she states, she “does not argue “from page to screen,” and my emphasis is not on the process of adaptation. Instead, I focus on the films themselves and the work of “recall,” which [Catherine] Grant suggests is essential for an adaptation” (Geraghty 2008, p. 4). This thesis restores the emphasis on the process of adaptation and unites with Geraghty’s approach to recall.

According to Geraghty, “The gap between character and actor allows for a performance to be seen, a fact that helps to explain why so many acting Oscars have been awarded to performances in adaptations” (2008, p. 5). Geraghty argues that because the audience may have their own recollections of the hypotexts and/or hypertexts, they are better able to understand and appreciate the performance and the choices made by the actor by comparing their previous knowledge of the text and possibly earlier adaptations with the performance they see on film. As Geraghty states, “In adaptations, the layering of performances takes on additional resonances in which one performance references another in relation to how it creates a particular character. The character (Oliver, Elizabeth Bennett, Hawkeye, and Stanley Kowalski) is the same but the adaptation enables us to see how the same character is performed in different ways and texts” (2008, p. 196).

The theory of this gap is supported by Eliot's paradox of originality lying in the aspects that are borrowed. The appreciation of a performance is enhanced by the ability of the audience to recall their previous knowledge of the hypotexts and to compare the differences that the actor brings. It further supports the need for analysis of the methods of Branagh in order to research the hypotexts to understand the gap to know where the originality of Branagh can be seen in his choices in borrowing.

Geraghty's suggestion of audience recall as a major component in adaptations is of particular interest in this project as it is one of the key defining elements of the theoretical framework of the thesis. Geraghty further points out that "this awareness of a gap, between what is being referred to in the work of recall involved in the adaptation and what we see on screen, can also, as we shall see, be discussed in relation to other elements – in rendering of landscape, for instance, or the use of costumes" (2008, p. 5). This project proposes that this element of recall is of primary concern to Branagh in his choices in the *mise-en-scène* throughout his film work. The theoretical framework of the thesis is thus based upon Sarris and Leitch's criteria for auteurship, Sellors' suggestion for the study of authorial intent, Wollen's proposal for the collaborative nature of author and reader for understanding the semiotic meaning of film, Eliot's paradox in which uniqueness lies in the choices made in the intertextuality of a work, and Geraghty's concept of audience recall which Branagh tries to elicit through the use of intertextual clues within the *mise-en-scène*.

3.3.1.5 Text-to-Text Analysis

The approach adopted for this thesis includes a text-to-text analysis of the hypotexts and hypertexts that inform the films of Branagh, along the lines of Bluestone (1956). Although this approach has also fallen out of vogue in modern film criticism, as Simone Murray states in her book *The Adaptation Industry: The Cultural Economy of Contemporary Literary Adaptation*, "for all the sense of a discipline joyfully kicking over the traces of previously dominant and long-outdated thinking, there is much that stays obdurately the same" (2012, p. 3). In spite of this

text-to-text analysis and its often accompanying discussion of fidelity having fallen out of favour in modern film criticism, they remain primary topics of discussion and comparison among film goers and audiences in society at large (Andrew 2000). Rarely is a film adaptation made in which the audience does not walk out of the theatre comparing the film to its hypotexts, hypertexts and transtexts, pointing out which elements were kept and which elements were deleted, and passing judgment upon the value of the film and its fidelity to the original sources.

This thesis argues that this reality in audience reception can be seen as one of the factors that motivates Branagh in his intention to elicit audience recall. As most of his directorial films are adaptations, this type of comparison is inevitable and invited among viewers of his films. For this reason, a text-to-text approach is taken for this study in order to determine the characters, plot developments, and other influences that have been appropriated from the hypotexts, hypertexts, and transtexts of his films which are then used as a means of eliciting audience recall.

3.3.1.6 Mise-en-scène

From the original French the term *mise-en-scène* translates into English as “putting into the scene.” Initially used in theatre and later adopted into discourse on cinema, the term *mise-en-scène* has developed to mean the elements of production chosen as a means of translating the language of the stage for the audience.

Historically the term *mise-en-scène* referred to the act of adapting the text to an actual performance, the literal meaning of putting on a play. The meaning gradually evolved to mean not only putting it onstage, but the methods and materials that were incorporated to produce the meaning of the play, including the actors and their performances. In this way, *mise-en-scène* embraces not only the physical elements of setting, props, costumes, and lighting, but also includes the use of space, and the performance, movement and action of the actors upon the stage or screen. Even the specific choices of color are part of the *mise-en-scène* as in the scene from *Gone with the Wind* in which Rhett Butler forces Scarlett to

wear a red dress to a party, thereby symbolically and literally marking her as a scarlet woman.

Specifically for film, whereby the camera serves to focus attention on particular elements of the *mise-en-scène*, the term *mise-en-scène* further incorporates the framing of each shot, the positioning and movement of the camera, and the type of lens chosen to be used for the shot. These elements add to the understanding of the relationships that exist between the various objects or characters that appear in a frame, as well as their relationship with the viewer in terms of what the viewer is allowed to see and how the viewer is allowed to see it.

One of the early influential contributors to the modern field of Film Studies and the examination of *mise-en-scène* is French film critic and theorist André Bazin, a co-founder of the well-known and respected French film magazine *Cahiers du cinéma*. This research draws upon Bazin's views of film aesthetic due to his emphasis on the importance of *mise-en-scène*, particularly regarding film. In film, *mise-en-scène* refers to all that is depicted within the cinematic frame. The term has developed in film to also include aspects such as artistic choices within editing, camera, and other elements of film production.

According to Bazin, "The structures of the *mise-en-scène* flow from it: décor, lighting, the angle and framing of the shots, will be more or less expressionistic in their relation to the behavior of the actor. They contribute for their part to confirm the meaning of the action" (1975, p. 65). Bazin's emphasis upon the significance of *mise-en-scène* is supported in this research.

In his discussion of the importance of Bazin in film criticism, American film critic Andrew Sarris says:

Bazin's most striking contribution to film aesthetics was the restoration of interest in the integrity of the visual image . . . he did change the way many critics looked at motion pictures. No longer was the ambiguity of the individual image disdained for the dialectical conflict between successive images. Examining both the deep focus shots in *Citizen Kane* and the slow pans in *Open City*, Bazin managed to link these two otherwise dissimilar films in the very ingenious concept of optical realism. (2003, p. 25)

Sarris continues, stating:

By establishing the notion of individual creation in even the Hollywood cinema, the French shifted the critical emphasis away from the nature of content to the director's attitude toward content. This attitude was expressed through a somewhat mystical process called *mise-en-scène*, defined perhaps most eloquently by French critic-director Alexandre Astruc:

I consider *mise-en-scène* as a means of transforming the world into a spectacle given primarily to oneself – yet what artist does not know instinctively that what is seen is less important than the way of seeing, or a certain way of needing to see or be seen. (2003, p. 26-27)

For his own definition of *mise-en-scène*, Sarris says, "I would suggest a definition of *mise-en-scène* that includes all the means available to a director to express his attitude toward his subject. This takes in cutting, camera movement, pacing, the direction of players and their placement in the décor, the angle and distance of the camera, and even the content of the shot. *Mise-en-scène* as an attitude tends to accept the cinema as it is and enjoy it for what it is – a sensuous conglomeration of all the other arts" (Sarris 2003, p. 27).

In their discussion of the importance of *mise-en-scène* in film, Bordwell and Thompson discuss the contributions of French illusionist and filmmaker George Méliès, an early filmmaker who gained fame for his leading technical and narrative innovations in the development of early cinema. Méliès became intrigued by the Lumière brothers' Cinématographe. After building his own camera, Méliès quickly discovered the power of illusion that could be achieved through careful planning and manipulation of the *mise-en-scène*.

Bordwell and Thompson define *mise-en-scène* in their book *Film Art: An Introduction*, stating:

it was first applied to the practice of directing plays. Film scholars, extending the term to film direction, use the term to signify the director's control over what appears in the film frame. As you would expect, *mise-en-scène* includes those aspects of film that overlap with the art of the theater: setting, lighting, costume and makeup, and staging and performance. (2009, p. 113)

This study applies these categorisations in its discussion of mise-en-scène.

This thesis thus approaches the research from a theoretical framework building upon Sarris and Leitch's criteria for auteurship by examining Branagh's methods in film-making to indicate his status as auteur. It further employs Sellors' significance on author intent in a film (2010) and Wollen's significance on the collaborative nature between author and viewer in decoding the semiotics in film (1972) by discussing Branagh's indicated intentions as revealed in interviews and other recorded work. It uses Eliot's suggestion of uniqueness paradoxically established through the use of intertextuality (1982) by examining the ways in which Branagh recycles material to create something new and/or distinct to him. It incorporates Geraghty's theory of audience recall in which memories and personal experience contribute to the unique understanding of each individual viewer (2008) by examining the elements and clues that Branagh incorporates into his films to achieve audience recall. It includes Bazin's theory of the use of mise-en-scène as a means of contributing to the meaning of a film (1975) by examining the elements of mise-en-scène in Branagh's films, and employs Bordwell and Thompson's categorisations of the elements of mise-en-scène in film (2009).

CHAPTER FOUR: FILMMAKING METHODS OF KENNETH BRANAGH

This study examines aspects of the life of Branagh the person in the effort to determine events in his life that had an impact on his later directorial processes and how these events inform his directorial choices. In the attempt to evaluate Branagh's status as auteur, the researcher conducted investigations into whether there do exist specific methods that Branagh employs in preparation to direct a film and whether such methods may be consistent throughout his directorial body of work. This chapter discusses the methods that the researcher found to be consistent in his directorial process. One of these methods involves his research into the histories of the stories he intends to tell in his films. His research also includes the study of other films in the same genre and of earlier cinematic adaptations of works that he adapts. While conducting such research, he is open to adopting or borrowing, as Andrew (2000) defines, elements or techniques from a range of hypertexts and transtexts.

Another of his methods can be seen in his recasting of the same actors in his different films, as well as his use of the same crew members in various key positions in the production process of filming. Other methods that remain consistent throughout his directorial films involve his rehearsal techniques and his recurring use of camera techniques. The final method that is repeated in his films is the incorporation of semiotic codes into the elements of mise-en-scène. In addition, though it is not a method, there are three recurring themes that unite all of his directorial films to date to one degree or another which can be seen as significant in determining the films he chooses to direct. All of the above-mentioned, this thesis herein argues, can be seen as evidence of and reasons for proposing Branagh's classification as auteur, as will be discussed in this chapter below.

In his autobiography entitled *Beginning*, Branagh describes his early fascination with the arts and mentions an event that was particularly striking to him when he was seven or eight years old, the viewing of the film *The Birdman of Alcatraz* starring Burt Lancaster. As he states, this film was particularly striking to

Branagh because “no one appeared to be ‘acting’” (1989, p. 16). Branagh claims to have been so engrossed by the film that he studied all the end credits just to understand who were all the people that were involved in making such a film. This film can be seen as a catalyst for a continuing desire to possess as much information as possible on topics that interest him in the filmmaking process. As he states:

It [the studying of the end credits] was the beginning of a habit that lasted throughout my youth. I started mentally logging all the unsung character actors . . . I began to wonder what ‘continuity’ was, and imagined it as the person who joined together all the bits of film. And who did ‘lighting’, which I always misread as ‘lightning’? I must have noticed it first on a horror film. Very soon I became a fund of useless information and, if nothing else, I knew that the Westmore family seemed to provide the make-up artists for every Hollywood film and that Michael Ripper was almost guaranteed to play the innkeeper in a Hammer horror film. (1989, pp, 16-17)

It was not until Branagh was sixteen that he got his first taste of acting in his school production of *Oh! What a Lovely War*. In this production, he played several different characters and used his cinema idols as his inspiration for how to play the various characters he was given. As he describes it, he “played the American arms dealer [as] (Burt Lancaster in *Bird Man*), the Young British Solder (Tom Courtenay in *King Rat*), the Old British Soldier (Robert Newton in *Treasure Island*) and the officer (Michael Caine in *Zulu*)” (1989, p. 31). This is significant in his development both as actor and director. It became one of his methods in his approach to directing other actors in that he encourages his actors to view other films and actors and to take inspiration from the acting style of such actors, as discussed in Chapter Five. This indicates the development from an early age of his attitudes towards borrowing from other transtexts.

While studying for his ‘A’ levels, Branagh had an opportunity to see Derek Jacobi in a “passionate and electric” (1989, p. 36) performance as Hamlet in a production of Shakespeare’s play at Oxford. Jacobi was to become an important influence and driving force for Branagh who would later cast Jacobi in many of his directorial films. This recasting of the same actors in various projects can be seen

as another means in which Branagh evokes audience recall, providing the audience with a means of comparing previous performances of an actor with the actor's current performance.

During the filming of *Too Late to Talk to Billy*, his first professional acting job, in which he was cast in the role of Billy, and his first foray into acting for the camera, Branagh says he learned much about the process of filming. As he says, "I studied the way the cameras were moving; I questioned Paul [Seed, the director] about his camera script; I tried to find out all I could about the actual mechanics of TV" (1989, p. 82). This can be seen as indicative of Branagh's desire to become proficient in the filmmaking process.

Branagh graduated from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA) and later went on to join the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) in Stratford-upon-Avon where he was cast in the role of Henry in Shakespeare's *Henry V*, which would prove to be an important influence on his future career. After his stint with the RSC, Branagh created his own theatre company, the Renaissance Theatre Company, through which he was able to direct a number of plays, and to have some well-known actors, such as Judi Dench and Derek Jacobi, each direct a play. He then created the Renaissance Film Company and was able to secure financing for a film version of *Henry V*, in which he starred and directed. This was his first outing as director of a feature film and it was a critical and commercial success, establishing him as a director and, particularly, setting him on the road towards directing future Shakespeare films.

Branagh's autobiography is thus useful in suggesting the foundations of what would become three of the different processes that he continues to employ in directing his films. The first can be seen in his desire to discover what he refers to as "a fund of useless information" (1989, pp, 16-17) which would grow into the process of conducting extensive research into the histories of the stories and adaptations of the films that he chooses to direct, as well as other films that he uses as inspiration, as is discussed in the chapters to follow. The second process involves his study of the acting styles of other actors in specific roles, as well as

the study of film styles of various genres, for inspiration in directing his own films. The third process is that of recasting the same actors in multiple films. All of these processes can be as seen as a means of attaining ammunition to be used in establishing audience recall in his films, and as processes that help to create a distinct style of film that contributes to Branagh's status as auteur. In addition, his biography gives some insight into his author intent, or rather, that which he wishes his audiences to understand as being his intentions. It further provides some indication of his desire to become proficient in the filmmaking process. These are discussed in further detail below.

4.1 Methods

Branagh's early films, especially his Shakespeare films, have been the focus of much scholarly research and discourse (Anderegg 2004; Burnett 2002; Burnett and Wray 2000; Cook 2012; Hindle 2007; Jackson 2008; Jess-Cooke 2007; Torrado Mariñas 2010; White 2006; Rothwell 2004). For example, Peter Donaldson, in his article *Taking on Shakespeare: Kenneth Branagh's Henry V*, offers an analysis of the influences of hypertexts on Branagh's film with particular emphasis upon comparing and contrasting it with the earlier film directed by Laurence Olivier and the stage production directed by Adrian Noble (1991). Sarah Hatchuel, in *A Companion to the Shakespearean Films of Kenneth Branagh*, provides analysis of Branagh's *Hamlet* and *Much Ado about Nothing*, as well as insight into *Dead Again* and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (2000). Samuel Crowl, in *The Films of Kenneth Branagh*, does the same for *Henry V*, *Dead Again*, *Peter's Friends*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, *A Midwinter's Tale*, *Hamlet* and *Love's Labour's Lost* (2006). In the years following Branagh's first film directorial outing in *Henry V*, his name came to be widely associated with Shakespeare adaptations, and his place in the realm of Shakespeare adaptation is attested to in the scholarly literature.

Deborah Cartmell, when discussing the adaptation of such "classic" texts to the screen, discusses the attitudes that many have to the process of adaptation, asserting that the relationship between the audience and the original source is one

that cannot be ignored. She states, “A successful adaptation of Shakespeare must then convey an ‘anxiety of influence’, an awareness that the production is both dependent on and inferior to the original” (1999, p. 23). Cartmell highlights how Shakespeare was adapted for film from very close to the beginning of cinema as a means of raising the cultural value of cinema and in order to elevate it to a higher esteem.

Judith Buchanan similarly comments that “The number of Shakespeare films made in the silent era may surprise. Between 1899 (when the first Shakespeare film was made) and 1927 (when the first properly commercial sound film was released), a total of between two hundred and fifty and three hundred films adapted from Shakespearean sources were made by the British, American, French, German, and Danish film industries” (2009, pp. 1-2). The first example of Shakespeare on film was the filming of a portion of Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree’s stage production of *King John* directed by William Kennedy-Laurie Dickson (Brooke, n.d.). Over the decades that followed this, Shakespeare continued to be a source material for filmmakers.

By the 1980s, the study of Shakespeare on film had also become a respectable part of academic study with growing academic recognition. Cartmell states, “It seems to be the case that ‘classic’ adaptations, on the whole, tend to ‘depoliticize’ the ‘original’ literary text, the assumption is that if it is a ‘classic’, then it must uphold right-wing values. Nonetheless, Shakespeare on screen is at present ‘academically respectable’; and where Shakespeare goes, others will invariably follow” (1999, p. 24).

During the 1990s, Branagh’s films were not only contributing to the respectability of Shakespeare adaptation but also to the medium of film itself. On the set of Branagh’s film *Hamlet*, Derek Jacobi passed on to Branagh an edition of Hamlet once belonging to Johnston Forbes-Robertson, considered one of the greatest Hamlets from the turn of the century. The edition had been passed from one Hamlet to the next to honor a distinct performance in the theatre. Judith Buchanan discusses the importance of this event for cinema, claiming:

Jacobi's decision to designate Branagh's *film* Hamlet the performance of his generation adds a symbolic layer of legitimacy to the medium as a vehicle for Shakespearean production. Future recipients of Forbes-Robertson's edition of Hamlet will be free to select a performance from stage or screen in a way that is genuinely medium-blind. (2005, p. 2)

Branagh's Shakespeare films are significant to this study in relation to his directorial methods. This study proposes to offer evidence of the methods that Branagh developed over the course of directing these films. The directing of *Henry V* played a particularly significant role in the development of Branagh's approach to directing in his films. During the process of bringing the play to the screen, Branagh established certain methods or processes he used in order to bring the film to fruition. Incorporating these methods became his standard practice in preparation to direct and throughout the filming of the films that followed, as will be demonstrated below. These practices, this thesis contends, all aid in demonstrating Branagh's auteurial status in his directorial films.

4.1.1 Research into Histories of Hypotexts, Hypertexts and Architexts

One of the key tasks that Branagh performs in his approach to directing is to research the histories of the stories, including their hypotexts and hypertexts, that he intends to direct. This research extends to the architextual genres to which the films may belong. The result of such research is evidenced in his frequent use of referencing previous adaptations of the same works, his demonstrated influences of architextual genres and his incorporation of elements in the *mise-en-scène* used to evoke audience recall. Branagh demonstrates an attitude similar to that espoused by Eliot's on the question of originality (1982). Samuel Crowl, in his work *Shakespeare at the Cineplex*, speaking of such referencing, says:

Branagh is a product of the postmodern moment dominated by a sense of belatedness – a sense that originality is exhausted and that only parody and pastiche and intertextual echo remain. Rather than finding such a condition enervating, Branagh's work seized on its possibilities. Branagh is a reconstructionist – an artist who creates out of the bits and shards of the postmodern moment. Peter

Donaldson has brilliantly demonstrated how the gritty strenuousness of Branagh's *Henry V* was inspired not only by Noble's post-Falklands/Vietnam stage production but also by a powerful aesthetic struggle with Olivier's 1944 film, which had been prompted by Olivier's desire to bring Shakespeare - and the English cultural tradition he represented - to the service of the nation as the Allies launched the invasion to reclaim Europe from Hitler. Branagh's *Henry V* insisted, in its historical moment, that coming home was as important as going over. (2003, p. 28)

An example of Branagh's research can also be seen in his adaptation of *Henry V*, for which he wrote the screenplay. In his adaptation, he includes not only the dialogue and action for the play of *Henry V*, but incorporates a scene from Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, shown in flashback, which describes an event that takes place in Henry's life prior to the events included in *Henry V*.

The influences on Branagh of the classic Hollywood productions from the cinematic genre of film noir is clearly evident in his film *Dead Again*. Incorporated within the neo-noir film are various elements of noir genre, including not only within the screenplay but within Branagh's direction. As Jason Bailey says:

Dead Again is one of the most Hitchcockian thrillers this side of De Palma, with easily traceable influences of Olivier-fronted *Rebecca* (in the creepy, needy housekeeper), *Psycho* (the mysterious old mother in the next room), *Dial M for Murder* (the scissors as murder weapon), and *Spellbound* (the therapeutic elements, plus a quickie reference to Salvador Dali, who advised on that film's dream sequences). The Gothic horror aesthetic owes more than a little to the Welles-starring 1943 *Jane Eyre*, as well; the photography of the moody opening scene, in which [Andy] Garcia visits Branagh on death row, recalls scores of similar scenes in various *films noir*. (Bailey 2016)

Much like the influence of Noble in Branagh's *Henry V* (Donaldson 1991), many of Branagh's influences for his film *Much Ado about Nothing* came from his earlier stage production of the play. In 1988, Branagh's Renaissance Theatre Company put on a stage production of *Much Ado About Nothing* with Dame Judi Dench making her directorial debut. Many of Dench's artistic choices were directly translated onto the screen for Branagh's film adaptation. Dench made the artistic decision to set the play in a Tuscan sun-soaked villa and to emphasize the

separate lives of the men and women, and to show the distinction between the military lifestyle of the men and the domestic of the women to be of importance.

Branagh describes Dench's *Much Ado About Nothing* as "robust in tone. It's hot-tempered Italianate qualities distinguish it from the more obvious 'Englishness' of [As You Like it and Hamlet]" (Hatchuel, 2000, p. 56). All of this is represented in the opening sequence and credits of Branagh's *Much Ado About Nothing*, which brings to mind one of Leitch's fallacies of contemporary adaptation theory. His number ten fallacy states "adaptations are adapting exactly one text apiece" (2009, p. 164). This is further seen when looking at *Hamlet*, for example, in which there is not only Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to be examined, but also such influences as Olivier's *Hamlet* or Derek Jacobi's *Hamlet* at the Royal Shakespeare Company (Crowl 2006).

In the commentary of the film *Love's Labour's Lost*, Branagh points out some of the influences that played a role in some of his scenes. For example, in discussing his use of comedic fake newsreels in the opening scene of the film, Branagh claims:

We wanted, with the very tone of this newsreel material, to put a smile on people's faces to start saying that we were aiming to present some fun during the movie. And this voiceover style, very familiar I think, even if it's only familiar through modern comedy programmes. Cholmondley-Warner is a character that Henry Enfield, a very successful British comedian, used in satirising that kind of newsreel world in British television comedy. And there are American versions of it as well where this voiceover tone is quite sort of stentorian and severe but often has a twinkle in its eye and from this distance can seem funny. It's very evocative of the period and seemed to do what we wanted, which is to just say at all times we would let the audience know where they were and that they could have fun. (Branagh 2000)

These statements further indicate the importance that Branagh places upon the reactions from the audiences that he aspires to achieve, while also demonstrating his authorial intention as he wishes it to be seen. In this scene, he indicates that he is specifically trying to evoke audience recall by attempting to reference the "familiar".

Another such example of Branagh's intention to evoke audience recall can be seen in the dance segment that takes place in the library. Though Branagh mistakenly attributes (2000) his influence as being from the Fred Astaire-starring film *Shall We Dance?* (Sandrich 1937), it remains an indication of Branagh's attempt to elicit audience recall. The actual inspiration to which Branagh alludes is McLeod's 1950 film *Let's Dance*, also starring Fred Astaire. This is demonstrated in the library scene from *Love's Labour's Lost* when actor Adrian Lester is seen reproducing Astaire's famed dance over the tops of chairs in which he steps onto the back of a chair and blithely tilts it over, following the movement over the chair, then gracefully resumes his dance moves as he lands on the floor (Images 1-2).



Image 1: Astaire Dancing over the Chair
(McLeod 1950)



Image 2: Lester Dancing over the Chair
(Branagh 2000)

Branagh's error in identifying the particular Fred Astaire film is an example of Grant's statement concerning the importance of adaptation's ability to make the audience recall the hypotext or, at least, the "cultural memory of it" (2002, p. 57), in that Branagh knew it was from a Fred Astaire film, the "cultural memory", but simply did not remember which one.

Branagh further indicates his influence of hypertexts when he discusses Lester's hiding behind a tiny potted plant during the same scene. As Branagh states, "that piece of business was shamelessly stolen from the 1984 Stratford Royal Shakespeare Company production [of *Love's Labour's Lost*] by Barry Kyle,

in which I played the king, and it always got a good laugh, and I wanted to keep it in” (Branagh 2000).

The film *Sleuth* includes such influences as well, designed to trigger audience recall. An example from the film which references a transtextual inspiration for the film is a scene in which Caine projects multiple images of himself onto a wall. This is a deliberate homage to the 1937 painting by Belgian artist Rene Magritte entitled *Not to Be Reproduced* (1937) and another example of Branagh’s attempt to trigger audience recall (Images 3-4).



3: The Magritte Shot
(Branagh 2007)



Image 4: Not to Be Reproduced
(Magritte 1937)

In line with Eliot’s ideas concerning originality (1982), Samuel Crowl, who shows through his works a great admiration for Branagh and his work, says of Branagh that he:

has become as much of a film auteur as his great modernist predecessors Olivier and Welles. Branagh’s nerve and intelligence are his most original qualities. His genius as an artist is as a synthesizer: his imagination works like a magpie, stealing good ideas from others, but linking them in surprising and original ways (Crowl 2003, p. 27).

This consistent borrowing and/or referencing, an example of postmodernist attitudes towards recycling previous work, comprises one of the

methods that Branagh continually uses in his films, aiding in creating a cinematic authorial stamp that often viewers expect to find in a Branagh film.

4.1.2 Casting of Actors and Choice of Crew

A characteristic prominent in Branagh's directorial films is his continuous recasting of the same actors in different films and his repetitive use of the same key crew members. In response to comments on his casting choices for his film *Dead Again* and his casting of actors whom he had previously cast, including Emma Thompson and Derek Jacobi, both of whom had roles in *Henry V*, Branagh says:

Sometimes people say to me, 'Oh, why do you use the same people all over again?' And I slightly refute the charge because there are always new people in the films that we make, but scenes like this are the beneficiary of a rapport between the two people. Obviously Emma and I knew each other very well, and that's a different thing, and has to exist not based on the relationship but mutual trust and respect and admiration as actors. But in addition, Wane Wright, who we knew well socially; that kind of relationship starts to inform the quality of the on-screen relationships and there's just a rapport and, I think, a sort of believability and, necessarily for those things, a kind of warmth which it's harder to achieve. It's not impossible, of course, when everybody is new. (Branagh 1991)

In a discussion of the filming of *Much Ado about Nothing*, explaining again why he often uses the same cast and crew members for various projects, Branagh says:

I believe the benefits of an ensemble, not exclusively working together, but building up a body of work, a sort of rapport, can mean that when you get to the next big project that requires everything and everybody to be working at their best pitch, it can really pay off dividends. (Rose 1993)

Comparing himself to directors Clint Eastwood and Woody Allen in this respect, Branagh says, "Allen has made almost as many films as Shakespeare wrote plays, and across many of those films, you find him working again and again with a core group of actors. Eastwood does something similar with Morgan Freeman and Gene Hackman" (Crowl 2006, p. 171).

Branagh's first directorial film *Henry V*, adapted, written and directed by Branagh and featuring him in the title role, stars alongside him, among many others, Derek Jacobi, Judi Dench, Emma Thompson, Ian Holm, Brian Blessed and Richard Briers. Following is an indication of the amount of times that Branagh has recast the same actors, beginning with his *Henry V*:

Emma Thompson, Branagh's wife at the time, appears in *Henry V*, *Dead Again*, *Peter's Friends* and *Much Ado about Nothing*. Derek Jacobi, in addition to *Henry V*, was cast in Branagh's *Dead Again*, *Hamlet*, and *Cinderella*, and is set to star with Branagh in the 2017 Branagh-directed adaptation of Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*. Judi Dench, in addition to her associations with Branagh on stage, stars in *Henry V*, *Hamlet*, and the 2017 Branagh-directed film *Murder on the Orient Express*. Brian Blessed appears not only in *Henry V*, but also in the Branagh films *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Hamlet*, and *As You Like It*.

Richard Briers is one of the actors most frequently cast by Branagh, having been cast in seven films including *Henry V*, as well as *Peter's Friends*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, *Hamlet*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *As You Like It*. Briers is repeatedly cast in the role of father figure, portraying Lord Morton in *Peter's Friends*, Leonato in *Much Ado about Nothing*, the Grandfather in *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, Polonius in *Hamlet*, Sir Nathaniel in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Adam in *As You Like It*. Briers' number of appearances in Branagh films is matched only by Jimmy Yuill, who was cast in *Henry V*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, *Hamlet*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *As You Like It*, and *The Magic Flute*.

Richard Clifford appears in five Branagh films, including *Henry V*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, *Love's Labour's Lost* and *As You Like It*, while Edward Jewesbury was cast in four, including *Henry V*, *Peter's Friends*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. In addition, composer Patrick Doyle appears in small roles in *Henry V*, *Dead Again*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, and *As You Like It*. Doyle's primary

contributions to Branagh's films, however, lies in his role as composer for the film scores of all of Branagh's films, including the 2017 *Murder on the Orient Express*.

All of the above-mentioned cast members appears in Branagh's first film *Henry V* and have appeared in various films since. Ian Holm appears in *Henry V*, as well as two additional films, *Hamlet* and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. Four additional cast members from *Henry V* appear in one additional Branagh film, including Geraldine McEwan who also appears in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Richard Easton who also appears in *Dead Again* and Michael Maloney who also makes an appearance in *Hamlet*. In addition, both Shaun Prendergast and Paul Gregory appear in *Henry V* and were cast as ship's crew members in *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*.

Branagh continued the practice of recasting the same actors after *Henry V* as new actors were added to his recurring roster of actors in *Peter's Friends*. Both Phyllida Law and Imelda Staunton appear in *Peter's Friends* and *Much Ado about Nothing*. Adrian Lester joined Branagh's roster in *Love's Labour's Lost* and subsequently appears in *As You Like It*.

This repetition of casting the same actors in multiple films can be seen as contributing to audience recall wherein the tendency of viewers when seeing an actor in a film is to compare the performance in that film to the actor's previous performances. Employing certain crew members across a host of films also begs comparisons concerning the aesthetics of the film. For example, as mentioned above, Patrick Doyle composes the scores for every Branagh film to date. Cinematography Roger Lanser worked on *Peter's Friends*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *In the Bleak Midwinter*, *As You Like It*, and *The Magic Flute*.

Branagh's adaptation of *Sleuth* is another example of casting used to trigger audience recall, although this represents the only time to date that Branagh has cast either of the leading actors, Michael Caine and Jude Law. However, in the first film adaptation of Anthony Shaffer's play *Sleuth* (Mankiewicz 1972), a young Michael Caine stars as Milo Tindle with an older Laurence Olivier starring as Andrew Wyke. In Branagh's 2007 adaptation, Branagh cast Michael Caine to

appear once more, this time taking on the Olivier role of Wyke, while Jude Law was cast to play Caine's previous role of Tindle. This casting not only serves to elicit recall of the earlier film and Caine's role in it, but serves as a further trigger for audience recall in that Caine plays the title role in the 1966 film *Alfie* (Gilbert 1966) while, in the 2004 remake of the film, Jude Law stars in the title role (Shyer 2004).

In the final scene of both *Alfie* films, Alfie begins to question the direction of his life and his choices and ultimately, facing the camera, asks the question, "What's it all about?" (Gilbert 1966; Shyer 2004). In the 1966 Gilbert version, this is followed by the haunting ballad sung by Cilia Black asking, "What's it all about, Alfie?" (Bacharach and David 1966). This line serves as another trigger for audience recall in the Branagh film of *Sleuth* in one scene in which Jude Law, in the role of Tindle, demands of Wyke, "What's it all about?", a line which Jude Law claims as having elicited giggles from the audience when he attended the screening of the film at the Toronto Film Festival in 2007 (Branagh 2007).

The casting of the same troupes of actors throughout his films contributes to a visual consistency and a sense of familiarity that lends a cohesiveness to his films, even to the extent, for those familiar with his work, that hearing a cast list of a film with these actors may automatically bring to mind the idea that it must be a Branagh film.

4.1.3 Rehearsal Techniques and Creating the "Live Element"

Another element of Branagh's directorial methods is the importance he places upon rehearsal periods and being prepared before shooting. As Hatchuel claims, he finds value in watching the entire cast reading of a script in advance, similar to watching a dress rehearsal in theatre. As Hatchuel states:

Even before the shooting of *Hamlet*, Branagh asked his actors to know their parts by heart from beginning to end, just like in the theatre. Prior to filming they did a complete run-through of the whole play so that, when they began filming and would have to perform their scenes out of order in front of the camera, they would have a feel for where their characters were in their personal stories. (Hatchuel 2000, p. 39)

Branagh, who sees extensive rehearsal as a means of aiding in his directorial choices for the camera and in editing, states:

For me as a director, rehearsal becomes very important because it tells me how to move the camera. It's as if in rehearsal you begin to feel and hear the music and the rhythm of the play as it is expressed by this group of actors. And that tells you a little bit about how to cut it or how you feel it should be cut, whether you stage long scenes or short scenes, and then, as you investigate that, you attempt to bring in some other elements in this strange sort of marriage. It may mean that the material acknowledges, as it moves from the theater to film, that the film audience expects other kinds of experiences. (Crowl 2006, p. 173)

This type of extended rehearsal is seen again, for example, in the filming of Branagh's *Sleuth*. In a discussion concerning rehearsal periods, Michael Caine compares the rehearsal time he spent before filming Mankiewicz's adaptation with the time spent for Branagh's, stating, "That's what was great because, you know, on the first one, we rehearsed a couple of days and then took sixteen weeks to shoot it. This one was rehearsed for three weeks and took four weeks to shoot because we knew exactly what we were doing at any given time. There was no rehearsal on the set with technicians sitting around" (Branagh 2007).

This is not to imply, however, that Branagh brings all of his actors together at the same time to rehearse. Rather, there are times when he deliberately keeps certain actors apart as a means of trying to create what he calls the "live element", in which he tries to create a feeling of liveness or spontaneity on film that is reminiscent of watching live theatre. One way that he tries to achieve this is by not allowing particular actors to become acquainted in advance of shooting, and then scheduling their first meeting in the film to be the first scene shot. In this way, the first time the actors are actually becoming acquainted is captured on film. This practice of Branagh is used to try to enhance the awkwardness or the freshness of first acquaintance and to give the scene a feeling of it being more real, more like live performance.

An example of this is seen again in *Sleuth* when Branagh did not require Caine and Law to rehearse together before shooting the first scene. In discussing

this with Caine, Branagh states that the reason for this is “because you hadn’t literally worked together, to do these first scenes of the film right at the beginning, it exploited whatever little awkwardness or getting to know each other was already there” (Branagh 2007).

Another practice that demonstrates Branagh’s intention of trying to enhance performance and create this live element is the filming of large sections of dialogue in one shooting without cuts. Even if a scene will later be cut during the editing process, Branagh shoots the scene in one continuous shot. This practice also is seen in the film *Sleuth*. In reference to this filming technique and its impact upon performance, Michael Caine, in conversation with Branagh, says, “

If you think it's a lot of dialogue, what you got to remember is the actor is thinking, "Am I gonna remember it all?" But you did a very clever thing. You just said, "If you fluff it or forget a line, just keep going. I'm gonna shoot it from another angle anyway," and so you never had any fear, which meant you then made fewer mistakes. Because it's the nerves that make the mistakes. One of these takes was nine minutes, and you go, "Oh, blimey, nine minutes." It's a long time to remember all the dialogue, and you're hitting marks. It's not like the theatre, where you can move around as you like. You've got marks on the floor that you're hitting and you've got to hit them properly. But to be told that you can fluff or dry and the continuity girl will come in with the line and you continue, that gives you a freedom, you know, which is so important. (Branagh 2007)

Branagh, in response, replies to Caine:

I think I noticed that you enjoyed, and I think Jude enjoyed, that sense of, once we've started shooting, just keeping the momentum. I know that you didn't like, and God knows we tried to minimise it, those times when you cut and then suddenly all your energy goes and it takes longer, and the lighting adjustments, and you drop the ball. It's not good, is it? It's not good, performance-wise. (Branagh 2007)

In terms of his methods for directing actors, Branagh is influenced by his own personal experiences at RADA. Says he, “When I was training to be an actor at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, this question of *why?* was something Hugh Cruttwel constantly urged me to consider. The *how* of creating a piece of art always

comes second. It's the *why* that will get you to the truth of a character" (Branagh 1993, p. xvi). It is this element in his theatrical training that he passes on to his actors, encouraging them to research and explore the past histories and development of their characters to discover the *why?* of their actions and motivations, as is demonstrated in the case-study chapters that follow.

Branagh's methods in directing actors aids in his creating a certain style of performance, particularly in his Shakespeare adaptations, that is distinct in his films.

4.1.4 Camera Techniques

When examining Branagh's directorial film oeuvre, there exist particular camera techniques and practices that are common to all his films. These methods include but are not limited to his exclusive use of film, camera techniques with a history of using spherical lenses, and long uninterrupted shots and tracking shots,

One of Branagh's trademark techniques throughout his film work is his consistent use of tracking shots to establish the location of the characters, as well as arguably to establish that the world around them does indeed exist all the time, even when not within the boundaries of the camera lens. When he does cut away, the camera often shows other people going about their lives in that same space before returning to the main characters. Samuel Crowl, in his book *The Films of Kenneth Branagh*, states:

Branagh was typically clever in the way he orchestrated cast and camera. In order to keep the audience's eyes alive and alert as Shakespeare's dense verbal images came flooding forth, Branagh used a series of complicated tracking and dolly shots that allowed him to often shoot several pages of text in a single take. (Crowl, 2006)

This can be seen in Branagh's 1989 film directing debut, *Henry V*, when he sets out to create the "longest tracking shot in the world" (Branagh 1989, p. 235).

Shot on Panaflex cameras and lenses by Panavision, *Henry V* features one of his most famous tracking shots. His four-minute shot in *Henry V* begins at the end of the battle of Agincourt with a man, played by Patrick Doyle, composer of the film's musical score, singing "Non Nobis Domine" and he is soon joined by the

voices of many others. The shot follows Branagh across the bloody battlefield. In spite of the bloody nature of the setting, the shot is carefully planned out and full of detail. The audience is always aware of what is happening around the characters, thus ensuring that the audience understands where everyone is in relation to each other.

To create the one shot, a five-hundred-foot tracking platform was built in fields outside Shepperton Studios, whose sound stages were used for filming. The shot swept over more than three hundred extras and horses lying “injured” or “dead”. He uses music throughout the filming period, instead of adding the music in post-production. After a soldier begins to sing, the rest of the music continues to be played back for the actors and crew throughout the scene. Branagh says in his autobiography, written while making *Henry V*, “As they marched, the music swelled to produce a tremendous climax. There would be no question about the statement this movie was making about war” (Branagh 1989, p. 236). He continues to say:

David Tringham [Assistant Director of the film], made this chaos work, and with our massive crowd and our remote control camera on its strange electronic arm, we began by 12:30 on that long day to start on the amazing shot. The visibility of Trevor Coop’s monitor set was so poor it was impossible to know what the remote control camera was picking up. Live, the action looked marvelous. As for the finished product, we would have to sweat. (Branagh 1989, p. 236)

This use of tracking shots continues throughout his 1991 *Dead Again*, shot on an Ultracam 35 with Cooke lenses, the most complex being the scene in which Derek Jacobi’s character Frank hypnotizes Emma Thompson’s character Grace. Instead of using a steady-cam, this shot was done using a small Elemack dolly, allowing for easier and smoother camera movement within the small space of the set. Once again, Branagh uses this tracking shot to establish the actors within their setting, making the audience aware of the small space, the almost claustrophobic confines of the slightly disheveled antique shop in which the characters are sitting. Branagh is quoted in the commentary of his film as saying, “I didn’t want the sort of often very pleasing float of a steady cam. I didn’t want a

smooth motion that was in tune and in motion with Derek's voice and motion" (1992).

More of his famous uses of tracking shots can be seen in his *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993). One such shot is when the character of Balthazar, again played by composer Patrick Doyle, is singing at the fountain of the villa's courtyard. Branagh uses a one minute and thirty-nine second shot starting with Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato at the fountain before following a young woman with her laundry to reveal a closer look at Balthazar, then to Benedick, before returning back to Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato once more.

Another noteworthy shot in the film is the two-and-a-half-minute finale. The shot tracks each of the ensemble cast members before leading up into grand aerial shots, leaving the audience to revel and celebrate along with the characters in the beauty of the Tuscan views. About this shot, Ian Shuttleworth, in his book *Ken & Em: The Biography of Kenneth Branagh and Emma Thompson*, quotes Branagh as saying:

I felt that the last part [of the film] should wrap up the "fairy tale" and have a flourish; I also suspected that there might be an element as people watched it of 'Christ, he hasn't cut yet!', and that might be fun . . . Those all-in-one things create a kind of theatricality on the set, which is very bonding. (Shuttleworth 1994, p. 293)

These long tracking or uninterrupted shots can be seen consistently throughout his films from *Henry V* through *Sleuth*. In addition to the above-mentioned tracking shots in *Henry V*, *Dead Again* and *Much Ado about Nothing*, the film *The Magic Flute* opens with a tracking shot that runs approximately six minutes and seventeen seconds, beginning with a view of the sun in the sky, lowering to reveal birds flying across the sky, lowering still further to the flower-dappled green fields below. A hand reaches out to pluck a flower and the camera turns to reveal the face of a soldier. The camera rises again to an overhead shot of the soldier who had plucked the flower, now sitting in a trench. The shot then lowers and follows other soldiers as they move through the trench, including one soldier who is carrying a message, then rises once again for an aerial shot of the

endless expanse of the soldier-filled trench, then moves across the fields to reveal another trench also filled with soldiers.

More soldiers are preparing for battle and the soldier with the message arrives and hands the message to the commander. The commander blows a whistle and the battle begins accompanied by a marching orchestra. Planes appear out of the clouds overhead as the battle rages below. There is wholesale slaughter as soldiers are shot or bombed and fall on the barbed wire-strewn battlefield. The camera focuses in on one young officer and follows him on his journey across the field, then the light fades to nighttime. Only at this point is there a cut in the sequence.

The film *Sleuth* opens with an extended uninterrupted stationary shot of a monitor sitting on a desk. Visual interest is added through the changing images that appear on the monitor, the result of the various security cameras that are located throughout the property. The images on the monitor's screen within the screen depict a car as it makes its way up the driveway to the front of the house and parks next to another car in front of the doorway. The security camera image on the monitor is an overhead shot looking down upon the two cars and the man who gets out of the newly arrived car and moves to stand before the door of the house. Inside the room where the desk is located, a man, sitting in the shadows in front of the desk but previously unseen, stands up and moves in front of the monitor which is still showing the man outside.

The shot cuts here into a second extended uninterrupted stationary shot, the direct view from the overhead security camera showing the man outside the door. This shot continues, the camera unmoving, as the front door opens and the dialogue begins between the two characters, one in front of the door and the other still hidden within the doorway. The conversation continues for some time until the man in the doorway extends his hand to the man outside. Only now is his arm alone visible as he shakes hands with his visitor and invites him inside. The camera finally moves, panning up over the roof and the balustrade of the upper floor, where the scene cuts once more, but is edited smoothly to imply movement through the

ceiling, mimicking an uninterrupted tracking shot, where it focuses again in an overhead shot on the tops of the heads of the two men.

Another element that all of Branagh's films present is the use of camera movement within a scene. Branagh's scenes are seldom shot with a static camera as camera movement becomes an important practice used to enhance performances and the ongoing action, to add a sense of urgency of a scene, and to reflect the emotions of the characters in the scene.

A common trait of Branagh's films also is a strong sense of the location outside of the cinematic scene and his adherence to the importance of the interaction of characters within their space so that the audience has a strong awareness of the entire location throughout the interaction of the characters.

The frequent use of such camera techniques common to all of Branagh's films elicits comparisons between his various films. For example, watching the tracking shot at the end of *Much Ado about Nothing* inexorably begs for discussions and comparisons with the tracking shot of the battle of Agincourt from *Henry V*, as do the circle shots that appear in various Branagh films lend themselves to such comparisons.

The use of extended tracking shots is a cinema technique commonly used. However, the distinctness comes from the frequency and consistency in Branagh's use of this cinema technique but with very different effects achieved due to his choices of when and how they are used.

Until *Hamlet* in 1996, Branagh's films were shot with spherical lenses instead of anamorphic lenses, which differ in their aspect ratio and the image that they project, anamorphic lenses projecting an elliptical image rather than a spherical one. Due to its ability to stretch the image, the anamorphic lens gained widespread use in the 1950s during what Barry Langford refers to, in his *Post-classical Hollywood: Film Industry, Style and Ideology since 1945*, as the transition phase from classical to post-classical Hollywood cinema (2010, p. 1), with the development of the widescreen format.

Branagh's preferred use of spherical lenses in his films pays homage to classical cinema. Spherical lenses produce a more classical style image that simulates the image created by the human eye more while anamorphic lenses produce a shallower depth of field. The use of anamorphic lenses changes the shape of the bokeh, causing the blurred out-of-focus images of light in the background to become elongated rather than the round shape produced by spherical lenses. In this way, too, spherical lenses create a more classical look.

The spectacle that is Branagh's *Hamlet* and the special effects required to create it are testament to Branagh's utilization of the advances in technology available in the post-classical era of filmmaking. However, he sometimes uses them to aid in emulating a more classical style.

4.1.5 Mise-en-scène

Another practice that can be seen across the scope of Branagh's films is his incorporation of semiotic signs into the mise-en-scène. This practice includes, among other things, such choices as the selection of one main shooting location, the use of non-diegetic sound to forward dialogue, a distinct style of blocking and movement, and his choices in costuming.

A pattern that emerges in Branagh's films is his choice to use one primary location. Many of his films are shot in a single location, incorporating both interior and exterior shots. One such example is *Peter's Friends*. The entire film was shot inside the house and around the grounds of the country manor. The same can be said for the villa in Tuscany in which *Much Ado about Nothing* was shot, including the outer buildings located upon the estate. Most of the film *In the Bleak Midwinter* was shot within the confines of a large church. *Sleuth* takes place entirely in the one location representing the home of Wyck.

Another pattern, as mentioned above, is the use of non-diegetic sound to forward dialogue. Diegetic sound refers to any sounds that originate within the screen from sources on or off screen but are a part of the story. Examples of diegetic sound include the dialogues of characters, music from instruments, radio or television that the characters can hear, and accompanying Foley sound effects

such as footsteps, glasses clinking, silverware rattling, or doors opening, etc. Non-diegetic sound refers to those sounds that are not a part of the action taking place within the story and are added for effect. This includes the film score which the characters do not hear, a narrator or voiceover, or sounds effects added to give emphasis to a moment, etc.

Branagh commonly employs the use of non-diegetic sound to add emphasis to dialogue and further promote the understanding of its meaning, and to reiterate or project the emotion of a scene. An example of this can be seen in the use of music during the above-mentioned tracking scene from *Henry V*. Another example is the scene from *Much Ado about Nothing* in which Benedick overhears Don Pedro, Claudio and Leonato proclaiming Beatrice's love for him and he turns to the camera and visibly blanches with the sound of a blink of music used to emphasise his surprise.

Another example of this use of music is from the film *Sleuth*. In the scene in which Tindle, now disguised as a detective, returns to visit Wyck, the image cuts between the two characters, choreographed with a repeating three-note tune emphasizing each cut, including Tindle's twirling a remote control in time to the tune.

In his Shakespeare adaptations particularly, the music is often used to aid in the understanding of the scene. In trying to make Shakespeare more accessible and enjoyable to those who may not be quite able to comprehend the language, the music is used to convey the meaning. For example, in the scene in which Hamlet is chasing his father's ghost through the woods in order to speak to it, the music is as frenzied as Hamlet's words, signifying his state of mind. When he stops abruptly and gazes around the woods, listening intently for some sound, the music too stops abruptly, leaving the viewer to listen intently as well. As the ghost approaches, the music takes on a tone of foreboding, making it clear that this is a warning for Hamlet to beware. As the ghost speaks, telling of its murder, the music turns sinister. In this way, the music helps the viewer to understand the meaning even if unable to understand all the words.

When the ghost disappears and Hamlet makes his oath to never forget his father, his vow is reverent, the music softly poignant, then slowly the music begins to swell and change as Hamlet vows to avenge his father's murder, becoming inspirational and epic, incorporating a drumroll as he prepares for his own private battle and Hamlet stares up to sky, almost in prayer and in awe. The music stops abruptly as his companions find him staring into the sky, but without the music now, Hamlet seems overwhelmed, wide-eyed and overwrought. He speaks with his friends but without the accompanying music, Hamlet seems to be raving and a bit mad. The lack of music here becomes as powerful as the music itself as it conveys the changes that are taking place in the mind of Hamlet.

Branagh also combines the use of diegetic music with an added use of non-diegetic music to create a fuller sound, often beginning with a song or instrumentation that is a part of the story then adding additional music that is clearly not, playing with the connection between what the characters hear and what they do not, adding an element of Hollywood musical musicality to the films. He combines the diegetic and non-diegetic but plays with the relationship between the two in various different ways.

An element of the Hollywood musical is the fact that the songs are meant to act as dialogue, or sometimes soliloquy, designed to further the story, and the accompanying music is actually non-diegetic sound, as the music is not meant to be a part of the story heard by the characters.

An example of this traditional characteristic of the musical can be seen in *Much Ado about Nothing* in the scene in the garden in which Bernardo is asked by the Count to sing a song. Bernardo begins by strumming on his instrument and the characters join in the singing, making it diegetic sound. However, as the singing continues, other instruments such as violins join in, which are clearly non-diegetic sound as there are no violins in the scene.

Another example is from *Love's Labour's Lost* in the scene in which the teacher begins to sing, but it is part of the diegetic sound in that, in spite of the film being a musical, this particular scene involves her singing for the entertainment of

others and does not serve as a means of furthering the dialogue in the usual sense of the songs within the musical genre. She sings, a part of the diegetic sound, then non-diegetic music is added as accompaniment to her singing. After her song, the other characters applaud her performance.

Branagh sometimes plays with this element of the music but in a way that is different than the traditional style of musicals by adding diegetic sound that crosses the line between the diegetic and non-diegetic. In these cases, Branagh does the opposite of the above-mentioned, beginning first with non-diegetic sound and incorporating diegetic sound.

An example of this can be seen in *The Magic Flute*. The opening sequence is fully orchestrated as part of the non-diegetic sound. However, as the camera moves across the field, diegetic sound is incorporated as part of the scene when the camera focuses upon an orchestra marching across the field and playing martial music, diegetic sound which is incorporated into the already playing non-diegetic sound.

Another example of this comes from *Love's Labour's Lost*. In the scene in which the King of Navarre is in the library singing, the music is already playing, non-diegetic sound, but the King plucks up an instrument and strums it, thus adding diegetic sound to the already existent non-diegetic sound.

In terms of Branagh's choices in blocking and movement, one of the main characteristics that he chooses is the use of symmetry in the staging, blocking and framing. This preference for symmetry can be seen consistently throughout his films. This is particularly used to emphasise the regality and elegance of a scene. As he states, "You're looking for a certain kind of symmetry and elegance to the way you frame things . . . something I think I've usually gone for and wanted to use here where the people are lined up in order . . . and mirror each other on either side" (Branagh 2000). This is seen repeatedly in his films, such as the scene in *Hamlet*, the scene in *Henry V*, in the Prince's entry scene in *Much Ado about Nothing*, and the negotiating scene in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

In terms of costuming, the costumes are often designed to have a timeless ambiguous feel that cannot be strictly tied to a specific timeframe or date. He has the courage to be experimental in his choices and often stylized and with varying degrees of historical accuracy. This can be seen as a means of putting the viewers in a position where they must trust him to present the world of the film to them since they cannot always place the film setting in a distinct space themselves.

For example, the costumes of *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993) are stylized to have a timeless quality. The women are in flowing white gowns that are airy and light to match the tone of the film. The costumes are made to highlight and showcase the femininity and sexuality of the women, to be in contrast with the men. The men wear more restricted clothing and are shown horseback riding and rough housing.

In *Much Ado About Nothing*, the costumes also help to carry the plot. It becomes visually understandable how Margaret may be mistaken for Hero by Claudio. The two women are dressed the same with similar hair color. With the viewer's understanding of that they are seeing what Claudio and Don Pedro are seeing, the viewer can relate and believe the anger and betrayal that Claudio feels and understand his refusal to be negotiated with. It is because he knows what he has seen with his own eyes.

Branagh employs much colour-coding in the film. The women are all in white. The men are in their soldier's uniforms. However, there is a "good guys" versus "bad guys" element in their costuming. The band of soldiers who follow the prince, the *good guys*, have blue collars on their uniforms. Don Jon and his men, the *bad guys*, wear black collars. The prince has both blue and black on his collar. In a more realistic setting, perhaps the soldiers would all be dressed the same.

Branagh also uses colour-coding in *Love's Labour's Lost* in that the accents such as ties or boutonnières of each of the men's clothing is colour-coded to match the attire of the particular lady in whom he is interested, also branding them as the stars of the film.

Another factor of Branagh's Shakespeare film work is his acting style and delivery. The articulation in Branagh's actors and clear expression is a result of his personal preferences and his rehearsal practices, as previously discussed. Sarah Hatchuel quotes Branagh in her book *A Companion to the Shakespearean Films of Kenneth Branagh* on "his desire to make Shakespeare's language sound as familiar as possible to a '90s ear":

One of the things that has always challenged me, inspires me, and makes me enthusiastic about working with Shakespeare is the attempt to make it sound as natural as possible. I've always been anti-declamatory. The very best Shakespeare in acting for me is when it's just people – people walking and talking like people do. But the extra juice you get is this dramatic poetry. (Hatchuel 2000, p. 33) As film critic Geoffrey O'Brien describes this:

The job of the actor was to clarify, line by line and word by word, not just the general purport of what the character was feeling, but the exact function of every remark . . . the result was a more pointed, even jabbing style, a tendency to deflate sonority in favor of exact meaning, while at the same time giving the meter of the verse a musician's respect and the rhetorical substructure of the lawyer's questioning eye. (O'Brien 1997)

Branagh also states that he requires much rehearsal to achieve his goal which is "to make things look effortless but somehow neat. In order to appear casual, it takes a lot of time to work on it" (Branagh 2000). Branagh thus tries to make his Shakespeare films "anti-declamatory" and for them to appear as natural as any modern film with the exception being only in their use of a more archaic vocabulary and occasionally a different type of sentence structure.

4.2 Recurring Themes

Another aspect of Branagh's films which aids in contributing to Branagh's status as auteur, though not a "method" of filmmaking, is a pattern of consistency that emerges in some of the themes of the films that he chooses to direct, a requisite feature in Leitch's criteria of auteurship. One of the themes that many of his films share involves the difficulty of navigating familial relationships. A second theme often repeated is the feeling of isolation and alienation of the "man-against-the-world" who feels the weight of the world on his shoulders alone. A third theme

that Branagh explores is the fitness to rule. Branagh's film *Henry V* is an example of both the second and third themes.

In the film version of *Henry V*, Branagh bases many of his choices in his adaptation process on the stage direction of Adrian Noble, who directed him in his starring role at the Royal Shakespeare Company. As stated by Hatchuel:

The king is both earnest and cruel in the two productions; Exeter is the same protective and brutal uncle; Montjoy, the French herald, becomes an admirer of Henry in both; the low-lifers convey the pain and suffering of war . . . Noble treated the bloody conflict of the play in a harsher way than previous productions, stressing its brutality and the soldiers' distress . . . we witness the same inner doubts troubling a very young and inexperienced king; we are presented with more or less the same ambivalent feelings towards war and the same sacrifices it demands of the king; we witness the same army suffering in difficulty and pain under the oppressive rain. In fact, Branagh's theatrical experience in 1984 almost worked as a rehearsal for his 1989 film. (Hatchuel 2000, p. 44)

A prime example of the first theme is his film *Dead Again*. This film, a modern neo noir, focuses on the question of past lives, explores the element of how people connect and the strength of that connection. The first theme concerning the difficulties of negotiating familial relationships is seen in the film's past life sequences. Roman is revealed to have been very jealous of Margaret's friendship with Gray Baker. His jealousy is seen as his motive for killing her. The theme is further explored in Madson's relationship with his mother, Roman and Margaret. The second theme of isolation and alienation is seen in Grace's amnesia and feeling of loss and abandonment, as well as in Roman's loss of Margaret. Roman's time on death row awaiting execution for the murder he knows he did not commit demonstrates his choice to deal with this alienation with grace and dignity.

The theme negotiating familial relationships is also exemplified in the film *Peter's Friends*. This film, released in 1992, is a comedy based upon an original screenplay written by Rita Rudner and Martin Bergman. The second theme of alienation and isolation is seen in the feelings of Peter who reaches out to his former friends with the hope of gaining some kind of support in his hour of need.

Branagh's fourth directorial film, *Much Ado about Nothing*, incorporates both the first and the third theme. The theme of familial relationships is seen in the anger that Leonato initially feels towards Hero when he believes the lies told of her. He soon realises that these slanders are false and they are reconciled. Benedick is, however, put into a position of choosing between Beatrice, the woman he loves and intends to marry, and Claudio, the man who has been like a brother to him. The theme of the fitness to rule is seen in the character of Don John. He is jealous of his brother's power and position, and he uses his own influence to cause devastation for no other reason than to foil the happiness of his brother. Don Pedro is put in the difficult position of having to decide punishment for his brother's villainy.

The theme of the difficulties of negotiating familial relationships is epitomised in Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. Released in 1994, it is Branagh's first and only horror film to date. Of all the Frankenstein-themed films that have been produced, it is the most faithful to the Shelley novel. The second theme of isolation and alienation is further epitomized in the characters of Victor and his Creation. Victor feels that he alone is responsible for the Creation and that he alone must bear the responsibility of destroying him. The Creation is isolated because of what he is as well as by his appearance.

These two themes are also explored in the film *In the Bleak Midwinter*. Released in 1995, it is a modern comedy written and directed by Branagh and is the first film that he directed in which he does not also appear as an actor.

Much like *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, *Hamlet* represents the epitome of dysfunctional family relationships as Hamlet has to deal with the knowledge that his father was murdered by his father's brother, Hamlet's uncle, and that the murderer has usurped his father's throne and married his mother, thus becoming Hamlet's new stepfather. Unlike any of his previous Shakespeare films which were edited to make them shorter, Branagh's film *Hamlet* includes Shakespeare's entire play of the same name although Branagh updates the setting to represent a more 19th century style of dress in the costuming. This film was an achievement of a

personal nature for Branagh for whom this was the fulfillment of a long-term dream. It is for his performance in this film that Jacobi gave him the copy of the play.

The theme of isolation is exemplified by the character of Hamlet whom everyone believes has gone mad with grief over his father's death. He alone assumes the responsibility of vengeance and further alienates his friends and loved ones as he struggles in this pursuit. The theme of fitness for rule is also brought into question in the form of both Claudius, who is a cold-blooded murderer who killed his brother to claim his throne and wife, and Hamlet, who is so overcome with his desire for vengeance that he thinks of nothing else, thus bringing about the destruction of his entire family and its claim to the throne and allowing a foreign power to assume the throne.

The film *Love's Labour's Lost* also contains the theme of the fitness to rule. The King of Navarre, believing that education alone can make him fit to rule his kingdom, unleashes the action of the film by making an absurd vow to do nothing but read and educate himself for a period of three years, and he drags his three friends into making the vow with him.

The film *As You Like It* explores both the first and the third above-mentioned themes. It is adapted by Branagh from the Shakespeare comedy play of the same name though the film is transposed to be set in 19th century Japan. The theme of familial relationships is therein examined in all of these characters. The theme of fitness to rule is brought into question when people continue to flock to join the disenfranchised Duke Senior rather than remain loyal to the newly proclaimed Duke Frederick. Frederick's fitness is further challenged by his own daughter when she chooses to flee as well.

The film *The Magic Flute*, released in 2006, explores the same themes. It is adapted by Branagh from the opera of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart of the same name and is set in a type of World War I timeframe in a war between the forces of the Queen of the Night and Sarastro. The film version of the opera includes both music and dialogue and is in English, with the translation from the original German done by Stephen Fry. The film stars opera singers Joseph Kaiser, Amy Carson,

Benjamin Jay Davis, Tom Randle, Lyubov Petrova, Silvia Moi, and René Pape. The theme of familial relationships is seen in the “custodial” battle over the possession of the daughter Pamina. The theme of the fitness to rule is shown in the choice of the Queen of the Night to commit suicide, thereby declaring herself unfit to reign.

The film *Sleuth* explores the theme of familial relationships as Wyke refuses to release his wife from a marriage that she supposedly no longer wants. However, her devotion to both Wyke and Tindle is called into question when she is revealed at the end of the film to be on her way back to reconcile with Wyke because she wants his money.

The cinematography and the look of this film are very stylized with a number of aspects that stand out. The filming includes many overhead shots to mimic the look of security camera footage, as indicated by the change in the color palette of the images. The lighting is striking, with the faces often half lit to give a more sinister look to the actors.

The creativity of the camera angles of Haris Zambarloukos, the use of reflection, viewing the image through horizontal blinds, the dramatic lighting and other aspects of the cinematography demonstrate the cinematographer’s willingness to experiment, which apparently appeals to Branagh. For his later films, Branagh consistently uses Haris thereafter as his cinematography. The film is particularly theatrical with the use of coloured lights in a setting that lends itself to a type of theatrical lighting. This film is an effective example of the ways in which Branagh uses many deliberate film techniques to capture the beauty of stage in his films, and he juxtaposes the two styles seamlessly. Branagh also exhibits a sharp and keen connection to the needs of the audience in order to create an image that allows the audience to be able to experience whatever he wants them to experience, in this case the tension and anxiety that the characters are feeling.

These three themes are significant for this study in that all are also prevalent in Branagh’s later films *Thor*, *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*, and *Cinderella*. They will be discussed in greater detail in the chapters that follow.

4.3 Conclusion

The question posed in this chapter is whether there are specific methods that Branagh uses throughout his body of directorial work that have contributed to his status as auteur. The research of this thesis indicates that Branagh does have specific methods in directing his films which are consistent throughout his earlier work. These methods are described herein and include research into the histories and examination of the hypotexts, hypertexts and architexts that inform his films, the recasting of the same actors in multiple films, extended rehearsals prior to shooting, the use of specific camera techniques, and the incorporation of semiotic clues into the *mise-en-scène*, all of which aid in establishing him as an auteur. The question for this research then becomes whether these methods remain constant across the case-study films that are the focus of this research and, if so, how they contribute to his status as auteur.

CHAPTER FIVE: *THOR*

This chapter forms the first of the case-study films researched for this project. The first section includes a look at the intertextual relationships of the 2011 film *Thor*, investigating not only a delineation of the similarities and differences between the film and its hypotexts and hypertexts, but includes also a discussion of the intertextual alliances of the film within the Marvel cinematic universe. The next four sections analyse the elements of mise-en-scène beginning with Branagh's direction and contributions, including both cinematographic elements such as camera movement and editing, and his directorial contributions such as directing the performances of the actors and rehearsal techniques. The elements of direction, camera and performance are incorporated into one section because Branagh is described as approaching these elements as one, working on these simultaneously to aid each other to achieve his desired effect.

The next three sections continue this analysis of mise-en-scène by looking at the elements of costumes, set, and music. These are analysed in order to discover whether there are similarities in Branagh's approach and methods that correspond with his earlier works, and to discern whether the intertextuality of the film may have been used within the mise-en-scène to evoke audience recall. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings of the research on *Thor*. A number of influences on the film from the Norse mythology are plainly evident. The Asgardians that appear in the film, with the exception of the Warriors Three, are based upon the gods and goddesses that fill the works of the *Poetic* and *Prose Eddas*. The portrayals of Odin, Frigga, Thor, Heimdall, Loki and Sif align well with the images of the gods created in these works, though there are some changes in the characterisations of Loki and Sif that are original to the comics.

Thor differs from Branagh's previous work in that it is adapted not from a classic text, stage play, or earlier film, but is adapted primarily from a series of comic books. In his book *The Comic Book Adaptation: Exploring Modern Hollywood's Leading Genre*, Liam Burke suggests that though comic books represent a different type of hypotext than the majority of adaptations, it is

reasonable to “reapply the terms and taxonomies of earlier scholarship to this exciting area” (2015, p. 12). Using Andrew’s taxonomy for modes of adaptation (2000), Burke goes on to contend that “Traditionally, most comic book adaptations by Hollywood studios could be categorized as ‘borrowings’” (2015, p. 13).

One topic of discourse that continues from novel-to-film adaptation into the discourse of comic book adaptation is the discourse on fidelity. Luca Somigli in *The Superhero with a Thousand Faces: Visual Narratives on Film and Paper*, in reference to film adaptation versus comic book adaptation argues that:

When drawing from canonized texts (in particular, so-called literary texts), from works firmly enshrined with the cultural tradition, the prime concern is faithfulness to the original, seen as a fixed entity complete in itself...However, when the source is a work of “popular culture,” the integrity of the original is not an issue. (1998, pp. 284-285)

Burke, however, argues that fidelity also remains a significant component in comic book adaptation. Citing the large number of comic books from which to draw for adaptation, Burke points out that it is the myth of the comic book character that is borrowed in adapting it to film, incorporating a variety of characters and setups from different issues in order to form a more complete representation of the characters, the plots, and their stories. As Burke states, for example, “in adapting the myth of Batman rather than one specific comic book, borrowings such as Tim Burton’s *Batman* maintain those staples that have reappeared in the character’s many incarnations and have become his most identifiable traits” (2015, p. 13). This holds true for the film adaptation of *Thor*, with Thor’s costuming, posturing, and the variety of characters incorporated into the film.

However, although particular plotlines or stories may not be adapted specifically, an expectation in the development of a film based upon comics is to maintain the general characteristics that do exist in the comics. The audience and fans of the comics expect to see a recognisable and fairly fidelitous portrayal of

their superheroes brought to life in celluloid form. Therefore, a certain degree of expectation is often considered when creating such a film.

As Gordon, Jancovich and McAllister point out in their *Film and Comic Books*:

Comics have core audiences of fans that engage with characters over longer periods of time, and...these fans have distinct opinions on how characters should be adapted for film. Moreover different fans of the same comic character will have different views, and...competing expectations of different fans will further complicate the problems of adaptations. Fans then can be an asset to a film adapted from a comic, but also a liability particularly when taken for granted. (2007, p. xi)

This idea of fidelity to the comics is a significant factor in Branagh's choices when dealing with the mise-en-scène for *Thor*, as will be demonstrated.

One difference that exists between the adaptation of comic books and conventional adaptations is that, as Will Brooker states, "the cultural hierarchies are reversed. Film may stand in a subordinate relationship to literature...but comic books are even lower down the ladder than movies" (2016, p. 48). As discussed in the *Literature Review*, the attitude often expressed is that of the superiority of the text to its cinematic adaptation. However, comic books are often considered a lower art form and the film, therefore, often achieves a higher status than its hypertexts.

There had been more than 600 issues in which the character of Thor appeared between its inception in 1962 and the completion of the script for the film in 2010. With this much information readily available, the screenwriters were faced with the challenge of creating a script that did not deviate from the essence of the original, so the craftsmanship had to be skilled enough to maintain the characters. In accepting that challenge, Zack Stentz, in an interview with the screenwriters of the film, Ashley Miller and Zack Stentz, discussed the necessities of understanding the formula for action film success, of being able to excite the audience, and the commercialization of the film as an influence on the writing of the script. Stentz states that in order to prepare for writing the script, both he and Millar read all the

comics, while Stentz also took college courses on the historical Vikings and read the *Prose Edda*, and states that they were drawing “from actual Norse mythology as well as from Marvel” (Weintraub 2010).

In addition to the influences of the Norse mythology and the comic books, there was the added influence of the existence of a Marvel film universe that had to be contended with in the making of this film. When the script was written for the film, the formula for success for this type of action superhero film had already been established. A Marvel cinematic universe had already begun to be created with the release of the film *Iron Man* and *The Incredible Hulk* not long after, both in 2008. In the above-mentioned interview, Miller, a self-proclaimed comic book aficionado, states that:

Thor is problematic for reasons that should be obvious, and dealing with that is difficult, especially when *Iron Man* has kind of set what the tone of the universe is, right, and what the nature of that universe is. And so the task becomes taking this very big concept of Thor, making it something that fits into that world, but still having it function on its own and having it function legitimately as drama, and making it feel like the things that you love about it as a comic book. That's the key to any adaptation, saying what do you love about it . . . and sitting down and writing that story. And it became easy for us to fit . . . Thor and kind of how we saw him into what Marvel wanted out of their Marvel universe, which is basically the movie version of that comic book world, as we understand it. (Weintraub 2010)

As will be shown, there are many examples of stories and ideas that are appropriated directly from issues of the comics, but there are also significant differences. One of the most noticeable differences between the comics and the film is that the archaic heightened language of the Asgardians found in the comics is dispensed with in the dialogue of the film in favor of more modern speech.

The film *Thor* is based primarily upon the Marvel Comics franchise and a variety of its comics. Although the character of Thor is initially derived from the revered Norse thunder god as depicted in the hypotext of Sturleson, this is a Marvel movie and it exists within the Marvel universe. Therefore, wherever the comics differ from the original Norse mythology, the film follows the story lines of the

comics. *Thor* exemplifies bricolage as defined by Sanders (2006) with a multitude of hypertexts serving as sources.

The main hypotext from which the film is derived is the Norse mythology and legends as exemplified by the work of Snorri Sturluson in his *Prose Edda*. The hypertexts from which the film is further derived include a wide variety of Marvel comic books. The architextual genre to which it belongs is the superhero action film.

The film stars Chris Hemsworth as Thor, Tom Hiddleston as Loki, Anthony Hopkins as Odin, Natalie Portman as Jane Foster, Stellan Skarsgård as Selvig and Clark Gregg as Phil Coulson.

5.1 Intertextual Relationships of *Thor*

Simone Murray, in her work *The Adaptation Industry: The Cultural Economy of Contemporary Literary Adaptation*, points out that “the intellectual project which new-wave adaptation studies sets itself takes, paradoxically, a tamely familiar methodological guise: namely, textual analysis” (Murray 2012, p. 4). As indicated above, it is often demonstrated by scholars in what she refers to as “the new wave” of adaptation studies that the discourse on the comparisons of texts with their source materials is dismissed as out-of-date due to its being inevitably coupled with a discussion of the merits of either the film or its sources or both. This study does not see these two topics of discourse, the comparison of texts and the comparative merits of each, as inevitably linked and does not approach this section of the research as a means of proclaiming judgmental evaluation in terms of their worth or value. Rather the comparison and palimpsestic contrasting of the various hypotexts and hypertexts is approached from the need of the ability to understand the hypotexts and hypertexts of which Branagh was aware in order to be able to recognise the semiological elements that he then incorporates into his films in order to evoke audience recall.

When preparing for a new directorial project, one of the major approaches Branagh uses is extensive research into the subject matter of the topic of the film, an indication of which is evidenced when he states:

Shakespeare, if we start with him, sort of going forward and back, he often used the great classic myths of other cultures, whether it was the lives of the ancient Greeks and Romans or whether it was the chronicles of Holinshed or the history of the English Kings. So he knew a good powerful story, which had already proved itself over the years. So he told stories. You know the myth of Henry V was a couple of hundred years old when Shakespeare decided to write about it. But he understood that it had an enormous impact on the English imagination so it was a story everybody already knew, as it were, and then he retold it again. So I think I start with that idea that Shakespeare recognised, what some would argue are the six or seven stories that we tell repeatedly. And one of them, you might argue, is this rags-to-riches story that is Cinderella. And I think the Norse myths and the fables and fairytales in this particular case that have been written by Perrault or the Brothers Grimm, or that come through Egyptian culture with a ton of different variations on how the story is told, all basically recognise that there is something in this myth that seems cathartic and necessary for audiences to relive. Or at the very least, it is simply entertaining. (AOL Build 2015)

With an understanding that Branagh is meticulous in his research into the history of his film topics, it is important for this project to investigate the literary precursors concerning the history of these topics under investigation in this study. As such, an investigation was made into the histories of the legends or characters upon which the case-study films are based. As Geraghty states, “the complex textual referencing of many adaptations, their layering of genres, performances, and settings, provides evidence for how they work as films, not as versions of another form, nor as a whirl of references without their own shape” (2008, p. 197).

What follows is a discussion of the hypotexts for the film and the world view and major gods of Asgard that have been appropriated in *Thor*. This is followed by a history of the Thor comics and comparisons of specific tales from the comics with the Norse mythology that feature characters or plot developments that were appropriated into the film. This is, in turn, followed by a text-to-text comparison between the film and its hypotexts and hypertexts. This is done as a means of identifying the elements used by Branagh to trigger audience recall.

5.1.1 The Gods of Asgard

Much of the information now known about the actual beliefs of Norse mythology and the gods of Asgard may be derived from two major primary sources, a hypotext commonly referred to as the *Poetic Edda* (Dodds 2014), also known as Sæmund's *Edda* or the *Elder Edda*, and the hypertext *Prose Edda* by Snorri Sturluson (2001), also known as Snorri's *Edda* or the *Younger Edda*. These two Eddas, the former in poetic form and the latter in prose, contain the wealth of information detailing the world view of Norse mythology and its conception of how the universe was created, a depiction of the nine realms that exist within that universe, including Asgard and Midgard, the relationships between the various gods and peoples, including giants, who inhabit these realms, and the many adventures that demonstrate and exemplify the characters and characteristics of the gods.

Snorri's *Edda* is the more comprehensive of the two *Eddas* and Sturluson appropriates some of his stories from the earlier *Poetic Edda*. In his *Prose Edda*, Sturluson describes the creation of Midgard (Earth), the realm of Asgard (the home of the gods), and the worldview of the Norse mythos (2001, p. 19). H. R. E. Davidson describes the relationships that exist between the gods of Asgard, stating, "We see the gods in never-ending competition with the giants and monsters who threaten their peace and menace their world. We see them divided amongst themselves by jealousies and quarrels, yet ready to combine against a common enemy when the danger becomes acute" (1990, p. 46). This mythology serves as the hypotext upon which Stan Lee relied in creating his Marvel comics book hero of Thor.

The universe in Norse mythology consists of nine realms. As is stated in the *Poetic Edda*, "Nine worlds I knew, the nine in the tree With mighty roots beneath the mold" (Bellows 1936, p. 4). The tree to which the previous line refers is the great world-ash known as Yggdrasil, which lies in the center of this universe and symbolises the link between the various realms which lie between the roots and branches of the tree. Beneath the root that leads to Jotunheim, the realm of giants, is housed a wondrous spring controlled by the water-sprite known as Mimir, who

is very wise, for any who drink from the magical waters of the well are bestowed with great knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

Connecting the realm of Asgard to the realm of Midgard is a rainbow bridge known as Bifrost, built by the gods, “a rainbow bridge that glowed with fire” (Davidson 1990, p. 26) and is “very strong, and is made with more craft and skill than other structures” (Sturluson 2001, p. 21). This bridge is used by the gods to travel to Midgard and no other creatures are able to use it.

Thor is one of the most memorable and iconic gods of Asgard in Norse mythology. This mythos is littered with examples of his battles with various enemies of Asgard, and his immense strength is legendary, as is his prowess on the battlefield. Thor, the Norse god of thunder, is the son of Odin and “To him was given force and strength, whereby he conquers all things quick” (Sturluson 2001, p 20). He carries a massive hammer too heavy for any but him to lift, and which always returns to his own hand whenever it is thrown, even though, due to Loki’s interference, its handle is much too short for such a large hammer.

Thor is depicted as a larger-than-life character who bounds through the nine realms fully convinced of his superior strength and dependent upon that strength to lead him to victory in any battle. His first response in any situation is to reach for his weapon and to battle his way through, the epitome of the ultimate action hero. He is ever ready to pick a fight and ever ready to finish one that has already begun.

Odin, supreme among the Norse gods and sometimes referred to as the Alfater because he is seen as being the father to all of the gods, reigns in Asgard. From his seat in his hall, Odin can see what is happening in all of the different realms at the same time. Odin possesses great knowledge and wisdom because he visited the well of Mimir and drank from its enchanted waters, thereby gaining much wisdom. The toll he had to pay for drinking from the well was one of his eyes. He sacrificed one eye to gain said wisdom. As the *Prose Edda* reports, Odin “once came there and asked for a drink from the well [of Mimir], but he did not get it before he left one of his eyes as a pledge” (2001, p. 24).

Odin gains knowledge also because he has ravens that act as his spies and bring him news of whatever is happening throughout the various realms. "Two ravens sit on Odin's shoulders, and bring to his ears all that they hear and see" (Sturluson 2001, p. 37). Odin also rides upon a wondrously swift steed. As stated by Sturluson in the discussion of the horses in Asgard, "Sleipner is the best one; he belongs to Odin, and he had eight feet" (2001, p. 25).

Heimdall is the gatekeeper of the rainbow bridge Bifrost. According to Sturluson, Heimdall "dwells in a place called Himinbjorg, near Bifrost. He is the ward of the gods, and sits at the end of heaven, guarding the bridge against the mountain-giants. He needs less sleep than a bird; sees an hundred miles around him, and as well by night as by day" (2001, p. 30).

Loki is a mischievous god "whom some call the backbiter of the asas. He is the originator of deceit, and the disgrace of all gods and men. . . His father is the giant Farbaute [Farbauti], but his mother's name is Laufey. . . Loke [Loki] is fair and beautiful of face, but evil in disposition, and very fickle-minded. He surpasses other men in the craft of cunning, and cheats in all things. He has often brought the asas into great trouble, and often helped them out again, with his cunning contrivances" (Sturluson 2001, p. 33).

As Rydberg describes him, Loki is forever developing one scheme after another that "seems to be to the advantage of the gods, but is intended to bring about the ruin of both the gods and man" (1906, p. 172). He can also whisper in the minds of others to influence them to do bad things.

Loki can be said to represent the duality of human nature, never completely good but never completely bad. He brings trouble to the gods then helps to stave off that trouble, representative of the constant battle between good and evil as represented by the gods and the giants, respectively. "In the perpetual rivalry between the Aesir and the giants, Loki's ingenuity extricates the gods from one difficult situation after another, even though it is often Loki's own two-sided nature which has created the problem in the first place" (Booker 2004, p. 646).

Frigg is the wife of Odin and is considered the first among the goddesses. Frigg is a powerful goddesses and has many abilities. She is able to see the future and “knows the fate of men, although she tells not thereof” (Sturluson, p. 28). Lady Sif is the golden-haired wife of Thor who is famed for her beautiful hair of spun gold. Loki cuts off all of Sif’s hair and Thor is so angry that he threatens to kill Loki if the hair is not replaced. Loki strikes a bargain with the dwarves who create new hair of pure gold that will grow in the same manner that regular hair grows as soon as it is placed upon Sif’s head.

5.1.2 Thor in the Marvel Comics Universe

Since its inception in 1939, Marvel Comics has created various comic book series featuring, among others, such superheroes as Captain America, Iron Man, Spiderman, the Fantastic Four, Deadpool, Hawkeye, the Incredible Hulk, Doctor Strange and Thor. In the different series, the featured superhero, always exhibiting a high moral code, must inevitably battle against supervillains in order to save the world from destruction and evil. These various superheroes all exist within the same fictitious universe and periodically cross over and make appearances in issues from each other’s series. This fictitious universe that is inhabited by the various characters is referred to as the Marvel Comics Universe.

For the development of the character of Thor, the legends of Norse mythology are freely appropriated and transposed in the Marvel Comics universe, with varying degrees of alterations or sometimes minor revisions. The character of Thor, though originating from the Norse mythology as the god of thunder from Asgard, has undergone somewhat of a transformation. Although the question of Thor’s appearance has been a topic of debate (Seigfried 2011), the Norse version of the legend traditionally depicts the god as a redheaded fiery-bearded beast of a man (Kaplan 2008, p. 472) whose actions are not always clearly benevolent, unlike Marvel’s adaptation that portrays him as blond, clean cut and identifiably a superhero.

The character of Thor made his Marvel comic book debut in the Marvel Comics fantasy comic book series entitled *Journey into Mystery*, number 83,

published in August 1962 (Image 5). He was created by editor and plotter Stan Lee, scripted by Larry Lieber, and penciled and plotted by Jack Kirby. Lee and Kirby again introduced the character of Thor in the first episode of the comic book series *The Avengers* in September 1963 as an essential and founding member of the superhero team.



Image 5: *Journey into Mystery* #83
(Lee and Leiber 1962a)

The heroics of Thor extend throughout various Marvel comic book series, beginning from his first appearance in 1962 and continuing through the present day, appearing in an accumulated number of more than six hundred comic book issues. He was featured in the *Journey into Mystery* series through issue number 125 at which point he received his own comic book series entitled *The Mighty Thor* in 1967.

Since 1967, the mighty Thor has appeared in several different series within the Marvel universe, including several reboots of *The Mighty Thor* series as well as appearing in *The Avengers* series and in various other crossover issues of such

comics as *Captain America* and *The Fantastic Four*. These issues all contain stories of Thor, sometimes with his superhero friends, battling various enemies of earth or Asgard and always eventually emerging victorious. It is common for a story arc to range over a number of issues, usually three, but sometimes some of the longer, more complex stories are extended to cover many more issues. The franchise also includes an animated television series, video games, as well as other merchandise.

This study will not discuss all of the stories in all of the comics series. However, it will discuss a number of particular issues that have pertinence to the scope of this study in their influence on and relevance to the film version of Branagh's *Thor*.

In the comics, as in the Norse legends, Thor is the son of Odin and the earth goddess Jord. (Simonson 1983). Odin takes their son Thor to his wife Frigg who vows to raise the child as her own son.

Odin in the Marvel universe is the omnipotent, omniscient ruler of Asgard, as depicted in the Norse mythology. Here, too, he has his two ravens Nugin and Munin who bring him knowledge of the realms. Like in the Norse tale, Odin rides his eight-legged horse Sleipnir to visit the well of Mimir. In exchange for knowledge, Mimir demands tribute, and Odin gives his right eye as payment, stating, "Thou hast thine ounce of flesh" (Thomas 1978, p. 7, panel 2). Thereafter, except in flashback, Odin always appears with only his left eye and an eye patch over his right eye.

In the first issue in which Thor makes an appearance, American Dr. Donald Blake, while on holiday in Norway, discovers a scouting party of would-be alien invaders from Saturn who have landed on Earth. These invaders, giant stone men, chase Dr. Blake into a cave. While searching for an alternative way out of the cave, Dr. Blake finds a walking stick. When he taps the stick against a stone, Dr. Blake undergoes a magical transformation that turns him into the Norse god of thunder Thor. The walking stick is also transformed into Thor's magical hammer Mjolnir.

Inscribed upon the hammer are the words, “Whosoever holds this hammer, if he be worthy, shall possess the power of...Thor” (Lee and Lieber 1962a, p. 5, panel 5). As long as Dr. Blake retains physical possession of the hammer, his transformation into Thor remains intact. Within sixty seconds of releasing the hammer, however, he reverts back into his Dr. Blake body. In this way, he is able to control his transformation.

Mjolnir is the indestructible hammer to which Odin adds special enchantments, such as “no one shall be able to wield this hammer lest he be worthy...and ever shall this mallet return to the hand of him who hurls it...and ever shall the thunderous storm and the very elements on high respond to Mjolnir’s summons!” (Zelenetz 1983b, p. 14, panel 2).

Much like the transformation that takes place within his fellow Marvel Comics superhero the Incredible Hulk (Lee 1962c), the superhero Thor is waiting inside the partially disabled body of Dr. Blake. However, unlike Dr. Bruce Banner’s transformation into the Hulk, Dr. Blake is able to completely control his transformation at will. Also unlike the emergence of the Hulk, whose clothes are ripped apart during his transformation, Thor appears in full god of thunder regalia, including Viking-style armour and horned helmet, which magically changes back unscathed into suit and hat when Dr. Blake reappears.

As Thor, Dr. Blake discovers that he possesses a number of superpowers, including the ability to fly, the ability to create and to end rain, snow, and tornadoes, and that he now has superhuman strength. His hammer is also indestructible and destroys everything in its path, possessing a boomerang effect so that it always returns to him whenever he throws it.

This duality of the nature of Dr. Blake/Thor is further explored and explained in later issues. In a later tale, Thor dares to venture into the realm of the Storm Giants, with whom Odin has a truce which forbids Asgardians from entering their territory. Thor disobeys this stricture and breaks the truce, almost beginning a war with the Giants. As Thor’s punishment for this crime, Odin creates the persona of Dr. Donald Blake and sends Thor to earth to live as a mortal and to learn humility,

telling him, “Though thou are supreme in thy power, and thy pride...thou must know weakness...thou must feel pain! But, such lesson can ne’er be learned by thunder god!” (Lee 1968d, p. 18, panel 4). Only when Thor learns a lesson in humility does Odin allow him to return to Asgard. As will be discussed below, this tale is appropriated into the plot of the film.

In issue 84 of this series, Dr. Blake returns to America with the walking stick, vowing to use the power of Thor only in the cause of justice and to fight against evil. This issue is significant in the Thor saga because it introduces Dr. Blake’s love interest and defines the relationship that exists between Dr. Blake and his nurse Jane Foster. As will be discussed below, the character of Jane is appropriated for the film.

Of great significance in the series is the introduction of the character of Loki, Thor’s adopted brother (Image 6). Loki is introduced at the same time is Heimdall, the gatekeeper of the rainbow bridge known as Bifrost, the bridge which connects the citadel of Asgard to the earth. Bifrost is the means by which the gods of Asgard are able to breach the distances of space in order to travel to earth. Both of these characters originate in the Norse mythology and play significant roles in the plot development of the film.



Image 6: *Journey into Mystery* #85
(Lee and Lieber 1962b)

The character of Loki is often forced by Marvel to fit into the mold of the villain to Thor's hero. In the Norse legend, Loki, the god of mischief, is not evil but a prankster, joker, and of course mischievous, causing trouble but then working to right his wrongs. In contrast, Loki in the Marvel universe is bent on the destruction of Thor and continually tries to bring about his doom, but only when he thinks he can get away with it and that no one will discover that he is behind the plot to kill Thor. Loki is a skilled sorcerer and often uses magic in order to bring to fruition his evil schemes and goals. He is very manipulative and able to coerce others, sometimes through the use of magic, into doing his bidding. As a result, he often uses others as his tools of destruction while hiding his own role in their actions. As is discussed below, these traits of Loki form an essential part of his character in the film.

Included in the series is a recurring story arc that tells the biography of Loki within the Marvel universe, in which, unlike the Norse tales, Loki has become the adopted son of Odin. This biography begins by telling of the great battle that was

fought between the forces of Asgard led by Odin and the Giants of Jotunheim led by Laufey, the king of the Frost Giants.

In the great battle between these two armies in the comics, King Laufey is killed by Odin, and the infant Loki is later discovered hidden away in a temple. Odin lifts up the infant, exclaiming, "It is Loki, son of Laufey! The child he kept hidden, for his heart was filled with shame that Loki was not born a giant as were the other offspring of Jotunheim. . . But still he is a regal prince, son of a kingly father!" (Lee 1965a, P. 5, panel 3). Odin raises Loki in the air, displaying the infant for all to see and proclaims, "Hear me, legions of Asgard! From this moment hence, I proclaim Loki son of Odin, half-brother to my well-beloved Thor! For better or for worse, Loki is forevermore an immortal of Asgard!" (Lee 1965a, P. 5, panel 3). This tale of Loki's origins appears in the film.

This lineage of Loki demonstrates a change from his Norse genealogy in that Laufey is stated to be Loki's mother, not his father, in the Norse mythology. In the mythology, Loki's father is said to be Farbauti, the giant. In a later issue of the comics, however, Loki is addressed as "Farbauti's son" (Simonson 1985c, p. 6, panel 2). This is an example of how the reality can sometimes shift without explanation or continuity within the Marvel universe.

Another character from the Norse mythology that appears in the comics is the Lady Sif, a beautiful golden-haired Asgardian, though her character undergoes a transformation. In the comics, she is not the wife of Thor. Instead the character of Sif is established as a warrior maiden who fights as brilliantly as any of the men. At one point, after being told by Thor that he is off to do "man's work" (Lee 1967b, p. 6, panel 1) when she asks to accompany him to battle, she replies, "Have we not fought side-by-side in the past? Has the battle sword of Sif been found wanting? I say thee nay, son of Odin! The words of thy lips are not the thought of thy heart!" (Lee 1967b, p. 6, panel 2) to which Thor is forced to concede.

Sif, who in an early issue has golden hair like her Norse mythological counterpart, has black hair in the later issues. This is because Loki, as in the Norse mythology, cuts off all of Sif's hair (Zelenetz 1983d). Thor threatens to kill him

because of his treachery. In response, Loki goes to the trolls and convinces them to make new hair for Sif. Because Loki does not pay them for their work, they make the hair black. In the film, Sif is portrayed with black hair.

An element of the plot development in the film that comes directly from the comics is the introduction of the Destroyer (Images 7-8), what Thor calls “the most dangerous, the most deadly single entity ever created,” (Lee 1965i, p. 7, panel 4), a giant robotic creature bent on destruction. It can shoot fire from its hands and disintegrator beams from its visor and is controlled and given life by the King of Asgard.



Image 7: *Journey into Mystery* #118
(Lee and Lieber 1965f)

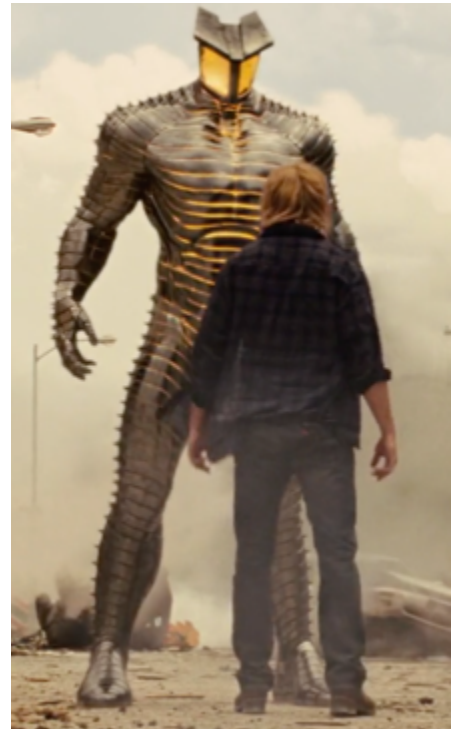


Image 8: Thor and the Destroyer
(Branagh 2011)

Through the manipulations of Loki, the Destroyer is brought to life and tries to kill Thor as Loki magically watches from Asgard. Loki soon realises that it might actually kill Thor and he becomes very afraid, believing, “the thunder god will surely meet his doom at the hands of the invincible Destroyer! And the slaying of Thor is certain to sound my own death knell! For the first time, Loki has entrapped himself!” (Lee 1965i, p. 15, panels 3-4).

Loki tries to seek aid from Odin, but Odin has fallen into his Odinsleep and the guards, fearing that Loki wishes to cause harm, will not let him awaken the king. Having cried wolf too many times, Loki is thrown into prison by the guards to prevent him from causing further mischief. However, through the use of his mental ability to influence others, even from far away, Loki manages to have Odin aroused and made aware of the danger. Thor, however, refuses the aid of Odin, preferring to prove himself victorious on his own, claiming, "A victory has more meaning when it is won by the force of your own arms, the ingenuity of you own brain!" (Lee 1965j, p. 13, panel 1). Using his own cunning as well as his strength, Thor defeats the Destroyer.

This is a significant entry in the series as it introduces a number of events that will play an important role in the Branagh film of *Thor*. In it, Loki is shown to have outsmarted himself. In his schemes for outwitting Thor, he has unleashed the only thing capable of destroying Thor. Loki does not wish to have Thor killed, only to get him out of his way, for he fears losing his own life to Odin's wrath should Thor die. Loki is forced to seek the aid of Odin to save Thor, much as he does in the film when sending guards to arouse the king and appraise him of their journey to Jotunheim. In this story, it is also demonstrated that Odin must sleep for the length of one entire day every year, "the sleep of life," (Lee 1965i, p. 10, panel 1) if he is to maintain his immortality, a plot device created by Kirby possibly as a means of preventing the All-Father from simply stepping into the fight and ending it in a sort of *deus ex machina* fashion, thereby making it essential for the hero to revolve the issue and deal with the danger on his own. This also appears in the film.

In another issue, the Destroyer returns again to try to destroy Thor. This time when Thor is once more on the brink of death after nearly being crushed by the Destroyer, Odin steps in, proclaiming, "Thor had lost the imperial attribute of...true humility! Only by stripping him of his awesome power could I reach the man beneath the god! Yea, my son and heir hath been sorely tried...and not found wanting!" (Lee 1968a, p. 9, panels 3-4). Because Thor was willing to give up his

life in order to save humanity, his hammer Mjolnir comes rushing back to his hand and his godly power and strength are restored. Odin takes possession of the Destroyer and returns to Asgard (Lee 1968b, p. 13, panel 4). This is a particularly relevant story as many of the elements of this are appropriated into the film.

The abilities of Heimdall in the comics are also appropriated in the film. An example of this is when King Brimer of the Storm Giants wishes to attack Asgard but knows he cannot get past Heimdall who guards Bifrost, for Heimdall can see and hear everything. Queen Nedra calls forth a Vanna, an air spirit, who can make himself invisible. She orders him to fly past Heimdall and spy on the troops and weapons of Odin's army. The Vanna becomes invisible and zooms over the bridge past Heimdall. Though Heimdall can see and hear nothing of his passage, he still is uneasy and feels the Vanna's presence and knows something is wrong (Lee 1964b). This failure of Heimdall to detect such an invasion is adapted for the film.

The Warriors Three are characters that are appropriated directly from the comics. In one tale, Thor is sent on a mission by Odin and volunteers come to join the mission. Among these are Hogun the Grim, "the silent, sinister, mystery warrior" (Lee 1965g, p. 2, panel 3), the handsome Fandral the Dashing, and Volstagg the Valiant whose love of food has caused him to become stout and round but who nonetheless claims, "Tis my muscles that have grown more round!" (Lee 1965g, p. 5, panel 1). These characters become known as the Warriors Three and they become Thor's most faithful companions, fighting at his side in many adventures throughout the series. They have also been, on occasion, featured in their own stand-alone comic books (Wein 1976).

These Warriors Three have very different fighting styles but all are great warriors. Fandral the Dashing has "the sizzling style of a master and the gay abandon of a carefree youth" (Lee, 1965h, p. 3, panel 2) and is much admired by the ladies, while Hogun the Grim fights in a different manner, "ruthless, savage, and unyielding" (Lee, 1965h, p. 3, panel 3). Volstagg the Valiant, the Lion of Asgard, swaggers and boasts and, in the end, often his sheer size brings disaster to his foes, such as when he is knocked unconscious but he lands on a gang of

mutineers and “his very fall toppled half of the mutineers” (Lee, 1965h, p. 4, panel 4). He is blustery and boasts often of his great courage, proclaiming himself “courage incarnate” (Lee 1966b, p. 3, panel 1) even as he is cowering on the ground trying to hide. On this mission, they succeed in gaining control of the magical Warlock’s Eye, a mystical weapon that emits a stun blast when the eye opens, defeating any enemy that stands before it. This is one of the artifacts that appears in the film, as is discussed below, in Odin’s trophy room.

Another artifact from the comics that appears in the film is the supremely powerful Casket of Ancient Winters (Images 9-10) which is stolen by Malekith the Dark Elf. The casket is said to contain “the essence of winters past” (Simonson 1984b, p. 9, panel 5) and has the power to unleash massive snow storms and to blanket the earth in perpetual winter. This casket forms an essential part of the plot development in the film, as is discussed below.

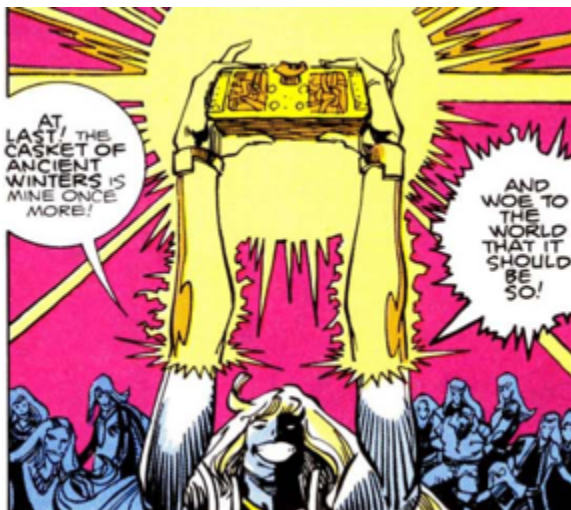


Image 9: Casket of Ancient Winters (Simonson 1984c)

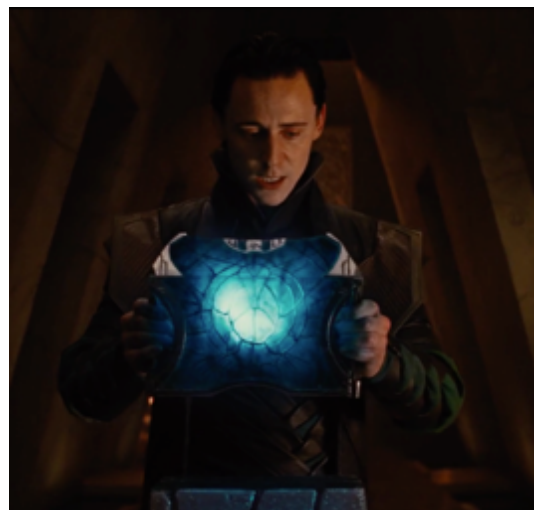


Image 10: Casket of Ancient Winters (Branagh 2011)

Another artifact that appears in Odin’s trophy room in the film and has its origins in the comics, as will be discussed below, is the Eternal Flame of Destruction. In one tale, Odin goes with his brothers to the realm of Muspelheim to ask its ruler Surtur whether it was true that he intended to destroy Asgard. Surtur responds, “There beside you burns the eternal flame of destruction. The flame which will ignite my sword that I may set the nine worlds alight!” (Simonson 1984e,

p. 15, panel 1). Understanding that Surtur intends to use the sword to burn all of Asgard and the nine realms, Odin steals the magical Eternal Flame of Destruction and escapes from Muspelheim in order to prevent this event from taking place.

The influence of other Marvel comics series can be seen in the film as well. Of interest also is a story from the Marvel Comic series featuring Captain America, another Marvel Comics superhero. In *Tales of Suspense* #79-81, a secret organization known as Advanced Idea Mechanics (AIM) develops a Cosmic Cube (Images 11-12) which controls matter and energy and has the ability of converting thought into reality. Anyone who has possession of the Cube, also known as the Tesseract, has only to think of something and it will instantaneously happen or appear (Lee 1966a, p. 8, panel 6).



Image 11: The Cosmic Cube (Lee 1966e)

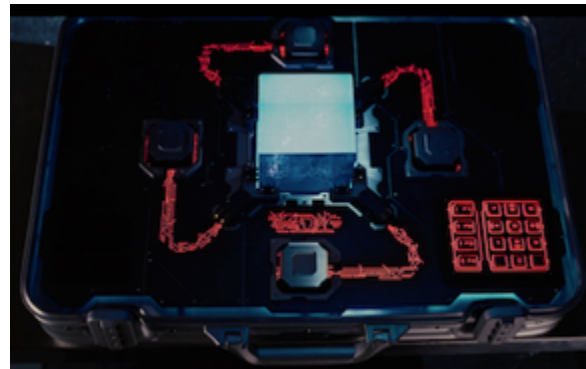


Image 12: The Cosmic Cube (Branagh 2011)

Also notable as influential to the film is the importance of S.H.I.E.L.D. The agency of S.H.I.E.L.D. made its comic book debut in the series *Strange Tales*, the title of the organization an acronym for Supreme Headquarters International Espionage Law-Enforcement Division (Image 13), which fights to keep the world safe. The leading character in this series is the eye-patch-wearing agent Colonel Nick Fury.



Image 13: *Strange Tales* #135
(Lee and Lieber 1965k)

S.H.I.E.L.D. is a secret international organization with an arsenal of high-tech gadgets and vehicles designed to cope with any kind of emergency that may threaten or bring danger or harm to the stability and safety of the world. Nick Fury is chosen to be the leader of the organization with the dual goals of destroying Hydra and of keeping the world safe. With Fury as its leader, S.H.I.E.L.D. moves into action wherever it is needed to control any situation that sparks of danger or the unknown, appearing in various series within the Marvel universe.

The character of Nick Fury originated as the hero of a Marvel comic book series first published in May 1963 entitled *Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos*, a series set during the era of World War Two (Image 14). In the comic, Fury is described as “six foot two of steel-muscled, iron-nerved fighting man! Fury believes in making his men fear him so much that they would rather face hopeless odds than face his anger! It’s rumored that he’s really got a heart, but no one can prove it!” (Lee 1963d, p. 1, panel 1). Originators of both the Sgt. Fury and the

S.H.I.E.L.D. series Stan Lee and Jack Kirby moved Nick Fury forward in time from the original series, aged him a few years, promoted him to colonel, gave him an eye-patch and made him the hero of their new comic book series.



Image 14: *Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos* #1
(Lee 1963d)

Another character that crosses over from a different series to the film is the hero Hawkeye. Hawkeye's character debuted in the series *Tales of Suspense* (Lee 1964) in an episode featuring Iron Man (Image 15). He begins as the villain in the story, the nemesis of Iron Man, but he is tricked into a life of crime after he is mistakenly identified as the thief after he has actually foiled a robbery. His ambition is to become a crime fighter like Iron Man. He is an exceptional marksman with a bow and arrow and his artillery consists of a variety of specialty arrows that can do many things, with arrows including tips such as suction cups, explosive tips, and armour-rusting tips. The situation in which he ends up on the wrong side of the law is soon remedied and Hawkeye joins the cast of Marvel heroes, becoming a member of the Avengers and appearing in a number of different comics series.



Image 15: *Tales of Suspense* #57
(Lee 1964c)

The film opens with a view of a van parked in the middle of the New Mexican desert. Inside the van are an astrophysicist named Dr. Jane Foster, her teacher Dr. Erik Selvig who has served as a sort of mentor for her in her research, and her assistant Darcy Lewis. They are studying the position of the stars in anticipation of some unknown astronomical event, and watch in amazement when some phenomenon appears, rapidly turning into a violent sandstorm. Caught in the middle of the storm, they accidentally crash into a mysterious man who is wandering around on foot in the eye of the storm.

This introduction of the character of Jane Foster marks the first departure of the film from its hypertextual comics. The character of Jane Foster is no longer a nurse as depicted in the comics. She is now an astrophysicist who is studying the astronomical phenomenon created by Bifrost, though she does not know this is Bifrost initially. The change in Jane's occupation represents a modernisation of the character. No longer in an occupation that has traditionally been seen as a

female occupation, that of nurse, this can be seen as empowering the woman in the post-feminist era.

Establishing Jane as a doctor puts her on a more even footing with Thor and puts her in a better position of power and respect among her peers. This is further reinforced by the decision to make her an astrophysicist and studying the stars which makes her knowledgeable about space, understanding more about Thor's journey from a scientific perspective than either she or Thor realises. This empowering of the woman allows her to be believable in her role as rescuer of Thor, a role that Jane performs throughout the film. No mere damsel in distress, she rescues Thor from the hospital (albeit having been responsible for his being there), comes to his rescue again by providing transportation for him to reclaim Mjolnir, and aids in rescuing him a third time when he is imprisoned by Coulson by providing him with an alias as Donald Blake. This empowerment of women is a theme that informs the following two case-study films in this study as well.

This portrayal of Jane further aids in grounding the film in a more "realistic" setting. The fact that she is a "normal" human woman and relatable to the audience grounds the story in reality and makes the fantastical element of Thor in Asgard more relatable because it is presented in contrast to the scientific endeavors of Jane and her reactions to the spectacle of this "mythical" realm by her standards. In addition, this change aids in fitting in with the plot of the film in which the character of Dr. Donald Blake of the comics is no longer the alter ego established for Thor in the film.

The action of the film then jumps backwards in time to 965 A.C.E. and the small village of Tonsberg, Norway, that is currently under siege by an immense army of Frost Giants from Jotunheim who are attacking Earth as their first step in moving forward with the intention of subjugating the entire nine realms. Their major weapon of attack is their magical Casket of Ancient Winters which covers the world in instantaneous and perpetual winter, freezing the human inhabitants as they try to flee, and threatening the possibility of a new Ice Age. The significance of the Casket of Ancient Winters and its power to freeze people is appropriated for

the film from the comics story arc in which it is used to create perpetual winter when stolen by Malekith.

The film continues with the arrival of King Odin Alfather with his own vast army of Asgardians, determined to defend Earth against the domination of the Frost Giants. Following a great battle, the Asgardian army is able to defeat the Frost Giants, Odin kills their king, and banishes them back to their own realm in Jotunheim. As spoils for their victory, the Asgardians lay claim to and confiscate the Casket of Ancient Winters which is the source of the Frost Giants' power. For more than a thousand years, this magical casket remains in the possession of Odin in his palace in Asgard.

In the Norse mythology, there are many stories of the gods battling against the giants of Jotunheim. This scene of the film is adapted from one of the stories in the comics that particularly mentions the defeat of the Frost Giants by the Asgardian forces of Odin (Lee 1965a). This is a significant scene for the premise of the film as it demonstrates that the Frost Giants possess the weapon of great power, the Casket of Ancients Winters. This casket is one of the main weapons later used by Loki and the Frost Giants, causing whomever is in its path to be frozen in jets of ice, rendering them powerless and immobile.

As is shown below, this casket plays a major role in forwarding the action of the film as a few members of the Frost Giants try to retrieve it from Odin's palace. Loki later uses it to prove that he is also a Frost Giant and then also uses it as a weapon against Heimdall. This is appropriated from the comic arc in which the dark elf Malekith searches for and retrieves the casket and unleashes the freezing winter across the earth (Simonson 1984a; 1984b; 1984c; 1984d; 1984e; 1985a; 1985b).

The action then moves to Asgard as this history is being narrated by Odin to his young sons Thor and Loki. Thor is excited by the tale and vows to hunt down and slay the Frost Giants when he is king, but Odin advises caution because "a wise king never seeks out war, but he must always be ready for it" (Branagh 2011).

In a moment of foreshadowing of information yet to be revealed, Odin informs the boys that though only one of them could become king, both were born to be kings.

The action jumps forward to the present time, where Thor, the elder son of Odin, now fully grown, returns to Asgard in triumph from recent battle amid great fanfare reminiscent of the triumphs held for generals of the Roman empire upon their returns to Rome after successful campaigns. He is received with applause and cheers as he approaches the throne of his father Odin who is prepared to abdicate his throne in favor of his son. The ceremony, however, is interrupted by intruders in the palace.

Odin summons his protector the Destroyer to defend the realm against a trio of Frost Giants who have managed to infiltrate the palace with the hopes of reclaiming their long-lost Casket of Ancient Winters. The Destroyer is a product of the comics herein adapted for the film (Lee and Lieber 1965f).

Odin, Thor, and Loki examine the destruction wrought by the Destroyer and realize that it has killed the invading Frost Giants and that the casket is still safely in their own possession.

Thor is outraged by this invasion of the Frost Giants into the realm of Asgard, though his father Odin cautions him to be calm, as nothing has been taken and the Frost Giants are dead. Against his father's wishes and urged to action by his sly brother Loki, Thor prepares to battle the Frost Giants as his father had once done, intending to take the battle directly to their own home ground of Jotunheim. Joined by his devoted companions the Warriors Three, Fandral, Volstagg, and Hogun, as well as his friend and fellow warrior Sif and his brother Loki, Thor sets out across the rainbow bridge Bifrost where he is confronted by Heimdall, the gatekeeper of Asgard, who is equally outraged that a handful of Frost Giants had managed to somehow gain admittance to Asgard without his knowledge. He opens the gate and sends Thor and his companions off to Jotunheim.

In the film as in the comics, the Lady Sif is a valiant warrior and not the wife of Thor as she is in the Norse mythology. She often travels and fights as a companion of the Warriors Three (Simonson 1984c). The Warriors Three are a

creation from the comics alone, created to serve as a sort of comic relief by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. The film fulfills that role in the portrayals of these characters and manages to appropriate the main characteristics of each of these characters as described in the comics. The natures of these four friends of Thor from the comics are well-captured in the film, as is the constant playful banter that is prevalent in both the comics and the film. The attitude of Heimdall in the film is also consistent with the portrayal of his character in the comics as is evidenced when he allows Thor and his comrades to use Bifrost to travel to Jotunheim because he is upset that giants have entered Asgard without his knowledge. This is similar to the story arc of the comics when the invisible Vanna sneaks past him (Lee 1964b).

Upon arrival in Jotunheim, Thor is confronted by King Laufey, who also cautions him to go home and forget this incident and not threaten the truce that exists between their two realms. Laufey, as in the comics, is the King of the Frost Giants and not, as in the Norse mythology, the Queen of the Frost Giants.

In Jotunheim, realizing that his companions are vastly outnumbered, Thor prepares to retreat until Laufey taunts him. Deciding that such a slight on his honour cannot be tolerated, Thor begins the battle which reeks much havoc among the Frost Giants, but is ultimately lost as the Asgardians are overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of the Giants.

A particularly useful skill of Loki demonstrated in the comics is displayed in the scene in which Thor leads his comrades to Jotunheim in response to the invasion of a few Frost Giants into Asgard. During the battle that follows between the Asgardians and the Frost Giants, one giant notices Loki near the edge of a precipice and slashes out at him, intending to push him over, only to have his arm go right through him. Loki has duplicated himself and the real Loki steps out from behind a pillar and pushes the giant over into the abyss below. Loki's ability to duplicate and multiply images of himself is demonstrated again in the film in his battle with Thor that takes place on Bifrost (Images16-17). This ability is also seen in the comics when Loki is fighting against Surtur (Simonson 1985c).



Image 16: Loki and Lokis
(Simonson 1985c)



Image 17: Loki and Lokis
(Branagh 2011)

Odin appears astride his eight-legged horse Sleipnir and sends Thor and his companions back to Asgard. Sleipnir features as Odin's eight-legged horse in both the comics (Thomas 1978) and the Norse mythology.

Back in Asgard, Odin is furious with the unrepentant Thor's arrogance and recklessness in almost bringing war once more to Asgard, finding him unready and unworthy of becoming king. In punishment for Thor's arrogance and pride, Odin

strips him of his power and strength, as well as his hammer Mjolnir, and casts him out of Asgard, banishing him to remain on Earth until he is worthy of returning. Odin also sends Mjolnir to Earth, but first he enchants it with a spell that will only allow anyone who is worthy of its power to wield it.

As Thor is cast out, Odin whispers the enchantment for the hammer Mjolnir just before he sends it to join Thor on Earth. The words of enchantment that he whispers which instantaneously appear engraved upon the hammer constitute an imbedded text from the comics, the exact words that are found on the hammer Mjolnir in the comics (Lee and Leiber 1962a).

Another similarity between the comics and the film constitutes the basic premise of the film. Thor is too arrogant and disobedient to his father, so his father exiles him to Earth as punishment until such time as he should be deemed worthy to return. This idea can be seen in the previously discussed story arc from the comics in which similar action takes place (Lee 1967c; 1967d; 1968a; 1968b).

The action of the film then flashes back to Earth, where Thor has landed in the middle of a great wormhole in the New Mexican desert at nighttime and he is hit by the van containing Jane Foster, Selvig, and Darcy, who have been following the progress of the wormhole as a part of their research project. Amid the darkness and confusion of the whirling sands, Darcy Tases Thor who, having lost his godly strength, is now completely mortal and he promptly collapses, unconscious. The three people from Earth then toss him into their van and take him to a hospital for the night.

In the hospital scene in the film, even without his godly strength, Thor is strong enough to battle a large group of orderlies, security guards and male nurses who try to calm him down in the hospital, tossing them against the wall as though they were weightless. He is brought down only by rapidly injected sedation by one of the nurses. In the film thus, his strength is shown to remain immeasurably greater than that of normal mortals, much as portrayed in the story of his loss of his mortality in the comics. In spite of his loss of godly strength, his mortal strength is greater than others as evidenced in the comics by his ability to wrestle a giant

boa constrictor into submission and to lift and carry a golden bull that is said to weigh a ton (Lee 1967c; 1967d; 1968a; 1968b).

In the film, Mjolnir is found in the middle of a giant crater in the desert by a local man and it soon becomes the focus of a sort of Arthurian sword-in-the-stone competition as various men vie for the thrill of being able to pull the hammer from its position in the ground. None are able to lift it. This competition ends when Phil Coulson, an agent of S.H.I.E.L.D., arrives and takes over the field.

The agency of S.H.I.E.L.D. has been appropriated from the comics to the film. The agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. who arrive later and confiscate Jane's equipment and research are the same characters who appear in the film *Iron Man* as well as in various comic book series, making their first appearance in *Strange Tales* (Lee 1965k). This particular group from S.H.I.E.L.D. is led by Agent Coulson, who also appeared in *Iron Man*. In the films beginning with *Iron Man* and continuing with *Thor*, the name of S.H.I.E.L.D. has been changed to the Strategic Homeland Intervention, Enforcement and Logistics Division.

Jane realizes that Thor can provide her with information on the wormhole so she and her crew return to the hospital to retrieve Thor, where she accidentally hits him again with her van. She provides him with a change of clothes, including a borrowed T-shirt to wear. On the shirt is a sticker sporting a nametag with the name of Jane's ex-boyfriend. It reads, "Hello, my name is Donald Blake, M.D." In this way, the film pays homage to the comics and Thor's alter ego in the stories.

In regards to the love triangle that exists in the comics between Dr. Don Blake, Thor, and Jane Foster, perhaps finding this love triangle too much like that of Lois Lane, Clark Kent and Superman, the screenwriters chose not to incorporate this duality displayed in the Dr. Don Blake/Thor concept of the comic books. Homage however is paid to this duality in the screenplay's use of the Dr. Blake character as Thor's identity in the hospital.

Back in Asgard, the companions of Thor are remorseful over his banishment. Loki admits that he told the guards to inform Odin that they had gone to Jotunheim, insisting that his actions and his betrayal of their trust had saved all

their lives. Loki then goes in search of the Casket of Ancient Winters, where Odin finds him. Confronted by Loki concerning questions about his heritage, and in fulfillment of the foreshadowing of his earlier statement that both of his sons were born to be kings, Odin admits to Loki that Loki was adopted and is actually the son of the Frost Giant King Laufey.

In the comics as in the film, Loki, the son of Frost Giants King Laufey, is taken by Odin to be raised as his own son after the defeat of the Frost Giants. Odin admits that Loki is the adopted son of Laufey, as in the comics (Lee 1965a), stating, “In the aftermath of the battle, I went into the temple, and I found a baby. Small for a giant’s offspring—abandoned, suffering, left to die. Laufey’s son” (Branagh 2011). This description is appropriated directly from the comics. Loki replies, “It all makes sense now. Why you favored Thor all these years . . . Because no matter how much you claim to “love” me, you could never have a Frost Giant sitting on the Throne of Asgard!” (Branagh 2011).

Of interest here is that although Thor is mentioned as being the son of Odin and Jord in both the Norse mythology (Sturluson 2001, p 20) and the comics (1983), no mention is made of this in the film, in which Thor is assumed to be the biological son of Frigga.

Loki is infuriated to learn that he has been lied to all his life, and he believes that he finally understands why he has always been scorned by the other Asgardians and always been viewed by them as being less than Thor. Odin then collapses and sleeps, languishing in his Odinsleep which is essential for him to be able to replenish his power, as is echoed in the comics (Lee 1965i).

The attitudes of the Asgardians towards Loki in the film is also mirrored from the comics. This attitude is seen in the story arcs that deal with Loki’s childhood and the way in which the Asgardians always assume right away that any treachery that occurs had to come from Loki (Lee 1965b). A similar attitude is revealed in the film in the scene with the following dialogue among the Warriors Three and Sif:

SIF

He may speak about the good of
Asgard, but he's always been

jealous of Thor.

VOLSTAGG

True, but we should be grateful to him. He did save our lives.

HOGUN

Laufey said there were traitors in the House of Odin. A master of magic could easily bring three Jotuns into Asgard.

FANDRAL

Loki's always been one for mischief, but you're talking about something else entirely.

(Branagh 2011)

Back on earth, Thor learns by chance that Mjolnir has been located nearby, and he sets out to find it. When Coulson's group confiscates Jane Foster's research on the wormhole, Jane joins Thor on his crusade to retrieve his hammer. Upon their arrival at the location of the hammer, they learn that S.H.I.E.L.D. has erected a temporary camp housing the hammer, surrounded by a fence and heavily guarded by armed guards.

Thor attempts to fight his way into the facility to reach Mjolnir. Coulson orders Hawkeye, appropriated from the comics, to give him "eyes high up" (Branagh 2011; Lee 1964). Hawkeye climbs aboard the bucket of a crane which raises him above the field so that he can keep the hammer in his line of view. Armed with his bow and arrows and training his arrow on Thor, he stands there immobile, ready to shoot if given the order.

Thor manages to defeat or elude the guards and manages to locate Mjolnir, he finds that he is no longer able to lift the hammer. In despair, he surrenders to the guards and allows himself to be captured. Now a prisoner of S.H.I.E.L.D., Thor is visited by Loki who lies to him and tells him that their father is dead and that Loki is now king. Loki simply appears to talk with Thor, demonstrating Loki's ability to magically make himself appear to others even when he is far away, which is an ability of Loki's demonstrated in the comics. None of the other humans in the compound can see him and he does not appear on the security cameras.

Loki tells Thor that their mother has ordered Thor's permanent exile to Earth and that Thor will never be allowed to return to Asgard as a condition of the truce with Jotunheim. Now despondent, Thor accepts his fate that he is to be mortal and begins to repent his arrogance, vanity and pride.

Selvig arrives at the S.H.I.E.L.D. compound to rescue Thor, explaining that Thor is really Dr. Donald Blake, one of Selvig's colleagues on his team who got a little overwrought over the theft of his research and a little overzealous on the drinking. Selvig assures Coulson that Dr. Blake did not mean any harm. Once more, as in the comics, Thor assumes the identity of Dr. Blake. The discrepancy of an M.D. working as a colleague of the astrophysicists is pointed out by Coulson, to which Selvig explains that Blake also has a Ph.D. in physics.

Following this scene Thor has drinks with Selvig. At the bar, Thor, believing that he is responsible for his father's death and that he is banished to live forever as a mortal, has finally seen the error of his ways and learned humility, admitting he was wrong in how he behaved. He admits, "I had it all backwards. I had it all wrong . . . For the first time in my life, I have no idea what I'm supposed to do" (Branagh 2011). Like in the comics, Thor has finally learned a lesson in humility.

Thor's exile is made palpable to him only by the fact that he has become interested in developing a romantic relationship with Jane Foster. During a late-night visit to Jane, Thor explains to her the existence of the nine realms and of Yggdrasil, the world tree that links them together, another element appropriated from both the Norse mythology and the comics. Thor sits with Jane Foster and draws a picture of Yggdrasil, explaining to her, "Your world is one of the Nine Realms of the Cosmos, linked to each other by the branches of Yggdrasil, the World's Tree. Now, you see it every day, without realizing. Images glimpsed through — what did you call it? — this Hubble Telescope" (Branagh 2011). This image is appropriated from the Norse mythological description of the world.

Back in Asgard, with Odin asleep and Thor banished, Loki has free reign and uses the time to establish his rule in Asgard, seizing the throne for himself. Now as king, Loki makes a secret deal with Laufey and offers him a chance to take

back the Frost Giant's Casket of Ancient Winters in return for Laufey's coming to Asgard and murdering Odin in his enchanted sleep.

This scene further establishes the characteristics of Heimdall, the all-seeing, who appears in the film in much the same light as in both the mythology and the comics. Another scene depicting his ability to see all shows his confusion when he cannot see Loki, as he states, "I turned my gaze upon you in Jotunheim, but could neither see nor hear you. You were shrouded from me, like the Frost Giants who entered this realm" (Branagh 2011). This ability of Heimdall to see all is also prevalent in the Norse mythology (Sturleson 2001, p. 30).

Still in Asgard and unhappy with Thor's continued exile and Loki's seizure of the throne, Fandral, Volstagg, Hogun, and Sif decide to journey to Earth with the hope of finding Thor and bringing him back to Asgard to challenge Loki for the throne. Once upon Earth, they manage to locate Thor. Their happy reunion, however, is cut short by the unexpected arrival of the Destroyer. Loki, upon learning that the Warriors Three have gone in search of Thor, has sent the Destroyer after them with orders to make sure that Thor never returns to Asgard. A battle ensues but the Asgardians are unable to defeat the giant automaton.

The film thus includes the story of the Destroyer and its powers and mission as the weapon of the king of Asgard, as seen in the comics (Lee 1965i). In the film, when Loki assumes the throne during his father's Odinsleep, he now gains control of the Destroyer as acting king of Asgard.

Thor's lesson in humility is further emphasized when Thor agrees to not participate in the battle against the Destroyer because he knows he cannot win. He exhibits true humility at a time when he would previously have been the first to lead in a fruitless battle. He goes instead to protect the humans and get them to safety, which causes great surprise to his comrades from Asgard.

Understanding at last that Loki really just wants to kill him, Thor then returns to the battle knowing he cannot win and offers himself as sacrifice to the Destroyer. Thor offers to sacrifice his life in return for the safety of his companions and the people on earth. When he is defeated by the Destroyer and on the brink of death,

Mjolnir comes racing back to him, exactly as it does in the comics when he offers himself as sacrifice (Lee 1968a). Because of his selfless self-sacrifice, Thor is now deemed worthy of wielding Mjolnir once more, and the hammer comes flying to his rescue and into his hand as his body is magically covered in his armour. With the use of his hammer and his newly-restored power and prowess, Thor is able to defeat the Destroyer.

Following the restoration of his powers and Thor's subsequent defeat of the Destroyer, Thor prepares to return to Asgard. Agent Coulson offers to have Thor join S.H.I.E.L.D., which Thor does in comics. He and his companions then return to Asgard in order to deal with Loki, though Thor vows to later return to earth for Jane.

The comic book story arc (Lee 1967c; 1967d; 1968a; 1968b) in which Thor is sent to Earth without his strength also includes the redemption of Thor, achieved through the act of being willing to sacrifice his life in battle against the Destroyer in order to save the lives of others around him. In the comics, he fights until he is on the brink of death in an effort to protect the people around him from the destruction wrought by the Destroyer. In the film, he does exactly the same thing, thereby leading to his own redemption and his return to Asgard.

Back in Asgard, Loki has proven himself once more to be a liar and a betrayer by tricking Laufey into coming to Asgard to kill Odin. Loki's real plan is exposed when he kills Laufey himself, revealing that he had used Laufey as a means of trying to prove to Odin that he is more worthy of the crown than Thor. Loki's plan is to use Laufey's incursion into Asgard and his attempt to kill Odin as an excuse for Loki to retaliate and destroy Jotunheim and bring for himself the kind of honours usually reserved for Thor.

The film differs from the story arc of the comics here in that Odin kills Laufey in the comics. This element of the story is changed for the film, as Loki's killing of Laufey in the film instead is an integral part of the film plot in order to demonstrate Loki's attitudes towards his discovery that he is the adopted son of Odin rather than his biological son.

Once Thor arrives back in Asgard, he must face Loki. Much like his desire not to have to fight his brother when they are young, as portrayed in the comics, he keeps trying not to fight Loki, but Loki will not allow that. Thor still wants to forgive him, like in the comics, and to believe that Loki is good (Lee 1965b). Loki, however, attempts to use Bifrost as a weapon to destroy Jotunheim.

The newly-humbled and much wiser Thor arrives in Asgard just in time to prevent Loki from using the power of Bifrost to completely annihilate Jotunheim. Loki and Thor engage in a personal battle upon Bifrost and Thor destroys the end of the rainbow bridge, willingly sacrificing his ability to return to Jane in order to prevent Loki from destroying Jotunheim. This varies from the mythology which states that the bridge will be destroyed when the legions of Surtur come across it to destroy Asgard during Ragnarok (Sturleson 2001).

In the process of this destruction, Loki and Thor nearly fall into the abyss below the bridge. Odin arrives in time to save them, but Loki, abject over his father's refusal to bestow upon him either his praise or understanding, releases his father's arm and allows himself to fall into the abyss. Thor is reunited with his father and welcomed back into his good graces. However, with Bifrost now destroyed, Thor is unable to return to Earth or to fulfill his promise to Jane. Jane, meanwhile, is back on earth trying to discover some means of opening a gateway between Earth and Asgard.

At the very end of the film, after all the credits have finished rolling, S.H.I.E.L.D. director Nick Fury brings Selvig into a S.H.I.E.L.D. warehouse and shows him an object which he wants Selvig to study, the Cosmic Cube, the device of immense power that will grant anyone who holds it any wish they choose. Unknown and unseen by Selvig, Loki appears at his side and urges Selvig to accept the challenge. Under Loki's guidance, Selvig agrees to take a look.

Of interest is that there are many items on display as Thor, Loki, and Odin visit the weapons vault at various times throughout the film (Images 18-27). Among the many wondrous treasures that are on display in Odin's weapons vault is the Orb of Agamotto (Lee 1964c), which allows its possessor to recognise wherever

magic is being used. Another item is the Tablet of Life and Time which gives superpowers to its possessor (Lee 1969). Also on display is the Warlock's eye, which emits a stun blast when it opens, defeating any enemy that stands before it (Lee 1966c). Ablaze in the trophy room is the Eternal Flame of Destruction, the flame that Odin, along with his brothers, stole from Surtur, ruler of Muspelheim, to prevent him from starting a war that would bring about Ragnarok (Simonson 1984). The Infinity Gauntlet is also housed there. This is a gauntlet containing the Infinity Stones, each of which controls one aspect of existence, including Power, Reality, the Mind, the Soul, Time, and Space. Combined, the stones in the gauntlet give to the wearer infinite power, allowing the wearer to make anything and everything into reality (Starlin 1977). All of these weapons have their origins in the comic.

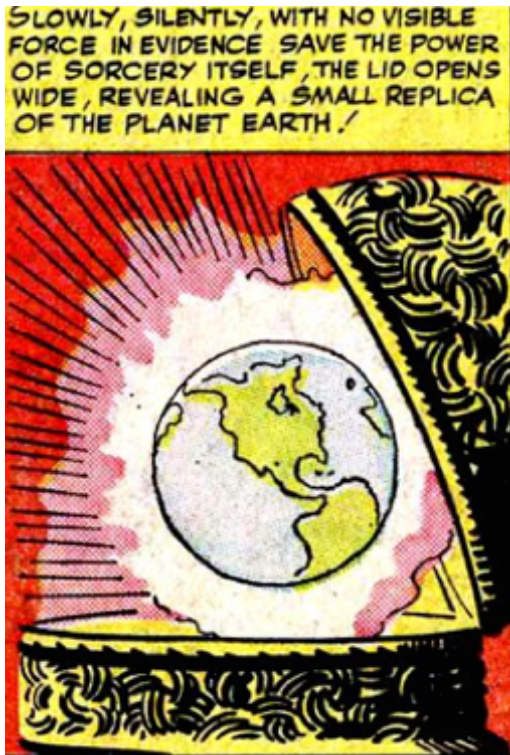


Image 18: The Orb of Agamotto
(Lee 1964d)

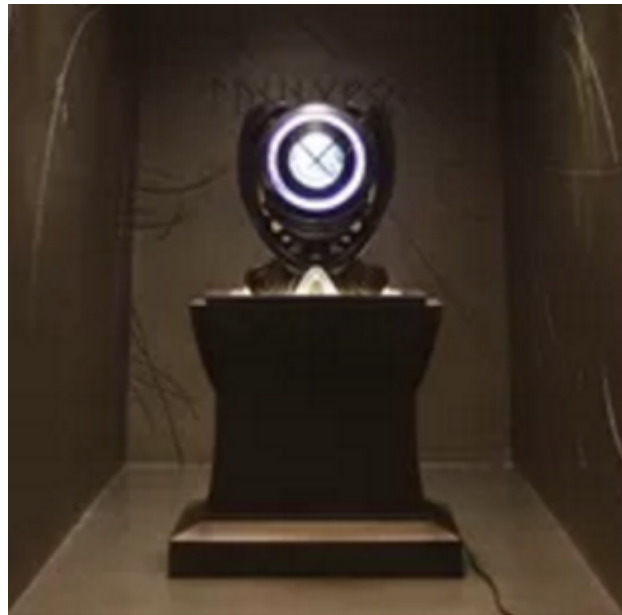


Image 19: The Orb of Agamotto
(Marvel-Movies Wikia 2016)



Image 20: The Warlock's Eye (Lee 1966c)



Image 21: The Warlock's Eye (Marvel-Movies Wikia 2016)



Image 22: The Eternal Flame of Destruction (Simonson 1984e)



Image 23: The Eternal Flame of Destruction (Marvel-Movie Wikia 2016)



Image 24: The Tablet of Life and Time (Lee 1969)



Image 25: The Tablet of Life and Time (Marvel-Movies Wikia 2016)



Image 26: *The Infinity Gauntlet* #1 (Starlin 1991)



Image 27: The Infinity Gauntlet (Marvel-Movie Wikia 2016)

The after credits shot depicts the possession by S.H.I.E.L.D. of the Tesseract which features strongly in the *Tales of Suspense* comic previously mentioned (Lee 1966a; 1966b; 1966c). This scene also introduces Nick Fury, who appears in various different comics series within the Marvel universe (Lee 1963d). This final scene, as with the inclusion of Hawkeye and the agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. and Selvig's allusion to the Hulk, are examples of intertextual alliance in which characters or items exist in the same fictional universe and exist across various films that are not sequels, prequels, or spin-offs, referring to these films which share transtextual elements and cohabit the same world and may, on occasion, be deemed to occur simultaneously. It represents "a coherent, integrative film mythology that paints a world far greater than that shown on screen" (Cogan and Massey 2016, p. 10). This type of intertextual alliance is an example of transmedia storytelling, "a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story" (Jenkins 2007).

5.1.1 Intertextual Alliances of *Thor* within the Marvel Cinematic Universe

Marvel Studios, a subsidiary of Walt Disney Studios, has created a cinematic universe franchise in which its superhero characters cohabit in the same manner in which the comic book characters do when they often cross over among the various comics and appear in each other's realms and storylines. In this franchise, the same actors are consistently recast to portray the same characters across the various films that feature the characters either individually or as part of the team known as the Avengers. In this way, the studio created a transmedia world with a series of films that incorporate a system of intertextual alliances in which references are made within the various films to the characters and/or events that take place in other films within the franchise.

As explained by Flanagan, McKenny and Livingstone in their book *The Marvel Studios Phenomenon: Inside a Transmedia Universe* (2016, p. 4), "a fictional universe is (obviously) not real, but its ontological properties and premise

may evoke real states, and it shall display consistent psychological and – of course – narrative continuities (Eder et al., 2010: 7). Principles of space and time within the diegesis need not resemble those of the real world, but their logic will be adhered to consistently throughout any text set within the universe”. They go on to point out that “a fictional universe allows events to accrue history; that this history affects characters, and is something of which they are aware” (2016, p. 5).

Although numerous superhero films featuring Marvel comics characters have been released, such as the three Spiderman films starring Tobey Maguire and two Spiderman movies with Andrew Garfield, three films about the Fantastic Four, and the film *The Hulk*, starring Eric Bana in the title role, these films are not a part of the new intertextual Marvel cinematic universe. Also excluded from this universe to date are all of the X-Men films.

In this new Marvel Cinematic Universe, as stated above, the same actors portray their same characters across all the films, with the exception of Edward Norton, the actor who portrayed David Banner in *The Incredible Hulk*, who was later replaced by Mark Ruffalo in the subsequent films in the series, and the recasting of such secondary characters as Rhodey, originally played by Terrence Howard in *Iron Man* but played by Don Cheadle in *Iron Man 2*, and Fandral, played by Josh Dallas in *Thor* and by Zachary Levi in *Thor: The Dark World*. In addition, they all share the opening Marvel logo sequence which runs images from the comic books at the beginning of each film. Each of the films also contains at least one secret scene during or after the end credits that foreshadow events to come in one of the upcoming films in the franchise. For example, the after-credits secret scene in *Thor* in which the Cosmic Cube, or Tesseract, is featured is a deliberate foreshadowing of the then soon-to-be-released *Captain America: The First Avenger* in which the cube plays an essential role in the plot development and the storyline. “For those intrigued enough to learn more, comics exist as a vast research archive for the curious, even when details have been adjusted (the MCU’s ‘Tesseract’ for the MU’s ‘Cosmic Cube’, say)” (Flanagan, McKenny and Livingstone 2016, p. 185).

Also included within this Marvel universe are several television series, including *The Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, a modern-day adventure in which Clark Gregg reprises his role from *Iron Man* and *Thor* as Agent Coulson, and *Agent Carter*, a post-World War Two period series and a spin-off of *Captain America: The First Avenger* film in which Hayley Atwell reprises her film role as Peggy Carter in the series, as does Dominic Cooper in the role of Howard Stark.

The films included as part of this cinematic universe, in order of release date, are *Iron Man* (2008), *The Incredible Hulk* (2008), *Iron Man 2* (2010), *Thor* (2011), *Captain America: The First Avenger* (2011), *Marvel's The Avengers* (2012), *Iron Man 3* (2013), *Thor: The Dark World* (2013), *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* (2014), *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014), *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015), *Ant-Man* (2015), *Captain America: Civil War* (2016) and *Dr. Strange* (2016). Announced to be released in 2017 are the films *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2*, *Spider-Man: Homecoming* and *Thor: Ragnarok*. Additional films to be released from 2018 onward have also been announced.

As indicated above, prior to the production of *Thor*, the fourth film in the franchise, three films were produced, *The Incredible Hulk*, *Iron Man*, and *Iron Man 2*. In production at the same time as *Thor*, and released later in the same year, was the film *Captain America: The First Avenger*. As such, in *Thor*, there are several scenes and images that cross reference these other Marvel films. In addition, there are numerous examples in *Thor* of contributions made by Branagh to the Marvel universe foreshadowing films that were yet to come through the incorporation of references and sometimes hidden clues that can be connected by the audience not only to the other films within the Marvel cinematic universe but also to the variety of original hypertexts.

There does exist a timeline within the universe in that there is a definite progression in the action that occurs across the films, and the various films can be placed along that timeline. For example, the character of Falcon appears in *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* and later in *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, then

makes an appearance at the end of *Ant-Man* when Ant-Man tries to break into the Avengers' complex which is introduced in *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. Ant-Man subsequently appears in *Captain America: Civil War*. Both of these indicate that the film events of *Ant-Man* occur after the events of *Avengers: Age of Ultron* but prior to the events of *Captain America: Civil War* along the series timeline. However, it cannot be said that *Ant-Man* is a sequel or prequel to any other of the previous films, but rather that it is a film depicting its intertextual alliances.

The same can be said of the film *Dr. Strange* whose events occur before the film *Thor: Ragnarok*, since one of the surprise scenes in the end credits shows Dr. Strange meeting with Thor to discuss what must be done about Loki, a foreshadowing of what is to come in *Thor: Ragnarok*, including the crossover appearance of Dr. Strange's character in that film. However, it is ambiguous as to exactly where this film lies along the timeline in reference to *Captain America: Civil War* since Thor is described as otherwise occupied during the events of *Captain America: Civil War*. This implies that it is possible that the events of *Thor: Ragnarok* are meant to be taking place simultaneously with those of *Captain America: Civil War*, which would then imply that *Dr. Strange* is meant to take place before *Captain America: Civil War*.

This is not meant to imply that none of the films are actual sequels. Sequels do exist within the franchise, as in *Iron Man*, *Iron Man 2* and *Iron Man 3*. The films that carry the same title characters' names are all sequels to the first in their series. However, the storylines are interwoven in intertextual alliances with the other characters' as well as the Avengers series.

Branagh's most significant contribution to the Marvel cinematic universe is in the casting itself. Branagh's choice in casting Hemsworth and Hiddleston as the sons of Odin, his casting of Hopkins as Odin, and Skarsgård as Selvig, as well as the casting of other important characters in Asgard such as Elba and Russo, becomes the standard in casting for these characters for the rest of the series. It is also Branagh who casts Jeremy Renner in the role of Hawkeye, a character who comes to play a more significant role in the later films. These casting choices are

significant in that the producers of the series are not immune to recasting major roles, as is evidenced by the recasting of the character of David Banner, as mentioned above.

Will Brooker, in his *Hunting the Dark Knight: Twenty-First Century Batman*, points out that “Various [comic book-to-film] adaptations have tried in different ways to capture or at least suggest a comic book aesthetic – from *Dick Tracy*’s deliberately flat colour scheme and *mise-en-scène* to *The Hulk*’s (2003) innovative editing and framing devices and *300*’s (2007) extensive use of blue screen and ‘digital backlot’ technology” (2012, p. 53). Branagh also attempts to capture the comic book aesthetics in the setting and camera angles, but in a different way. Furthermore, Hemsworth’s physicality exhibited in *Thor*, which reflects the comic book aesthetics, as discussed below, continues into his portrayal in the later *Thor: The Dark World* and the *Avengers* movies. In this respect, the influence of Branagh’s direction continues to be seen in the later films featuring Thor.

Thor features several crossover elements, or Easter Eggs, mentioned in *Thor*, such as Selvig’s reference to S.H.I.E.L.D.’s confiscation of David Banner’s research and the question of whether the Destroyer is one of Stark’s, as mentioned above. Clark Gregg, who appears in both *Iron Man* and *Iron Man 2* as Agent Coulson asks Thor whether he would like to come and work for him. This comes to pass when Thor, along with Captain America, Iron Man, the Hulk and numerous other Marvel characters then come together in *The Avengers*.

As Flanagan, McKenny and Livingstone point out:

Hardly unique to the MCU, but handled so well and consistently that they have become emblematic of the continuous and branching, specifically MS macro-narrative, such scenes have become a calling card, and the most recognizable Easter Egg associated with the studio.¹¹ Named as such because it requires a certain amount of hunting in order to activate, an Easter Egg is a piece of additional information that traditionally presents itself as a reward for inquisitive minds. With its etymology in computing, an Easter Egg was often an undocumented function hidden within the coding of a program that (with the requisite knowledge) could present the user with some form of additional content, denied to the uninitiated, and often requiring some manner of active participation to find. Alternatively, it could be

simply hidden in plain sight, in which case the knowledge required to activate the content is referential, depending on existing familiarity. (2016, p. 184)

The Easter Eggs provided in *Thor*, particularly seen in the displays created for Odin's trophy room, allows many opportunities in the later films to reference *Thor*, thereby creating for *Thor* the position of being a hypertext for the later Marvel feature films. In one of the secret scenes of *Dr. Strange*, there is a scene with Thor in which the Eye of Agamotto is introduced, strengthening the connection between the film and Branagh's *Thor*. As Flanagan, McKenny and Livingstone state, "These post-credits scenes, among other Easter Eggs found throughout the MCU, fabricate connective tissue, not only between other texts throughout the transmedia story universe, but also as a way of calling out to fan communities" (2016, p. 185). Such Easter Eggs constitute examples of semiotic codes.

This is relevant to this study because *Thor* is a film that demonstrates a pattern and similarity to Branagh's previous work and those that follow in the next chapters, wherein the film is rich in intertextual references to a variety of sources, including its references that place the film within its Marvel universe context, and demonstrates the same methods and perceived intentions as Branagh's other films. Henry Jenkins, in his book *Convergence Culture: Where Old World and New Media Collide*, describes this type of transmedia universe of which *Thor* is a part, pointing out that it:

places new demands on consumers and depends on the active participation of knowledge communities. Transmedia storytelling is the art of world making. To fully experience any fictional world, consumers must assume the role of hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of the story across media channels, comparing notes with each other view online discussion groups, and collaborating to ensure that everyone who invests time and effort will come away with a richer entertainment experience. (2006, p. 21)

This type of audience involvement is consistent with Branagh's methods in filmmaking. Branagh states that "One of the enjoyments of being part of that larger Marvel universe was being able to, wherever we could, maybe just offer a little

indication of how other elements of it might play here that perhaps feature elsewhere” (2011). An example of this extended universe is the setting of the battle scene on Earth between the Asgardians and the Frost Giants that is set in the southern Norway town of Tonsberg of 965 A.D., the same town in which is set, nearly a thousand years later, the scene from *Captain America: The First Avenger* when the Nazi Johann Schmidt steals the Tesseract from the church in which it was hidden in a wall carving of the world tree Yggdrasil (Johnston 2011).

This is another example of post-modernist cinema in which “The point is to combine references to the most diverse sources possible in a ludic game with the spectator, whose narcissism is flattered not through old-fashioned secondary identification with characters but rather through the display of cultural capital made possible by the recognition of the references” (Stam 2000, p. 305).

5.2 Direction, Camera and Performance

This section delves into the analysis of Branagh’s direction, the camera techniques, and the performances of the actors in the film. The aim is to establish whether there are existing methods that are similar to his previous work and whether the intertextuality of the film can be seen in the *mise-en-scène*.

The research suggests that Branagh’s intention with the epic film *Thor* was to create a film within the superhero genre that most importantly had a real relatable story, ultimately a story of a father and his sons, had a significant theme, which Branagh describes as a “story of the fitness for responsibility” and who would be king (2011), and was an intertextual *Thor* that rang true to the aesthetics of both the comic books and the Norse legends.

Haris Zambarloukos, the cinematographer of *Thor*, in the personal interview with the writer of this thesis, discussed the approach adopted by himself and Branagh when they were preparing to shoot the film, stating:

With *Thor*, I think we could be a bit more experimental. It was in mythology, but the comic book was a lesser known comic book than, say, Batman, etc., and Thor dealt with a lot of fantasy. Most comics that have been translated are pretty much a superhero in a costume within a modern context, an urban context. The thing with *Thor* which is very different from any other comic book is that it does live

completely in a fantasy world. Asgard is completely fantasy . . . A lot of Thor comics are either only in Asgard or only on Earth or a bit of both. We definitely consciously wanted to do a bit of both to ground it a little bit.”

This idea of a *Thor* inhabiting Earth as well as Asgard was an important aspect for Branagh in his attempt to provide a personal experience for the viewer. As he says, "The decision to be on Earth for a large part of the story was absolutely mine" (Smith 2011). This can be seen as a means in which Branagh strove to make familiar to the viewer the world in which Thor resides.

The film captures the visuals of the comic books with their highly-saturated primary and secondary colors and angular lines by mimicking the sequential art panels of the comic book structure. This is achieved through camera technique.

Martin Zeller-Jacques, in his article *Adapting the X-Men Comic-Book Narratives in Film Franchises*, discusses the way in which comic books are able to present “evocative character poses and expressive single images, such as Clark Kent ripping open his shirt to reveal the Superman emblem beneath”, and the films based upon comic books tend to incorporate such evocative images. However, Zeller-Jacques points out, “while many comic-book adaptations transfer such visual “moments” onto the screen, very few even attempt to represent the stylized visual world of a comic book” (2008, p. 145). Branagh is one of the few who does attempt exactly that.

Zambarloukos reiterates that “there was a certain amount of experimentation that we could take, given that there wasn't a Thor movie made before and the comic books are so varied and so different . . . So you get all your ideas out, you think everything through, [then] you test it through” (interview with thesis writer).

One of these experimental features to which he refers when it came to shooting resulted in the prevalent and striking use of Dutch angles in the film. This refers to the placement of the camera at an angle, or tilted, so that the line of the horizon in the shot does not run parallel across the screen in the image, thereby making the vertical lines and images appear tilted to one side, leaning towards one

side of the frame. This is a cinematographic technique that is traditionally used to create a sense of anxiety, tension or heightened drama in a scene, a technique favoured by such directors of the German expressionist period as Fritz Lang, whose films Branagh describes as influences on *Thor* (Mannythemovieguy 2011), and other such German expressionist-inspired films as *The Third Man* (Image 28). In *Thor*, as in these films, Branagh does use such angles to create tension. In addition to this element, there is an added motivation behind the prolific use of Dutch angles in this film.



Image 28: *The Third Man* Dutch Angle (Reed 1949)

As Branagh states, “For me, tilted angles, Dutch angles as we call them, [were used] because that’s the way I remember comic book frames . . . They were there because that’s how I receive the dynamism of the composition in the frames. Wide angle lenses with lots of depth [were used], and it’s why I chose it as a style for this” (Branagh 2011).

Comic book images are commonly drawn with the horizon line at an angle to the bottom of the picture frame, and the usage of this technique was another reason for its choice in order to provide the audience with that sense of this being the comic book brought to the screen but still grounded in that comic book world

(Images 29-32). This technique is used to provoke a sense of audience recall of the hypertext comic books for the viewer.

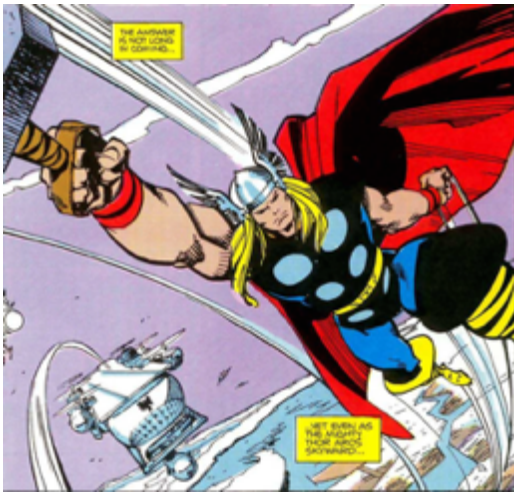


Image 29: Dutch Angle (Simonson 1983)



Image 30: Dutch Angle (Branagh 2011)

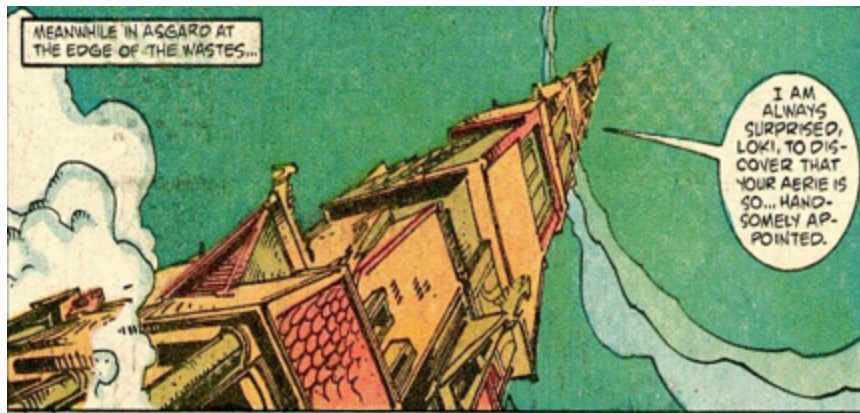


Image 31: Dutch Angle (Simonson 1985d)



Image 32: Dutch Angle (Branagh 2011)

Though Dutch angles are used frequently throughout the film, a particularly powerful example of their use is in the scene in which Loki has ascended the throne and presents himself to the Warriors Three and Sif. This is a scene that plays with angles throughout the scene, emphasizing the lines of Loki's costume, the throne, the sets and the guards, with the sharp and dramatic lines paralleling the sharp and dramatic tension they create. Even Loki is a study in angles as he stands contrapposto, reminiscent of the statues of ancient Greece and Rome (Image 33). It becomes even more powerful because it is the first time that Loki is revealed in full frame in all of his kingly regalia, including the large horned helmet that, prior to this moment, has been shown only in mid-shots and close-ups so that the full impact of the helmet is diminished in the earlier scenes and emphasised in the Loki-as-king scene.

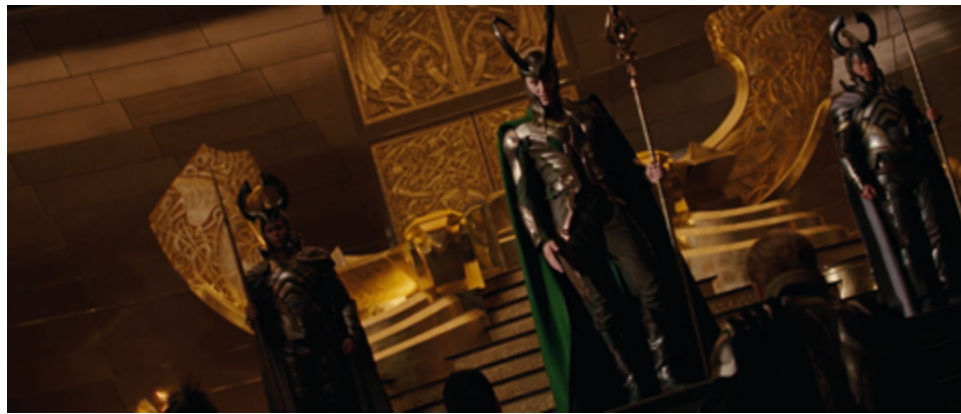


Image 33: Dutch Angle (Branagh 2011)

The Dutch angle here contributes to the sense of tension and of there being something that is somehow askew, off-putting and not quite right. This can be seen as a means of suggesting that Loki does not belong there as king, that his fitness to rule is questionable. This is an example of the camera working together with and aiding the performance and overall emotion of the scene.

This scene is created by a series of mid-shots and wider establishing shots presenting Loki on his stage. Though there is an absence of extended continuous uninterrupted tracking shots, the movement of the camera continues to track the motion in the scene, such as when Loki descends the stairs. This movement

establishes Loki in his environment, emphasizing for the viewer the relationship between the character of Loki and the actor Tom Hiddleston on his stage, which adds an element of live performance to the scene. This is similar to the scene from *Sleuth* which establishes the bedroom as a proscenium for Michael Caine to perform (Branagh 2007).

Camera movement and Dutch angles are also used to create a particularly striking and powerful scene in which Thor, having battled his way into the S.H.I.E.L.D. compound to retrieve Mjolnir, discovers that he can, in fact, no longer lift it. The posturing of Thor as he tries to pull it from the ground, coupled with the image filmed at a Dutch angle, combines to create not only tension but a sense of desperation. This shot, combining the Dutch angle and the posturing position of Thor in all his superhero body and godly strength, such as is mentioned by Zeller-Jacques (2008), further brings to mind the images from the comic books, evidencing the validity of audience recall (Image 34). Thor falls to his knees in despair as the agents arrive to take him into custody. With a bowed Thor on his knees handcuffed and defeated, the Dutch angle of the next shot contributes to the emotion of the scene, enhancing Thor's vulnerability and his isolation even when surrounded by his foes (Image 35). This shot is in contrast to the image of Coulson and his agents as they arrive, the camera now parallel to the horizon, indicating the steadiness and strength of S.H.I.E.L.D. (Image 36).



Image 34: Posturing of Thor (Branagh 2011)



Image 35: Thor Defeated (Branagh 2011)



Image 36: Strength of Shield

Another camera technique used as a means of achieving the comic book aesthetic is through the additional use of mid-shots instead of the sweeping wide angles for specific action shots, the framing of which is used to duplicate the look of the close-up action shots in the comic books. This is most prominently seen in the battle on Jotunheim between Thor and his comrades and the Frost Giants. This use of mid-shots creates a personal up-close view of the action. As Branagh explains, “The general philosophy for the fight was . . . to try and put the audience as close into it as possible.” He wanted “a sense of frenzy in battle where taking your eyes off the action for even a moment could be lethal. A sort of dirty scrum” (Branagh 2011) is created, in contrast to the epic wide shots which characterise

the earlier battle between Odin and the Frost Giants that includes hundreds and thousands of fighters (Images 37-38).



Image 37: Mid Shot Battle (Branagh 2011)



Image 38: Wide Shot Battle (Branagh 2011)

Concerning the fighting style that Branagh wanted to achieve, Chris Hemsworth says, “First, we looked at the comic books and the posturing, the way [Thor] moves and fights, and a lot of his power seems to be drawn up through the ground . . . We talked about boxers, you know, Mike Tyson, very low to the ground and big open chest and big shoulder swings and very sort of brutal but graceful at the same time, and then as we shot stuff, things became easier” (Warmoth 2010).

These mid-shots, combined with the posturing and performance of the actors, helps to enhance this comic book aesthetic. This scene, in terms of its

significance in the plot, also demonstrates the immaturity of Thor, his impulsiveness and lack of experience, particularly in comparison with Odin's organisation of his military legions in the earlier battle.

In directing the action sequence in this fight at Jotunheim, Branagh states that he also wanted to "make sure that everybody amongst the Asgardians had a chance to have some kind of signature move, particularly of course Thor . . . And at the same time, [we] wanted to showcase the incredible threat of the Frost Giants themselves, this dormant, pain-filled race" (2011). Branagh states that he worked with the actors to find out what their general gifts were in a sort of boot camp to make sure that Fandral, the swashbuckler, for example, could use his sword and that Loki could use his daggers in a way that would prove interesting.

These Dutch angles and additional framing techniques can be seen consistently throughout the film and contribute to the element of audience recall. Furthermore, they are visually striking and add to the process of reminding the viewers that they are watching a movie. They are a means whereby Branagh deliberately removes the viewers from their suspension of belief and makes them mentally invest in his invitation to enter once more.

In *Thor*, as in Branagh's previous films, there is a frequent use of tracking shots, though they do not dominate the film. The long tracking shots that are existent in Branagh's earlier films do not appear here, likely due to the nature of the film as an action film. However, the similarities in the use of camera movement between this film and his earlier films are still identifiable.

The use of tracking shots and the continual movement of the camera within the scenes, revealing "Branagh's stylistic fondness for keeping his camera in motion" (Crowl 2006, p. 45), are frequent in *Thor*. Where it is common in film to cut and edit a scene to offer over-the-shoulder shots between two characters engaged in dialogue, Branagh chooses to use a camera pan between the two characters involved, as in the scene in which Thor has convinced his companions to go to Jotunheim and Thor and Sif are shown in a mid-shot walking ahead of the others towards the camera. The camera pans back and forth between the two characters

rather than cutting between them or showing them both in the same frame, capturing a fluidity of movement in the look of the film.

An additional example of a type of Branaghesque tracking shot is the scene in which the Warriors Three and Sif are entering the town and the camera pans up to the roofs of the buildings to reveal the agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. who are tasked with following Thor and who report back to their command that Xena, Jackie Chan and Robin Hood have arrived. In this scene, the warriors arrive in a jovial state, happily entering the town amid looks of surprise, confusion and suspicion among the various townspeople. This adds an element of humor to the scene which Branagh feels is essential to the telling of the story. As he states, the addition of humor is necessary “in order to blend and make successfully stay in the same film all these many combinations . . . the fantastical elements, the space elements, the Jotunheim elements, the drama up there [in Asgard], and the investigation and the science down here [on Earth]. All of it had to include a sense off humor.” In terms of appearance, these characters are the only ones who remain consistent throughout the film whether in Asgard or on Earth, thereby adding humor.

Throughout the film, there are many tracking shots, even though they are not continuous. His previous films employ long “statement” tracking shots designed to make a statement about the space inhabited by the characters. Such a shot exists in *Thor* in the depiction of the realm of Asgard early in the film, although this scene is computer generated designed to mimic a long tracking shot. Shorter tracking shots, along with frequent pans such as in the above-mentioned scene, populate this film, contributing to the establishment of the actors in their space, or environment, making it consistent with Branagh’s previous work.

Another means of capturing the aesthetics of the comics was in the casting. When it came to casting, there were thematic elements that Branagh took into consideration in order to create a film that would coincide with his vision for it. The main actors were cast not only for their skills as an actor but for their appearances which resembled the characters as drawn by Jack Kirby and Walter Simonson,

thereby again evoking memories of the comics for those who were familiar with them.

In regards to particular casting decisions and what he describes as the “luxury casting of our film”, Branagh says of Anthony Hopkins’ portrayal of Odin, “That man, Anthony Hopkins. If you’re going to cast someone who looks as though he should run the universe, he’s your man. It’s a universe that has to protect itself against this kind of thing, the vicious violence of the Frost Giants, these creatures who can terraform worlds . . . creating ice that encapsulates the walls, the water, being able to produce ice weapons from their very hands” (2011).

About the casting of Chris Hemsworth as Thor, Branagh says, “He absolutely owned it. He walked in and took the part by the scruff of the neck, and one realized that we’d be luckier than a lucky thing to have him . . . Chris Hemsworth . . . showed himself to be a natural screen actor. He knows how to hold a screen. He knows how to be in front of the camera, not just to do” (2011).

In discussing his role as Thor, Hemsworth adds, “We just kept trying to humanize it all, and keep it very real. Look into all the research about the comic books that we could, but also bring it back to ‘Who is this guy as a person, and what’s his relationship with people in the individual scenes?’ And working with someone like Kenneth Branagh, who has all those bases covered and has so many ideas, it was a hell of a time!” (Huver 2010).

This statement of Hemsworth indicates evidence of Branagh’s research into the intertextuality of the film and his encouragement of his actors to do the same. This intertextuality is further seen in Hemsworth’s performance in the scene mentioned above in which he tries to retrieve Mjolnir. The physicality and posturing of Thor as he dramatically swings his arm outward, almost like in dance, as he reaches for the hammer is much like in the comics, creating those superhero “visual “moments” onto the screen” (Zeller-Jacques 2008, p. 145) that are reminiscent of the comics. The element of keeping “it very real”, grounding the scene in the reality of the character’s emotions, is displayed in the joy on Hemsworth’s face as he prepares to grasp the hammer (Image 39).



Image 39: The Joy of Thor (Branagh 2011)

This scene further explores Geraghty's statement concerning the gap between the actor's performance and the character, Hemsworth and his performance as Thor, in allowing the audience to see and appreciate the actual performance (Geraghty 2008).

In one scene in particular, Branagh makes a point of mentioning his own contribution to the performance of Hemsworth, or rather admits his lack thereof. In a scene in which Hemsworth walks into a pet shop and says, "I need a horse," Branagh says, "I wish I could tell you I'd given Chris Hemsworth a great reading of that line, I want a horse, which makes me laugh almost every time. I didn't. He did. He came at the part with such a natural sense of humor that it was great to see him get value out of that fish out of water moment" (2011).

In casting Tom Hiddleston as Loki, Branagh wanted an actor with whom the chemistry between Loki and Thor would lead the viewer to accept and believe that these two were brothers with true feelings for each other, even when those feelings were based upon Loki's Machiavellian deceptions. Of Hiddleston's performance, Branagh says, "the act . . . of Loki is wonderfully seamlessly done by Tom who evoked, by way of a sort of model for the character, the character of Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello*, who is, if you like, the great actor in Shakespeare, terrifying character who is a sort of sociopath who will disguise every real feeling under the mask of something authentic and genuine-seeming" (2011).

Branagh further compares the character of Loki to that of Cassius in

Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* while Hiddleston compares Loki to the character of Edmund in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Says Hiddleston of the character he portrays, "Loki's like a comic book version of Edmund in *King Lear*, but nastier . . . Loki's skilled in black magic and sorcery. He's a shape-shifter and has all sorts of superpowers from the dark arts. He can turn clouds into dragons, things like that . . . Ken [Branagh] wants Loki to have a lean and hungry look, like Cassius in *Julius Caesar*" (Bamigboye 2009). Hiddleston then goes on to point out that he followed a strict diet for six months before filming in order to achieve the lean look that characterises the images of Loki in the comic books.

This statement of Hiddleston also indicates his awareness of the intertextuality of the film. The knowledge of Loki's ability to turn clouds into dragons does not come from the film but from the comics, as this ability does not appear in the film.

Hiddleston credits Branagh with guiding him towards the representation of Loki that Branagh was seeking. Hiddleston, further confirming his knowledge of the intertextuality, states:

Ken and I discussed it a lot very early on, because we both read a lot of the comics and there were so many facets of him in [there] . . . There was kind of an agent of chaos who would go down to earth and turn whales into sea serpents and flowers into dragons and whole streets of cars in New York into ice cream. But then there was also this damaged younger brother who didn't receive as much love as his older brother, and who was passed over, rejected, betrayed. I think that became really interesting for both of us, actually. Ken and I suddenly decided we wanted to root all of his mischief in a truthful, psychological damage. He essentially was the younger brother who was never going to be king and he wished that he could. So all of his [actions] come from wanting to please his father. I found the duality of that [interesting]—he's a villain, he has a lot of fun, he's a mischievous prankster, but at the same time, he's in deep, deep pain. (Strom 2011)

For inspiration in how he would like to see the character of Loki portrayed, Branagh suggested that Hiddleston study the work of certain actors in specific roles who had created performances that Branagh found conducive to the portrayal

that he wanted Hiddleston to achieve. Hiddleston acknowledges Branagh's guidance in determining his own portrayal, saying:

Interestingly enough, he said to look at Peter O'Toole in two specific films, 'The Lion in Winter' and 'Lawrence of Arabia' . . . What's interesting about 'The Lion in Winter' is, [O'Toole] plays Prince Henry, and what's beautiful about his performance is you see how damaged he is. There's a rawness [to his performance], it's almost as if he's living with a layer of skin peeled away. He's grandiose and teary and, in a moment, by turns hilarious and then terrifying. What we wanted was that emotional volatility. It's a different acting style, it's not quite the same thing, but it's fascinating to go back and watch an actor as great as O'Toole head for those great high hills. (Strom 2011)

At the time of actual filming, Hiddleston explains that Branagh would allow him four different takes for particular scenes in which Hiddleston would use the acting styles of four different actors as inspiration. Says Hiddleston, "The first [take], [Branagh] always said you can have one for free. The second take would be the Peter O'Toole take. The third one would be the Clint Eastwood take. And the fourth take would be the Jack Nicholson. So I had these three great actors I was trying to pull stuff from" (Strom 2011). Hiddleston points out that, for the most part, it was his Peter O'Toole-inspired performance that was used in the film.

This O'Toole-inspired "emotional volatility" in the performance of Hiddleston can be detected in comparing the pivotal scene from *Thor*, in which Loki learns of his true heritage in his confrontation with Odin, with Lawrence's demand for a new post in his confrontation with his commanding officer General Allenby in David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia*. Hiddleston's calm reserve as he asks Odin for the truth of his own parentage and his sudden flare of anger when he harshly orders Odin, "Tell me!" (Branagh 2011) is reminiscent of O'Toole's performance as Lawrence when he calmly explains to Allenby, "I don't want to be part of your big push," then harshly proclaims, "I have no Arab friends. I don't want Arab friends" (Lean 1963).

This can be seen as another example of Branagh's attempts to induce audience recall, performance used as a means of bringing to mind, to those who are familiar with the previous films, similar performances by other actors, thereby

providing fodder for future debates on the actor's performance.

Branagh draws attention to the performance of Hiddleston when Loki returns to Jotunheim to bargain with Laufey, saying, "We did some additional photography in this scene and it was to exploit one of the qualities in Loki that we felt we could, by virtue of just how good Tom Hiddleston's performance was, also include, aside from him being a genuine brother and being a hurt brother and an ambitious and perhaps a rather jealous brother. To be mischievous and dangerous, of course, is a necessity for Loki, even if one does not necessarily suggest that he is preternaturally evil but that his capacity for wrong-doing is emerging, forming, shaping itself before our very eyes" (2011).

As Branagh has stated, he viewed the film as a story of fathers and sons with the emphasis on the familial relationship between these characters. In terms of the romantic relationship that develops between Thor and Jane Foster, Branagh says, "It's difficult in a big action film to allow the room for a romance . . . I suppose what you want to feel is that they like each other . . . that it's a relationship in which you're interested in what happens and in which you might invest. It can't be overburdened by suddenly becoming the grand passion of the ages. And yet, there is much to value out of these instant connections between, in this case, people from other worlds" (2011).

Natalie Portman, cast in the role of Jane Foster, attributes Branagh's selection as the director as one of the main reasons for which she chose to take on the role (Grossberg 2009). The early involvement of Branagh in the early development of the characters in the film is evidenced in Portman's statement that she "signed on to do it before there was a script. And Ken, who's amazing, who is so incredible, was like, '*You can really help create this character*'" (Kaufman and Boucher 2010). Portman confirms Branagh's influence in the development of the script and of the characters in the film.

The casting of Natalie Portman, drawing on her celebrity status, her Best Actress Academy Award-winning performance in *Black Swan* in 2010 and popular awareness of her personal status as a Harvard graduate, adds weight to the role of

Jane Foster and informs the audience perception of the character as being serious, intelligent and a power to be reckoned with. Oscar-winning status and celebrity, what has been popularly described as being America's equivalence to royalty, adds further to the audience acceptability of Portman as an equal to the godliness of Thor.

Branagh's choice in casting for the Warriors Three and Lady Sif was dependent upon the way they react to each other. His goal was to make the viewers believe that they are friends, that they have been on many adventures together, and that their friendship went a long way back, perhaps even having gone to the Asgardian Academy together (Images 40-41). They should exude a "lightness of tone that is embodied by the warmth between them" and that the camaraderie that exists between them creates a feeling in the viewers that "they are a group we want to be with" (2011).



Image 40: The Warriors Three (Simonson 1984c)



Image 41: The Warriors Three (Branagh 2011)

Evidence of this camaraderie is seen in the scene in which the Warriors Three and Sif arrive in the town in search of Thor. Their excitement, exuberance and familiarity is demonstrated in the expressions of these characters when they discover Thor in the coffee shop, which is presented in a Dutch angle mid-shot (Image 42).



Image 42: Joy of the Warriors Three and Lady Sif (Branagh 2011)

This section thus demonstrates how Branagh uses the elements of camera technique and performance in the mise-en-scène to evoke audience recall through the use of intertextuality. It further indicates his methods that are consistent with his earlier directorial works.

5.3 Costumes

“Costume is a vital part of the adaptive process of the text from page to screen since it is, and has been throughout filmmaking history, one of the primary methods of character revelation” (Gibson and McDonald 2012, p. 295). In a discussion of the costumes in the film, when asked why the Asgardian characters of *Thor* were not dressed more like Vikings, writer Stentz says that they did not have in mind that the film was based directly on the Norse mythology. He points out that, “if you go back and read, as we did, the original *Prose Eddas* from Iceland, that pretty much all of the Norse mythology comes from, they actually posit the Norse gods as super powered-heroes and not gods because that was the way that Snorri Sturleson . . . got it past the Christian authorities . . . he said these aren’t actually gods, they’re superheroes who were later worshipped as gods” (Weintraub

2010).

The goal became to dress them as aliens rather than gods. Just because they were worshipped by the Vikings did not necessitate that their gods be dressed as Vikings. Nevertheless, elements of the Viking culture were incorporated into the film, such as the horned helmets, as these had an influential role in the portrayal of the characters in the comic books.

In reference to costuming and the look and feel of the film, screenwriter Millar continues, “in terms of the style . . . Simonson [illustrator of numerous Thor comic books] was a huge influence on that . . . Visually. . . a lot of that idea was Simonson . . . Simonson, in a way, made the version of Thor that was most compatible with what I think Marvel wanted . . . Certainly, there was some influence from the Ultimates [another group of Marvel comic book superheroes] . . . in terms of the feel of the character and sort of the size of the world that Millar [writer of the Ultimates] brought to Thor” (Weintraub 2010).

As such, much of the costuming was influenced by the look of the comics written by Simonson in the 1980s. The costume of Thor as commonly depicted in the comics has him dressed in the American patriotic colors of red, white and blue in much the same vein as Marvel’s Captain America and DC comics Superman. The chest plate of his armour features several metal disks that cover the pectoral area. These metal disks are mirrored in the armour of Thor in the film, as is Thor’s iconic red cape and feathered helmet, taken directly from the comics (Image 43-44), thereby used to evoke audience recall.



Image 43: Thor Chris Hemsworth



Image 44: Thor (Simonson 1986)

“The costume here supports the character readings fostered by the narrative, maintaining the costume designer’s tradition of offering character insights that the narrative does not spell out explicitly. As part of an adaptation, the costume works to concretize ideas thrown out by the novel but not dwelt on at length” (Gibson and McDonald 2012, p. 301).

Important for Branagh was to capture the feel of each individual character, to create costumes that would convey the power and position of the particular character to the audience. This was true for costume designer Alexandra Byrne, who worked on the film. She states, “You can't just put on these clothes and expect to look like these characters.” For her, the goal was to match the costumes with the kind of confidence embodied by the actors who were cast to portray the character. She says, “If you were asking me to dress somebody and style them like him, it would have to be specific to that person . . . it's about the person and what they bring. Think about what is your personal swagger and your style and don't let it get all bundled up into vanity. Be an individual” (Zemler 2015).

This is what she tried to achieve in the costumes in *Thor*, costumes that embodied the character the actors portrayed as well as fit with the personal

properties of the individual actor. When designing for the character of Thor, Byrne explains that she had to contend with his months of weight training, stating, "Chris Hemsworth is in incredible shape and becomes almost super human when he's Thor . . . At this point I know where he's going to go. But a lot of the design is chasing their body as they bulk. And it depends on the character — for Thor it's all about his arms" (Zemler 2015).

She further states that "The thing about Thor is you've got a big red cloak so you need to take that on board . . . We had to find ways of using the cloak, but also he's a god from Asgard, so we had to make him fit in with the other characters, too. Thor's costume is made of many different things. Obviously a lot of it looks like leather, but a lot of it is moulded in soft materials to allow the fighting. Parts are leather. Parts of it are metal, there are lots of different things in there!" (Wilding 2013).

Hemsworth was also aware of the importance of costume for the portrayal of Thor that Branagh wanted to achieve. He states, "I put the thing on and said 'It's not very comfortable, but it looks amazing, so it's all good.' And then a couple of weeks in, I thought 'It's getting more and more uncomfortable,' and at the end of three, four months it was a pretty difficult thing to wake up and put on every morning. But it sells such an image in the picture. It does a lot of the work for you" (Huver 2010).

The costumes of Thor were designed to impress upon the audience and convey the strength and power that Thor must necessarily exude. The armour of Thor becomes symbolic of his power and is as evocative of that power when worn by Thor or likewise when removed.

The scene in which Thor is stripped of his armour by Odin is a particularly metaphorically-charged scene as Odin is literally stripping Thor not only of that armour but of the power that it symbolizes. The strength of Thor's armour is unsurpassed and remains undamaged in his battles with the giants of Jotenheim, yet how easily is this battle armour stripped away by the power and fingers of Odin.

This scene dramatically depicts the dominance of Odin over the chastised and vulnerable Thor, the supreme power of the father over the son.

Branagh proclaims this exile of Thor as “a Biblical action. The fall of man. Thor falls from the garden of Eden . . . from Asgard, and he’s stripped court-martial-like” (Branagh 2011). This scene, the cashiering moment in which Thor is exiled from Asgard, Branagh says was influenced by the scene from the film *The Life of Emile Zola* (1937), starring actor Paul Muni as Zola and Joseph Schildkraut as Captain Alfred Dreyfus, who is cashiered from the French military, accused of being a traitor (Images 45-46).



Image 45: Cashiering of Thor (Branagh 2011)



Image 46: Cashiering of Dreyfus (Dieterle 1937)

This theme of the removal of the costume as a powerful costume in itself is continued in the scene following Thor’s rescue from the hospital by Jane Foster. In this scene, Thor appears, much to the delight of the female characters watching, stripped of his shirt and wearing only a pair of jeans. The appearance of Thor in

this scene, says Branagh, “evidenced in Chris Hemsworth’s torso, was the product of his six/nine months of very intensive work in the gym” (Branagh 2011). In discussing the costuming for this scene, Branagh continues:

I remember, a few days before we shot this, saying, rather embarrassedly, “Hey Chris, I want to do this shot. It seems important to me that we reveal Thor in this way. Do you mind taking your shirt off?” To which he replied, “Do I mind? I’ve been doing this for nine months, mate. Of course, I’m going to get my shirt off.” I’m glad he did because it’s produced gasps in early screenings and we needed Thor to look like a god. Chris Hemsworth does. (Branagh 2011)

The influence of the comics can also be seen in the costume choices for the other characters in the film. One such example is the color of Sif’s hair in the film. Sif’s hair, always golden in the Norse mythology, is dark in the film, presumably the result of the comics version of the myth in which Loki cuts off her hair and then has to replace it and the hair with which he replaces it turns black.

The influence of both the mythology and the comics is seen in the costumes of Odin. He alone among the Asgardians wears a helmet of gold. In the early battle sequence in the film, Odin appears with both of his eyes intact and he has his great spear Gungnir at his side. During the battle, the Frost Giants king flings an ice flail into the face of Odin. In the scene which is said to have taken place after the battle, when Odin discovers the infant Loki, Odin appears with his right eye missing, presumably a result of this attack. In this way, the film has established a means of depicting Odin in the traditional manner, with only one eye, during the rest of the film, while avoiding the necessity of explaining that he had traded his eye for knowledge, as appears in both the mythology and the comics (Thomas 1978). Viewers accustomed to the appearance of Odin in the comics with only one eye are thereby satisfied, which further adds to the development of audience recall.

Other props that are added to the costumes that are taken from both the mythology and the comics include the appearance of Mjolnir, with its handle too short to support such a heavy head, the arrival of Odin in Jotunheim astride the steed Sleipnir with its eight legs, and the appearance of Odin later with the ravens perched upon his shoulders.

In reference to the costume for Heimdall, Branagh states that it is successful in that it creates “the kind of look that a guardian, a man who really is the person who says, and we believe him, “thou shalt not pass.” His voice was slightly amended “to just maximize the beautiful, rich, dark, warm tones in it because, as the single representative of Asgard out there, we wanted to just, every time we heard and saw him, to be aware of this memory of the guardian, the man whom you disobey at your peril” (Branagh 2011).

The armour of Loki is also heavily influenced by the comics. Like in the comics, he is shown in the film wearing his signature green. The Loki of the comics is continually depicted wearing green, which may be argued as representing the constant envy and jealousy that he feels towards the red, white, and blue-clad Thor. His costume in the early scenes of the film show him wearing a green cape over his pewter-coloured armour and wearing a pewter-coloured horned helmet of the same colour as the armed forces of Asgard (Images 47-48).



Image 47: Loki
(Branagh 2011)



Image 48: Loki
(Simonson 1985e)

When discussing the costume of Loki as he assumes the throne of Asgard, Branagh points out that “All the helmets were heavy and tight in order to have the great look, the great line. Nothing could rattle, nothing could roll. And the combination of what the collar does, the lines on the front of that costume, ditto Thor’s, they make it work in a kind of very streamlined, aerodynamic way that I think hints of the classic renditions of the frames from the comics but stops it being, in the way they’re worn, in the colors, in the palette, in the textures, it stops it being campy, stops it being kitschy, or at least not to a degree that allows us to accept a different kind of robustness to it” (Branagh 2011).

In the scene in which Thor has been captured by the forces of S.H.I.E.L.D. and is being held in the compound, Loki appears to falsely inform Thor that their father is dead. In this scene, Loki is shown wearing a modern suit, pale green shirt and dark green tie, and sporting a long, elegant overcoat (Image 49). He appears in the room with Thor then wanders into the section of the compound in which Mjolnir is housed. His attire and movements are reminiscent of the appearance of actor Gabriel Byrne in the film *End of Days*, in which Byrne is possessed by Satan (Image 50), arguably drawing parallels to insinuate that Loki has a bit of the devil inside him or is cast as a sort of devil’s advocate.

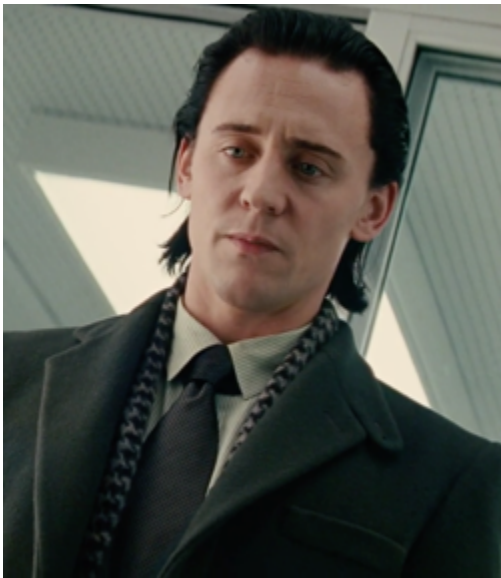


Image 49: Loki (Branagh 2011)



Image 50: Satan (Hyams 1999)

The costumes of the agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. are typical of traditional Hollywood interpretations of the shadowy men who comprise this sort of top secret government organizations, the “men in black”, in their dark suits, white shirts and ties, power suits designed to embody the dominion and authority they represent. In contrast, Drs. Jane Foster and Erik Selvig, whose titles can be argued to denote an element of authority as well, are primarily dressed instead in casual jeans and shirts, exemplifying a sense of powerlessness in the face of the greater authority represented by the men in black.

The costuming in *Thor* not only proclaims the distinction between the Asgardians and the people of Earth. Asgardian costumes are designed to constitute a fantastical presence in themselves and are used to showcase intertextual references to the comics and to serve as a sharp contrast to the costumes of the majority of the people on Earth which are designed to emphasise the ordinariness of everyday life on Earth.

The costuming of Portman reinforces her representation as a modern Earth woman, in contrast to the costuming of the woman of Asgard. Jane is seen in casual jeans and shirts, often plaid flannel shirts which designate an outdoorsy lifestyle. She wears little makeup, letting her natural beauty show, making her appear fresh-faced, a hint of the tomboy, and in line with the archetypical “down-to-earth” girl-next-door image. Asgardian Sif presents a more glamorous and conventionally feminine image in spite of her warrior armour, which is tightly fitted to demonstrate her feminine curves. The film itself even compares her to the sexy image of *Xena, Warrior Princess*. Her makeup is more pronounced and dramatic than Jane’s and her hair is slicked back into a high ponytail, further adding an element of sleek glamour to her look. Frigga is costumed in ultra feminine goddess attire reminiscent of ancient Greece, flowing gowns with her hair elaborately coiffed in a series of curls, and even more dramatic and pronounced makeup, establishing her as the more traditionally feminine role.

Famed multi-Oscar-winning costume designer Edith Head, in discussing the role of costume in film, states:

In pictures it's to give the impression that the actor is the person about whom the story is told . . . The point that's important and interesting is that a costume designer can translate someone into someone else through the medium of clothes. I would like to think that if the sound went off during a movie, you would still know a little about who the characters were by how they were dressed. (Head 1978)

In these ways, costume has been used in the film *Thor* to provide clues for the audience to gain insights into the characters and the roles they play within the story. It is furthermore a means of using intertextuality in the element of mise-en-scène to establish audience recall.

5.4 Set

When deciding upon a setting for the film, Branagh says that they were looking for a vast landscape on Earth, something epic, that would be powerful enough to mirror the epic landscape they intended to represent off Earth. He had previously worked in New Mexico and believed that it would present the proper epic feel to the film. Therefore, he chose to film in the desert of New Mexico, “the land of the big sky” (2011).

In a manner that is in keeping with the nostalgic atmosphere that Branagh tried to bring to his earlier work, the set built for the film to take place on Earth was an attempt to create a set modeled on the kind of old Western town that was often employed in classic American westerns, particularly that used in the films *Appaloosa* and *Silverado*. Says Branagh:

We took the basic shape and we remodeled the frontages and instead of the dust tract down the middle, we tarmacked and we recreated what I wanted to be . . . a sort of heightened version of a kind of Americana that I had enjoyed seeing in the comics. I wanted it to sit in the vast sea of the desert just like Asgard sits in the vast sea of space. And I wanted to be able to have the colors of the seats like the red here [in the diner], have a sort of ambience that evokes the world of [significant American realist painter] Edward Hopper, a kind of heightened, very familiar, very intensely-flavoured, intensely-coloured version of small town America that comes out of the comics and that is immensely fascinating and attractive I think to anyone who is not from America and I hope obviously, if you're from America, it's equally interesting. But it was to do with having Thor land in a kind of

coherent environment community where, when eventually it is threatened, we have some sense that it deserves not to be threatened, it deserves to be saved and that there are kind people there, people like you and me, and so that the building of this town, the creation of this town inside the desert with that kind of backdrop right in the back with the mountains and the fun of a sign like, 'Welcome to the home of the Vikings' on the water tower . . . creating an Earth part of a translation of the comics. (2011) (Images 51-56)



Image 51: Nighthawks (Hopper 1942)



Image 52: Puente Antiguo Diner (Branagh 2011)



Image 53: Early Sunday Morning (Hopper 1930)



Image 54: Puento Antiquo Main Steet (Branagh 2011)



Image 55: People in the Sun (Hopper 1963)



Image 56: Puente Antiguo (Branagh 2011)

These statements constitute a continuous method that Branagh uses throughout his earlier films in dealing with the settings. As discussed in Chapter Four, once again a single location is used for most of the film, the town having been built from scratch in the desert. The set for Earth is designed not to establish

a particular place or location, but rather to create a feeling within the viewer, a sense of familiarity, and a kind of Main Street, U.S.A. that viewers would recognize as being like their own hometown for many Americans. It is designed to create for the viewer a feeling of comfort and “home”. Similar to *Much Ado about Nothing’s* timelessness and generalized “Tuscan” setting of not really knowing exactly where or when it is set but recognizing that it evokes memories of what might be idealized as a Tuscan setting, Branagh provides a nostalgic version of what America may have been like at some point in time.

The coffee shop upon which some of the characters sit in one scene has a kind of “spaceship, fifties-inspired retro designed look that tries to evoke . . . a little outer space even on Earth” (Branagh 2011) (Images 57-58). This design brings to mind memories of the controversial “UFO sightings” around Roswell, New Mexico in the 1950s, which can be seen as symbolic of the arrival of the alien Thor on Earth.



Image 57: Puente Antiguo Coffee Shop by Night (Branagh 2011)



Image 58: Puente Antiguo Coffee Shop by Day (Branagh 2011)

For several reasons, Branagh chose to build an entirely new town as the set, the mythical town of Puente Antiguo (Old Bridge), rather than use a real town. He was aware that the script called for a big battle to take place in the middle of the town and he “just wanted to have complete and utter control over what we were doing” (2011) on the set, and not to have to worry about stopping traffic. He discussed the issue of the level of reality that a real town would add to the film but decided that the advantages of building a new set and the control that this would instill during the filming outweighed the advantage of adding that level of reality that could be achieved by using a real town as the location.

An example of the added advantage to building an entirely new set for Branagh was, as he states, “I wanted to have the time to . . . again have some of the fun of . . . Thor walking down the street, ignoring either walking on the left or the right hand side, walking like a god walks. I mean, people should get out of his way” (2011).

In the temporary set that S.H.I.E.L.D. creates to house the hammer, set designer Bo Welch created a series of tubes and cubes that were a “marriage between again the fantastical up on Asgard and in space and down here earthbound but still excitingly graphic and dynamic . . . both the way that he designed it and the starkness with which Haris Zambouloukis could light it was very exciting” (Branagh 2011).

This is the setting for the earlier mentioned scene in which Thor attempts to find Mjolnir. An overhead shot is used as Thor kneels alone in the mud after realising that he cannot reclaim his hammer, reiterating his alienation and isolation on Earth. The set is further depicted reflected in the eye of Heimdall who watches from his post in Asgard (Images 59-60). This is a powerful image that brings in the intertextuality again of both the hypotexts and hypertexts in the portrayal of Heimdall and his ability to see everything, watching Thor from across the vast distance of space.



Image 59: S.H.I.E.L.D. Compound (Branagh 2011)



Image 60: S.H.I.E.L.D. Compound Reflected in Heimdall's Eye (Branagh 2011)

The film incorporates a number of props that again pay homage to the comics. In several of the shots taking place in the town in New Mexico, prominently displayed on a billboard that features a picture of mountains, above the newsstand on the main road of town, are the words "Land of Enchantment. Journey into Mystery", a nod to the *Journey into Mystery* comics series in which the character of Thor first appeared (Images 61-62). The weapons vault of Odin also contains various props, as previously discussed, which reference various story arcs within the Marvel comics universe. In another shot designed to demonstrate the influence of the Norse gods in the modern world, Branagh wanted, from day one of being hired to direct the film, to have in the movie a subtle means of demonstrating that "Thursday" is derived from the original "Thor's day". To achieve this, Branagh uses

as a prop a storybook which Selvig takes in the library, showing the words written on the page of the children's picture book.



Image 61: Journey into Mystery Billboard (Branagh 2011)



Image 62: Journey into Mystery Close-up (Branagh 2011)

Regarding the creation of Asgard, Sturleson describes how, when the gods first began to create the halls of Asgard, “Their first work was to erect a court . . . and, besides, a high-seat for Alfater. That is the best and largest house ever built . . . and is within and without like solid gold. This place is called Gladsheim” (2001, p. 22). This image of a great golden realm is exemplified in the visual effects used to create the film version of Asgard (Image 63).



Image 63: Asgard the Golden Realm (Branagh 2011)

For Asgard, Branagh says that they strove to create a fjord-like landscape with Grecian or Roman empire influences and images for the set. They wanted the set to have a primitive quality yet a modern sci-fi look, and wanted “the finish on the walls of a material that looked like it’s made by a race that travels through space and are technologically advanced, more so than on Earth, but also has a throwback to an ancient culture that uses ancient weapons” (2001) (Images 64-65).



Image 64: Asgard (Branagh 2011)



Image 65: Asgard (Simonson 1984)

The influence of Fritz Lang's images of *Metropolis* (Lang 1927) can also be seen in the aesthetics of Asgard, depicting the high towers and pyramid shape of the buildings, particularly Odin's palace (Images 66-67).

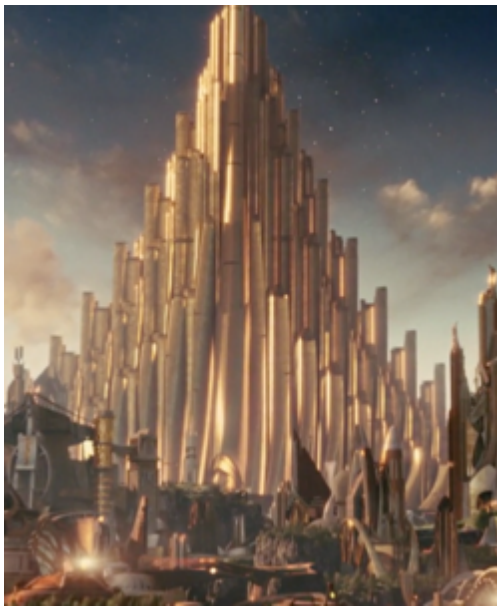


Image 66: Odin's Palace (Branagh 2011)



Image 67: Metropolis (Lang 1927)

As a director, Branagh says he enjoys this combination of “the ancient and the modern, the primitive and the sophisticated” in the remarkable buildings that

have “Viking influence layout with super sci-fi quality combination to try to bring to bear.” Taking the Icelandic Aurora Borealis as inspiration, auroras from all around the world were then photographed and used as additional sources for the visual effects team to closely mirror actual phenomenon to create a Bifrost which links the realm of Asgard to Earth.

The bridge in the film is different than the curving rainbow depicted in the comics. The bridge in the film is a straight flat bridge with changing lights and colours that shimmer. The goal in the design was to create a magical feel that showed the light impacts upon the bridge which changed slightly when the characters walked on it (Branagh 2011).

Sturluson states that “There is a dwelling, by name Himinbjorg, which stands at the end of heaven, where the Bifrost-bridge is united with heaven” (2001, p. 26). This idea is portrayed in the film by Heimdall’s observatory, which “creates a kind of astral map . . . reflecting . . . the patterns of Yggdrasil, the Tree of Life . . . as if it’s some sort of extraordinary underground map or some sort of roadmap where he chooses a place inside that . . . vast galactic solar system . . . through which the nine realms are spread. He [Heimdall] chooses the destination and he sends you there” (Branagh 2011).

The realm of Jotunheim in the film is a conglomerate of massive ice formations all tinted in shades of blue to add the feeling of immense cold. “Jotunheim we’d imagined as this once absolutely splendid city of ice” (Branagh 2011) which was now broken down, an angry planet full of echoes and pain.

5.5 Music

The score for the film was composed by Patrick Doyle, with whom Branagh has collaborated on many of his previous projects, including all of his feature films, beginning with *Henry V*, and including his Shakespearean films, *Frankenstein*, *Jack Ryan* and *Cinderella*. For Doyle, the challenge of scoring this film was to try to achieve a tone in the music that would fit in with the duality of the realms of Asgard and of Earth. Declaring himself to be very familiar with Norse mythology as part of his own Celtic background, Scotsman Doyle states, “Ken wanted the score

to have a contemporary feel, which I concurred with. I was also eager for the score to contain a strong sense of melody, which he responds to in my work. He was keen, as indeed I was, that the grand images were not in any way hyperbolized, and that there would be a balance between playing with, and against the images” (Schweiger 2011).

Doyle further adds, “I suppose the main challenge in *Thor* was to come up with a superhero theme, and the main theme that represents Asgard, the home of Thor, I wanted the latter to come across as an old folk song from a Celtic world, which, as I mentioned before, I was raised in. This melody had a development that became the traveling, action and fighting theme” (Schweiger 2011).

In creating the music, Doyle takes into consideration the character of Thor, stating, “We recognize Thor is a god. He is a big personality. He is a big person physically and the last thing to depict Thor would be a delicate piccolo! Clearly his world requires a slightly more robust set of musical instruments: horns, low brass, slow strings etc. He is a passionate creature, brave yet sometimes weak (especially in his human form). There is a sense of longing for home and remembering Asgard, which I featured particularly with the haunting quality of the Cor Anglais, which also captures Thor’s pathos and nobility” (Schweiger 2011). Doyle goes on to add that “It was very tricky moving from Earth to Asgard. Broader orchestral strokes and thicker orchestration helped to depict the grandeur and beauty of their world, whilst the music for Earth was much more contemporary, electronic and percussion driven” (Schweiger 2011).

Branagh describes the music by Patrick Doyle as having “a great sense of the dramatic,” adding, “We knew that he [Doyle] needed to have the kind of drive in the music that would keep the sort of ticking clock of Thor’s time on Earth really vibrantly motoring through, for instance, a sequence like this [referring to Thor’s battling his way into the S.H.I.E.L.D. compound]. Patrick’s particularly good at being able to craft, once he sees a sequence like this, the ups and the downs of the music, leave space for the sound effects, leave space for the visual effects, be able to give and paint in a musical introduction to as important a character as . . .

this man [Thor]" (2011).

When Thor achieves his destination through his battle and reaches for his hammer, he thinks he is about to go home. About this scene Branagh explains, "Here in the music, we try and set up this sense of impending triumph, the great strong man of the universe will claim his right, Excalibur will be lifted from the stone, Thor will be returned to his full powers and will be able to go home. Except, of course, that he can't. Only he who is worthy. That's what Odin said. And we have not seen sufficient evidence in this story of the flawed hero who must lose in order to find" (2011).

In reference to Thor's realization that he cannot lift the hammer, that he is unworthy, Branagh says:

That primal part of the character kicks in like a great bear yelling or like a crazed child hysterically screaming. Some part of him is broken by the certain knowledge that he ain't going back. That's it. It's over. No home, no friends, no family, no powers. This becomes for Thor a pivotal moment in his journey through the picture. And one of the things that I love about Chris Hemsworth's performance is just the look coming up, the sense as he sees the symbol of home, of that hurt, of that youthfulness, in his look. That great oak tree of a man is now almost a sort of bottom-lip-quivering kid. He's had to really understand that he's not going home. It's very touching, I think. And I asked Pat to reflect that in the music. It's the moment in which perhaps they may have admired, they may have been amused by, they may have a sneaking admiration for his cheeky, grinning, winking, cockiness but now perhaps the audience has genuine sympathy for this man. (2011)

Two modern pop songs are also featured in the film. The first is the song by Billy Swan entitled *I Can Help*. This song includes the lyrics, "If you need a problem, don't care what it is. If you need a hand, I can assure you this I can help. I got two strong arms, I can help" (Swan 1974). This song plays as the townspeople are gathered around Mjolnir trying to pull it from the ground, adding a touch of humor to the scene.

Another song featured in the film is *Walk* by the Foo Fighters. This song plays during the scene in which the repentant Thor and Selvig are having a drink in a bar. It later appears again in the closing credits. This song includes the lyrics,

“A million miles away your signal in the distance, to whom it may concern. I think I lost my way. Getting good at starting over every time that I return, I’m learning to walk again” (Grohl 2011). One of the film’s producers, Kevin Feige, in reference to the use of the song in the film states that “Ken in particular just loved it with these lyrics about learning to walk again and the way that fit the themes of the movie about redemption, learning to be a hero. The song starts off talking about being a million miles away from home and yearning and being separated by vast distances, and it’s no secret that Thor and Natalie’s character are from different worlds” (Boucher 2011).

An interesting note to add in reference to the sound and music, or lack thereof, in the film is that, at one point, as Thor, Sif, Loki and the Warriors Three travel through space on their way to Jotunheim, Branagh removes the sound completely for a brief moment in order to “try to create the real impact of passing through this sort of time warp, space warp” (2011).

5.6 Conclusion

As demonstrated in this chapter on the film *Thor*, Branagh strives to create a film that allows the viewers to engage with the film in a very personal manner, evoking recall, as discussed by Geraghty (2008), of the viewers’ possible connections to, memories of, and feelings towards the subject matter of the film. As Bazin states, “One must first know to what end the adaptation is designed: for the cinema or for its audience” (Bazin 2000, p. 21). Branagh can be said to be one of those who cares more about the latter. As such, he fits well within the Marvel Cinematic Universe. In spite of his earlier association and identification as a director of Shakespearean films, which may have made him a surprising choice for some, he was actually a logical choice, for “In raising films from properties that already have a vivid, specific life in the minds of one segment of the target audience, there is a careful balance to be struck regarding fan approval. Hence, the notion of valid, authentic artists who ‘get’ Marvel” (Flanagan, McKenny and Livingstone 2016, p. 199).

Furthermore, as Flanagan, McKenny and Livingstone state:

Marvel channels authorial power into the form that best serves its continuing serial plan: the shared universe. Each successful release, while undoubtedly burnishing the reputations of individual directors like Jon Favreau, Kenneth Branagh or Whedon (and, importantly, requiring the input of their personalities), counts in weight added to the credibility of the studio-brand. Although not denying the presence of name directors (highly rated figures like Branagh or auteurs-in-waiting recruited a formula was struck in official posters from a relatively early stage, with a legend – ‘From the studio that brought you Iron Man’; ‘From the studio that brought you The Avengers’ – that insisted upon a coherent studio identity. The promotion of a studio identity over an individual one is Marvel’s right, of course, and not unique; but for our analysis, the tendency (along with the publicity afforded to auteur-producer figure Feige) notably conjures a certain Old Hollywood, Fordist flavour: reintegrating the old in terms of the new. (2016, pp. 46-47)

Branagh’s reputation and status as a director thus lent an added respectably to the franchise while fitting in with its desired image and brand name. Branagh is a nostalgic director who tries to connect to the audience and does not underestimate the knowledge of the audience, offering things that will give pleasure to the audience, not just in a visual way, but in memory, deliberately trying to evoke comparisons between earlier memories in the audience. This can be seen in his earlier work as well to create a personal experience and association for the audience, a personal investment in the characters and the events taking place on screen. This is what Marvel tries to do as well.

In order to achieve this, Branagh adopts a number of different methods that are evident in the *mise-en-scène*. The first of these, concerning the goal of evoking memory, is the inclusion of particular references within the *mise-en-scène* that will bring to mind the hypotexts and hypertexts of the film to the viewers familiar with these sources, trying to create a fidelitous version that the viewers can connect to.

In addition, Branagh sometimes supplies subtle clues targeted specifically towards the aficionados in the audience who may recognize these clues which may not necessarily be noticed by others. These clues are a means of establishing a connection for the members of the audience who may have various different experiences with respect to their knowledge of the sources.

This can also be seen as a means of establishing trust in the audience. Branagh does extensive research into the history of his subject matter. With this background, he offers clues from various sources, creating confidence in the audience that the film is created with a conscious respect for the sources with which they are familiar and that it will be fidelitous to the spirit of these sources so that any changes made are made from a position of education and research.

These sources include the comic books as well as the Norse legends and the intertextual alliances with the other Marvel comics action films *Iron Man*, *The Hulk* and *Captain America*. Examples of the referencing of the comic books include the use of Dutch angles and other camera techniques to recall images of the comic book style, his encouragement of his actors to incorporate intertextuality into their performances from the hypertexts and other influences that Branagh wishes to include such as the performances of Peter O'Toole, and costumes and sets designed to evoke a variety of references between the hypertexts and hypotexts such as the Norse mythology, the comics, the Vikings, and historical events like the Roswell incident.

An example of Branagh's clues is the incorporation of references and artifacts that have their origins in other hypertexts and the hypotext, such as the sign stating *Journey into Mystery* on earth, the various artifacts found in the vault in Asgard, the disguise of Thor as Dr. Donald Blake, the alter ego of Thor in the comic books, and the insertion of the storybook with the notation on Thor's Day. A further example is verbal references to other Marvel films such as the question by the S.H.I.E.L.D. agent as to whether the Destroyer is one's of Stark's creations and the allusion by Selvig to Bruce Banner's loss of his equipment to the agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. As Branagh states:

One of the challenges for us when we came to this material was just what to select, what to include. There are nine realms, there are dwarves, there are elves, there are norns. There are hugely important characters like Balder, like Princess Karnilla. There were so many opportunities to create so many different kinds of story, but our real sense was that both for the devotees, for the aficionados, and I hope for people new to the story, is that we would try and tell a genuine origins story full of this kind of excitement. (Branagh 2011)

As discussed in the previous chapter, in terms of meaning, there are primary themes that are common to many of Branagh's films. One of these themes is the difficulty of navigating familial relationships. Another theme is the feeling of isolation and alienation of the "man-against-the-world" who feels the weight of the world on his shoulders alone. A third theme is the question of the fitness to rule.

Thor is an example of the first theme, a film which is, as described by Branagh, ultimately "a story of fathers and sons" (Branagh 2011). The way in which Branagh peels away the layers of the film to its most basic core demonstrates a very classical approach to filmmaking, indicating the significance he places upon telling a good story. As Langdon states, "At the core of the Hollywood classical style was storytelling" (Langdon 2010, p. 73).

Thor is wrestling with his anguish over his banishment from his father's graces. Loki is suffering from the jealousy he feels towards his brother Thor, the heartbreak he feels over believing that he always comes second in his father Odin's affections, and horror at learning that his father Odin is not his biological father. Odin is trying to survive the trials and tribulations of fatherhood and dealing with the emotional issues that both of his sons create.

This theme carries throughout Branagh's earlier films as well, as seen in such examples as Hamlet's difficulties with his mother and uncle in *Hamlet*, Don Pedro's problems with his brother Don John in *Much Ado about Nothing*, the rivalries between the brothers Duke Senior and Duke Frederick and the brothers Orlando and Oliver in *As You Like It*, Pamina and her mother the Queen of the Night in *The Magic Flute*, Andrew Wyke and his estranged wife and her lover in *Sleuth*, and the tortured relationship between the Strausses and their contemporary counterparts and the relationship between Frankly Madson and his mother, the Strausses' housekeeper in *Dead Again*.

Thor is also representative of the second theme in Branagh's films, a man thrust out of his own world, alienated and alone in a foreign land, and literally the only thing standing between the people of the town and their destruction.

Among Branagh's earlier films, this theme is seen in the story of Victor Frankenstein who is misunderstood by the masses in his continuing quest for knowledge and scientific advancement on how to cheat death in *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. However, even more representative of this is the Creature who is entirely alone and isolated. *Henry V* and *Hamlet* are both examples of this, as is Peter, who tries to bring his former friends together to counter his isolation over his newly discovered identification as being a carrier of the HIV virus in *Peter's Friends*, and Joe Harper, who single-handedly takes up the burden of trying to save his sister's church from destruction in *In the Bleak Midwinter*, and the orphaned Mike Church and the catatonic and amnesiac Grace in *Dead Again*.

The third theme, the question of the fitness to rule, is also apparent in *Thor*. Thor is cast out of Asgard because he has been determined by Odin to be unfit and unworthy to rule. His transformation and eventual self-sacrifice for the good of the people on Earth makes him worthy of leading his people. This theme is also explored in the films *Henry V*, *Hamlet*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *As You Like It*, and *In the Bleak Midwinter*.

This chapter indicates that the methods Branagh adopts in his earlier films continued to be used by him in *Thor*, adding support for Branagh's status as auteur, even within the broader scope of Marvel's authorial recognition and brand. These elements are further examined in the following chapters on *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* and *Cinderella*.

CHAPTER SIX: JACK RYAN: SHADOW RECRUIT

This chapter includes a brief look at the hypotexts upon which the character of Jack Ryan is based and an analysis of the intertextual relationships of the film *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*, released in 2014, which stars Chris Pine as CIA analyst Jack Ryan, Kenneth Branagh as Russian businessman Viktor Cherevin, Kevin Costner as Jack's CIA mentor and handler Thomas Harper, Keira Knightley as Jack's fiancée Cathy Muller and Nonso Anozie as Viktor's chauffeur and would-be assassin Embee Deng. It includes a brief summary of the plot of the film and analyses the elements that have been adapted or appropriated from its hypotexts and hypertexts, including elements of the architext spy thriller genre. It contains analyses of the categorisations of the mise-en-scène and suggests means in which these elements are used by Branagh to establish audience recall.

6.1 Intertextual Relationships of *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*

Kenneth Branagh's *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* is a modern spy thriller loosely based upon the character created by American author Tom Clancy in a series of novels written over a period of two decades beginning with the publication of his first novel *The Hunt for Red October* in 1984. There have been four films adapted from Clancy's first four novels in the series prior to the filming of *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*. Unlike the previous films, there is no specific novel from which this film is adapted but it contains appropriations of some of the hypotexts and hypertexts. Like *Thor*, *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* can be described as a bricolage with a number of influences from other films that constitute the architextual genre of spy thriller.

Jack Ryan is the leading character in the series of nine Clancy novels which include *The Hunt for Red October* (1984), *Patriot Games* (1987), *The Cardinal in the Kremlin* (1988), *Clear and Present Danger* (1989), *The Sum of All Fears* (1991), *Debt of Honor* (1994), *Executive Orders* (1996), *The Bear and the Dragon* (2000), and *Red Rabbit* (2002). In addition, Ryan makes an appearance in two other novels from Clancy's series that is set within the Jack Ryan universe and

features the character of John Kelly/John Clark, entitled *Without Remorse* (1993) and *Rainbow Six* (1998).

Jack Ryan, now referred to as Jack Ryan, Sr., continues to appear or is mentioned in a number of novels in the series that Clancy wrote featuring Ryan's adult son, Jack Ryan, Jr., which includes *The Teeth of the Tiger* (2003). Also included in the series are four novels written by Clancy with Mark Greaney, including *Locked On* (2011), *Threat Vector* (2012), *Command Authority* (2013), and *Support and Defend* (2014), and one novel written by Clancy with Grant Blackwood, *Dead or Alive* (2010). Following Clancy's death in 2013, two novels by Mark Greaney, *Full Force and Effect* (2014) and *Commander-in-Chief* (2015) and one novel by Grant Blackwood, *Under Fire* (2015), continued the Jack Ryan, Jr. series in which Jack Ryan, Sr. continues to appear or be mentioned.

The life story of Jack Ryan as he grows older and advances in his career continues over the span of these various novels, although they were not written in chronological order. The story of Jack Ryan begins when he is a young undergraduate in the university (Clancy 1993) and continues through his career advancement as a lieutenant in the U.S. Marines, a stock broker on Wall Street, a professor at the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland (Clancy 1987), an analyst for the C.I.A. (Clancy 1984; 1987; 1988; 2002), the Deputy Director of the C.I.A. (Clancy 1989; 1991), the United States National Security Advisor (Clancy 1994), the Vice-President of the United States (Clancy 1994), retirement (Clancy and Blackwood 2010), and the President of the United States (Clancy 1994; 1996; 2000; 2003; Clancy and Greaney 2013; Greaney 2014; 2015).

The first Jack Ryan novel adapted for film was *The Hunt for Red October*. The film was released in 1990 and starred Alec Baldwin as Jack Ryan alongside Sean Connery. *Patriot Games*, released in 1992, and *Clear and Present Danger*, released in 1994, starred Harrison Ford as Jack Ryan. *The Sum of All Fears*, released in 2002, starred Ben Affleck as Jack Ryan and was seen as a reboot of the franchise since the setting was updated to a more modern timeframe. *Jack*

Ryan: Shadow Recruit is considered another new reboot and is updated once more.

In Tom Clancy's novel *Patriot Games*, a representative of the Home Office, David Ashley, points out in a conversation with Jack Ryan, who is on his hospital bed after being shot by terrorists, that "One cannot always stay in the shadows" (Clancy 1987, p. 59). Hence the name for the film, *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*. The film is an appropriation, a commentary and a bricolage of the characters from Tom Clancy's novels featuring CIA analyst Jack Ryan.

The film tells the story of a young graduate student who is profoundly affected by the events of September 11, 2001. As a consequence of this attack, Jack Ryan drops out of university and joins the Marines, where he is seriously injured in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan. Months are spent in a Veterans' Administration hospital where he must undergo grueling physiotherapy as he tries to learn to walk again following a debilitating back injury. While there, he is under the care of a young medical student, Cathy Muller, who is helping him to recover and towards whom he feels an obvious attraction. As he recovers in hospital, he is recruited by the CIA to go undercover as a financial analyst on Wall Street, searching for financial links to any kind of terrorist activity.

The action moves forward in time ten years to when Ryan, now holding his Ph.D., working on Wall Street and living with Cathy Muller, discovers irregularities in the financial transactions of his Russian associates and he suspects these may be linked to terrorist activity. Jack is ordered by the CIA to go to Russia to investigate. Following an assassination attempt on his life in his hotel room in Moscow, Jack becomes convinced that his Russian partner, Viktor Cherevin, is planning to commit a terrorist attack on US soil.

Cathy shows up unexpectedly at Jack's hotel, suspicious that he is having an affair with another woman. Her presence there adds further danger to Jack's precarious situation as she is kidnapped by Cherevin and Jack is forced, with the aid of the CIA, to rescue her.

Following Jack's discovery of the plans of Cherevin to destabilise the US economy, Jack returns to the US in order to prevent the planned terrorist attack. He manages to kill the would-be terrorist, who is discovered to be Cherevin's son, and prevents the attack. Because of his failure, Cherevin is murdered by his government in order to whitewash their covert activities. The film ends with Jack being subsequently honoured by the US President for his heroic actions.

Unlike previous films such as *The Hunt for Red October*, *Patriot Games*, *Clear and Present Danger* and *The Sum of All Fears* that were adapted from specific volumes of Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan series of novels, *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* is not adapted from any one specific novel. Rather Jack's character, among others, is appropriated from the series and an entirely new script was created with an original storyline. The film contains a somewhat limited collection of elements of the storylines appropriated from a variety of the Clancy novels and it is updated from the 1980s of the first Clancy novel and given a post-9/11 timeframe, set in the present day when it was released in 2014. This updating to a more contemporary setting than is seen in the books or previous film adaptations, it may be argued, allows for the film to connect with a younger audience who remembers the World Trade Tower attacks and their subsequent destruction. This could thereby provide a more personal connection for the audience.

Like *Thor*, this film is a bricolage assembled from a variety of sources. The primary influence upon this film, however, is the architextual spy thriller genre whose various elements are incorporated into the film. This study examining the intertextuality of the film discusses not only the hypotext Clancy novels and the hypertext film *The Hunt for Red October*, but it includes an examination of the elements of the architextual spy thriller genre that are found in the film, all used to elicit audience recall.

From the novels, certain aspects are appropriated up front. In both the series and the film, Jack Ryan becomes a Marine, a stockbroker on Wall Street and a CIA analyst. In both, he marries Cathy Muller, and in both, he begins as an analyst but is roped into becoming an operative for the CIA. In the novel *The Hunt*

for *Red October* (Clancy 1984), Jack is the one who realises that Soviet Captain Ramius is planning to defect. As such, he is the one who is chosen by the CIA to try to make contact. Similarly, in the film, Jack uncovers the suspicious financial activities of Cherevin and is sent by the CIA to Moscow to investigate.

The film adapted from Clancy's first novel *The Hunt for Red October* also serves as a hypertext for *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*. Early in the film, there is a scene in which Jack, having survived the helicopter crash, is being rushed to the hospital. The medics who are taking him discuss the fact that he has suffered extreme injuries including burns and that his back has been fractured, yet he still managed to rescue several of his comrades from the wreckage. This scene is appropriated from the film *The Hunt for Red October* as demonstrated below in the dialogue of two characters from that film:

PAINTER

When you shook hands with him [Jack Ryan], you notice the ring on his finger, Chuck?

DAVENPORT

Class of 1972. Marine Corps.

PAINTER

Greer told me about him. Three weeks after he was commissioned, he was in a chopper on a rescue mission in the Med. They went down. Bad. Pilot and crew killed instantly. That kid spent eight months in traction with a broken back, and two years learning to walk again. (McTiernan 1990)

Since *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* was not adapted from a single book written by Clancy, it was possible to incorporate such a scene, since it adds an explanation of how Jack received his injuries on an actual mission which had been originally added to the Ryan saga by the earlier film, possibly to make him more heroic. In the novels, Jack receives his injuries during a training exercise. As the reason for incorporating this scene into the film as a means of further strengthening the character of Jack Ryan, Branagh explains, "If there's any danger of people thinking that Jack is in some way a settled or placid character, or

somehow he's kind of too normal, too thoughtful, this idea of presenting his traumatic past, this profoundly influencing time in the military, and then in the face of incredible physical pain, pain which Clancy talks about through all the books, the accident that caused so much appalling trauma to his back is something that goes all the way through the books . . . was something we considered really emphasising here" (Branagh 2014). This statement is again evidence of the research that Branagh does when directing a film as it demonstrates his familiarity with the Clancy novels.

In the scene in which Ryan is undergoing physiotherapy after his injury in Afghanistan, Branagh cast real veterans from the Afghan war as the extras in the hospital. Chris Pine did his preparation for these scenes in actual rehabilitation centres and, says Branagh, what they were trying to convey was that Jack Ryan is, "on-going, a quietly brave man . . . I think it was a keynote to what he was trying to do, which was to bring a level of human authenticity to it . . . he conveys pain sort of very convincingly . . . without overplaying" (Branagh 2014).

In the film, Cathy Muller is introduced to Jack as a medical student under whose care he is receiving physiotherapy. This meeting between Cathy and Jack is an original addition to the film and does not correspond with the text of the Clancy novels. In the novels, Jack is introduced to Cathy when he is employed as a stockbroker working for her father Joe Muller and she is an eye surgeon (Clancy 1985, p. 790). Like the transformation of the character of Jane Foster in *Thor*, this change can be seen as a means of empowering the character of Cathy in that she becomes the crutch on which Jack leans, supporting and encouraging him on his road to recovery. In this way, Cathy rescues Jack from his hopelessness, as Jack later is put in the position of having to rescue Cathy from Cherevin.

In one aspect, however, the film character of Cathy is similar to her character in the books. Jack arrives at his hotel and finds that Cathy has simply shown up unexpectedly in Moscow. In spite of his having asked her not to come, she says she wanted to make a grand gesture to see what she really meant to him and she demands to know what is really going on with him. She knows that she is

not imagining things because she has found a gun in his hotel room. He confesses to her that he is in the CIA. This makes her happy because she was afraid that he was having an affair with another woman. This type of jealousy and suspicion is a part of her character in the Clancy series as well, as she is mistakenly convinced that Jack is having an affair with another woman in Clancy's *The Sum of All Fears* (1991).

The hypotexts of this film can be seen as not only the Clancy novels from which the main characters are derived, but also a number of architextual films from which Branagh frequently borrows, as described by Andrew (2000). As a result of his suspicions concerning his Russian partners, Jack Ryan attends a showing of the film *Sorry, Wrong Number*, the opening scene of which constitutes an embedded text within the film. While in the movie theatre, Jack secretly passes a report to one of his fellow agents in which he discusses the fact that one of their Russian partners is hiding financial accounts from them. The decision to use the opening of the film *Sorry, Wrong Number* for the cinema scene was Branagh's. Says he, of this choice:

Telephones play an enormous part in our movie . . . and I liked that opening caption. The idea at the beginning of Jack's story that a single telephone call could be the difference in people's lives. The melodrama is great. And I so wanted to have a scene in a movie theater because, along the lines of our aspirations to the classical DNA of the thriller, and in part the spy thriller, we feel like "We got to have a scene in a movie theatre when somebody passes something on". You have to do that. That's part of the absolute building blocks of it. (Branagh 2014)

This is evidence of Branagh's desire to appropriate classic elements of the spy thriller architext. The claimed authorial intent is to lead the audience towards memory not only of the film noir depicted on the screen, but to identify such spy thriller elements as the secret passing of information in a dark, secluded place. The selection of *Sorry, Wrong Number* is also a foreshadowing of Jack's position when he has his own sorry-wrong-number episode on a lonely rooftop in Moscow.

Another example of the appropriation of architextual elements from other films can be seen in the walk-in-the-woods scene. Viktor Cherevin goes to a

secluded wooded area to secretly meet with a Minister of the Russian government. During their walk in the woods, the Minister says that he warned the US of the dangers of a UN vote and he questions Cherevin as to whether he had started moving the assets when the vote went against the Russians. Cherevin replies in the affirmative and the Minister reminds him that he must understand that the government will remain entirely distanced from the events to follow, that anything he activates has to be self-contained for it cannot appear that the Russian government is actually involved or aware of any such activity. The government must have plausible deniability. Cherevin agrees. The beginning of the conspiracy is thereby initiated in the film.

This scene is a further example, as in *Thor*, of Branagh's use of previous films as influences upon his work. Says Branagh of these images, "For those who would like to know where our visual references come from, we also thought of *Miller's Crossing*, a fine Coen Brothers film, in terms of the actual images here" (Branagh 2014) (Images 68-69). Both films include the walk through uninhabited woods as a means of ensuring that secret conversations will not be overheard. Not only is the similarity in action there, but the camera movement, framing and costumes are similar, as is discussed in the following sections on mise-en-scène. This obvious similarity is another example of Branagh's deliberate attempt to evoke audience recall.



Image 68: The Walk in the Woods (Branagh 2014)



Image 69: The Walk in the Woods (Coen and Coen 1999)

This walk in the woods leads to another architextual element of the film, that of the mysterious sleeper cells of Soviet spies or assassins assimilated into American society years or even decades before and kept in readiness in case they are ever needed to commit acts of sabotage or terrorism in the USA. Such an example is the 1977 film *Telefon* (Siegel 1977) in which brainwashed sleeper agents living in the USA are activated and sent out to commit terrorist acts and then commit suicide. Cherevin likewise activates his sleeper agent Aleksandr, a young man who was sent to the USA as a boy and raised there as a US citizen but who remains loyal to Mother Russia and to Cherevin, who happens to be Aleksandr's biological father. Aleksandr is similarly sent on a mission to bomb Wall Street, serving as the catalyst to set up Cherevin's plan to destabilise the US economy. Referencing the film *Telefon* further strengthens the reference to *Sorry*,

Wrong Number and the connection to Jack Ryan on the rooftop as he frantically phones the CIA, emphasizing the recurring telephone motif in the film.

Another example of architextual borrowing, is the assassination attempt in the fight-in-the-hotel-room scene. When Jack goes to Moscow, he is met by a private security guard from the Cherevin Group. The security guard/bodyguard chauffeurs him to his hotel and then accompanies him to his hotel room, carrying his bags. Once they are in the hotel room, the security guard attacks him and tries to kill him. After a vicious struggle, Jack manages to get the upper hand and drowns the security guard in the water in the bathtub.

In discussing Branagh's penchant for borrowing from classic spy thrillers, film critic Kenny points out that this fight scene taking place in Ryan's hotel room is reminiscent of the fight sequences of such films as the James Bond thriller *From Russia with Love* (Young 1963) and Hitchcock's *Torn Curtain* (Kenny 2014). Such a claim can be argued in that these other fights also involve assassins who are sent with the intention of murdering the main characters of the films, and these fights take place within a very confined and limited space.

That same evening, Jack meets with his mentor Harper on a park bench. Jack is very upset that somebody tried to kill him and that he in turn had to kill somebody with his bare hands. Harper tries to comfort him to an extent, but tells him ultimately that he has to get over it.

This meeting on a park bench is another element of the spy thriller architext, as is discussed in the sections on mise-en-scène. In reference to the inclusion of such a meeting between Jack and Harper, who is accompanied by a dog, Branagh says, "They both look so cool here, the slightly homespun thing of Kevin having a dog as well is a nice incongruous quality . . . Another one [classic scene from spy thriller genre] I wanted to do was the park late at night, two guys apparently just out for a walk, one with his dog, again sharing incredible secret conversations that might affect all our lives. It's again the landscape of a spy movie that I was very interested to do, especially with these two guys. I really think they loved doing this scene and I think Kevin loved playing, as Chris did, this little discussion of the cost,

of the human cost, of deciding to serve in a covert way” (Branagh 2014). This type of nighttime meeting on a public park bench is reminiscent of such films as *The Falcon and the Snowman* (Schlesinger 1985) in which the character of American would-be spy Daulton Lee is roped into such a meeting with a Soviet agent who intends to work with Lee to pass classified US information to the Soviet Union.

Another element is the car chase. In another scene in the film, while Jack is talking with Harper, Cathy remains in a vehicle outside. Cherevin’s employees appear and they attack the other CIA operative in the vehicle and kidnap Cathy. Jack commandeers a CIA vehicle and goes in pursuit. After an extended car chase through the nighttime streets of Moscow, Jack manages to catch up with the vehicle and to rescue Cathy.

When Cherevin realises that he has failed, he once again meets the Minister in the secluded woods and he is shot by the Minister for his failure. He dies alone in the woods. About this scene, Branagh says, “as the end expanded, as we wanted to provide as much variety as possible and as much of a sense of cumulative escalation, and also have a sense of the guy who got it all wrong last night, maybe playing his cards wrong, underestimating continually Jack Ryan, that the big gamble was misplayed, and that if he had acted sooner, then the financial attack might have occurred . . . To get it out into nature makes it a bit more wild West-y. A man at a crossroads gets killed, a body left by the side of the road, to those kinds of cinema archetypes” (Branagh 2014), indicating again what Branagh wishes to convey as his authorial intent.

To a certain extent, the plot of *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* can be said to echo that of Alfred Hitchcock’s well-known Soviet spy drama *Torn Curtain*. In both films there is the American doctor who heads to Moscow and the fiancée who follows the hero to Russia, with disastrous results and contributing to turning his stay into a much more dangerous event.

American film critic Glenn Kenny proposed that the plot line of the film is also similar to that of the James Bond film *The World Is Not Enough* (Apted 1999). In *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*, the conspiracy in the film, to sabotage the US

economy, is initiated due to a vote in the Security Council taking place in the United Nations concerning a proposed new Turkish pipeline, to which Russia is bitterly opposed as it would have a detrimental impact on Russia's economic domination of oil exports. The Russians claim that the approval of this pipeline would cause oil prices to fall and it would bankrupt the Russian government. The Russian ambassador says that they will regard US approval of the pipeline as an act of economic war against the Russian government. The US defies Russia and votes in favor of the proposed pipeline, believing that the only thing that would be undermined by this pipeline would be Russia's monopoly. The Russians are upset by this.

In the film *The World Is Not Enough* (Apted 1999), conflict arises over the much-disputed development of an oil pipeline that would link the Soviet oil fields to Europe. Although Kenny (2014) compares this plot development as similar to the plot of the Jack Ryan film in the fact that a pipeline is a significant point in the plot development of that film, the plot is different enough that it does not signify that that film should be deemed a hypotext for this film.

Says Branagh of such comparisons, "I don't mind that everything's been done before because I come from the classical theater. First half of my career was entirely doing things that had been done before hundreds and thousands of times. So I believe that doing it originally with different people was in itself worthwhile, was already in the system" (Branagh 2014).

6.2 Direction, Camera and Performance

This section continues the analysis of Branagh's direction, the camera techniques, and the performances of the actors in the film. The aim is to explore whether the methods of Branagh exhibited in *Thor* continue in *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* and the degree to which the intertextuality of the film can be seen in the mise-en-scène as a means of establishing audience recall.

As can be deduced from his own statements, Branagh's claimed intent with the film *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* was to create a film within the spy thriller genre that resonates with the audience's memories of classic Cold War spy thrillers, but

to place it within a modern context to which the viewer can emotionally connect. He achieves this through the use of familiar scenes and techniques that are recognisably spy thriller style that evoke a sense of familiarity in the audience, such as the slight-of-hand techniques for passing information and the location for the passing of such information in the darkened movie theatre. Branagh says of this homage to the old school spy genre, “I grew up seeing those kinds of things and so it’s exciting to be able to put them into a movie” (Branagh 2014).

In reference to his method for approaching the direction of the film, Branagh says, “the process for me was to sit down with David Koepp, screenwriter, and with Chris Pine and go through refining the script and asking questions and things. Then Kevin Costner came aboard, we did the same thing with him, and then Keira Knightley” (Molina 2014). This indicates Branagh’s role, like in *Thor*, of incorporating his input and that of the actors into the development of the characters and the screenwriting process.

Chris Pine, in an interview, speaks of what it was like to be in a film directed by Branagh. Says Pine:

What I would say about Ken is that he is incredibly, incredibly focused . . . Ken . . . is very specific about what he wants. We don’t spend much time. There’s maybe three takes and then we’re moving on. Oftentimes there’s one. He knows what he wants, how he wants it and that’s not to say that he’s not open to collaboration, but he’s not shy from, if we get it in one, we’ll move on. And in those scenes where it demands some colors and really getting to the core of it, he’ll stay with it. And what I love about his set, too, and it’s probably because he’s an actor directing actors, is that there’s actor-focus and a lot of times with big films, I think because there’s so much responsibility elsewhere in the film, what with CG or effects or the visuals of it, he’s very happy to kinda sit in a scene and talk with the actors. He’ll oftentimes stand right next to the camera and watch us work, which is great. He’s not hidden in video village all the time, which sometimes can happen. So I appreciate that. (Browne 2014)

When approaching the direction of the film, Branagh says, “One of the things that I wanted to do is a sort of inbuilt roughness, an edge, a kind of unpolished quality that I feel the story has. That’s what I really liked about the script. And I didn’t want it to get too smooth, which means that you’re never quite settled,

you're always a bit back-footed and, frankly, at times scared and certainly adrenalinised. And so the actual way of shooting the movie was led by that same instinct" (Branagh 2014). This desire can be seen in his frequent use in this film of handheld cameras and Steadicams.

Branagh's influence is also seen in the opening action of the film which has no dialogue. Unlike many action films that begin with a bang, the hero caught up in the middle of the action in sometimes a life and death struggle, this film opens with Jack Ryan lying quietly on a bench. Seeing that many people are rushing to the television screens, Jack follows the crowd. The first piece of dialogue that is spoken is Jack's question to a random student, asking "What's going on?"

In this opening, Branagh was influenced by his previous work with Shakespearean drama, and notes that "great art starts with simple questions," pointing out that *Hamlet* opens with the simple question, "Who goes there?" Branagh says, "What we're dealing with here is this extremely sensitive subject of the recollection of 9/11" (Branagh 2014).

In order to enhance this "recollection", Branagh uses real news footage to explain what is happening, the crash of the airplanes into the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001. The drama, the setting, and the tone is provided by the real life pivotal events that took place on this date and altered the course of many lives in the real world. In this way, Branagh establishes an immediate connection with the audience, relating to the memories of the viewer.

The choice to use the embedded text of the real news footage of 9/11 is a way to evoke an especially powerful sense of recall, particularly among viewers who may themselves remember watching that exact same footage live at the time of its occurrence. As Branagh explains, "We all knew what we were doing and where we were that day anywhere in the world really, and so it means a lot to people" (Branagh 2014). The choice to ground the action in these real life events not only makes the audience connect with the events, it makes them connect more closely with Jack, as they can empathise and understand how in that instant this could be a life-changing moment for him.

Branagh says, “One of the most difficult things Chris Pine had to do in this movie was this reaction to that [9/11] . . . and I think he sets up what’s a formidable performance with just his ability to carry off not speaking in the front part of the movie, because he can think, and we can be interested in him thinking” (Branagh 2014).

In this scene, when Jack sees students rushing into one of the buildings and he joins them to discover what is happening, the camera follows him. This scene is a series of tracking shots, consistent with Branagh’s previous films, beginning with Jack’s lying outside on a bench and following him until he is standing in front of the television monitors inside one of the buildings. The scene consists of a string of tracking shots interrupted by several cuts, as in *Thor*, but the movement of the action and the tracking of the character continues through the cuts. The cuts are not actually jump cuts, as the camera angles are similar enough to not quite give that jump cut look, but they are different enough to add a jarring feeling which makes the viewer ill at ease.

A difference between this film and Branagh’s other films in terms of these tracking shots is that here they are presented to seem that they are more eye-level, as though they are from the eyes and viewpoint of the viewer. This framing adds to the suspense of the scene, creating in the viewer the desire to also discover what it is that everyone is rushing to see. Suspense and tension is further added to the scene by other students being allowed to cross the frame between the camera as it trails behind Jack, sometimes obscuring him completely from view as he is lost in the crowd. This further references the generally claustrophobic mise-en-scène common to such thrillers. At one point, the camera even has to maneuver through a doorway to keep up with him rather than simply mysteriously passing through the wall (Image 70) as is done in *Sleuth*. The camera almost has to chase him, creating a sense of panic and urgency in the viewer to hurry and catch up for fear of losing him. The camera thus mimics the movement of someone who is following or trying to catch up with Jack.



Image 70: Stalking View (Branagh 2014)

The scene appears to have been shot using a Steadicam, moving through the crowd in a way that causes the viewer to feel rushed and anxious, creating that sense of being “unsettled, back-footed, scared and adrenalinised” that Branagh says he is trying to achieve (2014). All these camera techniques thus aid in Branagh’s attempt to create an effect that is rough rather than smooth, adding to the tension of the film and the tone of a traditional spy thriller from the opening scene. These tracking shots thus serve an additional purpose other than establishing the characters within their environments.

This scene is also an example of another of the aims that Branagh tries to achieve in this film, which is to create a feeling in which the audience is peeping in or spying on the characters in a secretive or often voyeuristic manner, also achieved through the use of camera technique, movement and framing. In some scenes, the camera moves around objects to reveal a previously hidden character, as though the camera is secretly hunting down that character. These camera movements give the viewer a sense of furtively sneaking up on the characters and secretly observing or spying on them. This adds a feeling of secrecy and anxiety to the scene, further enhancing the thrill of the spy genre for the audience.

Another example of this is the scene in which Cathy and Jack have just argued over Cathy’s suspicions about his having an affair. The camera tracks through the darkened apartment before coming upon a door with windows through which Cathy is revealed seated on a sofa and watching television. The camera watches her through the windows before cutting to Jack standing in the doorway

(Image 71). This example establishes the viewer as voyeur with the use of reflections in glass to put distance between the viewer and the character. This feeling of voyeurism is particularly effective in this scene because of the content of the scene, an intimate moment between the two characters in the safety of their own home, so that the viewers feel as though they are intruding, being in a place where they should not be, witnessing an intimate moment that should be private.

Such framing evokes memory of the classic Hitchcock thriller *Psycho* (1960). Norman Bates removes a hanging picture from the wall and peers through a hole in the wall previously hidden by the picture. Through the jagged hole he spies upon an intimate scene with Janet Leigh disrobing and preparing for a bath (72).



Image 71: Voyeuristic View (Branagh 2014)



Image 72: Voyeuristic View (Hitchcock 1960)

Another example of viewer as voyeur from a different scene is when Jack is shown at his desk in his job on Wall Street. The camera is outside his office peering at him through the glass that separates his private office from the open spaces of the cubicles and work spaces of the other employees, as demonstrated by the reflections of the glass that are transposed over Jack's face (Image 73).

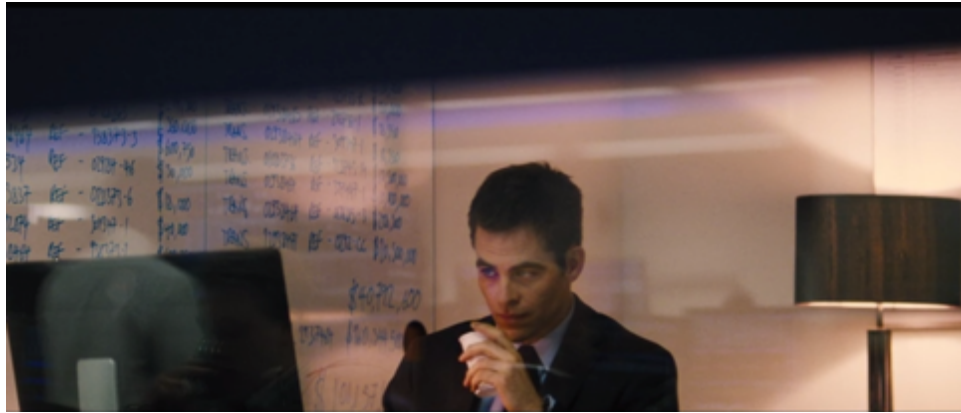


Image 73: Voyeuristic View (Branagh 2014)

Branagh says, "I love that shot with all the fluorescents dancing away in the background . . . we enjoyed using the fluorescents, we enjoyed using a lot of reflections, we enjoyed using a lot of long lenses. We moved the camera all the time. We were constantly trying to make people feel the sweat of it. We're always moving on all the close-ups of all the participants" (Branagh 2014).

In response to a question posed by this researcher as to whether the use of the reflections was deliberate, Zambarloukos replies, "Everything Branagh does is deliberate. He is an absolute perfectionist. There is no wasted frame. And when you work with Ken, from all of us, he's the one that works the most, sleeps the least, is on his toes the most. So you kind of have to do the same. One thing he's not is a lazy director. He never leaves a single frame go. I've never ever met anyone as hard working as him. He is truly one of the most hard working people on the planet."

An additional camera technique that is used to enhance the feeling of viewer as voyeur is the use of the Steadicam and handheld cameras, as mentioned in the opening scene. For Branagh, this technique is specific to this film and is not used

in his other films. Throughout this film there are moments when the deliberate shakiness of handheld cinematography adds to the anxiety and tension of the scene. An example of this is shown in the scene in which Jack is attacked by his driver/assassin in the bathroom.

Another technique also used in this scene is the use of character point of view with the camera. It is not a custom of Branagh to use the camera as a means of demonstrating what a character is seeing. However, in this scene, the camera follows Jack's point of view and zips and darts shakily around the room as Jack frantically searches the bathroom in which he has locked himself in an attempt to escape the assassin's bullets. The camera becomes his frantic eyes as he tries to find a means of escape, adding to the feeling of terror that has engulfed Jack. This also serves to establish the actor in his small space, presenting the confines of Jack's temporary and claustrophobic prison. Allowing the audience to see the location through Jack's eyes also allows them to join him in searching for an escape.

These techniques together collectively aid in creating the feeling of the spy genre in that the viewer, when watching, is always made aware of the defined boundaries of the space in which the character exists. This demonstrates the confinement of the characters, sometimes closing in on them and sometimes even pointing out for the viewer the exits that represent possible means of escape for the character.

The camera thus plays with the dynamic of who sees what and what is seen by whom. It involves the audience as an active participant of the spy game, leaving the audience, like Jack Ryan, in the position of being constantly in the shadows.

In this film, Branagh is not looking for glamour. He applauds Chris Pine for not caring about his looks. In reference to this fight in the hotel room, Branagh discusses the fish out of water scene where Jack has had training in the Marines but is not really a fighter. Branagh says:

It's a street fight, it's a bar fight, it's a brawl. You're grabbing the breaks where you can get them. You're having to be ruthless. One of the things that I think Chris Pine was pretty brave to do in the

context of a part which you might call a movie star part. In this situation, those veins on your face do pop out and you get a bit florid and it's not necessarily the most becoming look for a moment or two but you feel the guy is drowning, an enormously more powerful adversary . . . and then the desperation. (Branagh 2014)

Branagh further adds:

The other thing about Jack Ryan, I think, is he is a gentleman . . . He has good spiritual manners, I would say. And what's happened in these last few minutes [after he has killed a man] for him is not an easy thing. The idea of the death of another human being, however deserved it might be in that situation, is not something that sits easily with him. He has a conscience . . . so that's something he knows he's already going to have to live with. It's part of the picture to understand what a good man is prepared to put up with, prepared to do in order to serve . . . Definitely something the picture was trying to take a look at and not be too glib about. (Branagh 2014)

A Steadicam is also used in the scene in which, after his defeat of the would-be assassin, Jack flees his hotel room. The attack by the assassin makes it obvious to him that Cherevin is doing something illicit that he does not wish Ryan to find out about. Jack escapes to the rooftop of the hotel to telephone his CIA contact, frantic over what has just happened and out of his element because he is simply an analyst. The voice on the other end of the line points out that, in the end, Jack is a Marine and that he should remember his tradecraft and he will be fine. As this conversation is playing out, the Steadicam circles around Jack in a dizzying motion, contributing to the sense of panic that Jack exudes, and demonstrating Branagh's continued use of circling shots, a technique that Crowl describes as having become "a feature of Branagh's repertory" (2006, p. 45). This is also an example of Branagh's use of camera movement to enhance the performance of the actors.

About shooting the scene looking over the rooftops of Moscow after Jack kills his assassin in the hotel room, Branagh says:

It is sunset, or the magic hour as DPs like to call it, or the tragic hour as so many of us who have had to work through it find it, and two or three pages of dialogue for Chris Pine. So we said to Chris, 'Look, this is the keynote for us here. We've got this view of all of Moscow,

the sun's going down, you're under pressure. We want to do it all in one go with a Steadicam shot. What do you think?' And he, God bless him said, 'Let's go for it.' And then we ended up running. We did six, seven, eight takes just back-to-back. The Steadicam guy was absolutely exhausted just trying to get this thing that Haris was so thrilled about. He said, 'We can get the sun to go down in the shot. It can go down in the shot. It can be an in-camera visual effect by God' . . . We got a rainbow . . . It's a real rainbow. No visual effect. That's no visual effect. It's real Haris Zambarloukos, real Moscow rainbow at real sunset in real Moscow . . . So afterwards, I remember cutting here and saying to Haris, 'Wasn't that great?' He said, 'It was beautiful, wasn't it?' I said, 'Yeah, it was a beautiful performance.' He said, 'No, the rainbow was great." But Chris did three pages of dialogue . . . That's the keynote for the movie. This guy, a good guy, on his own, persecuted, under pressure, not quite sure who to trust, where to go, tough, able, brave but vulnerable. This is our Jack Ryan. (Branagh 2014)

The camera movement, circling around Jack, also serves again to establish the character in his space and his relationship with that space, as well as demonstrating to the viewer that he is really there in "real Moscow".

This film is the first of Branagh's films in which both film and the Red Epic digital camera were used, as Branagh's chosen medium is always film. In the interview with this researcher, when asked about this use of the Red camera, Haris Zambarloukos states that the Red was used for:

some of the night shots in Moscow and in New York. We did about four or five days. We were traveling and so there were no laboratories that we could use and we were doing night work so that it was more conducive and pretty much documentary style in that all those Red Square scenes, all of those car chase scenes need very precise focus . . . So it just worked out quite efficiently that they are all bunched together at the beginning of the film, i. e., within a week's work and then we switched back to film for everything else. The idea was to make it look like film. Again, we took a modern technique when we needed to and found ways of integrating it.

The action sequences of this film are also indicative of the methods employed by Branagh in all of his films to enhance performances in that he consistently tries to couple the action with the emotional state of the characters. He does not use typical straight-forward action scenes commonly used in action

films, even in his car chases. The emotional reactions of the characters to the action are always incorporated within the action scenes.

An example of this is the car chase through the streets of Moscow as Jack tracks and follows the vehicle of Cherevin who is holding Cathy captive and threatening her with physical harm.

As Haris Zambarloukos states:

On *Thor* we wanted to do a lot of the action sequences not as a second unit stunt piece. A lot of elements of dialogue, emotion, etc. happen in intense situations. And that's what makes his [Branagh's] films so exciting. He never says, "Oh well, now we are going to have a car chase". Same on *Jack Ryan*. It's not like, "Oh, the motorcycle chase". And within all of those things, there is always constantly some kind of emotional conflict, some kind of dramatic element, and always a huge amount of performance that goes on, and they all have to happen simultaneously. And it would be a lot easier if it didn't, but that's the kind of way that it's chosen.

The action sequences thereby also become scenes which simultaneously focus upon the performances of the actors. Of the action sequence inside the car, Branagh points out that they had a camera on a 180-degree car rig that allowed them to shoot inside the vehicle, so that they were shooting the "real Chris moving the real steering wheel in the real city and reacting to real sharp turns at real speed . . . It put real Chris in real streets in the middle of the night, sweating and trying to remember the lines, and he's got so many things to think about doing that sequence" (Branagh 2014). This is typical of how Branagh puts the actors under pressure and makes them really perform, which helps to give that sense of heightened reality and to feel the real sweat and terror of the chase. It is another example of how the camera is used to enhance performance.

In reference to this, Branagh points out that, "we would often play these scenes quite long even if we knew that they would be broken up and they would be cut . . . so when Chris was doing this car chase, he was doing a three-minute dialogue sequence that might play out over ten, twelve, fifteen pages of screenplay but Chris did the whole thing in one. He was so game for that. That in itself also

gave a quality to the performance I think was unusual. It wasn't just guy steps into a car for five-second take, cut, gone, see you in a couple of hours" (Branagh 2014).

The long uninterrupted shots are not as prominent as in Branagh's Shakespearean films, but this indicates that Branagh's methods in creating a performance are the same regardless of whether or not the scene will later be broken up.

Chris Pine had already been cast in the role of Jack Ryan when Branagh was chosen to direct the film. Says Branagh, "That was key to me because I thought that was excellent casting, an actor I very, very much admire and liked a lot. I thought that he had the qualities of approachable-ness, the humor, the quick thinking, the capacity for vulnerability" (Molina 2014). In casting Pine and Knightly together, Branagh adds, "It's a very handsome chemical vibe between the pair of these."

Within the traditional spy thriller genre, there are a number of characters that exist as iconic archetypes which are herein incorporated, characters who play a significant part in forwarding the story. As such, the casting of actors to play these types of roles was very significant. Says Branagh, "For those who love the Clancy books, there's a kind of classic DNA that runs through this. There are things that it kind of embodies in the genre. It came out of that Cold War period but it's peopled by sort of classic and archetypal types" (Branagh 2014).

One of these archetypes is what Branagh terms "the mystery man". As he states, in reference to the William Harper character, Jack's mentor, "I like 'mystery man'. He could be the devil, you know. He could be Mephistopheles coming in there and tempting. Is he in fact somebody you can trust? He's certainly a smooth guy" (Branagh 2014).

For the role of Harper, in the casting of Kevin Costner, who had previously been offered the role of Jack Ryan in *The Hunt for Red October*, Branagh says, "Kevin carries all that movie weight with him . . . It's also interesting just to see it as a weird kind of mirror image going on, of these two very handsome lads, you know, physically kind of similar in their way, and both with great naturalistic delivery

and ability to hold a screen. They're both people you can stand and look at and watch thinking" (Branagh 2014). Branagh further adds:

The other thing that Kevin Costner brings to this is just a gravitas, that's when he goes through this scene and he talks about there is a scenario where none of us get out alive here, you believe him, you believe that he believes it and also there is something . . . there is a degree to which Kevin, across the great body of work that he's done, represents something quintessentially American . . . and he has weight. So when he talks about protecting America, you know he feels it. And, I think, feels it also with a degree of sensitivity. (Branagh 2014)

Branagh's perception of Costner as "quintessentially American" is a result of the numerous roles Costner has played in which he appears as the stereotypical small-town American hero in such films as *Field of Dreams*, *Bull Durham*, *Wyatt Earp*, *Man of Steel* and his Oscar-winning performance in *Dancing with Wolves*. This casting can be seen as evoking audience recall with Costner recognised and accepted as "the good guy", thereby aiding in his connection with the audience.

Branagh also states that he was very pleased with the casting of Mikhail Baryshnikov in the role of the Russian Minister, who "comes in here once again in terms of trying to set up the archetypal classical elements of a spy thriller. Two men in suits walking in woods, distant from cars that have delivered them, to have a conversation that can only be had in this secret and private way" (Branagh 2014).

The casting of Baryshnikov adds a degree of authenticity as many viewers are familiar with him and would recall the fact that he is, in fact, born and raised Russian, in contrast to the playing of the role of Cherevin by Branagh, who is not. The casting adds further to audience recall and the theme of Russian intimidation for those who are aware of Baryshnikov's personal real life drama in his defection from the U.S.S.R.

In casting Nonso Anozie, Branagh says, "Nonso Anozie, who plays Embee Deng, who's our would-be killer here, when you first see him, he's so cheerful. He's so comforting. He's the guy you do want to meet when you arrive in a foreign country where you may be slightly concerned about security. But as they say, you don't want to make an enemy of him and unfortunately Jack Ryan does and that's

quite a different face we suddenly see“ (Branagh 2014). Anozie becomes a new addition to Branagh’s list of actors that he works with time and again when he appears once again in a featured role in *Cinderella*.

Branagh also adds that “Elena Velikanova who plays Katya, the secretary there, again I think she is also part of the classic spy structure as the handmaiden to the bad guy and is in herself a potentially scary scary figure,” further evidencing Branagh’s attention to audience recall. As he points out, “She’s got a little Nurse Ratched in her” referring to the wicked nurse played by Louise Fletcher in her Oscar-winning role in the film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*. Branagh further explains that her introduction into the film is “part of what people say would happen in those kinds of scenarios and with those kind of security organisations. Intimidation, particularly Russian intimidation, being there and just staring you out is a big technique, letting you know we’re there” (Branagh 2014).

6.3 Costume

In costuming, the leading characters are modern upscale young working professionals and they dress the part. Jack Ryan’s suits reflect his status as an upwardly mobile professional on Wall Street. The suits worn by Kenneth Branagh in his role as Viktor Cherevin are expensive-looking as denotes his character as a billionaire. The costumes have a certain level of believability in modern society. The characters are not dressed to draw attention to themselves or to their fashion but to be acceptable as who the characters represent in the modern world. Kevin Costner appears in his naval uniform because, as Branagh says, “When you see him in this uniform, you know he is important” (Branagh 2014).

During the scene in which Branagh and Baryshnikov are walking through the woods, both are dressed in long, woolen coats, designed to look both elegant and expensive. These bring to mind the previously discussed images of Loki in the scene where he goes to visit Thor on Earth and of Gabriel Byrne in both *End of Days* (Hyams 1999) and *Miller’s Crossing* (Coen and Coen 1990). These are expensive coats and suits, which aid audience recall as they are reminiscent of those worn by the wise guys of Mafioso films like *The Godfather* (Coppola 1972)

or the suits worn by James Bond as an archtext of the spy thriller, power suits designed to indicate their power which Branagh employs, especially in his characterisations of his villains.

While stating that "Clothes are the clues to the character" (Jones 2014), costume designer Jill Taylor describes the costume choices for the character of Cathy Muller, stating, "I just wanted to convey that this character was a practical, intelligent girl, with an inherent sense of who she was, who had more important things to think about, other than the way she looked" (Jones 2014). Taylor further adds that she was deliberately trying to incorporate a sense of old Hollywood in the costuming, stating, "I have always been a huge fan of Katharine Hepburn, particularly her style, and so looked to her for inspiration, she had a practicality about her, a simplicity of dress, but still always managed to look feminine even wearing pants, men's brogues, and a simple shirt" (Jones 2014). This Katherine Hepburn influence can be seen in the character's Oxford shirts, straight-legged trousers, and boxy-shouldered coats.

6.4 Set

The initial screenplay was written to be set in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. However, it was decided to set the film in Russia instead because the Cold War mindset is still a conscious part of many people's memories. As such, for Branagh, Moscow remains one of the only places where an immediate sense of danger for Americans is believable. In addition, much of the spy thriller genre films which were influential on Branagh are concerned with Russian/American relations during the Cold War. Branagh says, "Although it's reinvented, it's like the ancient enmity. Somehow it's two old colossi still facing each other again in their new clothes, of the flashy brash rich Russia and the American Empire stumbling and juddering a bit, but still commanding its primacy on the world stage. And something about the complementary and adversarial elements of that I think is satisfying to the audience. They somehow know where they are" (Branagh 2014).

Some of the filming took place in Moscow, particularly around Red Square, because, as Branagh states, "I think it does something to you as an actor when

you have the absolute sense of its [the Kremlin's] dominance in the center of that city. And its massivity, its size . . . It's a city inside itself. And so the sense of the power of what goes on in there and how far it reaches is very very strong. You feel differently there for sure" (Branagh 2014).

This is again indicative of the significance of audience recall and Branagh's desire to create an experience for the audience as the Kremlin remains a symbol of 20th century Communism and the Cold War in popular American culture in the way that the Statue of Liberty is meant to be a symbol of freedom.

While the Kremlin may be seen as a symbol of old 20th century Russia, Branagh wanted also to convey a new modern 21st century Russia with modern glass skyscrapers and hi-tech facilities, to say "The new Russia has everything." Things are deliberately shown which have lots of glass windows and surfaces, hotel rooms, office buildings, glass-paneled doors, all of which contribute to that sleek, modern, minimalist look of the new Russia, while at the same time, contributing to the continued voyeuristic feeling that is deliberately created throughout the film. This is particularly evident in a scene in which Jack Ryan steals information from Cherevin's computer in his office. The scene includes a shot taken from outside the glass high-rise so that Jack's movements as he moves quickly through the hallways and down the stairs within in building are seen from outside it. It gives the impression of the viewer standing across the street and again spying on the action taking place inside, adding tension to the scene.

The trend can also be seen as continuing in the appearance of Cherevin's office. Says Branagh, "the idea for Cherevin's office here is this big empty space, one clean desk, one terrifying memento of his life in the army [a grenade], rough-textured walls, and then the dominance of a big painting that celebrates brief Russian supremacy in the Napoleonic Wars." The painting can be seen as a means of reminding the audience of the power and strength of Imperial Russia, adding again an element of Russian intimidation and reminding the audience of the Cold War climate of fear.

Of the prop of the grenade sitting in Cherevin's office on his desk, Branagh says, "The grenade is so evocative of simply, as soon as you see it, everybody knows that, 'Gosh, you take that pin out, there's just a few seconds' so it's latent with danger . . . It's almost as if, you say the wrong thing in the meeting, you're gone. So that sense of the potential danger of Cherevin. And I feel like Chris Pine here is feasting with panthers" (Branagh 2014). This explosive nature of the grenade can be seen as symbolic of the situation in which Ryan finds himself and Cherevin's attempt to cower him.

Of interest also is Branagh's discussion, which he finds very amusing, of the Moscow hotel room that Jack returns to, cleaned up after he has killed the assassin. As Jack enters, there is a small tray of chocolates on his pillow. Branagh says, "This Moscow hotel room, beautifully realised by Andrew Laws, who I think did a marvelous job as production designer in giving a cohesion to the high-tech world between both capitals New York and Moscow and found brilliant exterior locations . . . He was a huge contributor to the movie. I think he made a big difference including these little touches. If you're a guy who just came in two hours ago, you are murdering an enormous Nigerian man, and then you go out and explain how the world is going to end to Kevin Costner, and you come home and they've decided you should get three chocolates for your trouble" (Branagh 2014).

Branagh also particularly wanted the setting of a scene in the Russian Orthodox church because "the world of conspiracy and secrecy in the spy film, people having to have conversations in places in public in order to mask dastardly things, is something I really enjoy doing" (Branagh 2014). An example of another such architextual church scene can be seen in Alfred Hitchcock's film *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), in which the characters of Dr. McKenna and his wife Jo enter a church in search of clues that might lead them to the whereabouts of their kidnapped son. The congregation in the church is singing a slow and prodding hymn, like a dirge, adding a gravity and sense of menace to the scene and imposing the question of the possibility of impending death.

Some of the exterior shots were also filmed on location in New York City, though Branagh points out that a number of the shots that represented New York were filmed in the Clerkenwell area of London. For these shoots, Branagh says, some of the signs within the locations “we’ve repainted with various New York logos and we peopled them with New York taxis and cars and trucks and things” (Branagh 2014).

The scene with the van in the water under the bridge that is set to take place in New York beneath Wall Street was also a set that was built for the film. Branagh says:

It was the 007 stage at Pinewood which I think carries a certain romance for anybody who lives and works in movies because it’s such a big stage, has a huge tank inside it. You’re aware of great movies, not just the Bond movies . . . but huge sets have always gone in there. So we had a chance to work in there and begin the sense of size here that we were trying to convey underneath New York . . . There are lots of tunnels and lots of underground and cavernous places under New York, which in themselves are fascinating . . . And the challenge for us was just the accessibility of said places with the vast numbers of people that make up a movie crew. And so we took the research, took the inspiration, and decided that we would use artifice to make up the difference and give us something a little more tailored. (Branagh 2014)

6.5 Music

From the opening credits of the film *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*, the influence of Branagh can be seen. It was he who requested that the usual music that traditionally accompanies the production house logos of Paramount and Sky Dance Productions be removed, replaced by the music of Patrick Doyle who was hired once again by Branagh to score the music of the film he is directing. In this way, Branagh hoped to set the tone of the film from the very first second.

The musical score for this film, as in every other film that Branagh has directed, was composed by Patrick Doyle. Putting his faith into Doyle’s abilities once more, Branagh says, “Getting the tone right for this movie was something that music was always going to be a big part of it actually . . . Patrick’s always had a really good feel for something that in itself is all integrated. So, if you listen to his

soundtracks on their own, they feel like an organic whole, but he's very good at plotting the movie part of it" (Branagh 2014).

The music of this film has great tension and an eerie sound that is designed to make the listener uneasy, alert, and even a bit fearful. It is underscored with heavy violins and the deeper brass instruments and a melodic trace of the balalaika tinkling almost like bells tolling. The score ranges in tone from ultra patriotic, as in the final scene in which Ryan meets the President of the United States, to traditionally Russian-inspired, as in the scene of Cherevin praying in the church. It is often techno-heavy which is in keeping with the high-tech atmosphere that is created in some of the sets.

Concerning his choices in composing the soundtrack, Patrick Doyle explains his influences, in particular, the German expressionist-inspired work of director Carol Reed's *The Third Man*:

I visited the film set, which I do whenever I can, and saw the ultra-modern hotel room in Moscow featuring Chris Pine as Jack. I was very impressed by the images of modern day Moscow's financial district, which is as architecturally striking and contemporary as Wall Street in New York, and London. Therefore I knew the score had to reflect this contemporary world. These buildings utilise a plethora of different metals and glass so the look of the film and its locations are very edgy with strong angles and bright lights. As a result, these images of metal and glass needed to be addressed musically . . . In the tense scene where Jack is on a rooftop in Moscow . . . I wanted to give the score a sense of suspended time at this point and a feeling of *The Third Man*. I remember watching *The Third Man* as a kid and it came to mind in creating the feeling of loneliness that Ryan feels, being in a foreign environment. I used a treated balalaika to capture the sense of the indigenous music of Russia. (Ciafardini 2014)

In describing his decision to incorporate a Russian hymn into the score, Doyle states:

When I saw early footage of Kenneth's character Viktor Cherevin praying as he lights a candle inside an Orthodox church, I imagined a traditional hymn being sung in the background by a male-voice choir as he prayed. Coming from a world of choral music myself, I felt it would be a wonderful opportunity to write such a piece. The words to "Faith of Our Fathers" come from an existing hymn that was translated into Russian and the score recalls this theme sporadically

throughout the movie. When Kenneth heard what I had written, he loved it. But he felt it was essential to have a shot showing the choir singing, so this was scheduled as a new shoot a couple of days later. As a result of our meeting, we now cut away from Viktor to show a section of the choir singing during the scene. (Ciafardini 2014)

The almost dirge-like quality of the hymn in this scene, reminiscent of the earlier-mentioned Hitchcock scene (1956), can be seen as a foreshadowing of the deaths to come, a funeral rite for the character who will soon be dead.

Another element of interest in the film score, seen in Branagh's earlier films as he plays with the relationship between diegetic and non-diegetic sound, is in the scene in which Jack returns to his hotel room to find the room has been completely cleaned and all traces of his fight with the bodyguard have been eradicated. Playing on the radio as he enters is a version of the Jack Ryan theme so that the diegetic music playing is the music which the audience can recognize as a part of the non-diegetic music of the film, except with different instrumentation. About this choice, Doyle says, "I suppose it's a sort of musical Alfred Hitchcock moment! Ken thought it was very funny" (Ciafardini 2014).

One of the things that is consistent in the music of Branagh films is that he consistently parallels the emotional arcs of the characters within the dialogue of the characters.

6.6 Conclusion

The visual style and tone of *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* are different from those of *Thor*. However, the methods used by Branagh to achieve the different styles are similar. Also like *Thor*, the film is a bricolage filled with intertextuality and references to a variety of hypertexts which are designed to elicit audience recall.

As is his usual practice previously demonstrated, Branagh begins by making a decision for the best approach based upon research into the hypertexts and architexts of the film and the elements of intertextuality that he wishes to present. The continuous references of the architextual elements designed to elicit audience recall dominate in the film's reiteration of spy thriller elements.

In *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*, examples of such referencing include the architextual elements of the spy film genre, such as the incorporation of the character of the 'mystery man', the meeting of Jack Ryan with the agent in the cinema, the meeting of Ryan with his mentor on the darkened park bench and the secret hand-offs between agents. Branagh also includes references to previous thrillers, such as the use of the opening credits of *Sorry, Wrong Number* and the walk-in-the-woods scene reminiscent of *Miller's Crossing*. The early sequence of the helicopter crash can be seen as a nod to those Jack Ryan aficionados who are fans of the film franchise and its reference to *The Hunt for Red October*.

In filming, the constant movement of the camera and the way in which the camera tracks and presents the subject matter is consistent with *Thor* as well as his other films although it differs from *Thor* and the other films in that the camera is often used to appear to present point-of-view shots as though the audience is spying on the action and the characters. Another similarity between *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* and *Thor* is the way in which the camera is used to enhance performance which is even incorporated into action scenes. There is a difference in the settings in that, although the camera movement is used similarly to his previous films to establish the character in his environment and to suggest that the world exists beyond the cinematic screen, the film does not make use of a single location nor does it employ both interior and exterior scenes of the same set

The same themes that appear throughout many of Branagh's films can be detected here as well. In terms of the difficulty of navigating familial relationships, Jack Ryan is troubled in his relationship with Cathy as he is forced to contend with the insecurities and accusations of his fiancée that result from his necessity for secrecy and his obligation to lie to her, contributing to situations that put their lives in danger. The theme concerning the feelings of isolation and alienation are here as well. Jack Ryan, in his obligatory secrecy and his need to lead a double life, lives his life in isolation, compelled to remain alone and alienated from his coworkers and his friends, as he carries the future and stability of his country on his shoulders. The third theme, the question of fitness to rule, is seen in Jack

Ryan's own insecurities as he questions his own ability to carry out a mission that is, in essence, a mission to save the world from economic disaster.

CHAPTER SEVEN: *CINDERELLA*

In keeping with Branagh's process of researching the histories of his film stories or topics, this chapter identifies the origins of the Cinderella legend and some of its various incarnations that exist in different parts of the world. The chapter then examines the intertextuality of the 2015 Disney live action film *Cinderella* with particular emphasis on the relevance as hypotext and hypertexts, respectively, of the Perrault fairytale, the Grimm's fairytale and the 1950 Disney animated film. It compares and contrasts the film with these various hypotexts and hypertexts and analyses the means in which the intertextuality is used to elicit audience recall. It further explores the way the elements of *mise-en-scène* are also used to elicit recall. It concludes with a comparison of the methods used by Branagh in this film with those used in his previous directorial films, particularly the case-study films *Thor* and *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*, and argues that this film contributes to Branagh's status of auteur even within the auteurship of the Disney franchise as discussed by Thomas Leitch, who claims such auteurship for Walt Disney, stating:

It might seem odd to consider Disney as either adapter or auteur, since he neither wrote nor directed any of the features for which he is best remembered. Yet Disney is clearly both adapter and auteur, since all of the Disney features before *The Lion King* [1994] were based on earlier stories or novels, and they were all marketed as products of Disney and no one else. (2007, p. 245)

Branagh's Disney-produced film *Cinderella*, released in 2015, stars Lily James as Cinderella, Richard Madden as the Prince, Cate Blanchett as the Stepmother, Ben Chaplin as the Father, Sophie McShera as Drisella, Holliday Grainger as Anastasia, and Helena Bonham Carter as the Fairy Godmother. Actors whom Branagh has previously cast include Stellan Skarsgård as the Grand Duke, Derek Jacobi as the King and Nonso Anozie as the Captain of the Guards.

7.1 Origins of the Cinderella Legend

The legend of Cinderella has been told and retold in various incarnations in different parts of the world throughout the centuries since antiquity. The original story of the young servant girl whose lost slipper earned her a kingdom may be

traced as far back as to ancient Egypt and the tales surrounding a Thracian slave and courtesan known as Rhodopis who lived during the sixth century B.C.E. and is said to have been a fellow slave with Aesop who is credited with writing many fables, and she may have become the wife of the Egyptian Pharaoh Psamtik III (also spelled Psammetichus).

Greek historian Herodotus, writing in the fifth century B.C.E., states that:

Rhodopis, the courtesan...was a Thracian by birth, slave to Iadmon, son of Hephaestopolis, a Samian, and fellow-slave of Aesopus the story-writer...Rhodopis was set free and abode in Egypt, where, her charms becoming well known, she grew wealthy enough for a lady of her profession. (1920, Chapters 134-35)

Four centuries later, Greek geographer and historian Strabo, in his *Geography*, describes a particular story concerning Rhodopis, claiming that:

A story is told of her, that, when she was bathing, an eagle snatched one of her sandals from the hands of her female attendant and carried it to Memphis; the eagle soaring over the head of the king, who was administering justice at the time, let the sandal fall into his lap. The king, struck with the shape of the sandal, and the singularity of the accident, sent over the country to discover the woman to whom it belonged. She was found in the city of Naucratis, and brought to the king, who made her his wife. (1903, Chapter I)

Roman author Claudius Aelianus, too, writing in the second century, repeats this tale of Rhodopis and her shoe and identifies the king by name, stating:

The *Egyptians* relations affirm that *Rhodopis* was a most beautiful Curtizan ; and that on a time as she was bathing her self. . .an Eagle stooping down, snatched up one of her Shoes, and carried it away to *Memphis*, where *Psammetichus* was sitting in Judgement, and let the Shoe fall into his lap. *Psammetichus* wondring at the shape of the Shoe, and neatness of the work, and the action of the Bird, sent throughout *Ægypt* to find out the Woman to whom the shoe belonged ; and having found her out, married her. (Chapter 33)

French author Frédéric Dillaye in his discussion of the origins of the tale of Cinderella (Perrault, 2005, p. 224), repeats these tales, stating, “Si nous remontons aux origines de Cendrillon, nous rencontrons les premiers germes de cette légende dans l’histoire d’Égypte. Strabon & Élien racontent, en effet, que a pantoufle de la jeune Rodope étant tombée des serres d’un aigle sur les genoux de Psammétichus, le Pharaon fit chercher la dame, la découvrit & l’épousa.” (If we go back to the origins of Cinderella (Cendrillon), we find the first seeds of this legend in the history of Egypt. Strabo (Strabon) and Aelianus (Élien) tell, in effect, of the slipper of the young Rhodopis (Rhodope) having fallen from the talons of an eagle into the lap of Psamtik (Psammetichus), the Pharaoh searched for the lady, found her, and married her.)

Such tales continued in various embodiments in the following centuries with embellishments, many of which can be found online, translated into English (Ashliman, 1998). These include various versions from a wide variety of countries throughout Europe, Asia, and the Americas.

One of the earliest recorded versions of the legend comes from ninth century China (c. 850) and the heroine of this tale is called Yeh-Hsien (Casey, 2006). The story of the slipper and the search for the unknown and unseen owner of the shoe is quite similar to the story of Rhodopis’ shoe in that the king is presented with a shoe that he finds intriguing and goes in search of its unknown owner, never having met her.

In 1634, the tale of Cenerentola (from the Italian word *cenere*, meaning *ash*). appeared in a published collection of folk tales entitled *Lo cunto de li cunti overo trattenemiento de peccerille* (*The Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones*), also known as *Il Pentamerone*, written by the Neapolitan poet and author Giambattista Basile, Conte di Torrone (2000). In this tale, Cenerentola is abused by her stepmother and stepsisters, loses her slipper at the king’s banquet, and becomes queen when she is brought to the king and her lost slipper fits only her foot. Her wicked stepsisters are so filled with envy and hatred that they cannot bear

to see Cenerentola treated so grandly so they sneak away and comfort themselves with the belief that their king is simply a madman.

The incarnations of the Cinderella legend most relevant to this study, however, are the versions by Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm. These two versions of the legend have been most influential on Branagh's *Cinderella*, as is demonstrated below.

7.2 Intertextual Relationships of *Cinderella*

The opening title credits of the Disney classic animated film of *Cinderella* state explicitly that this film is "From the Original Classic by Charles Perrault" (Geronimi and Jackson 1950). As such, the action of the 2015 *Cinderella* film, which uses the animated film as a major hypertext, rather closely follows the unfolding of the Perrault version of the tale, with some exceptions. Some appropriations to the film can be traced back to the Grimm story of *Ashputtel*. The film can thereby be classified as a bricolage of appropriations from these versions of the tale.

Branagh's approach to the live action version of *Cinderella* is that he does not want an alternate retelling of a story with which so many people are familiar. As in the two films *Thor* and *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*, he wants the audience to connect to the nostalgia they may feel, in this case, about the classic fairytale and also the 1950 Disney animated film. He wants the audience to revel in the retelling and to create that tension of anticipation of what is to come, already having knowledge of what those actions to come will be. As Branagh declares, "Somehow suspense still kicks in. So in that sense, you may expect it but you also want to relive it, and it seems one of those stories where the ritual retelling of this particular tale is quite a personal thing for people" (AOL Build 2015).

As Zambarloukos says in the interview with this researcher about their approach to filming, "With a piece like *Cinderella*, it's got to be a Disney extravaganza and that's what we tried to do and we didn't want to do a modern version of it. We wanted a classic fairytale in the Charles Perrault, not the Brothers Grimm, version of this," to create a *Cinderella* that is engaging as well as mentally

stimulating for a child, not in the degree that it will remove them from the action, but in a way that will cause them to recognize visual cues such as the recurring motif of the butterfly, especially given the nature of the film as a family film in terms of its likelihood of being re-watched over and over by children.

An example of such visual cues can be seen in the Mercer Meyer *Little Critter* series of storybooks (Meyer 2005). Throughout these books, Meyer draws, hidden somewhere within the drawings as settings, a little mouse and a little spider, the constant companion of Little Critter. Attention is never drawn to these small characters and they are never mentioned by name, yet for a child reading the books or being read to, one of the interesting aspects becomes to locate where in each picture these characters are hiding.

Branagh incorporates this same type of challenge in *Cinderella*. For example, perhaps upon first watching the film, not everyone will notice the goose chandelier. However, for a child who owns the DVD, recognizing the numerous examples of goose imagery may become a mental challenge of discovery when watching the film multiple times.

Ellis proposes that “The faithfulness of the adaptation is the degree to which it can rework and replace a memory. This process is always likely to fail to some degree, as the generation of a memory from a reading of a text will involve associations of a contingent and personal nature as well as more culturally pervasive ones” (Ellis 1982, p. 4).

In the same vein, “It’s an interesting question about memory,” says Branagh:

I don’t know if you feel this. I often quote movies and books where I quote a famous scene and I describe it in huge detail, very specific detail, and then I go back and watch it, and it’s completely different. I just remember it was so important to me that my imagination was already working. This isn’t just a crazy director’s thing of I was re-cutting it in my head. It’s just that you remember it differently. As you’re leaving the movie theatre, it’s different from what you just saw . . . I’ve said to a few people as they say to me, ‘Oh, you’ve stuck so closely to the 1950 original’, I’d say, ‘Really? Watch it right now. I think you’re going to find probably that’s not the case. But I can quite see how you might feel that’. And I’m always interested in the way in

which memory and the evolution of memory effects what we feel, particularly about these cherished experiences which sometimes, when we go revisit . . . it's okay to retell that story now and get back to why I did love it because the real version on my memory is somehow dating. (AOL Build 2015)

This statement of Branagh supports specifically the premise of the significance for him of audience recall and his desire to create a personal experience for each viewer. It further supports Wollen's (1972) theory of the significance of the semiology of film aesthetics.

In his interview, Zambarloukos points out, in creating a new version of the tale, that further supports Branagh's claimed author intent concerning the importance of audience recall, stating:

There was a certain amount of responsibility we all felt as crew members with *Cinderella* that we didn't really feel with any other film to that extent, at least in that it is completely in people's subconscious. It's a much viewed animation, it's a much loved animation. It's a very old myth. So there's a certain gravitas that you feel you owe yourself more than anything else. And at the same time, we had to be ethical with everything we chose to do. There's a lot of things we took into account for young girls that we wanted to make sure didn't fall into stereotype or chauvinism or anything like that. That was really important and, at the same time, to make it beautiful and make beautiful gowns, and also celebrate art the way that old Disney animations did. My memory of Disney animations is just I used to get inspired to love art more. So we wanted the children that do watch this to be inspired to love art more.

This further evidences the significance placed by Branagh upon the desire to create a personal experience for the viewer of his work and the theory of the viewer as producer of meaning (Wollen 1972).

Cinderella opens with Ella (Cinderella) as a young baby living happily as the princess and ruler of the hearts of her mother and father. It soon progresses to Ella as a young girl happily cohabitating with her parents and a varied collection of lovable animals, including Mr. Goose and Gus Gus and Jacqueline the Mice, with whom she communicates and who understand her as well. In this scene, Gus Gus

is eating the corn dedicated for Mr. Goose. Ella's mother also informs her that Fairy Godmothers watch over them.

This scene immediately brings to memory the appearance of the mice Gus Gus and Jacques who are Cinderella's friends in the animated film. Although the mice in the animated film actually speak, the mice here do not but are nevertheless able to understand her. This scene also references the scene in the animated film when Cinderella feeds the chickens and the mice come to collect some of the corn.

In the scene, the father, a merchant, returns home from his travels, bringing gifts, including a paper butterfly, *un papillon*, for Ella. The butterfly, several of which flit across the sky in the first shot of the film, becomes a recurring motif throughout the film. It also appears, along with a goose and a horse, as a shape in the clouds in this opening scene (Images 74-75).



Image 74: Goose and Horse (Branagh 2015)

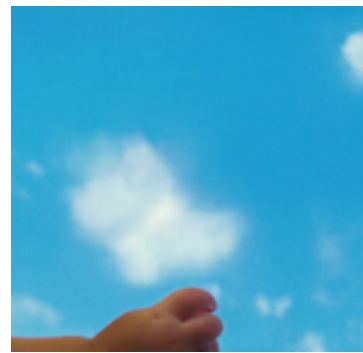


Image 75: Butterfly (Branagh 2015)

The horse in the clouds can be seen as foreshadowing of Ella later meeting the prince while both are on horseback. The goose is significant in that it references the Mother Goose story and the goose later drives the carriage that delivers Ella to the prince's ball. In this opening scene, the baby Ella reaches up to pluck the butterfly cloud from the sky and it transforms into a fluff of cotton, establishing an immediate connection and foreshadowing of Ella and the butterfly. The grasp of the butterfly furthermore strengthens the analogy of Ella as butterfly and connects the images in the clouds with the action of the story.

The use of the butterfly motif is symbolic of the action of the film. In some cultures, such as Native Americans, the "butterfly is the symbol of change, the soul, creativity, freedom, joy and colour" (Woolcott 2015). The butterflies flit across

the screen, foreshadowing the drastic changes that are about to occur in Ella's life. In ancient Greece, it was seen as the symbol of the soul and rebirth. "To the ancient Greeks, the butterfly came to symbolize the soul for which the *psyche* was used which could mean both soul and butterfly" (Kritsky and Cherry 2000, p. 8). The life cycle of the butterfly as evolving from egg to caterpillar to chrysalis until finally emerging as a butterfly is seen as the source of its primary symbolism as transformation and rebirth (Gibson 1996).

All of this is seen in the constantly depicted butterflies in the film. Butterflies dance in the air as Ella dances and frolics in the grass, emanating the joy that she and her family feel reveling in their complete happiness. However:

The shortness of life, and the inevitability of death, does indeed give poignancy to the brief beauty of the butterfly . . . [Hence] the butterfly has a deeply ambivalent symbolic significance. It is a vehicle of transformation that can not only raise us up but also stab us in the heart. Thus, in European folklore, the butterfly frequently shows a surprising demonic aspect. (Caspari and Robbins 2014, Butterfly section)

The butterfly symbol for the film can be seen as a double-edged sword in that it can represent the joy of the family or the shortness of life and the impending death of the mother, which occurs in the next scene.

Before the mother dies, she tells her daughter Ella that the great secret that will see her through all of the trials and tribulations of life is to "Have courage and be kind" (Branagh 2015). This statement becomes a theme throughout the film and is often repeated by Ella as well as characters who are influenced by her.

The hypotext for this film is first and foremost the Charles Perrault tale of *Cendrillon (Cinderella)*, first published in 1697 in Perrault's collection of fairytales entitled *Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passé: Les Contes de Ma Mère l'Oye (Stories and Tales of the Past: Tales of Mother Goose)* (Perrault, C., 2005, 1993). Perrault's tale begins with the marriage of a gentleman to his second wife. The 1950 animated Disney film *Cinderella*, which serves as a hypertext for the newer film and is also based upon the Perrault tale, mentions the childhood of Cinderella briefly in passing.

Another tale that serves as a hypertext for this section of the film is the Grimm 1812 fairytale *Ashputtel*. While neither the Perrault tale nor the animated film contains tales of Cinderella's early childhood, the Grimm tale does. Ashputtel is the heroine of the story, so called because she is forced by a cruel Stepmother to sleep among the ashes in the hearth and is therefore constantly dirty and covered in ash. Before this action takes place however, she is merely a little girl, the daughter of a rich father and a dying mother. Upon her deathbed, the mother calls her little daughter to her side and instructs her to "Always be a good girl, and I will look down from Heaven and watch over you" (Grimm Brothers 1905). After the mother's death, the girl takes heed of her mother's words and is "always good and kind to all about her" (Grimm Brothers 1905). The similarities between the film and the Grimm tale are evident.

Another difference that occurs between the original Perrault story and the animated Disney film is that the Disney film establishes from the beginning that Cinderella's father is a widower, her mother having already died, and that he marries a widow. In the Perrault version, the author does not actually say that either of these spouses is dead. He merely states that this is the second marriage for both parties, although given the fact that divorce in Catholic France was illegal until 1792, one can argue that the deaths of the spouses might be inferred or even taken for granted. The Grimm version opens with Cinderella's mother on her deathbed and states unequivocally that she dies.

In the live action film, Ella is then shown to be a young woman who has lived happily with her father for many years when her father proposes to her the possibility that he would like to marry again with a widow called Lady Tremaine who has two daughters near Ella's age. This differs from the animated film which depicts Cinderella and the two stepsisters as still young children when their parents marry. Ella is pleased with the hope that this marriage will bring her father happiness and she welcomes her new family into her home.

The Stepmother arrives, a woman who "had known grief but she wore it wonderfully well" (Branagh 2015). The stepsisters Anastasia and Drisella are

immediately rude and condescending towards Ella. The Stepmother and stepsisters proceed to hold large parties in the house while Ella and her father cosset themselves away in the library.

This differs from the Perrault tale in the initial treatment of Ella. In the tale, the gentleman has a lovely and kind daughter from his first wife, and the lady whom he marries has two proud and haughty daughters from her former husband. The new wife, unable to bear the comparison between the goodness of the man's daughter and the odious qualities of her own daughters, puts the girl to work in the most menial labours of the home, relegating her to the position of servant in her father's house and forcing her to sleep in the house's garret.

In the Branagh film, as the father prepares to go on another journey for business, the stepsisters request that he bring them back presents of lace and parasols, while Ella requests only that he bring back for her the first branch that touches his shoulder as he departs from home. The Stepmother overhears the father telling Ella that the house is still filled with her mother's presence, which offends the Stepmother. This differs from the animated film in that an attempt is made to add dimension to the character of the Stepmother and to discover some of the reasons for her cruelty, including her jealousy.

Although the scene with the Stepmother is an original scene, the earlier scene has its origins in the Grimm tale. In this tale, the father of Ashputtel is going to the fair and he asks the three daughters what they want him to bring them from the fair. While the stepdaughters ask for jewels and fine clothes, Ashputtel asks simply for "the first twig, dear father, that brushes against your hat when you turn your face to come homewards" (Grimm Brothers 1905). The father, in keeping with their requests, brings the stepdaughters the jewels and fine clothes they requested and brings for his own daughter a hazel twig that brushed against his hat and nearly knocked it off his head. Ashputtel takes the twig and plants it on her mother's grave, watering it with her tears. There the twig soon grows to be a fine hazel tree. A bird builds its nest in the tree and watches over Ashputtel, speaking to her and bringing her things that she wishes for.

In the film, as soon as the father leaves home, the Stepmother tricks Ella into moving into the attic at the top of the tower and giving up her large bedroom to the stepsisters. Life continues for Ella only slightly changed as she discovers the lack of any kind of accomplishments in her stepsisters and realises that her Stepmother is well aware of this. Drisella tries to play the harpsichord and sing while Anastasia tries to draw but their talents are deplorable. The Stepmother begins to be deliberately cruel to Ella, already allowing her to serve her and her daughters as though Ella were their servant. This aspect of the film is similar to the Perrault story in that the Stepmother reveals her antipathy to Ella while the Father still lives. However, in the Perrault story, for fear of a scolding from her father, the girl does not tell him of her misfortunes and simply does as she is told by the stepmother.

One of the most striking differences between the two stories and the Disney films is the death of the father, which happens early in the Disney films. In the Perrault story, as well as in the Grimm story, the entire action takes place while Cinderella's father is alive. For a film marketed towards children, a dead father is presumably more palatable than an uncaring and indifferent one who allows the physical and mental abuse of his only biological daughter at the hands of a cruel stepmother and her equally cruel daughters. The Disney film also introduces the specter of financial woes following the father's death which is caused by the squandering of the family fortune on the vain and thoughtless stepsisters.

Ella receives word that her father has died while away from the family, but he has sent for her the first branch that brushed his shoulder as he departed. Ella is devastated by the news while the Stepmother and stepsisters, respectively, are upset about their finances and the fact that he did not send them the gifts they were expecting. The Stepmother is again infuriated because the deliverer of the message tells Ella that before the father died, he spoke only of her and her mother.

The Stepmother dismisses all the servants and makes Ella do all of their work, treating her always as a servant, making her work doing their laundry, serving them, and giving her to eat only scraps from their table. Her only friends

remain the mice and the animals of the farm. Some nights the attic is too cold, so she sleeps next to the fire, getting dirty from the ashes.

At this point, because of her dirty face, Drisella gives a new name to Ella, that of “Cinderwench”. Anastasia suggests instead “Dirty Ella” but Drisella comes up with the brilliant moniker of “Cinder Ella” (Branagh 2015). Thereafter, Ella becomes Cinderella. This incident is appropriated from the Perrault hypertext wherein to keep warm after her daily work is completed, the girl sits among the ashes and cinders of the fireplace, which gets her dirty and causes her stepsisters to call her Cinderwench or Cinderella. This is not included in the hypertext animated film in which Ella is referred to as Cinderella from the very beginning of the film.

Ella is so angry and hurt by this incident that she escapes from the house, takes a wild ride through the countryside on her horse, and comes face-to-face with a large stag. Ella hears a nearby hunting party that has been hunting the stag. She tells the stag to flee, then dashes off in a different direction in order to distract the hunters. One member of the hunting party hears Ella’s cries and goes to rescue her, catching up with the runaway horse and calming him. This is the first meeting of Ella and the Prince. Both on horseback and on equal footing, this can be seen as establishing them as equals rather than in a relationship of superior and inferior. There is an attraction between the two and Ella refuses to tell the young man what she is called. He in turn does not admit that he is the Prince but tells her rather that he is an apprentice named Kit who lives and works at the Palace.

The name Kit is borrowed from the additional hypertext film of the 1965 television adaptation of *Cinderella* based upon the play with the music and lyrics of Rogers and Hammerstein (Dubin 1965). In that film, the Prince’s name is Christopher, which is a rare example of the Prince having a name that is not simply Charming. This contributes to the element of audience recall for the viewer who is familiar with the formerly annually repeated televised showing of the Rogers and Hammerstein film, as Kit is often used as a nickname for Christopher.

Ella asks Kit to leave the stag in peace and not to kill him. When he responds that that is the actual purpose of the hunt, she tells him that it may be the way things are done, but it does not mean that it is the way things should be done, for in the end, the important thing is to “Have courage and be kind”. The Prince acquiesces to her request and rejoins his hunting party to return to the Palace. This varies from the animated film in which Cinderella meets the Prince for the first time at the ball.

This meeting before the ball presents a more twenty-first century Cinderella in which the Prince is impressed by her kindness and intelligence, not just by her beauty, when he sees her for the first time, unlike in the animated film. She is not just another pretty face. This is a more contemporary Cinderella, a product of the aftermath of the feminist movement which saw female as equal to male deserving of the same rights and respect. This Cinderella has no problem with voicing her opinions concerning the treatment of animals, another contemporary attitude, nor with telling Kit what he should or should not be doing.

The Prince returns to the Palace and tells his father the King about the beautiful girl that he met in the forest. The King cautions him, reminding him that he must marry a princess. The King is with a doctor and both learn that the King is very ill. Afterwards, the Grand Duke upbraids the Prince for allowing the stag to escape, to which the Prince replies, repeating Ella’s words, that just because that is the way things are done, it does not mean that it is the way things should be done.

The Prince then precedes to sit for a portrait that will be copied and sent abroad to other kingdoms along with invitations for foreign princesses to attend a royal ball with the hope that the Prince may choose a bride from among the attending royalty. The portrait for which the Prince poses depicts the Prince in a similar manner, astride a horse, as the portrait of the Prince that appears in the animated film, again eliciting audience recall (76-77).



Image 76: Portrait (Geronimi 1950)



Image 77: Portrait (Branagh 2015)

The Prince asks the King whether if he were to marry, could he not marry a simple country girl. The Grand Duke responds with questions concerning the number of soldiers such a girl can bring to strengthen the kingdom. The King, understanding his impending demise, responds by saying it is essential to him that he see the Prince and the Kingdom safe. The Prince agrees to holding the ball/matchmaking event on the condition that all eligible maidens of the kingdom also be invited. The King concedes to his wishes. Similar to the animated film, as well as the Rogers and Hammerstein musical, a Royal Crier is shown to proclaim to the kingdom that a ball is being held during which the Prince will choose a bride and that all the maidens of the kingdom are invited. Ella is in the village and hears the proclamation and is thrilled by the thought of being able to see Kit again.

Ella delivers the news to her Stepmother and stepsisters, who immediately begin to plan how they can snare the Prince as the bridegroom for one of the stepsisters. The Stepmother orders Ella to return to the town to make arrangements for the seamstress to make three new ball gowns for the Stepmother and stepsisters.

As the stepsisters argue over which of them will be the future queen, Ella considers the fact that the stepsisters “could be every bit as ugly within as they were fair without” (Branagh 2015). This is in keeping with the descriptions of the stepsisters in the Grimm’s tale. In this tale, Ashputtel’s widowed father marries another woman who already has two daughters of her own who are “fair in face but foul at heart” (Grimm Brothers 1905). In the Grimm tale, these three new

arrivals to the household, as in the film, badly mistreat the newly-dubbed Ashputtel and take away her fine clothes, forcing her to wear only a dirty old grey frock. Throughout the years that follow, they make her do all the work of a housemaid under a constant barrage of mental and verbal abuse.

Also mirrored in the animated film and in the Grimm story is the Stepmother's promise that if Cinderella completes her chores in time to clean up and get ready, she will be allowed to go to the prince's ball. In both cases, the Stepmother assigns nearly impossible tasks for Cinderella to complete, taking for granted that she will not be able to do so and will thus be prevented from attending.

In the Grimm tale, the king of the land also gives a ball and feast in which his son is to choose a bride from the young ladies in attendance. The stepdaughters are provided with beautiful clothes to go to the ball. When Ashputtel asks her Stepmother if she can attend the ball as well, her Stepmother refuses the request. After much pleading and begging from Ashputtel, her Stepmother finally agrees that Ashputtel may go to the ball under certain conditions, telling her, "I will throw this dishful of peas into the ash-heap, and if in two hours' time you have picked them all out, you shall go to the feast too" (Grimm Brothers 1905).

The Stepmother then proceeds to dump a dishful of peas into the ashes. When faced with the hopeless task of collecting all the peas in so short a time, Ashputtel calls upon her friends, the birds of the forest, to swoop into the kitchen and collect all the peas. Ashputtel happily brings the dish of recovered peas to her Stepmother within the hour, fully expecting to be allowed the privilege of attending the ball. The Stepmother, enraged that her plan of keeping Ashputtel preoccupied and unable to attend the ball, demands that Ashputtel now retrieve two dishes of peas from the ashes. Now she dumps two dishes of peas into the ashes and again Ashputtel calls upon her friends the birds to collect them all from the ashes. The Stepmother realizes that her plan has not worked and finally admits unequivocally that Ashputtel may not go to the ball because she would shame her family. The Stepmother then leaves to take her own daughters to the ball.

In the animated film, while Cinderella is unable to find time to make herself a dress, the birds and the mice help to construct a dress for Cinderella made from a dress that Cinderella's mother had owned and other bric-a-brac that they scavenge from around the house. In this film, this dress is literally ripped and shredded by the vindictive stepsisters, thereby dashing all of Cinderella's hopes of attending the ball.

The idea of birds as helpers in her household chores which appears in the animated film can thus be traced back to the Grimm story in which Ashputtel is able to call down the birds to pick out all the lentils from the ashes in the hearth, thereby aiding her in accomplishing her impossible task. The addition of talking mice wearing clothes and able to sew is a typical Disney fabrication.

In the live action film, since the Stepmother would not make a dress for Ella, she sews up her own dress to wear to the ball, made from a dress that had belonged to her mother. This scene references the animated film when a mouse is shown pushing a spool of thread across the floor, bringing it to Ella as she sews her dress with the voiceover pointing out that "she did have a little help" (Branagh 2015), thereby again eliciting audience recall.

When Ella appears on the stairway declaring her intention to also attend the ball, the Stepmother and stepsisters rip her dress, destroying all her work and making it impossible for her to attend the ball. Ella runs into the garden and leans upon the fountain in tears, declaring her despair and her inability to continue on in this manner with courage as she had promised her mother. Such a scene is seen also in the animated film.

The Fairy Godmother appears as an old beggar woman who asks Ella for a bowl of milk. Ella kindly gives her a drink. The Fairy Godmother thanks her for her kindness and changes into a beautiful young woman in a magical glowing white dress with fairy wings. Waving her magic wand, she turns a pumpkin into a golden carriage. This scene also references the Rogers and Hammerstein version wherein Cinderella first meets the Prince when he stops at her well and asks for a drink of water.

At this point in the Branagh film, the action begins to follow the Perrault story fairly closely. In both story and film, as Cinderella weeps over her inability to attend the ball, her Fairy Godmother appears to grant her wish. The godmother turns a pumpkin into a carriage and turns the mice into horses. In the film, the Fairy Godmother changes Gus Gus and three other mice into four white horses to pull the carriage. She then locates two green lizards which she turns into footmen. Mr. Goose she changes into the coachman and puts them all in their places on the coach.

When everyone on the coach is thus ready to leave, she changes Ella's ripped dress into a frothy concoction of layers of blue silk and chiffon as butterflies circle around her and land upon her dress, becoming an ornamental part of the dress itself all around the neckline. Last of all, the Fairy Godmother changes Ella's shoes into sparkling glass slippers with butterflies atop them, casts a magic spell on her so that her Stepmother and stepsisters cannot recognize her, and sends her off to the ball with the warning that she must leave the ball before midnight, at which time all the magic will be reversed. In the both the Perrault story and the film, the Fairy Godmother orders Cinderella to return before midnight as the enchantment will be broken on the stroke of midnight. None of these elements exist in the Grimm story, in which a magical bird takes the place of the Fairy Godmother in granting Ashputtel's dreams of going to the ball and provides her with beautiful dresses.

The butterfly symbolism in the film continues on Ella's ball gown and shoes for the ball. Just as the life cycle of the butterfly is so short, this can be seen as symbolic of the brevity of the happiness that Ella feels before having to flee from the Prince and return to the drudgery and toils of her everyday life.

This part of the plot is also appropriated from the Perrault tale in which a ball is held by the son of the king and all the fashionable people of the kingdom are invited to attend, including Cinderella's family. Cinderella helps her stepsisters to dress beautifully by ironing their dresses and fixing their hair, although they

mock her and jeer at her. Cinderella is not allowed to attend the ball and begins to cry when she watches her family leave for the ball.

At this point, Cinderella's Fairy Godmother appears, offering assistance for Cinderella to attend the ball. The Fairy Godmother takes a pumpkin from the garden and, with a touch of her magic wand, turns the pumpkin into a gilded carriage. She then collects six mice from a mousetrap and turns them into six dapple gray horses. Cinderella finds a fat rat in a trap and the Fairy Godmother turns it into a fat coachman, then turns six lizards into footmen to serve on the coach. The use of mice as horse appears in both the Perrault hypotext and the animated hypertext. The use of lizards as footmen in the film is derived from the hypotext, whereas the hypertext changes this so that the footman is created from Cinderella's dog. Both hypotext and hypertext vary from the film in that the hypotext has the coachman derived from a rat and the hypertext uses a horse as the coachman.

In the film, Mr. Goose is used as the coachman. This is an animal that appears frequently in the film, carrying forward the animal symbolism that predominates this film. The goose has historically had a symbolic meaning. First century B.C.E. Roman poet Ovid mentions geese in his magnum opus *Metamorphoses* in the poem *The House of Sleep*, referring to them as good guards, saying "Nor watchful dogs, nor more wakeful geese, Disturb with nightly noise the sacred peace" (Ovid 1923). This attitude towards geese is reiterated in his poem *The Story of Baucis and Philemon* when he says, "One goose they had ('twas all they could allow); A wakeful sentry, and on duty now" (Ovid 1836, p. 258). He is further quoted as saying that geese are "more sagacious than dogs" (OrangeManor 2016). In addition, the tales of Charles Perrault are the tales of Mother Goose, demonstrating that Perrault may, too, have been aware of the symbolism of the goose as guardians and protectors. The symbolism is not lost in the fact that the goose in this film is the animal selected by the Fairy Godmother to serve as coachman and protect Ella on her drive to and from the ball.

In the Perrault tale, at this point Cinderella is ready to go to the ball except for the question of her attire. When she points out the problem to her godmother, the fairy changes her dress into a gown of gold and silver and covered in jewels. The godmother then bestows a pair of glass slippers upon Cinderella and commands her to return before midnight, as all the magical items will return to their previous state at midnight. In the animated film, the gown is converted into a blue gown, which serves as inspiration for the gown in the live action film.

In the film, at the ball, the princesses from all around the world are presented to the Prince, but he remains preoccupied with searching for Ella. Ella at last arrives and enters the ball alone at the exact moment when the ball is set to commence and the Prince must choose a partner for the first dance. The Prince sees Ella and seeks her out across the ballroom as she comes down the grand staircase, much like the similar scene in the animated film. He claims her for the first dance and the ball begins as everyone at the ball watches them, enchanted by the beauty of the mysterious “princess”. Only now does Ella realise that her friend Kit is actually the Prince.

This differs from both the Perrault tale and the animated film in which the ball is the first time that Cinderella and the prince meet. In the Perrault story, upon Cinderella’s arrival at the ball, the prince is told that a great princess has arrived. He goes out to meet her and escorts her into the ball. Everyone at the ball is entranced by the beauty of the mysterious princess and all music and dancing ceases as the prince leads her onto the dance floor. Even the king is enchanted by her beauty. In the animated film, the prince notices Cinderella in the darkness of the hall and goes to meet her and bring her into the ballroom.

Like in the animated film, in the Branagh film, the Prince then escapes with Cinderella into the garden to be alone with her and get to know her better. There he explains to Ella that he is likely to be forced into a marriage of convenience to bring allies and strength to the kingdom as his father may be dying. While they are thus occupied, the Grand Duke admits to the Prince’s Captain of the Guards that

he has already made a deal promising the Prince's hand in marriage to the Princess Chelina of Zaragosa. The Stepmother overhears this conversation.

In both the animated tale and the Branagh film, the clock begins to strike midnight and Ella flees from the Prince, running through the garden and the Palace where she bumps into the King. She then exits the Palace and runs down the stairs towards her carriage, losing one of her slippers on the staircase. The Prince is not too far behind and she has no time to go back for the lost slipper. The Prince collects the slipper and starts in pursuit. The Grand Duke insists that the Prince return to the ball and promises to find the girl for him.

This discovery of the lost slipper can be traced all the way back to the origins of the Cinderella tale, the story of Rhodopis in ancient Egypt.

As the carriage races for home in the film, the spells begin to reverse. The footmen turn back into lizards, the horses turn back into mice, the driver turns back into Mr. Goose, and the pieces of Ella's raiment are all changed back into their previous state with the exception of her glass slipper. She makes it back home in time to see the Stepmother and stepsisters arrive and to listen to their gossip about the Prince and the interloping princess who stole him away.

In the Perrault tale, there is banquet that is served during which Cinderella sits next to her stepsisters, but they do not recognize her. Just before midnight, she leaves the ball and hurries home. When her stepsisters arrive home, they tell her stories of the princess, which amuses Cinderella greatly.

In the Perrault version of the tale, a second ball is held on the next night, and Cinderella appears in an even more beautiful dress. Again she is pursued by the prince who is captivated by her beauty. It is at this ball on the second night that, in the pleasure of the ball, Cinderella forgets the command to leave before midnight and must rush out immediately when she hears the clock strike. In her hurried flight, she loses one of her glass slippers, which the prince collects. Cinderella arrives home in her old clothes, but has inexplicably retained the mate to the glass slipper that she left behind.

In the film, after the ball, the Prince visits the King on his deathbed where the King gives his blessing for the Prince to marry whomever he chooses and informs him that he should find the girl who keeps losing her shoe. The Prince becomes King upon the death of his father and another proclamation is issued in which the King declares his love for the mysterious princess who wears glass slippers and announces his intention to marry her.

Upon hearing this news, Ella rushes home to collect her remaining glass slipper. However, it has already been discovered by the Stepmother who insists that Ella must allow her to rule the kingdom and the King after her marriage. When Ella refuses, the Stepmother breaks the slipper and locks Ella in the attic. When Ella demands to know why the Stepmother is so cruel, the Stepmother explains the jealousy and envy she feels towards Ella.

The Stepmother goes to the Grand Duke and tells him that the “princess” is actually a servant girl in her home. Promising that no one need ever know that the Grand Duke has promised to marry the Prince to Princess Chelina, the Stepmother blackmails the Grand Duke into promising to provide advantageous marriages for her daughters and to make her a countess. In exchange, she will keep Ella hidden away.

The Grand Duke, knowing well that he will never find the girl, travels the length of the kingdom, allowing all the maidens to try on the slipper. None can fit it. He arrives with the Captain and the guards at last at Ella’s home, but the stepsisters also cannot fit the slipper. As they prepare to leave, they hear Ella singing up in the attic. The Captain insists upon investigating the singing but the Grand Duke insists that they leave when the Stepmother tells them that no one else is there. The Prince, now the King, reveals himself, having traveled incognito among the other soldiers. He orders the Captain to investigate.

Ella is taken downstairs by the Captain where she finds the King waiting. She tells him that she is no princess but an honest country girl who loves him and asks whether he will take her as she is. He declares his intention to do exactly that and puts the slipper upon her foot. Finally, it fits. The stepsisters come crashing in,

declaring their love for their dear sister. As the King leaves with his bride-to-be, Ella turns and declares to her Stepmother that she is forgiven. Nevertheless, now that the wickedness of the Grand Duke and the Stepmother has been revealed, the Stepmother flees the kingdom along with her daughters and the Grand Duke.

This flight in the film demonstrates a similarity to the Basile version of the tale of Cerentola (2000) in which the stepsisters are so jealous of Cerentola's good fortune and happiness that they cannot bear to stay so they flee to another land. This choice in the ending of the film may demonstrate again the extent of research that is devoted by Branagh to the history of the tale.

In the Perrault tale, the prince, now much in love with Cinderella, announces that he will marry the young lady whose foot fits into the glass slipper. The slipper is tried on by all the maids of the kingdom, including the stepsisters, but none can fit it. Cinderella sees her sisters trying it on and asks to do the same. The gentleman who has been sent along with the slipper allows her to try it on, in spite of the stepsisters' laughter and mockery, and the slipper fits. Cinderella pulls the matching slipper from her pocket and her godmother appears and transforms Cinderella's clothes into even more magnificent clothes than she had previously worn. The stepsisters, who now realize that Cinderella is the mysterious princess, immediately repent of their evil ways towards her and she forgives them. Cinderella is taken to the prince and they are married. Cinderella, ever the good and forgiving young lady, brings her stepsisters with her to the palace and arranges very advantageous marriages for each of them.

In the Branagh film, Ella and the King are married and reconfirm their belief that they must have courage and be kind and all will be well. As snow falls upon the Palace, the crowds cheer for their new King and Queen who are deemed to be the best and kindest royals to ever rule the kingdom.

The moral of this tale, as Perrault states is that "Beauty in a woman is a rare treasure that will always be admired. Graciousness, however, is priceless and of even greater value...In the winning of a heart, graciousness is more important than a beautiful hairdo" (1993). A further moral to be gained from this tale is that

“Without doubt it is a great advantage to have intelligence, courage, good breeding, and common sense...However, even these may fail to bring you success, without the blessing of a godfather or a godmother” (1993).

Branagh’s Cinderella is not only a contemporary woman, like Jane Foster and Cathy Muller, but is also another incarnation of the modern post-1989 Disney princess that includes such characters as Ariel from *The Little Mermaid*, Belle from *Beauty and the Beast*, Jasmine from *Aladdin*, Pocahontas from *Pocahontas* and Mulan from *Mulan*, who, like Ella, are fierce, independent, empowered, willing to take risks, and somewhat ruthless in their determination to achieve their goals, vastly different from the earlier Disney princesses such as Snow White or Sleeping Beauty who wait for their Princes to come and rescue them. These modern heroines may be anachronistic to the timeframes in which their films are set, but they present modern attitudes and modern role models more in keeping with what modern girls would admire. Though informed by the earlier Disney animated film of *Cinderella*, Branagh’s Cinderella, unlike in the animated film, is proactive and goes in search of her life rather than waiting for it to come and find her.

This is not a Cinderella who remains meekly subservient to the more forceful Stepmother and Stepsisters as in the earlier film. This Cinderella, when questioned by one of her former servants as to why she remains under the tyranny of the Stepmother, replies that this is her home and that she stays in order to preserve and cherish it in memory of her parents and the love and life they once shared together. She is a girl who chooses her fate, chooses to remain and to work to keep her family home in good repair, and chooses to face the cruelty of her new family with courage and kindness.

7.3 Direction, Camera and Performance

This section continues the analysis of Branagh’s direction, camera techniques, and performances of the actors in the film. The aim is to investigate whether the methods of Branagh exhibited in *Thor* and in *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* continue in the direction of *Cinderella* and the degree to which the

intertextuality of the film can be seen in the mise-en-scène as a means of establishing audience recall.

The camera movement in *Cinderella* stands apart from Branagh's previous two films in that the camera is slower and steadier and camera movement is designed to not draw attention to itself. Many of the shots consists of slow pans or zooms, and the tracking shots are primarily smooth on tracks and used to follow fast movement such as those of the characters on horseback. This type of movement is largely due to the film's genre as a children's or family film, where these shots make it is easier for young eyes to focus upon the action and they do not remove the viewers from the story of the movie. As Haris Zambarloukos says, "We knew this was going to be a children's film and a family film".

The filming took on a more traditional look for classic cinema, much like Branagh's earlier Shakespeare films. Says Zambarloukos of the style they were trying to create:

We did go back and do a lot of old fashioned film techniques for this and there was a lot of limitations in that. So I think what we've done to a large extent is kind of change our filmmaking techniques to suit the modern era whereas what we were doing is "Let's take everything that was great about the past and everything that we love about our future technology and put the two together to make it something really special".

There are some shots that are more consistent with the camera movements of Branagh's previous two films and the way in which camera is used to enhance performance. Similar to the filming techniques demonstrated in the filming of *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*, there are scenes in *Cinderella* which were filmed in long continuous shots, even though they were later cut and edited in postproduction. An example of this can be seen in the scene depicting the initial meeting between Cinderella and the Prince in the forest, one of the defining moments of the film.

The filming took place as a series of long continuous shots in which the camera tracked the actors on horseback through the woods, then circled around them as they performed their dialogue (Image 78). Numerous takes were made from different angles and focusing upon the different actors, but each take was

shot continuously from beginning to end of the entire scene. The shots were then later cut and edited in postproduction. As has been shown, this is a technique that is used consistently throughout Branagh's directing career in order to enhance the performance of the actors, combining action with performance to create heightened emotion from the actor as well as in the viewer. In reference to this scene, Branagh says:

Any film I suppose, but in a fairytale, the compression is such that you want to get the maximum value from this short a telling of the story. So we decided they must meet beforehand. They meet as her horse has bolted and as his horse is on his hunt. So when we shot the scene, both our real actors galloped into the scene. So they galloped into the scene on two horses, and we then played the scene for its entire length each time. So then two real actors have to control two real horses, so there's already a lively spontaneous quality. There's an electric quality because, frankly, it's a bit dangerous. There's literally all this horse power. It meant that every take, you really didn't know what would happen because you didn't know what would happen with the horses. Also we made sure that Lily and Richard hadn't really spent any time together at all, so this was the first day of filming, so what you see is them really starting their relationship together. (AOL Build 2015)



Image 78: Horses Circling (Branagh 2015)

This is an example of Branagh's attempts to capture the live element on camera. In his interview, Haris Zambarloukos discussed the shooting of this scene, saying:

Within a film, performance is key, but so is camera. He [Branagh] looks through every frame through the camera. He has an input on everything. On every costume, every production design aspect, his imprint is everywhere. But one of the things that he does, to do with how the two of us work together, is the idea that the drama and camera and action are never apart. So for example, and again this can often be quite difficult, when Cinderella and the Prince meet in *Cinderella*, I believe most directors, and most great directors, would probably have them ride on horses, meet somewhere, get off the horse and have a conversation. That would never ever happen with Ken. He made them [the actors] all learn how to ride a horse. He asked Lily to learn how to ride a horse bareback and gallop to a stop at the beginning of every scene and then asked the horse wranglers to create a choreography of the horses so that we could do this all in one flow. And I had to do similar lighting over six days in an exterior in England where it rains most of the time, and choreograph cranes that all worked with the horses and the actors doing their most important scene where Cinderella and the Prince meet. It's not an easy way out, but no one else could make it look as spectacular, and no one else, I think, could direct an actor to get the emotion so well while performing so many other physical things. And I think that's the thing. He really does love physical theatre and therefore he loves physical film. And that's what I call it, the way I describe it to people who haven't worked with Ken, that drama and action are always intertwined.

This technique of capturing the live element in the performance within the action is a continuance of Branagh's methods as evidenced in his direction in *Thor* and *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* and provides further evidence of Branagh's continuing attempt to provide an experience for the viewer.

The shooting of this scene also made an impression upon actor Madden, who says, "It's kind of a lot of work when you have to try and control these beasts and do what we need to in the scene. But that was part of what Kenneth Branagh wanted to happen. [It] was this kind of metaphor for these two people meeting and trying to control this feeling, something else that's going on [that] they're trying to contain while connecting with each other. A kind of metaphor for their feelings all coming through and the unpredictability of it." (Mavity 2015)

This scene is similar to the scene on the rooftops of Moscow when Jack Ryan is frantically asking for instructions after killing the bodyguard, as the camera

circling around the actor(s) in both scenes is used for the same purpose. The movement of the camera is typical of Branagh, both literal and metaphorical, in that the heads of the characters are spinning while the camera is also spinning.

Lilly James, discussing her meeting with Madden and pointing out that the horseback scene was shot on their first day, says, “Ken wanted to sort of capture the energy of two young people meeting for the first time on camera. So we’d only met twice briefly before we shot that scene.” (Mavity 2015)

Madden says of this moment when Cinderella and the Prince meet and fall in love, “We had so much else going on. Cinderella’s horse is out of control and I’m trying to calm that down, so before we’ve realised that we’ve settled and are speaking to each other, it’s happened. So we’ve tried not to think about it. The adrenaline of being on the horses and trying to control them and working out who each other are, that kind of gets in the way. So before we know it, we’re kind of really close to each other talking, and it’s very intimate all of a sudden.” (Mavity 2015).

The rotating and circling camera used in the horseback scene is also typical of Branagh as a means of establishing the relationship of the actors within the space of the set around them. The trees and the forest are clearly defined in the scene from *Cinderella* as are the rooftops of Moscow for Jack Ryan. Also, even though the *Cinderella* scene is shot to be later edited, the technique of shooting in one continuous shot is typical of Branagh’s method of filming.

By keeping the actors on horseback and not having them dismount in order to have their conversation, Branagh establishes Cinderella and the Prince as equals, metaphorically on the same level, and not as though one were dominated by the other or that one is somehow inferior to the other. This is in keeping with his desire to create a Cinderella that is not the damsel-in-distress waiting for the Prince to rescue her, even though there is a touch of irony here in that that is exactly what he does in this scene as he calms her runaway horse.

This scene serves also as a reminder to the audience that this Cinderella is a modern princess and has a post-feminist approach concerning the relationships

between the sexes. Although Kit does, in fact, rescue Ella on the runaway horse, Ella later rescues him in return, much like Jane Foster and Cathy Muller, in that she provides him with guidance and inspiration in the ways of being a good King, ruling with courage and kindness and understanding that the ways things are done does not mean that that is the way they should be done. The weight that Kit gives to Ella's views and opinions, and the vulnerability that he shows in allowing himself to be swayed and improved by her influence, marks this as a modern love story. This sense of equality is also demonstrated in the closing scene in which Kit brings Ella onto the balcony after their marriage and whispers, "My Queen", to which she responds, "My Kit", establishing them as equals in their marriage as well.

This idea of equality is further enhanced by this rotation of the camera and the movement and circling of the horses themselves within the limited boundary of the frames. This results in the backgrounds of the shots being almost identical when cutting between the two actors and the portrayal of the actors as once again equal. These his-and-her mid-shots are done with shallow depth of field, resulting in a blur of various green and blue stripes of the trees, giving the impression that the two actors are alone in the space, with wide shots edited in that serve to remind the viewer that these two characters are out in the forest.

The camera circling further symbolises the excitement of meeting someone new to whom one may be attracted and the rush and spinning head elation that can accompany this. The combination of mid-shots and wider establishing shots is reminiscent of the continuous circling of Derek Jacobi and Emma Thompson as she is being hypnotised in *Dead Again* and is used to create a sense of heightened excitement.

Another scene that strongly demonstrates Branagh's camera style that is consistent with that used in his previous work, particularly in his recent films, is the scene in which Cinderella flees from the Prince and runs through the palace in search of the exit. In this scene, the camera is used again to enhance performance, even when there is no dialogue. In one continuous shot, the camera leans to the left in a Dutch angle, so predominant in *Thor*, as Cinderella enters the frame, then

levels out as she runs across, then leans to the right in another Dutch angle that amounts to a 180-degree rotation of the camera as Cinderella exits the frame (Image 79). This rotation of the camera emphasises the frenzy of her escape and is another example of how the emotional performance is combined into the action. The importance of the moment is not just about her flight but about how she feels as she flees. The use of the Dutch angle is also a means of establishing intertextuality and audience recall in that it is used to reference *Thor*. As Branagh states of this shot:

It was a canted Dutch angle with a bracket for the camera where we could do that [turn sideways] and be on a track as well. So we were panning and tracking the other way and tilting the camera 180 degrees. We loved it. Haris Zambarloukos shot *Thor* as well and we had a lot of fun over the years talking about how many people were driven mad by the canted angles in *Thor*. I loved them in *Thor* but obviously some people didn't. He could never stop doing it. And we thought we've got to be able to get one into this movie. And that was it. And we thought, well, we're moving and they'll never know. And also it's crazy, it's midnight, she has to get back home. Literally, the world is turning upside down. Her world is turning upside down. And it's literally going to be coming apart in a minute in the form of footmen who will become lizards, horses that become mice, so it's literally how do I keep level? Not easily. And also, that room is full of portraits. So it's part me saying, 'Look at all these people. That's a prince's family. That's a king's family.' So it felt like there were people crowding in on her as well. (McCarthy 2015)



Image 79: Dutch Angle (Branagh 2011)

In the film, there are numerous wide shots and overhead shots to showcase the set, the costumes, and the actors within the set, particularly in the ballroom scene (Images 80-81). In this scene, there is also the symmetry within the frames to indicate, as in Branagh's previous films, a sense of regality and royalty and the indication that these characters have power. The symmetry in the shots featuring Cinderella as she enters the ball and as she runs through the gardens and up the stairs in her flight from the Prince signifies her entitlement to be considered a part of this royalty, regardless of her birth.



Image 80: The Ball (Branagh 2011)



Image 81: The Ball (Branagh 2011)

During the dance scene, again the camera sometimes circles around the actors, thereby involving the audience in the dance, and drawing attention to the *mise-en-scène*. Of this scene, Zambarloukos says, in his interview:

The highlight for us and the most difficult thing we wanted to accomplish is that ballroom scene. And I think that, to us, we really wanted to make that something that just takes your breath away. And in a modern era with digital effects and more modern storytelling, the idea of creating a waltz where the dance and the emotion are all intertwined was the thing that we spent time on and really wanted to nail, and to get something across that isn't modern filmmaking. That's something in the past that they could also to some extent never do. Although we went within certain limitations, we shot on film, we shot anamorphic lenses, we used real sets and real gowns and real choreography and real waltz and all of that. But there are certain things that we have now that just make that even, I think, more grandiose in a way.

Zambarloukos further discusses this desire that Branagh had to make the film appear in a style that was classic and reminiscent of the cinema of the 1950s, and how modern techniques were intermingled with older techniques and elements to create the desired effects. Discussing the modern means in which he and Branagh achieved the aesthetic of 1950s cinema, Zambarloukos continues:

Our cranes now are telescopic. With techno-cranes far more elaborate, you can really program incredible sweeping moves that you could never do in the 1950s with a regular crane. Lighting can be more precise. You can DMX control lighting so that it flickers a certain way. All the lights are on electric winches so that you can be very precise in the way that you place them for each shot and manipulate changes quickly between takes. Things that would take three hours in the 1950s take me about ten minutes. That means that each shot is closer to perfection than it could have been forty years ago, for example. So the aesthetic [of old cinema] was the same.

This attempt to recreate the film aesthetics of the 1950s can also be seen particularly in the choice of costumes for the film.

For this film, Branagh again adopts his usual practice of enhancing the performances of the actors through the suggestion that they also invest in extensive research as a means of defining and inhabiting their characters. Says Madden of Branagh's research method:

It was a really fun set to be on, but there's also something special about Kenneth. This could be *Macbeth* or *Cinderella* and he'd put the same amount of detail and work into it, so you felt that. He'd give me

and Lily books on a weekly basis. “Have a look at this. Read this book.” Things that you wouldn’t expect, you know. I’d get Machiavelli’s *The Prince* or something and he’d say, “I think the Prince would be reading this just now.” And although you’re not going to read that on screen, from performance it’s just an extra bit of something that goes into how much thought he puts into it. So it was a really good working environment . . . But when you’re on set with people like Cate and Derek Jacobi and Stellan Skarsgård, you need to kind of really be on your A-game and come prepared and Ken really encourages that. And that’s kind of inspiring to be around. (Mavity 2015)

This statement further supports the evidence that Branagh devotes tremendous efforts to research in his approach to directing his films and encourages his actors to do the same. An example of how this research is specifically put into performance is Blanchett’s referencing of the animated film in her performance as the Stepmother in the scene in which she opens the door to admit the Grand Duke as he arrives to bring the glass slipper to the maidens of the kingdom in search of the one whose foot it fits. In this scene, Blanchett flings open the doors of her chateau in a sweeping gesture and stands, silhouetted and framed symmetrically in the middle of the doorway with her arms expansively extended upward and outward as she welcomes her guests. This shot references a similar image in which the Stepmother flings open the curtains in the animated film (Images 82-83).



Image 82: Stepmother Welcoming Guests (Branagh 2011)



Image 83: Stepmother Welcoming Daylight (Geronimi and Jackson 1950)

In this film, as in *Thor*, the casting itself can be seen as an element of intertextuality. In the context of the time in which this film was produced, Lily James was a rising star in film, riding a wave of popularity derived from her performances as Lady Rose MacClare in the successful television production of *Downton Abbey* (Fellowes 2011-2016), as was fellow cast mate Sophie McShera who played the role of Daisy Mason in the same series. Similarly, Richard Madden was riding the same kind of wave following his popularity as Rob Stark in the HBO production of *Game of Thrones* (Benioff and Weiss, 2011-). The casting of Nonso Anozie as the Captain of the Guard brings to mind his performance as the would-be assassin in

Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit, as the casting of Stellan Skarsgård as the Grand Duke brings to mind his role as Selvig in *Thor*. These two castings further demonstrate Branagh's continuing collaboration with the same actors in multiple projects, as does the casting of Helena Bonham Carter as the Fairy Godmother whom Branagh had previously cast as Elizabeth in his production of *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994).

7.4 Costumes

As is seen in some of his previous films such as *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Hamlet*, *Cinderella* is filled with ambiguous costuming that is not historically accurate but has an historical-ish feel to it, adding an element of timelessness and again putting the viewers in a position of having to trust him to provide a setting for them that is a combination of both the relatively realistic and the fantastical.

In addition, much like in *Love's Labour's Lost*, the costumes of the characters in the film are colour-coded according to the individual characters. Like the costumes of Loki in *Thor*, the costumes of Cate Blanchett's character are sometimes trimmed in black but are primarily green, symbolizing the envy and jealousy the Stepmother feels towards Cinderella. The colours of the costumes for the stepsisters are aligned with the colours depicted in the Disney animated film with Anastasia appearing in pinks and purples while Drisella appears in variations of yellow and blue (Images 84-85), thereby again provoking audience recall. Sandy Powell discusses her choices for the stepsisters, saying, "They are meant to be totally ridiculous on the outside – a bit too much and overdone – and ugly on the inside" (Camhi 2014).



Image 84: Stepmother and Stepsisters
(Geronimi and Jackson 1950)



Image 85: Colour-coding of Branagh
(Camhi 2014)

Designed by three-time Academy Award-winning costume designer Sandy Powell, the costumes are designed to look like a 1940s or 1950s Hollywood interpretation of the 19th century rather than actually 19th century fashion (Camhi 2014). Says Powell of this 19th century inspiration, “It felt the most like a fairytale world. But it’s not a period film. I mixed in modern elements. I just used the basic shapes from a period then elaborated on that depending on the character” (Kanter 2015). Powell further states, “I wanted the costumes to be bold and have an explosion of color as if it were a picture book. But at the same time, I wanted the clothes to be true to each character and believable” (Chi 2015).

The idea that “Dress tells the woman’s story” (Gaines 2012, p. 180) cannot be more true than in the designing of Cinderella’s gown for the ball in which she once again comes face-to-face with the Prince. The importance of Cinderella’s gown within the Cinderella storyline in the minds of the general public perhaps can be traced to Disney’s initial choice to have only one night of the ball instead of the three that appear in the Perrault story. Cinderella’s ball gown in the animated film has become iconic for many. Powell, much like Haris Zambarloukos, felt a responsibility to the viewers of the film, in particular to the children who are passionate about the Disney princess Cinderella, and the desire to not disappoint little children all over the world.

Cinderella's dress that belonged to her mother, which she alters to become her initial ball gown, is pink, created in exactly the same color as the mother's dress altered by the mice in the animated film (Images 86-87). For the second ball gown, created for Cinderella by the Fairy Godmother, Powell points out she initially wanted to separate the ball gown from the animated film version. However, in keeping with Branagh's desire to evoke audience recall, it was eventually decided to settle on shades of blue much like the original animated film (Images 88-89), although the various colours that she incorporates into the gown in order to achieve her desired colour effects include blue, green, lavender and lilac (Kanter 2015).



Image 86: Cinderella's Mother's Dress (Geronimi and Jackson 1950)



Image 87: Cinderella's Mother's Dress (Branagh 2011)



Image 88: Cinderella and the Prince (Geronimi and Jackson 1950)



Image 89: Cinderella and the Prince (Fanpop 2015)

Powell states, "I wanted to make the gown look enormous. The gown had to look lovely when she dances and runs away from the ball. I wanted her to look like she was floating, like a watercolor painting" (Chi 2015). The butterflies on the

shoulders are to represent the elements of magic and nature. The circumference of the skirt is eleven meters. Chi adds:

To convey a weightless, flowing dress, the voluminous skirt was composed of more than a dozen fine layers of fabric that included crepe silk, printed polyester, and iridescent nylon in different shades of blue and turquoise. Underneath those layers, [Lily] James wore a corset and petticoat. In the end, nine versions of Cinderella's ball gown were created, each featuring more than 270 yards of fabric and 10,000 Swarovski crystals. It took 18 tailors and 500 hours to complete per dress. (Chi 2015)

The significance of the gown being created as a magical fairy-like ethereal fantasy-inspiring vision can be seen as evidence of Branagh's desire to again provide the viewers with an experience, in this case predominately aimed at the young girls who dream of being fairy princesses and would take enormous pleasure in the vision presented by Cinderella's effervescent blue dress. This holds true for the creation of the sparkly glass slipper.

The glass slippers of Cinderella are the result of a collaboration between Powell and Swarovski, modeled after a pair of shoes from the 1890s that inspired Powell during a visit to a shoe museum in Northampton. Of her visit there and her subsequent inspiration, Powell says:

I was allowed to look in the archives and found a shoe that was dated back to 1890. It was an extraordinarily high heel, like a beautiful little pump but with a five-and-a-half inch heel. It was incredible, I couldn't believe anybody had worn it. The museum allowed me to borrow it and we did sketches of it, a scan of it and then produced a 3-D model of it so we had the piece before we gave it back. That's what I worked with on Swarovski to try to figure out: how to turn that model into crystal. That's the story of the glass shoe. (Kosin 2016)

Eight pairs of shoes were created for the slippers. However, since there is no movement in crystal, they were not worn by Lily James. Instead, the glass slippers that Cinderella appears to be wearing in the film are a result of visual effects. The shoes continue the butterfly motif that is found throughout the film with its butterfly instead of a buckle on the top (Image 90). Says Powell, "It's a crystal butterfly instead of having a buckle or a bow. It's a different image. I thought about

the tiny children looking up to Cinderella, and wanted this look. Now they'll know that as long as there's a sparkly shoe with a butterfly on the front, it's a Cinderella shoe" (Kanter 2015).



Image 90: Swarovski Crystal Slipper (Kendrick 2015)

In terms of the wedding gown created for Cinderella, Powell wanted it to be unlike the blue ball gown. As she says:

Creating the wedding dress was a challenge. Rather than try to make something even better than the ball gown, I had to do something completely different and simple. I wanted the whole effect to be ephemeral and fine, so we went with an extreme-lined shape bodice with a long train . . . Cinderella wins the Prince's heart through her goodness, so I wanted to show this through her clothes. I wanted her to stay modest and pure even though she was going to be a part of royalty. . . A team of seamstresses meticulously cut, sewed, and stitched together the elegant, to-the-floor length gown for nearly a month. Once it was assembled, the frock was given to the artists who intricately hand painted flowers onto the gown. It took 16 people and 550 hours to complete the dress. (Chi 2015)

As for the wedding costume for the Prince, Powell's main influence was the Disney animated film with a 1950s style of tailoring. "The silhouette and the shape of the shoulders is from the original animation," she says. "But we created more of a fitted look and dressed him in less masculine colors such as blue, green, and white." (Chi 2015). The military-style jacket, as well as many of the other costumes

or accents for the costumes, were all dyed blue to match Madden's blue eyes (Images 91-92).



Image 91: The Wedding Clothes
(Geronimi and Jackson 1950)



Image 92: The Wedding Clothes
(Chi 2015)

Though the “masculinity” of the above-mentioned colours is debatable, by presenting the Prince in softer hues of blue as opposed to the bright red or the black that Derek Jacobi wears as king, it presents Cinderella and the Prince as equals. It further is an example of the colour coding that is often shown in Branagh's films such as the colour coding of the couples in *Love's Labour's Lost* and the colour coding of Don Pedro's men in white and blue and Don John's men in white and black, the traditional colour of the “bad guys” in *Much Ado about Nothing*. In addition, Stellan Skarsgård appears often in this film wearing black, thereby also marking him as a bad guy.

In dressing the Fairy Godmother, Powell says, “That was another difficult one because there's a lot of high expectations surrounding a Fairy Godmother, isn't there? She had to go from the beggar woman, which was all those browns and greys and pewter colors, to a complete contrasting bright white. And I wanted it to light up. We made it happen! We had little LED lights all over it, which twinkled.

You see it, but it's not distracting. Rather, I wanted it to look like she was glowing” (Kanter 2015).

In the case of the Fairy Godmother, the costuming departs from the animated film. This Fairy Godmother is younger and more glamorously dressed than her animated counterpart, possibly as a means of emphasizing the difference between her disguise as an old beggar woman and her resplendent appearance as her real self (Image 93). This costume can be said to reference the 1939 production of *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming 1939) in its depiction of Glenda the Good Witch. Similar to the Fairy Godmother, Glinda is dressed in a sparkly full-skirted ball gown and carries her magic wand (Image 94). Her dress also has iridescent puff sleeves that closely resemble fairy wings. In addition, unlike the sweeping circle skirt of Cinderella, the dresses of both the Fairy Godmother and Glinda are more 18th century French-inspired with their bustled sides that bring to mind the era of Marie Antoinette.



Image 93: The Fairy Godmother
(Branagh 2015)



Image 94: Glenda the Good Witch
The Wizard of Oz (Fleming 1939)

For the costuming of the evil Stepmother, Powell turned to the films of the 1940s, citing Joan Crawford and Marlene Dietrich as her inspirations. Powell states, “That’s exactly what my inspiration was: Joan Crawford and Marlene Dietrich. I don’t know why, but it just came into my head that it would be a good look and I just kept thinking of those actresses in films back in the ‘40s that were meant to be 19th century. I loved the way they still had the padded shoulders and the pointed bosoms and thought that was a really good look for Cate. That absolutely was the inspiration – sort of the 1940s version of the 19th century – and getting it wrong” (Kosin 2016).

The influence of such films as *Gone with the Wind* (Fleming 1939) can be seen in the costuming wherein the film exemplifies the lack of historical authenticity in costuming that was prevalent in films of that era (Image 95). This is in keeping with Branagh's previous films in the desire to make it timeless and not grounded specifically in a particular era. It also is indicative of Branagh's appreciation of classic Hollywood cinema.



Image 95: *Gone with the Wind* Gowns (Fleming 1939)

In addition to the costumes themselves, Production Franchise Supervisor Anna Hall points out that “Swarovski offered up the opportunity for us to borrow some of their very precious archive jewelry. We ended up with hundreds of pieces of archive jewelry” (Monsasterio Films 2015). The Stepmother is usually adorned with such 1940s costume jewelry. In this use of the 1940s and 1950s aesthetics in costuming, the film continues Branagh's method used in *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* of referencing the architextual films of this era as inspiration for his films in order to achieve audience recall.

In further keeping with Branagh's vision of the timelessness of the story and the decision not to place the setting in any one particular historical period, hair designer Carol Hemming says of the ball scene, “Right from the very beginning we wanted to have different period flavours throughout. Because this is a fairytale, you have a little bit more freedom to play with the centuries and with the looks.” Powell

further adds that “There is a diverse mix of characters and looks because the idea was this is a ball for everybody, young, old, poor, rich. And also we wanted to have an element of international flavour, so we’ve dressed princesses from around the world” (Monsasterio Films 2015).

Ella’s costuming in the rest of the film serves to symbolise her alienation and isolation from her stepfamily. She appears always in a simple blue frock while her stepsisters are seen everyday in different elaborate outfits. Her hair is worn loose and hanging down her back while her stepsisters are adorned with upswept coifs and curls. Her everyday shoes are simple ballet slippers with a definite modern twist as her stepfamily parade around in more historically inspired laced boots. These all contribute again to the representation of Ella as a modern heroine.

7.5 Set

The setting of the film is loosely based upon the 1950s Hollywood depiction of the 19th century era, appropriating much of its aesthetics from the 1950 Disney animated film. The exteriors of Cinderella’s house and surrounding gardens and fountains are very similar to those depicted in the earlier film, including the fountain around which Cinderella as a child interacts with her father, and the tower with the attic at the top of the stairs to which Cinderella is banished by her Stepmother after her father’s death (Images 96-99). These continue Branagh’s uses of intertextuality in the mise-en-scène to create audience recall.



Image 96: Cinderella’s Chateau
(Geronimi and Jackson 1950)



Image 97: Cinderella’s Chateau
(Branagh 2015)



Image 98: Cinderella's Fountain
(Geronimi and Jackson 1950)



Image 99: Cinderella's Fountain
(Branagh 2015)

The interior of the house is filled with rich detail, heavy drapes and floral chintz of a style that was used in the 19th century. It also includes various floral and animal motifs that continue the nature themes and symbolism of the film, such as the goose chandelier in the foyer and the butterflies in the wallpaper (Image 100). The interiors have a cluttered, lived-in feel and include an eclectic collection of items that represent the travels of the father throughout the world.

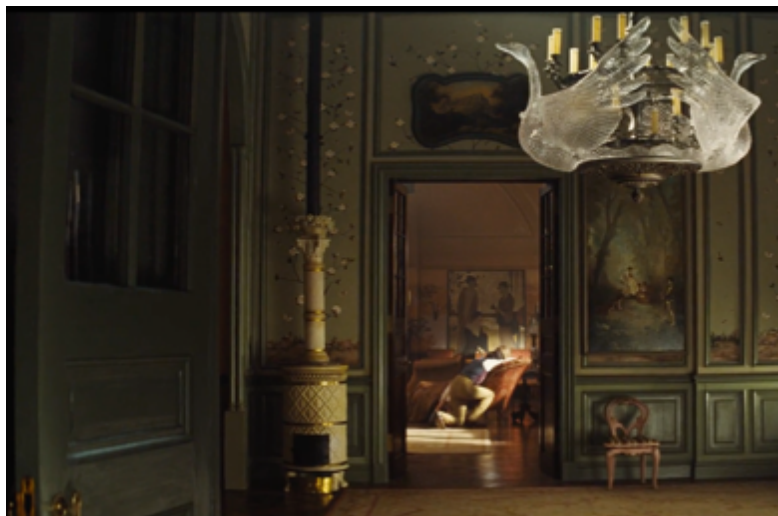


Image 100: Goose Chandelier (Branagh 2015)

The palace, Branagh says, was inspired by his 2012 visit to Buckingham Palace during which he received his knighthood. Says Branagh, "It was a very nice thing to go to the Palace and get to see it. I was able to share some of my research

with Dante and we have the wide white corridors that are in Buckingham Palace in our film palace" (Hiscock 2015).

Production designer Dante Ferretti describes the set of the ballroom at the King's palace as "an inspiration especially from the Baroque style with a lot of decoration in gold and marble. And so I put it all together and then move it like this [as if shaking it all up together], and this is what has come out" (Monsasterio Films 2015). Branagh further states that:

Ferretti based his grand ballroom on Versailles, Blenheim and a palace in Vienna. It had a massive staircase, balconies and marble floors, and took about nine months to build on the 007 stage at Pinewood Studios. The pattern on the floor took weeks to lay down and was specifically tailored for sweeping overhead shots of the dancing. My inspirations were Visconti's *The Leopard*, *The Wizard of Oz* and *Gone with the Wind*. I wanted it to be a sensory experience of heightened colour and swirling dresses. (Williams 2015)

This inspiration can be seen in *Gone with the Wind*, in the ballroom scene in which Rhett Butler demands a dance with the recently widowed and in mourning Scarlett O'Hara Hamilton. The brightly costumed dancers whirling around the ballroom floor parallel the dancers at the ball in *Cinderella*. The colours are vibrant and the set design includes similar multi-tiered levels with railings that allow the spectators to overlook the ballroom and the dancers below (Image 101-102).



Image 101: *Gone with the Wind* Ballroom (Fleming 1939)



Image 102: Ballroom (Branagh 2015)

The claimed intention for the ballroom set was to literally shock and awe the viewer. The success of this attempt can be measured by the reaction of the actors to the set. “When I saw the designs for it, I was so pleased because they had this fantastic fairytale quality to them, and you just wanted to visit that world that is not like our world,” says actor Skellan Skarsgård of the set that was created for the ballroom scene, housed in the same soundstage at Pinewood Studios where a part of the Jack Ryan film was shot. (Monsasterio Films 2015).

/Says actress Kate Blanchett of the ballroom set, “The first time I walked onto the set, I was gobsmacked. I had to pick my jaw up off of the floor. It took them an hour to lower all the chandeliers and to light them all” (Monsasterio Films 2015). Actor Nonso Anozie adds, “It’s the kind of film that you imagine doing when you’re a kid and you want to get involved in the movies. And you get into a set like this and it’s like all your dreams are rolled into one.”

Similar to Geraghty’s analysis of the significance of the outdoors in the 2005 film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* (2008, p. 40), the outdoors also constitutes an important setting for this film, demonstrating the significance of nature for Ella. The scenes showing her playing outside with her parents as a baby, showing her outside again a bit older when her father gives her a butterfly after returning from his travels, showing her as she grows up walking the fields with her father after the death of her mother, showing her outside happily feeding and communing with the animals, showing her dashing outside to lean upon the well after her dress has been destroyed before the ball, and finally meeting the Fairy Godmother outside all serve to establish the outdoors as a solace and comfort for Ella.

This establishment of the outdoors as her place of solace adds meaning to her dash across the grounds on horseback after she has been verbally abused by her stepsisters. It is here where she meets Kit for the first time and where she spends most of the time with him at the ball. The meeting outdoors between Ella and Kit also adds to the effect of their being viewed as equals because they are both outside of the confines of their social contexts and restraints.

7.6 Music

The score for *Cinderella* was composed by Patrick Doyle and, as reporter Jon Burlingame puts it, “If ever a movie demanded a rich, romantic score, it’s “Cinderella”, with its fairy-tale story of an orphaned servant girl, a handsome prince, a grand ball and a glass slipper. And who better to provide the music than composer Patrick Doyle” (Burlingame 2015).

Doyle’s involvement in the film was established early on so that he could compose the music that would be used when shooting the ball scene. As Doyle

states, “I was on holiday in France. Ken called me, and talked about the tone of the picture and the feeling he envisioned. The music had to have romance and heart. So I sat down at the piano and wrote the love waltz, something simple and direct, but with strength” (Burlingame 2015).

Of his score which has a 19th century feel to complement the setting established by Branagh, Doyle recalls, the executives from Disney “wanted the score to have a classic feel to it, a timeless quality. That’s what I strove for. I wanted to honor the tradition” (Burlingame 2015).

Branagh explains that “The tone we were trying to achieve was playful and joyful, but also emotional without being manipulative. Patrick found a beautiful yet robust tune that could be orchestrated so that it could offer lots of moods. It had simplicity, joy, and added a sense of fun. And, of course, his trademark: romantic” (Burlingame 2015).

In this film, as in the previous collaborations with Branagh, Doyle plays with the relationship with diegetic and non-diegetic sound. When Cinderella’s mother sings *Lavender’s Blue*, a 17th century English folksong, the soundtrack orchestrates her singing, then stops when the young Cinderella sings, drawing attention to the point that the character of the mother’s singing was diegetic rather than singing as a part of a musical. In Disney animated films, there are songs in which the characters sing their emotions which are not supposed to be actual singing but are a part of the inner dialogue of the character. This film does not share this element with the animated version. It is not a musical, so the singing in the film is diegetic sound.

This song recurs throughout the film and can be interpreted as the Ella theme song. The music played as she enters the ballroom is a musically enhanced heavily orchestrated instrumental version of the song that swells with her increasing happiness. It is the song that ultimately saves her when she is heard singing it by the Prince’s Captain of the Guard, thereby leading to her rescue from the tower in which she had been locked by her Stepmother.

The animated version has elements of music that are also diegetic music as when Cinderella sings *A Dream Is a Wish Your Heart Makes* as she moves around her attic bedroom. In this scene, the mice and birds are listening and one of the birds joins her song, demonstrating that this is diegetic sound. This musical element of the animated film is incorporated into this *Cinderella* version with the singing of her mother, as well as her singing softly *Sing, Sweet Nightingale* as she feeds the chickens, demonstrating the comparison between Cinderella's ability to sing is compared with the stepsister's inability to sing well. Cinderella's singing is also an important element in the telling of the story as her singing is ultimately what leads to her discovery by the Prince's Captain of the Guards and her being rescued from her attic prison.

The song that the stepsister Drisella sings while seated at the harpsichord constitutes one of the film's inside jokes in that the song that she so horribly mangles is a song that Doyle had previously composed for Branagh's film of *As You Like It*, Shakespeare's *It Was a Lover and His Lass* which is sung in the final wedding scene of that film. Doyle says this song was chosen here because, as he states, "It would be the ultimate disaster to have an appalling singer sing those immortal words" (Burlingame 2015).

This film is the third Disney film in its series of live action films adapted or appropriated from its earlier animated films. The first was the film *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), the second *Maleficent* (2014), which was a prequel to the *Sleeping Beauty* film depicting the early life of the Queen from the animated film. In *Maleficent*, Disney pays homage to the musicality of the earlier animated film when Lana Del Rey sings *I Know You*, a song from the animated film, during the end credits. Likewise, during the rolling of the end credits of *Cinderella*, actress Lily James performs *A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes*, after which Helena Bonham Carter sings *Bippity Boppity Boo*, both songs from the animated film *Cinderella*. In this way, the connection between the animated film and the live action film is strengthened in that each of the characters Cinderella and the Fairy

Godmother sings these two songs, respectively, in both films. It also demonstrates Disney's usual convention of showcasing the talents of its lead actors.

There is a difference in the way that *Maleficent* was marketed and the way *Cinderella* was marketed in that the former was marketed as a prequel whereas the latter was marketed as the live action version of the animated film, thereby acknowledging and encouraging the connection between the two. This connection is further emphasized by having the lead actors sing these songs rather than hiring a well-known singer from another genre to sing the songs during the end credits as Disney often does in its animated films, such as Christina Aguilera singing at the end of *Mulan* or Vanessa Williams at the end of *Pocahontas*.

As Burlingame states, "Performed by the 65-piece London Symphony Orchestra, the score offers fanfares and flourishes for the prince; magical sounds for the fairy godmother (Helena Bonham Carter); furious chase music for the pumpkin-coach getaway; and warm, lyrical music for Ella's special relationship with her birth parents" (Burlingame 2015). The use of known songs from the previous films added into the soundtracks of this film contributes to Branagh's claimed intentions of creating audience recall.

7.7 Conclusion

The findings of this research indicate that there are specific methods that Branagh consistently employs throughout his directorial film work, including the three case-study films, all of which combine to support Branagh's status as auteur as defined by both Sarris and Leitch. The first of these methods involves his use of research into the intertextuality of all of his films. Aside from the intertextuality revealing itself through the storyline of the films, Branagh consistently uses the element of *mise-en-scène* to incorporate and enhance this intertextuality into his films.

One of the methods in which intertextuality is incorporated into the *mise-en-scène* is through the use of camera techniques, including constant camera movement, frequent use of panning and tracking shots, camera movements to

symbolise the characters' emotions and camera framing to reference earlier hypertexts.

Another method in which Branagh incorporates intertextuality into the mise-en-scène is by sharing his research and knowledge with his actors and encouraging them to do research as well in order for them to give performances that are enriched by the intertextuality.

His use of performance, action and camera movement together to create the dynamics of a live element also denotes a method that he employs continually in his films. Further elements of the mise-en-scène including costuming, sets, and music are further used to incorporate intertextuality. Costuming is filled with intertextuality referencing his specific choices of hypotexts, hypertexts, and architexts, as well as transtextual influences such as classic Hollywood films that audience members may recognise and/or be reminded of.

In the settings of his films, there is a consistent aim to present the expansiveness or boundaries as they are within the storyline and not as they would seem simply within the camera's line of sight. The intention is to create the feeling that there exists more beyond what is revealed within the cinematic screen. The camera work is one of the ways in which he achieves this, such as circling the actors or panning in a scene, which gives the audience not only a view of the environment of the actors but reveals their relationship with the other elements in the scene.

The music in all his films is composed by Patrick Doyle and often has a variety of intertextual references that Branagh chooses to incorporate. It incorporates diegetic and non-diegetic in a variety of ways. This is seen prominently in his films prior to *Thor* and is used but is less evident in *Thor* and *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*, but is seen again prominently in *Cinderella*, which is more reminiscent of Branagh's earlier films.

Branagh continues the use of referencing to evoke recall in *Cinderella* with elements like costume, such as the pink and the blue ball gowns of Cinderella, the uniform of the Prince at the ball, and the colour-coding of the costumes of Drisella

and *Anastasia*, all inspired by the costumes of the 1950 animated Disney film. Other references are the inclusion of characters like Gus Gus and the cat Lucifer, and the use of songs written for the animated film. An example of clues is the use of the Patrick Doyle composition of the Shakespeare poem that Drisella mangles.

There are also usages of repeated patterns and motifs that allow even young minds to look for more in the film than just the events that are happening onscreen, such as the recurrence of the butterfly or goose images that occur throughout the film in different locations and forms.

Analysis of the *mise-en-scène* of *Cinderella* indicates that this film displays these consistencies with Branagh's previous works, and is more reminiscent of Branagh's earlier feature films than is *Thor* or *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*. The film displays numerous similarities with his earlier Shakespeare films in terms of the ambiguous timeframes in the settings, in the use of grandiose scenes with many extras, and the slower movement of the camera in such techniques as its tracking and panning shots. The evidence indicates that these methods work together to create an intertextual film full of semiotic codes that offer the audience many opportunities to experience a sense of recall or connection to the film that is personal to them.

The live element and the resulting heightened style is consistent throughout his work. This live element creates an effect of distance that allows the audience to view the film with a more critical eye, making them better able to recognise the semiotic codes presented to them.

The three major themes as discussed in Branagh's previous films are apparent in *Cinderella* as well. The first theme of the difficulties of familial relationships is demonstrated in Cinderella's being forced to submit to the abuse and emotional neglect of a stepmother and stepsisters who resent, belittle and despise her. This in turn leads to the second theme, that of feeling isolated and alienated from the people around her. Cinderella, suffering from the loss of her beloved mother and father, finds her only friends take the form of farm animals and mice. She takes upon her shoulders alone the responsibility of preserving the

memory of her father's legacy by doggedly continuing to maintain the upkeep of their estate. The third theme, the fitness to rule, is demonstrated in the comparisons between the behavior of Cinderella and her stepfamily, particularly poignant in the scene in which the Stepmother confronts Cinderella in the tower room brandishing Cinderella's glass slipper and Cinderella demands of her, "Why must you be so cruel?" (Branagh 2015). The fitness to rule of Cinderella and her King is then revealed in the simple declaration near the end of the film that they must always "have courage and be kind" with the voiceover stating that they were seen as the best monarchs to ever rule the land. These recurring themes in Branagh's oeuvre evidence Sarris' third premise in reference to meaning, as well as Leitch's criterion of thematic consistency (2007, p. 256).

In reference to Sarris' first category of auteurship, Branagh is very knowledgeable of the film equipment and has had an interest, from his early career in acting, in the technical side of filming, as indicated in his discussion of his early experiences in television during which he was constantly questioning the crew on their various duties and skills and how things work. When questioned about specific camera movements in interviews, or when speaking on the commentaries of the DVDs, he offers much information and technical discussions of how effects were achieved and why and how certain equipment was chosen over others in order to achieve the desired effects.

In reference to Sarris' second element, Branagh's films contain a strong visual style in his early films, particularly in his Shakespeare films. The personality of Branagh is revealed in his films, however, through his numerous choices and contributions concerning the *mise-en-scène* and the performances existent in his films.

He has a very methodological approach to directing in which he is well researched in the intertextuality of his films. In working on an adaptation, his process is to investigate the various sources and adaptations available in order to pick and choose what he likes from each. He shares this research and knowledge with those involved in his projects, from the actors to the various members of the

crew, and consistently makes films that leave clues throughout to connect with the viewer in an intellectual or emotional way and to activate the element of recall. In terms of the movement of the camera, there are consistently tracking shots with cameras that follow the actors, as well as other elements in the film.

In his earlier films, Branagh employs the frequent use of long uninterrupted shots, tracking shots, elaborate crane shots, and cameras that rotate around the actors. This continues throughout his later films, yet he also begins to add new types of camera movement to enhance the emotions of the scene, such as the rotating of the camera 180 degrees in the ballroom scene from *Cinderella*. In these later films, he is more experimental yet still incorporates the elements of his earlier films. There are not as many long tracking shots, but each film does incorporate some such shots. In addition, each film has a style that is based upon the research Branagh does into its intertextuality and the choices he makes in trying to create a film that he feels is most representative of the nature of each individual film.

His choices in the visual style may be different for each film and his decisions are thus made not by following a formula of aesthetics that he likes but by looking at a film, scene by scene, and deciding what would be the best choices for achieving his desired intentions for the specific film. Thus though the look of his various films may be different, his intention and approach are the same.

There are elements of his *mise-en-scène* that are consistent throughout Branagh's directorial film work that further contribute to a sense of continuity. His choice of Patrick Doyle as the composer for the film scores is consistent in every film he has directed. His films also exhibit a degree of repetition in the company of actors that he chooses to cast. He is shown to work closely with the heads of various departments and aspects of the films that he directs and to be involved in the decision-making processes. These methods further conform with Leitch's criterion concerning auteurship's dependence upon the consistent working habits of the auteur and his "appetite for the coordination and control of outsized projects" (2007, p. 256), as indicated not only in the three case-study films but in his large-scale versions of both *Henry V* and *Hamlet*.

As Haris Zambarloukos says of Branagh in his interview, “He looks through every frame through the camera. He has an input on everything, on every costume, every production design aspect. His imprint is everywhere.” However, his films do not all have a consistent visual style, nor are they stylised to the extent that his work is easily identifiable to those who are unfamiliar with his work.

The thesis further demonstrates the ways in which Branagh can be defined as auteur, based upon the additional criteria proposed by Leitch. Leitch’s premise that an auteur will “emerge victorious in battle with competing auteurs, whether writers, producers, or stars” (2007, p. 256) can be seen in the film *Much Ado about Nothing*, which was cast with a variety of superstars including Denzel Washington, Keanu Reeves, and Michael Keaton, all of whom were arguably better known and more popular than Branagh at the time of filming, but the film is regarded primarily as a Branagh film, not as a Denzel Washington film.

Leitch’s suggestion that an auteur’s “authorial stamp is less closely connected with original creation than with brand name consistency and reliability” (2007, p. 256) is indicated by the amount of scholarly literature that focuses on Branagh’s films, particularly his Shakespeare, which display a style of performance that has set a new standard for the performance of Shakespeare in the twenty-first century. This establishment of himself as a leading director of Shakespeare further provides evidence of Leitch’s posit that auteurs are successful “at turning themselves into brand names” (2007, p. 256).

Leitch’s proposal that auteurs have an “association with a popular genre” (2007, p. 256) is evidenced in all three of the case-study films. His involvement with both *Thor* and *Cinderella*, including elements of costuming, particularly with the Cinderella dress, imply a “sensitivity to the possibility of broad appeal in such disparate media as movies, television, books, magazines, and T-shirts” (2007, p. 256). As regards the final criterion that Leitch proposes, that of possessing “a public persona that can be converted to a trademark more powerful than the other authorial trademarks with which it will inevitably compete”, (2007, p. 256), this thesis adheres to the previously discussed hierarchy of the Marvel and Disney

brands, and proposes that Branagh's films under these brands still bear his authorial stamp beneath the larger umbrella of the Marvel and Disney authorial stamps and branding.

The evidence of this research builds upon Ellis' and Grant's theories of audience recall as a part of Branagh's methods, and supports Geraghty's theory of the elements of *mise-en-scène* used to evoke this recall. However, this research takes that theory a step further to demonstrate the means and methods through which these elements can be used to elicit recall, as exemplified by Branagh's use of these elements throughout his directorial work. It further demonstrates the use of performance, as suggested by Pavis, as a significant means of further conveying meaning to the audience, and it further is used as a means of providing the audience with an experience evocative of the live element. It further demonstrates how the semiotic codes of performance can be used to present the intertextuality of the film from a variety of sources, such as the posturing of Hemsworth in *Thor*, as well as Hiddleston's use of Peter O'Toole as an inspiration for his acting style.

In this way, this research contributes in moving forward the discourse on the use of semiotic codes to communicate with the audience and how it is achieved. It adds further insight into the live element by presenting technical methods for possibly creating and enhancing the sensation of the live element of performance on the screen.

The research does not support the premise suggested by Ellis that the goal of an adaptation is to replace the original hypertexts in the memories of the viewers, but rather that the adaptation is used as a means of recalling those memories and possibly enhancing them.

The choice of the three most recent works of Branagh was based upon their position as his most recent films and as films directed in his post-Shakespearean phase. The film *Sleuth* might have been an interesting addition to the case studies as it possesses marked similarities to these three in that it is within the same post-Shakespearean phase and it is the first film in which Haris Zambarloukos joins Branagh as an important element of Branagh's team of crew members with whom

he consistently collaborates. As such, the films share with his later films the experimental camera usage that marks these films. However, it also differs from these later films in that, though it is an adaptation of the hypotext and hypertext of the play and earlier film of the same name, it is not a bricolage of multiple different sources in the same manner that the later films are. In addition, the three films chosen provide sufficient material to examine the questions posed by this research.

One of the initial questions posed in the beginnings of the research was whether a defined correlation could be found between the technical filmmaking process and performance, between the tangible and the nontangible. This study argues that one of Branagh's intentions within the *mise-en-scène* is to evoke the live element of performance and that the study presents some technical methods for how he achieves this.

The evidence in the study presents that this is something that Branagh is attempting to do. However, the element of live performance itself is debatable in terms of whether his films do indeed capture this since much is dependent upon audience response. The evidence is presented from the position that this is something that his films do achieve.

These methods practiced by Branagh continue to provide evidence for his status as both author and auteur, even within the franchise system of the Disney "transmedia corporate hegemony" (Leitch 2007, p. 255), with its extensive marketing of accompanying film-oriented merchandizing. Thomas Leitch points out that:

It would be a mistake to think of the corporate model of Disney's continuing success as an exception to the general rules of authorship whereby adapters can aspire to the conditions of auteurs. No less than Disney do Hitchcock and Kubrick imply corporate models of authorship that seek to hide any signs of corporate production beneath the apparently creative hand of a single author whose work – that is, whose intentions, whose consistency, whose paternal individual care for the franchise, even if that franchise is as suspenseful as Hitchcock's, as prickly as Kubrick's, or as horrific as Stephen King – can be trusted. Auteurs of this sort are made, not born; they emerge victorious in battle with competing auteurs,

whether writers, producers, or stars; and their authorial stamp is less closely connected with original creation than with brand name consistency and reliability, from Hitchcock's suavely amusing scares to Disney's wholesome family entertainment. (2007, p. 256)

This thesis argues that even within the auteurship of Walt Disney Studios and the authorial branding of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Branagh establishes himself as auteur, as based upon the criteria of both Sarris and Leitch.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS

This thesis demonstrates that Kenneth Branagh employs a variety of methods in his approach to filmmaking and that these methods remain consistent across his directorial body of work to date. The result is a directorial style that can be detected throughout his films. In addition, his contributions to his films can be seen not only in his directorial style, but in the elements of mise-en-scène, all of which support the characterisation of Branagh as an auteur.

The thesis further indicates that a goal to which Branagh aspires in his directorial film work is to evoke audience recall, thereby providing a personal experience for the individual spectator. He achieves audience recall through the use of intertextuality incorporated through the storyline and text of the film itself, but also through its incorporation into the elements of mise-en-scène. As part of his process to incorporate this intertextuality into the mise-en-scène, he employs specific means and methods.

The initial step in this process is in-depth and extensive research into the hypotexts, hypertexts, and architexts of the film. He then decides which elements of the research he wishes to incorporate into the film, including elements of his own personal experiences and influences which then become additional transtexts of the film. These choices he shares with his cast and crew in order to enhance their ability to materialise his vision. From the results of his research that he chooses to incorporate, those that do not present themselves within the storyline or as embedded texts are incorporated through the mise-en-scène.

Using specific framing to reference the hypertexts and transtexts, such as Dutch angles in *Thor* referencing the comic books, the framing of the walk-in-the-woods scene from *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* referencing *Miller's Crossing*, the reproduction of images parallel to the animated feature in *Cinderella*, as well as the Dutch angles of the flight-from-the-ballroom scene also in *Cinderella* referencing *Thor*, is one of the methods that Branagh uses to include intertextuality into the mise-en-scène. Further camera techniques such as camera movement are also used to enhance the architextual nature of the film, such as the furtive

voyeuristic camera movements in *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* and the slower pans in *Cinderella* used to compensate for its being a family film.

Another method designed to achieve this is giving actors direction to research hypertexts or transtexts for visual insight into the physicality or mental state of their characters. One example of this is his direction to Hemsworth to incorporate the physicality of Thor from the comic book and from the physicality of boxers. Another example is the direction to Hiddleston to watch specific performances of Peter O'Toole for inspiration in the portrayal of Loki. Another example is his direction to Madden to read texts that he felt the Prince would have read in order to have a better understanding of the character.

Another method is to incorporate specific references to costuming, creating costumes that evoke memories of hypertexts, such as the similarities of Thor's costumes in the film and the comics, the colour-coding of the costumes in the film to match those in the animated feature of *Cinderella* and the costumes designed to reference the 1950s Hollywood representation of historical costume, and the James Bond or Mafioso-inspired suits and coats of *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* which reference the architextual spy thrillers or villains, respectively.

Sets are also used to reference intertextuality as in the vision of Asgard in *Thor* reminiscent of its descriptions in the Snorri legends and the palace's similarity to the posters of Lang's *Metropolis*, the scenes from *Cinderella* in which the sets echo the images from the animated feature such as the fountain in the courtyard and the exterior architecture of Cinderella's chateau, and the inclusion of locations such as the Kremlin to reference Cold War spy thrillers in *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*. Music also provides intertextuality, such as the inclusion of songs from the animated feature and from Branagh's *As You Like It* into *Cinderella*. These methods all contribute to Branagh's ability to create audience recall in his films.

This study discusses Branagh's intention of triggering audience recall, while understanding that audience members view films with various levels of involvement. Viewers with a high level of such involvement may be seen as viewers informed by prior knowledge of a film's hypotexts, hypertexts and/or

architexts. As Mikos, Eichner, Prommer, and Wedel state in their article *Involvement in The Lord of the Rings: Audience Strategies and Orientations*, “For viewers who lack prior knowledge, the processes of involvement are probably not as easily realised as for viewers who have read the books. Nonetheless, the films offer sufficient opportunities for involvement through their portrayal of the characters, their various genre frames, and the special effects, which create visual attraction and encourage visual enjoyment” (2008, p. 115).

In discussing such relationships of involvement between a viewer with a high level of prior knowledge of the hypotext and its film adaptations, Sue Turnbull, in her article *Understanding Disappointment: The Australian Booklovers and Adaptation*, points out that:

It is therefore possible that enjoyment for this particular audience segment comes not only from the realisation on film of the books they know intimately and already love, but also from the performance of a vernacular form of textual analysis in making critical evaluations of the film. In other words, this special audience consider themselves to be in a position of superior knowledge and authority when it comes to making assessments of the film. . . Ultimately, it would seem, it is the sense of being a special audience in possession of a degree of authority with regards to a reading of *both* texts that explains how the expression of critical judgments (including disappointment) may be an intrinsic part of the profound pleasure to be derived from the film experience. (2008, p. 109)

This addresses the type of relationship that Branagh wishes to encourage with his interest in audience recall, acknowledging that viewers watch a film with varying levels of involvement. The study of audience reception in relation to audience recall is outside the scope of this thesis, however, yet it provides an additional area for further research.

This study contributes to the scholarly literature in the field of adaptation studies in terms of its expansion of the theory of Geraghty on using *mise-en-scène* and semiotic codes to evoke audience recall by exploring the methods through which *mise-en-scène* can be used to achieve this recall. The originality of this study is its proposal that by evoking in the audience an element of live performance, the resulting effect may be the enhancement of recall by placing the audience in a

frame of mind to better perceive the semiotic codes of the film. It further contributes to the research in the methods that can be used to capture the element of live performance on screen. This study further contributes to the academic literature on the Marvel cinematic universe and the intertextual alliances that exist between the various films produced within this universe and their transtextual influences. The study also contributes to the academic literature analysing the films of Branagh during his post-Shakespearean phase.

The depth of the research into the intertextuality of the case-study films adds strength to the ability to discover the influences from the hypotexts, hypertexts and architexts that Branagh incorporates into his films. Additional strengths of the study are that the depth of this work encompasses a wide range of sources across numerous types of media and that, although the research is accompanied by the personal interview with Haris Zambarloukos and the opportunity to question Branagh himself on his attempts to capture the live element, it has been sufficient to challenge and provide evidence to support the conclusions of this study even without these. These serve to add verification and support to the conclusions already evidenced.

The empirical research presented herein is thus used to counterbalance the epistemological nature of the theories on auteurship, audience recall and the ability to capture the liveness of performance on film. Empirical evidence demonstrates that Branagh attempts to evoke audience recall and to capture live performance, and that he has specific methods to achieve these. However, the evaluative nature of proposing whether these goals are in fact achieved is open to debate based upon individual audience perception. This provides fodder for future research based upon the models of Simone Murray for the exploration of audience response. Further exploration can also be made into the methods of capturing the element of live performance on film and its effect upon audience perception of semiotic codes.

In addition, the development of the Marvel cinematic universe and its transmedia universe is relatively recent and a verdant topic for future academic

research. Not only are the films adaptations with which the audience is often very familiar, but Marvel has successfully created an audience that actually seeks to discover the intertextual and transtextual elements that are proliferated within the films of the expanding universe. The creation of a cinematic environment which encourages audience participation in the uncovering of its semiotic codes is open to a wide range of potential research topics with an equally wide range of theoretical approaches such as those based upon the study of intertextuality and transtextuality, Geraghty's theory of audience recall, and Murray's studies of audience reception, to name but a few. It further opens the door for future research into the contributions of the various television series within the Marvel filmic universe. As Leitch points out:

There is much to be gained by considering the peculiar problems raised by postliterary adaptations – that is, movies based on originals that have neither the cachet of literature nor the armature of a single narrative plot that might seem to make them natural Hollywood material. Even if many more of them were not gathering on the horizon, they would warrant a closer look because they throw a new light on the subject of adaptation and suggest a possible alternative to the chimerical quest for fidelity. (2007, p. 258)

The significance of the study to practitioners is that it provides practical analyses of what could be generalised means in which intertextuality can be incorporated from a variety of sources into all areas of *mise-en-scène*, including some methods that can be used to achieve audience recall and capture the live element.

The approach to filmmaking that Branagh uses can thus be summed up by Branagh himself when he states:

It's definitely been my experience that you prepare, prepare, prepare, plan, plan, plan, in order to be able to deviate from a position of strength. It's usually easier to handle the bad news that comes along when suddenly your actor X isn't available, they're sick today or something . . . but we're only in the location for one day and it costs us squinty billion dollars . . . I sometimes prepare, to be completely improvisational. (Branagh 2014)

During a Guardian Live event held on 8 October 2015, Branagh reiterated his attitudes towards his extensive preparation methods, saying:

The other thing we're trying to exploit . . . is to be very, very prepared . . . but still allow us to capture the live element, you know, that thing of being sort of fleet-of-foot enough to be in that moment that, if the table collapses, you might do something about it, whatever that is. And the thing that was very quiet now feels very powerful. The event nature is to be both artful and artless at the same time.

During this Guardian Live event, when questioned specifically by the author of this thesis as to what methods he uses to capture what he referred to as the "live element", Branagh responded with a tale of one example from the filming of *Hamlet* demonstrating how he sometimes achieves this through the unexpected.

In this story, he is trying to film a long nine-minute tracking shot, a sequence which involves for the actors more than eight hours of waiting around while the lighting is set up. Actor Richard Briers is set to enter the scene after six minutes. However, when the cameras start rolling, Briers keeps messing up and they have to begin again. After several takes, Briers prepares to enter and rather than face the camera, he turns around and enters the screen with his back to the camera and does the entire scene with his back to the camera. This is the take they use for the film because he cannot manage to do it otherwise.

This tale is a further example of how Branagh's extensive preparation with cast and crew allows him to be prepared for the unexpected as the rest of the cast and crew went along with the shoot and he managed to film the tracking shot. At which point, Branagh declared in conclusion, "And that's how we captured live performance."

As a means of challenging or providing support to Branagh's claims, the researcher of this study asked specifically of Haris Zambouloukos whether Branagh deliberately tried to capture an element of live performance in his directorial films, to which the cinematographer of all of the case-study films replied that these attempts were "very deliberate. Absolutely deliberate and that was the intention." When asked whether the camera was used as a means of capturing this, he replied:

Again the whole thing goes together. You have to have a very emotional scene, a very engaging scene. You want the camera to kind of go with it in harmony. And I think that's what I mean by Ken being a perfectionist and we can't let just anything go. It is like a jazz band. Everyone needs to know the score and know the song and only then they can improvise. Most jazz bands rehearse a lot. So all those things that you notice are absolutely true and deliberate and they definitely come from a tradition of theatre. It's not a Mike Lee film that you make up as you go along. The idea is that this is the script, this is the word, this is the emotion. You know how to interpret it and you really have to dig deep to do that. To make it your own. It's much harder to make something your own than it is to make something original. So that requires tremendous effort and patience.

Branagh has spoken often in his biography and in interviews of his experience of first attending a live performance in Oxford in which he watched Derek Jacobi in the title role of *Hamlet*, which proved to be a momentous occasion in the course of his life. Describing this event, Branagh says:

I was completely bowled over . . . It seemed unbelievable, dramatic, dark and rich to look at, full of exciting lighting effects. The production had tremendous pace, and the acting was passionate and electric. I cheered at the end as he came on. I'd read all about him: Cambridge, Birmingham Rep, understudying at the National Theatre, taking over from Jeremy Brett, Cassio in Olivier's *Othello*, Ivanov for Prospect, and now here he was, live – a completely thrilling Hamlet. I was watching Derek Jacobi. (Branagh 1989, p. 36)

It may be suggested that this quintessential, ground-breaking moment of his life was so monumental for him that he has spent his career trying to recreate that feeling for his audience, thereby defining his attempt to give back to the audience the kind of exultation which he received from this theatrical performance. Jacobi has since become one of the actors that is repeatedly cast in Branagh's directorial films, as well as becoming involved in a number of Branagh's various theatrical productions.

In conclusion, this thesis presents evidence to support the hypothesis that Kenneth Branagh's directorial methods have established him as an auteur. It further supports the proposal that Branagh uses the elements of *mise-en-scène* to

establish recall in addition to the element of live performance to create a cinematic experience for the viewer that is both personal and intimate and, hopefully at the same time, entertaining.

The inclusion of such references and clues serves a secondary purpose, that of distancing the viewers from the action of the film by redirecting attention to these familiarities in order to allow the viewers to use their own preconceptions and connections to the material to create a personal experience. Branagh distances them so that they can enter again carrying their own personal connections and experiences with them. Branagh's goal thus is in line with that of Wollen (1972) to make the audience collaborators with him in creating meaning.

In terms of his fidelity to the hypotexts and hypertexts of his films, Branagh champions the idea of being faithful to the spirit more than the letter of the originals. In keeping with the premise of Thomas Leitch (2000), who points out that most films are not completely faithful to the source texts, Branagh often takes liberties in his adaptations, changing the timeframe of the setting, transposing scenes, and adding scenes and deleting scenes when needed in order to aid in the flow of the storytelling. For the titles of his films that are most faithful to their texts, Branagh indicates this fidelity by adding the names of the authors, as in *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* and *William Shakespeare's Hamlet*.

Unlike Truffaut's argument about the fidelity of the works of Aurenche and Bost who, he claims, are faithful to neither the letter nor the spirit of their original sources (2009), Branagh tries to remain faithful to the spirit of his source materials, though he takes such liberties with the texts. Branagh is fidelitous in the sense that he does want the viewer to recognise the original source within the film and to make the connection between the film and the source material, and, as mentioned above, he includes references to earlier source materials.

One way that Branagh creates distance for the audience is by consistently placing the audience in the position of the spectator. The camera movements show the action and the interaction between the characters from an outside position rather than from the individual perceptions or point of view of the characters, with

exceptions such as the point-of-view shots seen from the position of Jack Ryan, as discussed in Chapter Six. Though his camera movements can sometimes be symbolic of the emotion of the character, as seen in the frantic dash of Cinderella, as discussed in Chapter Seven, scenes are still usually shot from the position of the onlooker rather than from the eyes of the individual characters.

For Branagh, a significant task of the filmmaker is to provide an experience whereby the viewers receive information that evokes memories of their own experiences and thereby draws them back into the action taking place on the screen. In this way, Branagh pushes the viewers away, only to draw them back in. This distancing serves another purpose, that of evaluating and/or appreciating the actors and their choices on the screen. He incorporates a heightened style of acting that makes the audience aware of the acting, “realistic but not naturalistic” (Branagh 2000). This heightened style of performance to which he aspires, this realism but not really naturalism, furthers his desire to make viewers aware of the performance of the actors and of the acting choices they make.

The second goal that Branagh tries to achieve is to capture the feeling of the live element of performance. He attempts to create an experience for the viewers that feels alive and immediate. Instead of a film that has been shot much earlier and the audience is viewing it at a much later stage, Branagh tries to create a sense of the immediacy of the live element.

There is no one absolute specific technical method or technique that Branagh uses to aid in capturing a degree of live performance on screen, but rather a combination of elements. These include both the more technical side of filming, such as equipment choice, framing and camera movement, as well as the less tangible side, such as the acting and rehearsals or lack thereof. There is also no consistent “Branagh formula” that he employs across all his films, as he approaches each project as a separate and individual case and varies the methods employed in the effort to determine the best methods of achieving his goals in each particular film.

Camera movement or framing is one of the ways used to convey an element of live performance. As Branagh states, "I want to do things with the camera and with the scene, which, I believe, essentially, gives the scene to the actors" (Mazer 1996). In *Thor*, the use of camera movement around the central character within the set creates a more three dimensional understanding of the actor, which gives the impression more of an actor in an open space rather than an actor within the confines of the cinematic screen. In *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit*, the same thing occurs. In addition, the sometimes sneaky and voyeuristic angles and movement of the camera are used to highlight the movement of the actors in their space, thereby conveying an element of live performance by using the camera as the eyes of the viewers and making them a part of this voyeuristic incursion. In *Cinderella*, the topsy turvy movement of the camera is similarly used to convey the immediacy of the frantic and chaotic emotion of Cinderella, as though this is happening in real time. The camera movement around the characters is also seen in select scenes, such as the horseback scene. Although the film, as explained in the chapter on *Cinderella*, has a steadier style of movement than the other two mentioned above, it cuts between various wider shots and closer shots, establishing the same sense of the actors within their space as in the other films.

This is one of the qualities that is seen consistently throughout all of Branagh's films. This kind of use of camera angles is also particularly prominent in Branagh's film *Sleuth*, in which the camera evokes recall as it often depicts the familiarity of a security camera, and in one scene, conveys a feeling of live performance in that it looks like the proscenium of a stage in which the two characters are playing their parts.

Another technique used by Branagh to capture the live element of performance is the shooting of a scene in one extended take. Even when the scene will later include different cuts and individual shots, the actors are still required to perform the entire scene without a break. The intention behind this is to let the performance play out, creating an effect of immediacy that Branagh hopes

translates to the screen. An example of this is the initial meeting of Cinderella and the Prince on horseback. In explaining his motivations, Branagh says:

We did a number of things in the film where we shot things in one, which puts some real flame under the actors. They get kind of nervous; it creates a kind of theatrical effect. It actually helped to create conditions, as I thought, that were conducive to bringing out that sort of extra under-the-skin kind of tingle that the audience can feel, I'm sure, when it's happening right in front of you, and you don't know what's going to happen next. (Mazer, 1996)

Another method he has used to enhance the element of live performance is exemplified in this same scene from *Cinderella* in that Branagh made a point of not allowing the lead actors Lily James and Richard Madden to become familiar with each other before the first day of filming, allowing them to meet only briefly before the scene was shot. The horseback scene was the first scene from the film to be shot. As Cinderella and the Prince are becoming acquainted for the first time, James and Madden are also becoming acquainted for the first time. In this way, art imitates life, the purpose of which is to enhance the live element of the scene. As Lily James explains, "Ken wanted to sort of capture the energy of two young people meeting for the first time, on camera" (Mavity 2015).

Evidence suggests that the live element is captured through a variety of camera and performance methods working together. It is difficult to determine whether it functioned within the *mise-en-scène* as another aid in eliciting recall or whether this is an aid in eliciting the element of the live element. One could argue this point, but this thesis supports the first interpretation. This is one method that aids in recall but also adds a sense of dynamics and excitement to his films.

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