

SHAKESPEARE AND CONTEMPORARY ADAPTATION:  
THE GRAPHIC NOVEL

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the process of adaptation of Shakespeare's plays into the graphic novel medium. It traces the history of these adaptations from the first comic books produced in the mid-twentieth century to graphic novels produced in the twenty-first century. The editions used for examination have been selected as they are indicative of key developments in the history of adaptation of Shakespeare's plays into the medium. This thesis explores how the plays are presented and the influences on the styles of presentation. It traces the history of the form and how the adaptations have been received in various periods. It also examines how the combination of illustrations and text and the conventions of the medium produce unique narrative capacities, how these have developed over time and how they used to present the plays. Sales data of Shakespeare graphic novels is presented and analysed to reveal the target audience is the education sector which in turn drives the publisher's promotion of the authenticity and fidelity of their editions. How authenticity is claimed and invoked in the adaptation into graphic novels is also examined.

To Mum,  
with love and gratitude

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Introduction

I.	Introduction	1
II.	Definitions of Terms	2
III.	Adaptating Shakespeare's Plays into Graphic Novels	10
IV.	Literature Review – Shakespeare in Graphic Novels	28
V.	Chapter Summaries	34
Chapter 1:	Shakespeare Comic Books in the 1950s	37
I.	Shakespeare and Comic Books of the 1950s	37
II.	Adaptating Shakespeare's Plays into Comic Books	44
III.	The Reception of Shakespeare Comic Books	55
Chapter 2:	Shakespeare Graphic Novels of the 1980s	68
I.	Shakespeare and the Graphic Novel	68
II.	The Oval Projects Shakespeare	71
III.	Stylisation and Intertextuality: Graphic Novels and the Theatre	84
IV.	The Reception of Shakespeare Graphic Novels	91
Chapter 3:	Shakespeare Graphic Novels in the Twenty-First Century	102
I.	Classical Comics Shakespeare	102
II.	Manga Shakespeare	110
III.	Independent Publications	121
IV.	Shakespeare's Storytellers: Onstage and Offstage Worlds	125
V.	The Reception of Shakespeare Graphic Novels in the Twenty-First Century	135
VI.	Digital Comics	151
VII.	Shakespeare in Interactive Motion Comics – <i>Macbeth</i>	157
Chapter 4:	Authenticity	167
I.	Adaptation, Fidelity and Authenticity	167
II.	The Control-Text and Editorial Intervention	172
III.	Authenticity and the Modernised Text	181
IV.	Visual Presentation of the Text	187
V.	Graphic Novels as Performance	197

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont.)

Chapter 5:	Marketing and Sales of Shakespeare in Graphic Novels	204
I.	Marketing Books	204
II.	The History of Marketing Shakespeare	208
III.	Marketing Shakespeare in Graphic Novels	216
IV.	Sales of Shakespeare in Graphic Novels	227
V.	Graphic Novels in Education	235
Chapter 6:	The Comparison of Three <i>Tempests</i>	248
I.	Scenography and Style	248
II.	Postcolonial and Romantic <i>Tempests</i>	262
Conclusion		282
Appendix 1:	Selected Chronology of Shakespeare's Plays in Graphic Novels	289
Bibliography		292

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

### Introduction

Figure 1:	Example of Closure, McCloud, p. 66.	page 17
Figure 2:	SelfMadeHero, <i>King Lear</i> , 2009, p. 12.	page 25
Figure 3:	Oval Projects, <i>Othello</i> , 1983, p. 57.	page 27

### Chapter 1- Shakespeare Comic Books in the 1950s

Figure 4:	Famous Authors Illustrated, <i>Hamlet</i> , 1950, p. 12.	page 41
Figure 5:	Henry Irving as Macbeth; Famous Authors Illustrated <i>Macbeth</i> , 1950, cover; Classics Illustrated, <i>Macbeth</i> , 1955, cover.	page 47
Figure 6:	Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth, 1889; Vivien Leigh as Lady Macbeth, 1955.	page 48
Figure 7:	Famous Authors Illustrated, <i>Macbeth</i> , 1950; Classics Illustrated, <i>Macbeth</i> , 1955.	page 49
Figure 8:	Classics Illustrated, <i>Hamlet</i> , 1952, p. 1.	page 50
Figure 9:	Lawrence Olivier, <i>Hamlet</i> , 1948; Famous Authors Illustrated, <i>Hamlet</i> , 1950, p. 15.	page 51
Figure 10:	Classics Illustrated, <i>Julius Caesar</i> , 1950, p. 4.	page 52
Figure 11:	Classics Illustrated, <i>Macbeth</i> , p. 2.	page 53
Figure 12:	Classics Illustrated, <i>Macbeth</i> , p. 12.	page 54

### Chapter 2 – Shakespeare Graphic Novels in the 1980s

Figure 13:	Oval Projects, <i>Macbeth</i> , 1982, p. 52.	page 71
Figure 14:	Oval Projects, <i>Macbeth</i> , 1982, p. 40.	page 72
Figure 15:	Oval Projects, <i>Othello</i> , 1982, p. 57.	page 73
Figure 16:	Oval Projects, <i>Othello</i> , 1983, p. 68.	page 75



Figure 17:	Zarate's use of colour, Oval Projects, <i>Othello</i> , 1983, p. 85 and p. 117.	page 76
Figure 18:	Oval Projects, <i>Othello</i> , 1983, p. 17.	page 77
Figure 19:	Oval Projects, <i>King Lear</i> , 1984, p. 78.	page 79
Figure 20:	Oval Projects, <i>Twelfth Night</i> , 1984, p. 120.	page 80
Figure 21:	Ian Pollock's poster for the 1982 RSC production of <i>King Lear</i> .	page 88
Figure 22:	Poster for Lane College performance of <i>King Lear</i> , October 2007.	page 90
Figure 23:	Oval Projects, <i>Othello</i> , 1983, p. 69.	page 98

### **Chapter 3 – Shakespeare Graphic Novels in the Twenty-First Century**

Figure 24:	Chorus in Classical Comics <i>Henry V</i> , 2007, p. 7.	page 105
Figure 25:	Classical Comics, <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , 2009, p. 7.	page 106
Figure 26:	Classical Comics, <i>Macbeth</i> , 2008, p. 1.; Orson Welles' <i>Macbeth</i> , image of witches, 1948.	page 107
Figure 27:	SelfMadeHero, <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , 2007, p. 68.	page 113
Figure 28:	Wiley Press, <i>Julius Caesar</i> , Hyeondo Park's illustration of Marc Antony inspired by Marlon Brando, p. 11, and Cassius inspired by Mr. Burns, p. 14.	page 116
Figure 29:	Gareth Hinds, <i>King Lear</i> , 2008, pages 36 and 37.	page 122
Figure 30:	Nicki Greenberg, <i>Hamlet</i> , 2010, p. 99.	page 124
Figure 31:	Backstage image from Nicki Greenberg's <i>Hamlet</i> , p. 289.	page 125
Figure 32:	Classical Comics, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2009, p. 18.	page 128
Figure 33:	SelfMadeHero, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2007, p. 25.	page 129
Figure 34:	Classical Comics, <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , 2009, p. 33.	page 130
Figure 35:	SelfMadeHero, <i>Othello</i> , 2008, p. 145.	page 132
Figure 36:	SelfMadeHero, <i>Henry VIII</i> , 2009, p. 14.	page 133

Figure 37:	Classical Comics, <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , 2009, p. 40.	page 134
Figure 38:	SelfMadeHero, <i>As You Like It</i> , 2008, p. 32.	page 143
Figure 39:	SelfMadeHero, <i>Macbeth</i> , 2008, illustrations of Macbeth, p. 15, and Lady Macbeth, p. 50.	page 145
Figure 40:	Dan Carroll's <i>Hamlet</i> , 2009, Act 3 Scene 4, pages 5 and 6.	page 152

#### **Chapter 4 – Authenticity**

Figure 41:	Classical Comics, <i>Macbeth</i> , 2008, Original, Plain and Quick Text, p. 9.	page 185
Figure 42:	Classics Illustrated, <i>Hamlet</i> , 1952, p. 13.	page 190
Figure 43:	Classical Comics, <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , 2011 p. 65.	page 191
Figure 44:	Classical Comics, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2009, p. 131.	page 192

#### **Chapter 5 – Marketing and Sales of Shakespeare Graphic Novels**

Figure 45:	Classics Illustrated covers of Julius Caesar, 1950, <i>Hamlet</i> , 1952, and <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> 1956.	page 217
Figure 46:	Classical Comics, <i>Henry V</i> , 2007, covers of the three Textual versions.	page 219
Figure 47:	Gareth Hinds, cover of <i>King Lear</i> , 2008.	page 220

#### **Chapter 6 – The Comparison of three *Tempests***

Figure 48:	Classical Comics, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2009, p. 49.	page 249
Figure 49:	Classical Comics, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2009, Act 5 Scene 1.	page 251
Figure 50:	Classical Comics, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2009, showing human faces in the landscape, p. 74 and p. 86.	page 253
Figure 51:	BBC, <i>The Tempest: The Animated Tales</i>	page 253
Figure 52:	Can of Worms Press, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2009, p. 43.	page 254

Figure 53:	Can of Worms Press, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2009, Trinculo and Stefano, p. 67.	page 255
Figure 54:	Can of Worms Press, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2009, Act 5 Scene 1, p. 117.	page 258
Figure 55:	SelfMadeHero, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2007, p. 57.	page 259
Figure 56:	SelfMadeHero, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2007, Act 5 Scene 1, pp. 168-72.	page 261
Figure 57:	Classical Comics, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2009, Prospero, p. 1.	page 265
Figure 58:	Classical Comics, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2009, p. 21.	page 266
Figure 59:	Classical Comics, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2009, p. 33.	page 267
Figure 60:	Classical Comics, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2009, p. 31.	page 268
Figure 61:	Classical Comics, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2009, p. 35.	page 269
Figure 62:	Classical Comics, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2009, p. 128.	page 271
Figure 63:	Can of Worms Press, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2009, Prospero, p. 6.	page 272
Figure 64:	Can of Worms Press, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2009, Caliban, p. 20.	page 273
Figure 65:	Can of Worms Press, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2009, p. 134.	page 274
Figure 66:	SelfMadeHero, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2007, Prospero, p. 17.	page 275
Figure 67:	SelfMadeHero, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2007, Caliban, p. 110.	page 277
Figure 68:	SelfMadeHero, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2007, p. 120.	page 278
Figure 69:	SelfMadeHero, <i>The Tempest</i> , 2007, pp. 80-81.	page 280

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1:	Retail sales of Shakespeare books 2007 - 2009 in the UK as provided by Nielsen Bookscan.	page 229
Table 2:	Retail sales figures for Shakespeare graphic novels 2007 - 2009 in the UK as provided by Nielsen Bookscan.	page 230
Table 3:	Retail Sales figures of Shakespeare graphic novels for 2010 in the UK as provided by Nielsen Bookscan.	page 234

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BBC	-	British Broadcasting Corporation
CC	-	Classical Comics
CCA	-	Comics Code Authority
CI	-	Classics Illustrated
CWP	-	Can of Worms Press
DCSF	-	Department of Schools and Families
IBSC	-	International Boys School Coalition
ISBN	-	International Standard Book Number
LTS	-	Learning and Teaching Scotland
OEL	-	Original English Language
OP	-	Oval Projects
RSC	-	Royal Shakespeare Company
SMH	-	SelfMadeHero
TCM	-	Total Consumer Market
WP	-	Wiley Press

# INTRODUCTION

## I. Introduction

When Clive Bryant, the Chairman of Classical Comics (CC), first conceived of the idea of producing full text adaptations of Shakespeare's plays as graphic novels in 2004 he believed he had a new 'world-changing concept' and was not aware of anyone else doing it.<sup>1</sup> He believed that using the graphic novel medium, with its combination of images and words, was an innovative way to present Shakespeare's plays in a 'dynamic, colourful and exciting manner'. Seemingly unknown to Bryant was that Shakespeare's plays had been adapted into comic books and graphic novels since the mid-twentieth century.

This thesis examines the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays into the graphic novel medium. It traces the history of these adaptations from the first comic books produced in the 1950s to the graphic novels of the twenty-first century. The history of the publication of Shakespeare plays in comic books and graphic novels is long and complex with multiple editions reprinted under different publisher's imprints or reprinted under different series titles. Rather than listing all of these multiple variations, a more valuable way of investigating Shakespeare graphic novels is to focus on the key developments introduced over this period.<sup>2</sup> Using selected editions as examples the development and evolution of the medium, the context of their production, their reception and the sales and marketing of the editions will be explored.

The primary texts used in this thesis have been selected as they represent significant moments in the adaptation of the plays into the medium. They include the first adaptations of Shakespeare's plays into comic books in the 1950s. These were produced by several different

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<sup>1</sup> Clive Bryant, 'E-mail Interview' to Margaret Roper, 13 January 2009.

<sup>2</sup> For a listing of key editions see Appendix 1 'Graphic Novels of Shakespeare's Plays – Selected Chronology'.

publishers including Seaboard and Amex but the most extensive and successful range was the Classics Illustrated (CI) series. These were the standard form until the next significant development in the 1980s when Oval Projects (OP) in the UK published the first Shakespeare graphic novels to include the 'full unabridged' text. The next significant developments were in the twenty-first century when editions of Shakespeare's plays were published as both traditional western graphic novels and in the manga form of the medium which was developed in Japan. In the UK Classical Comics (CC) also introduced a range of editions which reproduced the language of the plays in original, modernised and simplified forms. CC also adapted their edition of *Macbeth* into a digital multimedia form creating an electronic version of the graphic novel. Self-published works created by individual adapters in the twenty-first century are also used in this thesis as examples to demonstrate specific points in relation to artistic style, form and editing.

Using these examples of key points in the adaptation of the Shakespeare's plays into the medium this thesis examines questions raised about adaptation of the play-texts, including how the plays are presented and what are the influences on styles of presentation. It also addresses how the narrative capacities of the medium are used and how they have developed over time. Issues of reception and the producer's concerns for the attribution of authenticity and the commercial influences which shape the editions are also included in this examination of adaptation of Shakespeare's plays into the medium.

## **II. Definitions of Terms**

### **Shakespeare Adaptations**

There have been adaptations of Shakespeare's plays since they were written over four hundred years ago. Adaptation means to modify and make suitable or make fit to a new

context and is generally used to refer to Shakespeare's plays transposed to a different location, time period or genre to create a new cultural product. The types of modifications made to the literary text or the way in which the source text is used in the adaptation process can vary markedly. In the analysis of the adaptation of literary works theorists have attempted to define the terminology used and to categorise new works based on their relationship to the source text.

In *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots* Ruby Cohn provides a long list of the words to describe different types of reworkings of Shakespeare's plays. She uses the overarching term 'offshoot' with subcategories of reduction/emendation, adaptation and transformation.<sup>3</sup> In Cohn's terminology 'adaptation' is the term applied to reworkings of the plays that have 'substantial cuts of scenes, speeches and speech assignments; much alteration of language; and at least one and usually several important (or scene length) additions' and includes 'plays that are relatively faithful to Shakespeare's stories however far they depart from his text'.<sup>4</sup> She uses the term reduction/emendation to classify offshoots that are close to the Shakespearean texts but cut lines or emend words. For Cohn 'additions' are the crucial factor in distinguishing an adaptation from a reduction/emendation.

In *Adaptation and Appropriation* Julie Sanders also suggests an extensive list of potential types of adaptations which include:

Variation, version, interpretation, imitation, proximation, supplement, increment, improvisations, prequel, sequel, continuation, addition, paratext, hypertext, palimpsest, graft, rewriting, reworking, refashioning, re-vision, re-evaluation.<sup>5</sup>

Sanders differentiates between adaptations 'which signal their relationship with the informing source text or original' and appropriations which 'affects a more decisive journey away from

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<sup>3</sup> Ruby Cohn, *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 3.



the informing source into a wholly new cultural product or domain'.<sup>6</sup> Such lists recognise the myriad of ways in which the source material can be used and modified to produce a new work. As Fischlin and Fortier note, 'writ large adaptation includes almost any act of alteration performed upon specific cultural works of the past'.<sup>7</sup> Shakespeare's plays have been used in graphic novels and comic books in many different ways from citation of lines of text, to relocation of characters into different stories, production of prequels and sequels and relocation of plots, just to name a few. The term adaptation can be used to describe all these types of works. In order to define the parameters of study of this thesis the type of adaptation to be included needs to be specified.

The examination of adaptation of Shakespeare's play-texts into different media has been primarily concerned with the production of film and theorists have attempted to categorise the different possible types of film adaptation. Geoffrey Wagner suggests three categories which could be used to describe literary adaptations into film which are transposition, commentary and analogy.<sup>8</sup> Transposition is the adaptation of a novel to film with minimal interference, commentary is a purposeful alteration of the original and analogy is a considerable departure from the original to make another work. Similarly, Dudley Andrew also proposed three categories of adaptation which broadly equate to Wagner's categories: borrowing, intersection and fidelity of transformation.<sup>9</sup> Adaptations which fall into the 'transformation' category are those which attempt to represent the text most faithfully in the new medium, 'intersection' aims to recreate the distinctness of the original and 'borrowing' makes no claim to fidelity.

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<sup>6</sup> Sanders, p. 26.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, eds., 'Introduction', in *Adaptations of Shakespeare: A Critical Anthology from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (N.J; London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; Tantivy Press, 1975), p. 222-3.

<sup>9</sup> Dudley Andrew, 'Adaptation', in *Film Adaptation*, ed. by James Naremore (London: The Althone Press, 2000), pp. 28-37, (p. 29).

All these categories are an attempt to frame the discussion on adaptation but theorists also recognise categorisation is not exact. Fischlin and Fortier note categorisations are ultimately untenable as ‘any attempt to classify the possibilities of reworking too narrowly will run up against many anomalies’.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Deborah Cartmell suggests that ‘the more we study adaptations, the more it becomes apparent that the categories are limitless’.<sup>11</sup> However, while recognising the limitations of categorisation it can be used to restrict and define the types of adaptations that will be examined in this thesis.

In this thesis Shakespeare adaptations will refer to those graphic novels of Shakespeare’s plays which could be described as ‘transpositions’ using Wagner’s categories, or ‘transformations’ using Andrew’s terminology. That is, adaptations which attempt to reproduce the plays, more or less intact, in a new medium and explicitly declare themselves to be versions of Shakespeare’s plays. This will include abridged editions of the play-texts which, though heavily cut, still identify themselves as a version of the play.

## **Comics Books and Graphic Novels**

Consensus on the definition of what constitutes a comic book or graphic novel has not been reached in the evolving field of comics scholarship. As Groensteen notes,

So great is the diversity of what has been claimed to be comics, or what is claimed today under diverse latitudes, that it has become almost impossible to retain any definitive criteria that is universally held to be true.<sup>12</sup>

The variety of definitions proposed by comics scholars supports Groensteen’s assertion.

Robert Harvey suggests that ‘the thing that distinguishes [comics] from other kinds of

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<sup>10</sup> Fischlin and Fortier, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Deborah Cartmell, ‘Introduction’, in *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*, ed. by Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 23-28 (p. 24).

<sup>12</sup> Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, trans. by Bart Beatty and Nick Ngyuen (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 2007), p. 14.

pictorial narratives – is the incorporation of verbal content’.<sup>13</sup> For Carrier it is the speech balloon that is the defining element because they establish the ‘word/image unity’ identifying the medium as a hybrid form, part verbal and part pictorial.<sup>14</sup> Kunzle proposes in his definition of a comic strip four criteria. There must be a sequence of separate images, a preponderance of image over text, the medium in which it appears must be mass medium and ‘the sequence must tell a story with is both moral and topical’.<sup>15</sup> McCloud provides the definition of comics as ‘juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequences intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer’.<sup>16</sup> Though all these definitions differ on various points, the common element for all theorists is that graphic novels are comprised of sequential images which construct a *continuous* narrative.

Graphic novels differ from illustrated editions of the Shakespeare’s plays which also combine words and pictures. As Carrier observes, in illustrated editions the images are discrete from each other and present events that are temporally distant from each other. An illustrated work cannot be called a comic book or graphic novel as they require too many intermediate stages to be filled in to be viewed as a continuous story.<sup>17</sup> Using Marie-Laure Ryan’s terminology, illustrated editions use an ‘indeterminant’ mode of narration where only one or two points are specified and ‘it is up to the interpreter to imagine one (or more) of the virtual curves that traverse these coordinates’.<sup>18</sup> Graphic novels are a ‘determinant’ mode of narration where ‘the text specifies a sufficient number of points on the narrative trajectory to project a reasonably definite script’.<sup>19</sup> It is this element that differentiates them from

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<sup>13</sup> Robert C. Harvey, ‘Comedy at the Juncture of Word and Image’, in *The Language of Comics: Word and Image*, ed. by Robin Varnum and Christina T. Gibbons (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 2001), pp. 75-96 (p. 75).

<sup>14</sup> David Carrier, *The Aesthetics of Comics* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> David Kunzle, *The Early Comic-Strip* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: Kitchen Sink Press, 1993), p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Carrier, p. 55.

<sup>18</sup> Marie-Laure Ryan, *Avatars of Story* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14.

illustrated editions where the pictures highlight a specific moment or character but the pictures alone cannot be read as a coherent continuous narrative.

The naming of the medium is also a contested issue. When the medium was first developed the term 'comics', or 'comic books', was used to differentiate them from illustrated books as a unique narrative form. McCloud uses 'comics' as a generic term to mean all forms of the medium whether they are comic strips, comic books, graphic novels or manga. In contemporary publishing the terms comic and comic book are often avoided due to the link with a juvenile audience and the implication that they are 'funnies' and not a medium which can be used to present serious topics and stories. It was in the 1970s that the convention of naming was changed to include the term 'graphic novels' to signal that the content was more complex and mature than that found in comic books. However, 'graphic novel' is not without its critics as it implies fictional stories and also does not differentiate between non-fiction, poetry or instructional texts, and in the case of Shakespeare, does not identify them as play-texts. It is also criticised by comics scholars as merely a marketing term which is used by publishers to create a hierarchy of value in the medium by differentiating their products from lesser form of comic books. Chute argues that 'graphic novel' is a misnomer but notes it is a common and recognisable term. Chute prefers the term 'graphic narrative' as it indicates the substantial length that is implied by 'novel', but also accommodates modes other than fiction.<sup>20</sup> However, 'graphic narrative' is also a problematic term as it does not adequately differentiate the medium from other visual narrative forms and could be used to describe film and individual works of art. More recently *The New York Times* has used the term 'graphic books' instead of graphic novel to encompass the wide variety of genres that are now produced but identify 'manga' as a separate form of the medium.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Hillary Chute, 'Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative', *PMLA*, 123:2 (2008), 452–65 (p. 453).

<sup>21</sup> New York Times, 'Best Sellers' <<http://www.nytimes.com/best-sellers-books/overview.html>> [accessed 01 May 2010].

The ongoing debate on the most appropriate term to use is reflected in the naming of two new journals which both began publication in the UK in 2010. *Studies in Comics* objective is to ‘articulate a theory of comics’ and uses the term to describe all forms of the medium.<sup>22</sup> *The Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* was published with the stated aim to include ‘all forms of sequential imagery’.<sup>23</sup> In naming this journal the publisher is signalling that there is a difference between a ‘graphic novel’ and a ‘comic’ but does not define the two terms. The naming conventions used in this thesis will also differentiate between the two terms. In this thesis ‘graphic novel’, which is now widely recognised and commonly used, will be used to describe the medium that includes both traditional Western forms as well as manga to identify these longer editions. The term ‘comic book’ will be used to describe those editions produced prior to the 1970s to signal the historic change in the naming convention and the shorter length of those editions.

### **Editors, Illustrators and Adapters.**

The identification of the roles of the creators of an edition is problematic in graphic novels and comic books of Shakespeare’s plays as they are not always noted or easily distinguished. The production of a graphic novel is often a collaborative project which can involve writers, editors, illustrators, letterers, pencillers and colourers. Illustrators may be involved in the scripting of the illustrations, and editors may instruct illustrators on the size, content and style of images so the line between these two functions can be blurred. For example, Sonia Leong, the illustrator of the SelfMadeHero (SMH) edition of *Romeo and Juliet* stated in regard to her role in producing the script for the graphic novel:

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<sup>22</sup> Intellect Publishing, ‘*Studies in Comics*’ <<http://www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-Journal,id=168/>> [accessed 21 January 2011].

<sup>23</sup> Taylor and Francis, ‘*The Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*’ <<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/rcom>> [accessed 30 April 2011].

Each script was given to me in scenes or acts and it was up to me to layout my pages as I saw fit...I did have some input [...] we would play around with visual cues to bring in so Richard [editor] would know what to cut out.<sup>24</sup>

Other artists such as Paul Duffield, who illustrated the SMH edition of *The Tempest*, stated they were given the script for the graphic novel already broken down into individual speech balloons and pages. His role was to develop illustrations to fit the speech balloons provided.<sup>25</sup> For Ian Pollock, producing the Oval Projects (OP) edition of *King Lear* was also a collaborative process between the illustrator and the editor. He stated that ‘the series editor ‘leant’ on me rather heavily to alter things [...] in certain frames there was too much dialogue going on so it was broken up into three smaller frames’.<sup>26</sup> Pollock also notes that the OP series editor rejected some illustrations on the basis that they didn’t appropriately reflect the scene. Though the production of these graphic novels was clearly a collaborative process it is not often reflected in the credits in the editions.

The terms used to describe different functions also vary in different publications of Shakespeare graphic novels. The person responsible for the visual representation of the play may be referred to as the ‘artist’ or ‘illustrator’. The person responsible for the textual content may be referred to as ‘script adapter’, ‘editor’, ‘textual consultant’, ‘series adapter’ or even ‘writer’. To provide consistency and clarity in this thesis the terms ‘illustrator’ will be used for the visual representation of the play and the term ‘editor’ will be used to describe the function of adapting the play-text. Where there is a lack of clarity in identifying the contributors to the publications the term ‘adapter’ will be used to describe the function. In self-published works such as Gareth Hinds *King Lear* the illustrator and editing function are carried out by the same person and the term ‘adapter’ will also be applied.

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<sup>24</sup> Sonia Leong, ‘E-mail Interview’ to Margaret Roper, 12 February 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Duffield, ‘E-mail Interview’ to Margaret Roper, 01 January 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Ian Pollock, ‘Fooling with Shakespeare’, *Illustrators*, 48 (1984), 14-16 (p. 16).

### III. Adapting Shakespeare's Plays into Graphic Novels

#### III. I Transmedial Adaptation.

In *Narrative across Media* Marie-Laure Ryan defines a medium as a channel or system of communication which presents a unique combination of features that makes a difference to how narratives are presented and experienced.<sup>27</sup> In transposing a Shakespearean play-text into a graphic novel the work moves from the language-only medium of a literary text to the visual and verbal medium of graphic novels. Therefore the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays into comic books and graphic novels is an example of 'transmedial' adaptation.

Ryan argues that in transmedial adaptation as 'the intrinsic properties of medium shape the form of narrative and affect the narrative experience' because 'media differ widely in the efficiency and expressive power'.<sup>28</sup> A medium is not simply a conduit through which a narrative passes unaffected, but its specific features and conventions impact how the narrative is presented and read. The properties and conventions of a medium Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan observes 'open up possibilities and impose constraints which [...] shape the narration, the text and even the story'.<sup>29</sup> In transmedial adaptation the narrative possibilities of the medium, which Ryan calls 'affordances', are exploited by the adapter who must also work around its limitations to produce the narrative.

The graphic novel medium uses the two different narrative channels of language and images and each channel has different affordances and constraints. An image, Ryan observes, can 'immerse the spectator in space, map the story world, represent the visual appearance of characters and settings and suggest an immediate past and future to the moment depicted' and

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<sup>27</sup> Marie-Laure Ryan, 'Introduction', in *Narrative Across Media: The Languages of Storytelling*, ed. by Marie-Laure Ryan (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), pp. 1-40 (p. 19)

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, 'How the model neglects the Medium: Linguistics, Language and the Crisis of Narratology', *Journal of Narrative Techniques*, 19.1 (1989), 157-66 (p. 160).

represent emotion through facial expression. What images cannot do is make explicit propositions, represent possibility, conditionality and counterfactuality, represent the flow of time, interiority, dialogue or make evaluations or judgements.<sup>30</sup> In regard to affordances of language Ryan notes that language can ‘represent temporality, change, and causality [...] make determinate propositions by referring to specific objects and properties’ as well as ‘represent the difference between actuality, virtuality and counterfactuality’.<sup>31</sup> What language cannot do is show what settings and characters look like, display beauty and represent continuous processes.

The graphic novel is what Ryan refers to as a ‘multi-channel’ or ‘spatio-temporal’ medium which combines the temporal affordances of language with the special affordances of images.<sup>32</sup> The graphic novel medium has also developed specific conventions in the style and presentation of the images and text which are used to communicate the narrative. The presence of images overcomes some of the limitations of language alone by showing characters and settings. In the graphic novel adaptation of a play-text the images can also show emotion of the characters through facial expression, gestures, colour and weight of the image which is not necessarily explicit in the dialogue. In the conventions of the medium the appearance of the text can also be used as narrative device and emotion can be expressed in the font style, size and colour of the typography used for the dialogue. The conventions of panel size and shape and the layout of the page are also used to convey emotion, actuality and control narrative timing.

As Ryan notes the narrative capacity of single images can imply previous movement or anticipate what is to come, but it cannot make this explicit and so leaves much to be filled in

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<sup>30</sup> Ryan, *Avatars of Story*, p. 19.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>32</sup> Ryan, *Narrative Across Media*, p. 10.



by the interpreter.<sup>33</sup> Graphic novels attempt to overcome this limitation by using sequential images which make the preceding and following action more explicit. Though they use static images graphic novels can represent the flow of time as a sequence of images so providing causality by presenting the past, present and future in the narrative. The conventions of illustration style can imply reality or imagination, and through the use of speech and thought balloons the graphic novels can also present dialogue and interiority which an image alone cannot. Therefore, by combining the two channels of image and text, and using sequential images and the conventions of the medium, the graphic novels exploit the possibilities and overcome some of the limitations of a single image or text alone to convey a narrative.

### **III.II Construction of Narrative in Graphic Novels**

All narratives are built from discrete units linked together in an organised manner to form a whole. In literature, including play-texts, the discrete unit used is the sentence or statement. In Shakespeare's plays these statements are constructed in the form of dialogue between characters, or monologues, and the meaning of each statement is understood in context of what has preceded it and what follows it. The dialogue in a play-text can be further structured by the inclusion of statements in the form of stage directions which Jowett suggests can 'invite the reader to envisage the dialogue as dramatic action played out in the theatre'.<sup>34</sup> These extradiegetic statements assist the reader to understand the relationship between sequential units of the play.

In graphic novels the discrete narrative unit is the panel. The panel is a single illustration, with or without text, which is commonly contained within a frame. As with the sentence in literature, these panels are organised in a specific sequence to communicate the

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<sup>33</sup> Ryan, *Avatars of Story*, p. 26.

<sup>34</sup> John Jowett, *Shakespeare and Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 147.

narrative of the graphic novel. McCloud describes the construction of a graphic novel as a sequence of visual images that ‘fracture both time and space, offering a jagged staccato rhythm of unconnected moments’.<sup>35</sup> That is, unlike the visual media of film and theatre, the graphic novels do not present action and dialogue in a continuous flow. Instead they present specific moments shown in static illustrations which can include fragments of narrative statements.

The theories on how a continuous coherent narrative is constructed using static illustrations and the grammar of the medium are essential to the process of adaptation of Shakespeare’s plays into graphic novels. The critical language on the construction of narrative in graphic novels is developing and evolving and it borrows terms from other fields of inquiry into visual media including film, theatre and art criticism. The contemporary discourse on the construction of narrative in graphic novels has also produced conflicting theoretical positions on the role and importance of the different narrative channels of the medium.

For Rommens there are two layers of narrative in graphic novels which, borrowing from film theory, he calls the intradiegetic and the extradiegetic. The intradiegetic layer is that which is contained inside the panels and is therefore part of the story world. Rommens identifies both the image and the text as intradiegetic narrative features as the text in the form of speech balloons is part of the visual image. The extradiegetic narrative is formed by the captions that are set outside the image and assume a position above the story itself. For Rommens every image and text combination tells a story, an event, and the meaning is constructed by the compulsion of readers to seek an interpretation of the image.<sup>36</sup> This differentiation between the narrative layers within the panel and outside the panel is important in regard to Shakespeare graphic novels. It is the extradiegetic information that not only locates

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<sup>35</sup> McCloud, p. 67.

<sup>36</sup> Aaround Rommens, ‘Manga and Storytelling’, *Image & Narrative*, 1 (2000)

<<http://www.imageandnarrative.be/narratology/aarnoudrommens.htm>> [accessed 12 December 2008] (para. 5 of 15).

the action of the story and directs interpretation but it can also signal that the graphic novel is an adaptation of a play by inclusion of scene and act divisions. Rommens' broad areas of narrative provide a starting point for interrogation of how a coherent story is constructed the medium which can be supported by more detailed theories.

Groensteen argues that in the analysis of narrative in graphic novels it is the image that takes precedence over the textual component. He states that the theoretical position of the illustration and text being equivalent components in a graphic novel is unsupportable and argues for the predominance of the image as it is 'what is essential to the production of meaning'.<sup>37</sup> Groensteen's argument for the primacy of the image does not fully embrace the understanding of the narrative as a combination of two equivalent modes of signification. Text and image combining to produce meaning is the basic convention of the medium. To argue for the primacy of the visual over the verbal is to reduce the function of the text in the making of meaning. Groensteen does however focus on the impact of panel content and page layout as well as stylistic convention of simplification and stereotypes in illustrations.

The analysis of the vocabulary and the 'grammar' of graphic novels is the focus of Will Eisner's discussion on the production of narratives in the medium in *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative* and *Comics and Sequential Art*. Eisner provides only a broad definition of the medium as a 'literary form that deals with the arrangement of pictures or images and words to narrate a story'.<sup>38</sup> He, like other critics, focuses on the sequential nature of the images as the primary mode of construction of narrative. In addition, Eisner provides a detailed explanation of the use of narrative devices of the frame, panel size, and lettering from the creator's perspective. One of the challenges Eisner notes in adapting Shakespeare's plays in the medium is that the play-texts are written for production in the three dimensional active

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<sup>37</sup> Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> Will Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative* (Paramus: Poor House Press, 1996), p. 5.

medium of the theatre.<sup>39</sup> Transposing them to the two-dimensional static medium of graphic novels provides the adapters with the challenge of making it visually interesting.

One of the most influential analyses of the medium is Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* which examines how the individual components of graphic narratives function in what he describes as the 'vocabulary' of comics. McCloud includes in the vocabulary of comics the features which form the conventions of the medium that can be manipulated by the illustrator and editor to produce a desired effect. His theory includes an extensive analysis of elements such as the composition of images, the size and shape of the panels, the layout of the panels on the page, the shape of speech balloons and typography as well as the style of the graphics. Both McCloud's and Eisner's work can be used to explore how an interpretation of a Shakespearean play-text is influenced by manipulation of these features.

A core theory in McCloud's work is that the reader of a graphic novel creates a coherent narrative through the act of 'closure' between the discrete images 'where the reader takes two separate images and transforms them into a single idea'.<sup>40</sup> To construct a coherent narrative the reader must be able to link the discrete illustrations and comprehend the relationship between the illustrations and the text in order to produce meaning. The reader is directed on how to fill in the links between the images based on the information provided and the conventions of the medium. Closure is based on the understanding that the story also takes place outside the frame shown and continues between panels in the blank gutter where the reader is 'observing the parts but perceiving the whole'.<sup>41</sup> McCloud's theory of the construction of narrative is echoed by Lefèvre who states that 'in comics (or other narratives) meanings are constructed by the reader's interpretation of the formal system (drawing and

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<sup>39</sup> Will Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art* (Tamarac: Poor House Press, 1990; repr. 2004), pp. 112-21.

<sup>40</sup> McCloud, p. 66.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

texts) [...] the reader accepts the notion of the frame where the fictive world does not end'.<sup>42</sup>

The understanding that the fictive world continues beyond that which is shown in the illustrations allows the reader to interpret the incomplete illustrations and make links between subsequent images.

Closure occurs both within a panel and between sequential panels. Closure within a panel is performed by the reader interpreting the illustration in conjunction with the words included. As Barthes notes all images are polysemous and present a 'floating chain' of signifieds that the reader of the image is able to choose from.<sup>43</sup> Placing words in conjunction with visual images serves to contextualise the illustration and limits and directs the received meaning. The most common relationship between the visual and verbal units in graphic novels is that which Barthes describes as 'relay' where 'text and image stand in a complementary relationship', and the text elucidates the image and advances the action by setting out meanings that are not found in the image alone.<sup>44</sup> In regard to graphic novels McCloud describes this relationship as 'interdependency' where both the words and the picture are necessary to produce meaning.<sup>45</sup> The meaning of the words are perceived in context of gestures, costumes and settings, colours, shapes, textures and the structuring of action. In graphic novels the words serve to aid reader's understanding of the image and the image aids the reader to understand the words. Therefore the adapter is able to communicate the play-text and produce the narrative through the selection of illustration and text combinations.

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<sup>42</sup> Pascal Lefèvre, 'Narration in Comics', *Image & Narrative*, 1 (2000)

<<http://www.imageandnarrative.be/narratology/pascallefevre.htm>> [accessed 22 December 2008] (para. 8 of 27).

<sup>43</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the Image', in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp. 32-51 (p. 39).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p. 41.

<sup>45</sup> For detailed categorisation of the different relationships between words and images in graphic novels see Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: Kitchen Sink Press, 1993), pp. 153-161.

Closure between panels is performed by the reader imaginatively constructing the action implied in the movement from one illustration to the next, that is, the action which occurs within the ‘gutter’ or space between the panels. It is in this way that the ‘unconnected moments’ illustrated are read to form a continuous story. Ryan also notes the reader input required to understand the narrative in the graphic novel medium and states that the reader

constructs a storyline by assuming similar shapes in different frames represent common referents (objects, characters or settings); by interpreting spatial relationships as temporal sequence (adjacent frames represent subsequent moments); and by inferring causal relations between the states depicted in the frames.<sup>46</sup>

This complicity by the reader, and their imaginative input, into the construction of the action beyond the frame is essential in the production of a coherent narrative in the graphic novels. In order to perform closure between sequential panels the reader must be given the visual or textual cues required to direct the received meaning. These cues can include an image connector where a component of an image, such as a character or scenery element, is repeated in subsequent panels. The connectors can also be textual where fragments of statements are contained in sequential panels.

**Figure 1:** Example of closure, Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, p. 66.

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<sup>46</sup> Ryan, *Narrative Across Media*, p. 141.

Where the illustrations in juxtaposed panels show spatially or temporally distant events extradiegetic text, also known as banners, may be used to assist closure between the illustrations. The graphic novel banners, as Groensteen notes, can serve a ‘controlling function’ which is concerned with the management of narrative time so directing the reader’s understanding of the temporal relationship between events.<sup>47</sup>

Harvey’s analysis of the medium in *The Art of the Comic Book* provides more emphasis on the role of page layout in the construction of narrative than McCloud. For Harvey there are four distinctive threads which work together to produce the narrative. These include narrative breakdown, arrangement of images within panels, the arrangement of the panels themselves and finally the artistic style of the images.<sup>48</sup> The narrative breakdown refers to the division of the story into unit panels and what is selected to be illustrated. Narrative timing is achieved by manipulating the size and placement of the panels in the graphic novel and can create suspense and emphasis on key moments. The arrangement of the panels themselves on the page also has a narrative function and page layout and panel composition by giving visual emphasis through use of size and position of the panel. Harvey’s theories on the construction of graphic narratives diverge most significantly from McCloud’s in the definition of closure. Whereas McCloud sees sequence as the essential character of the medium, Harvey sees the combination of words and images as the primary character. For Harvey closure occurs between the words and pictures in a panel whereas McCloud sees it as between a sequence of images.<sup>49</sup> Closure within panels and closure between panels are both critical to the construction of the graphic narratives. The single image must be interpreted before it can be linked to the preceding and subsequent panels and this involves an interpretation of the combination of words and image in a panel.

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<sup>47</sup> Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, p. 131.

<sup>48</sup> Robert C. Harvey, *The Art of the Comic Book: An Aesthetic History* (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 1996), p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5.

While closure creates a continuous narrative from the discrete panels, narrative timing of the action of the play is created through the manipulation of the structural features of the graphic novel. Features such as the panel size, shape, the layout of the images on the page and the content of the panel dictate the narrative rhythm and timing in graphic novel. In early comic strips the layout of panels was regular and repetitive where each page was divided into panels which were of a standard shape and size. In this situation it is the amount of text in each panel that creates dramatic timing because the panel occupies the reader for at least the length of time it takes to read the text. Those panels with minimal text are read quickly but the action slows at the panels which have more text which require the reader to linger longer on the illustration.

Variation in story tension and atmosphere can be created by the use of a different number of frames on a page and as Eisner notes ‘the number and size of panels also contribute to the story rhythm and passage of time’.<sup>50</sup> The larger panels have the narrative function of emphasising the moments which the adapter has identified as critical or, as Barthes has described them, ‘hinge-points’. Barthes noted not all narrative units are of the same importance ‘some constitute real hinge-points of the narrative [...] others merely ‘fill in’ the narrative space separating these hinge functions’.<sup>51</sup> In the process of translating Shakespeare’s plays into graphic novels the adapters can select what they consider the hinge-points of the narrative and use size and shape of the panels to emphasise them. Full page panels, known as splash pages, inform the reader that the moments illustrated are key points in the adapter’s realisation of the play. The adapter can use these splash pages not only to show the crucial moment of action but as establishing shots to emphasise the importance of the scenes which are to follow and so create suspense for the reader by pausing the action.

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<sup>50</sup> Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art*, p. 30.

<sup>51</sup> Roland Barthes, ‘Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives’, in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp. 79–124 (p. 93).



Adapting Shakespeare's plays into images is not only influenced by the structural conventions but also by the artistic conventions and the narrative limitations of picture. As Ryan observes, though pictures 'lack the code, grammar and syntactic rules to articulate specific meanings' and the narrative limitation of pictures stems from their inability to make propositions, they can find ways around these limitations to suggest specific properties such as through the use of caricature.<sup>52</sup> Graphic novel illustrations are, as Carrier notes, generally not in the neo-classical tradition of art but more often deal with caricature, 'which is inherently the art of exaggeration [...] and involves deformation'.<sup>53</sup> These are used by the illustrator to communicate their interpretation of the character or the action to the reader. Graphic novel illustration uses icons, emoticons and stereotypes in order to convey information as quickly as possible and this can result in simplification or abbreviation.

Groensteen refers to the simplification of illustrations as 'typification' and states that it functions to allow immediate recognition through visual signs which are easily decoded and allow for immediate identification.<sup>54</sup> McCloud agrees that this is the effect of typification in comics and adds that it focuses attention on the idea that the adapter is conveying.<sup>55</sup> In graphic novel illustrations moods and actions are expressed by gesture and posture of the body and facial expressions using commonly recognisable physical characteristics. The typification of illustrations in graphic novels can lead to criticism of over simplification of characters and emotions. It also leads to the use of stereotypical images which Eisner refers to as 'an accursed necessity' in the medium.<sup>56</sup> The use of stereotypes and simplification has generated criticism of the aesthetic value of the artwork in Shakespeare graphic novels and graphic

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<sup>52</sup> Ryan, *Narrative Across Media*, p. 10.

<sup>53</sup> Carrier, p. 16.

<sup>54</sup> Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, p. 162.

<sup>55</sup> McCloud, p. 30.

<sup>56</sup> Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative*, p. 17.

novels in general and, as Harvey notes, can lead to relegating them ‘to the lowest rung on the artistic ladder’.<sup>57</sup>

Graphic novels have also developed conventions to attempt to overcome the narrative limitations imposed by the lack of movement and sound. All sound and movement in graphic novels is represented visually. Dialogue and thoughts are represented in word balloons which, as Carrier observes, externalise thoughts and ‘makes visible the inner world of the represented figures, externalizing their inner lives, making them transparent to the readers’.<sup>58</sup> Sound can be implied in the illustrations through the typography of the dialogue spoken by the characters. The visual representation of sound does have its limitations as Lefèvre notes that ‘in comics the visible appearance of the characters and the typography used can suggest the sound of a voice but it remains largely an interpretation by the reader’.<sup>59</sup> The adapter can also represent sound by incorporating onomatopoeia within the panels. For example, in the CC edition of *Macbeth* the knocking by McDuff and Lennox on the door of Macbeth’s castle is indicated by the words ‘knock knock’ in the image and the word ‘SLAP’ appears in the panel which illustrates Lady Macbeth hitting her husband across the face. The conventional representation of volume thorough size of the lettering, where larger font text implies a loud sound and smaller text implies a softer sound, is used for both onomatopoeia and dialogue.

Movement can be implied in graphic novels through ‘speed lines’ which are placed around a person or object to indicate motion. This convention uses the number and thickness of these lines to indicate the speed of the movement. Motion can also be implied by incremental changes that occur in subsequent images and sometimes by repeating an image within a frame to convey movement and the passing of time within a single frame. It is by using these conventions that graphic novels can be said to visually represent sound and

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<sup>57</sup> Robert C. Harvey, ‘Comedy at the Juncture of Word and Image’, in *the Language of Comics: Word and Image*, ed. by Robin Varnum and Christina T. Gibbons, pp. 75-96 (p. 76).

<sup>58</sup> Carrier, p. 73.

<sup>59</sup> Lefèvre, *Narration in Comics*, para. 11 of 27.

motion in the play. Therefore the meanings of words in graphic novels are read in the context of the composition of the images, gestures, costumes and settings, colours, typography and the structuring of action.

### **III. III Narrative Capacities of Different Media**

Shakespeare's plays have been adapted into other spatio-temporal media which combine image and language such as theatre and film. There are of course commonalities between the reproduction of the play as a graphic novel and these other modes of performance. Though the graphic novels are mute and composed of static images, critics such as Lusardi acknowledge the performative aspects of the medium where the conventions can be used to represent effects of film or theatre. Lusardi states that the realisation of a moment in illustration is 'clearly analogous to rendering a production'.<sup>60</sup> As Lusardi notes, directors and actors in theatrical performance must select stage design, costume and choreograph movement on stage and decide on the timing in delivery of lines. The adapters of graphic novels must also decide on scenography, costume, the physical appearance of the characters, and the content of the frames in the illustrated sequence. These decisions add detail not included in the play-text so the choices made by the adapters of graphic novels present an interpretation of the play-text.

Just as there are commonalties between graphic novels and performance there are of course significant differences between illustrated and theatrical representation. In acknowledging the limitation of 'the page becomes the stage' analogy Lusardi lists the inherent differences between the theatre or film and the graphic novels and states that

Only in metaphor may we call a page a stage. Printed icons are not the same as live actors in three-dimensional space or the illusion thereof in film. The broken action of

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<sup>60</sup> Lusardi, James P., 'Iconic Shakespeare: Oscar Zarate's *Othello*', in *Shakespeare and the Visual Arts*, ed. by Holger Klein (Lewiston: The Edwin Mullen Press, 2000), pp. 136-53 (p. 137).

static panels does not reproduce the continuous, fluid motion perceived in theatre or on film. To read text in a speech balloon is not to hear speech spoken.<sup>61</sup>

In the theatre the sensory stimulus of movement, sound, smell and the communal nature of the event contribute to the experiential aspect for the audience of a live performance. With the graphic novels the dialogue is of course read rather than heard and all characterisation, action, emotion and tone are conveyed through the visual rendering of the play.

Viguers notes in her analysis of Ian Pollock's *King Lear* that, unlike theatre, the work draws 'on the experience of reading, entailing a disjuncture from the physical world, an absence of mind in which one's imagination conjures sensate, emotional, spatial, auditory reality'.<sup>62</sup> Theatrical presentation includes live bodies performing with an audience present, but the graphic novel presents two dimensional impressions of human figures and reading it is a private pursuit. For Bate the transition of a stage moment to an image denies the temporal dynamic of the stage and adds a symbolic weight to the meaning of the constituent parts of the composition.<sup>63</sup> The graphic novel is a material object where as performance is temporal. Graphic novels do not have the 'liveness' of a theatrical performance and instead present action that is 'broken' as it moves from panel to panel. Shakespeare graphic novels also do not necessarily employ an aesthetic which mirrors the theatre. Graphic novels have the ability to use a variety of perspectives not available to theatre such as changing the point of view from which the image is presented. In a theatre each audience member is located at a specific distance and at a specific direction to the action on the stage, whereas in the illustrations the spectator's view may be altered. Therefore the difference between graphic novels and theatre is significant and they cannot be considered as representations of the stage performance.

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<sup>61</sup> Lusardi, , 'Iconic Shakespeare' in *Shakespeare and the Visual Arts*, ed. by Holger Klein, pp. 136-53 (p. 137).

<sup>62</sup> Susan Viguers, 'King Lear as a Book: A Verbal/Visual Production', *The Shakespearean International Yearbook*, 4 (2004), 215-31 (p. 229).

<sup>63</sup> Jonathan Bate, 'Pictorial Shakespeare', in *Book Illustrated: Text, Image and Culture 1770-1930*, ed. by Catherine J. Golden (New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 2000), pp. 31-59 (p. 33).

The reproduction of Shakespeare's plays as graphic novels has more in common with a film version of the play than with a theatrical version. The editor of the Wiley Press (WP) manga editions, Adam Sexton, summarises the filmic qualities of the graphic novels when he stated that

manga is potentially more visual than a stage production [...] Unbound by the physical realities of the theater, the graphic novel can depict any situation, no matter how fantastical or violent, that its creators are able to pencil, ink, and shade [...] graphic novels more closely resembles a contemporary film' than the theatre.<sup>64</sup>

Like film, the graphic novels are not constrained by the physical space of a theatre and they are not constrained by the physical limitations of actors. Additionally graphic novels are not limited by the financial implications of their choice of performance design. The graphic novels can use detailed scenery and props and include extensive scene shifting which is not consistent with a theatrical performance. The graphic novels change the audience perspective by using filmic devices such as point of view, variation in focal distance and close ups to communicate action as well as the emotion of the text. Establishing shots are used to spatially locate the action in the graphic novels and close ups of characters are used to focus on the interiority and the emotions. Close ups of specific features such as hands or scenographic details or props are used to signify the importance of the object.

Storytelling in graphic novels Rommens notes, particularly in manga, is achieved through 'analytical montage' where sequences of disconnected images are used to narrate a scene. Rommens describes analytical montage in graphic novels as

the 'scattering' of a story event over different frames. A scene that would 'normally' (at least, from a western point of view) be captured in a single pane - with the necessary (or if you will redundant) descriptive information - is now cut up over different frames. The isolated frames, with alternating 'camera-angles', are put together in a visual continuum.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, illustrated by Hyeondo Park, edited by Adam Sexton (New York: Wiley Press, 2008), p. 3.

<sup>65</sup> Aarnoud Rommens, 'Manga and Storytelling', *Image & Narrative*, 1 (2000), <<http://www.imageandnarrative.be/narratology/aaroundrommens.htm>> [accessed 12 December 2008]

The example below in Figure 2 from the SMH edition of *King Lear* shows how narrative is constructed using analytical montage. The illustrations use close ups of characters and objects to focus the reader's attention which would not be possible in a staged performance but instead borrows from film practice. In this example the background illustration of the mountains establishes the location of the action. By overlaying this with illustrations which depict portions of two men this informs the reader of the action taking place in this location. The illustrations indicate the characters are running by the posture of the bodies and the speed lines around them. The costumes of the characters identify them as Native Americans and the weapons indicate that they are hunting. All this information is communicated to the reader without the aid of dialogue or extradiegetic text.

**Figure 2:** SelfMadeHero, *King Lear*, p. 12.

Though graphic novels do employ some techniques used in film, and the critical language used by the comic scholars in their discourse is at times borrowed from film theory, the two mediums are significantly different. To imply that the ‘page becomes the screen’ is as flawed as declaring that ‘the page becomes the stage’. One of the key areas where performing Shakespeare in graphic novels diverges from film is of course in the lack of sound and movement in the static illustrations. The adapters can use the structural and grammatical conventions of onomatopoeia and speed lines to attempt to overcome this limitation by implying sound and movement but the medium is static and mute.

In addition to their commonalities with other modes of performance graphic novels can also produce effects which are specific to the medium. As Pascal Lefèvre observes

When it comes to comics, we must bear in mind how the medium itself offers unique possibilities for storytelling even as it imposes limitations on how the story can be told.<sup>66</sup>

One of the unique possibilities in comics, as Lefèvre argues, is that they are much more spatial than film and have the ability to ‘multi-track time’, that is, present two different time periods at once.<sup>67</sup> Different time periods can be presented in a single image through the use of thought balloons to illustrate past events or memories in conjunction with the character in the dramatic now of the story world. Multiple images of a character or object in a single frame in graphic novels can present different time periods simultaneously. The flow of time can also be presented at different speeds within a single image. An example of this multi-tracking of time is found in Zarate’s *Othello* in which the moment Othello slaps Desdemona in Act 5 shown in Figure 3. This panel includes series of five close ups of Desdemona’s face ‘registering in detail Desdemona’s horrifying experience’.<sup>68</sup> Here the graphic novel has the ability to present simultaneously static images of moment by moment action from two separate points of view

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<sup>66</sup> Pascal Lefèvre, ‘Some Medium-Specific Qualities of Graphic Sequence’, *Substance*, 40.1, 14-33 (p. 31).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

<sup>68</sup> Lusardi, ‘Iconic Shakespeare’, in *Shakespeare and the Visual Arts*, ed. by Holger Klein, pp. 136-53 (p. 145).

and in two separate time lines. The large image shows the moment after Othello has struck Desdemona and the sequence of panels showing Desdemona in close up is a graphic representation of ‘slow motion’.

**Figure 3:** Oval Projects, *Othello*, p. 57.

The panel also presents the scene from two different points of view. The large image in the frame positions the reader behind Desdemona watching the action from a distant position. The close up illustrations of Desdemona’s face included within the panel position the reader on the opposite side and much closer. As Lefèvre notes this multi-tracking of time effect would be difficult to achieve in cinema ‘because the viewer would have to follow different focus points at the same time’ and is obliged to follow the constant forward movement of the film.<sup>69</sup> In graphic novels the reader can spend all the time they need on one picture and move backwards and forwards between the panels in a sequence to comprehend their relationship.

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<sup>69</sup> Lefèvre, ‘Some Medium-Specific Qualities of Graphic Sequences’, 14-33 (p. 24).



Therefore, though transmedial adaptation of Shakespeare's plays from text to graphic novels do have similarities with other visual modes the medium-specific properties and conventions provide unique affordances, as well as limitations, and impact how the narrative is presented.

#### IV. Literature Review – Shakespeare in Graphic Novels

Shakespearean scholarship and Comics scholarship are areas which do not often intersect. The reproduction of Shakespeare's plays in graphic novels is an area of enquiry that has been generally overlooked by comics scholarship. Though there are over three hundred postgraduate theses listed on the Comics Research website none of these deals with Shakespeare.<sup>70</sup> Journals of Comics scholarship also not included articles specifically on adaptation of Shakespeare's plays into the medium.<sup>71</sup> Where Shakespeare is addressed in these publications it is as citation and influence in original works such as Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman* series. This is also the case in Jason Tondro's recent monograph, *Superheroes of the Round Table*, which looks at the influence of Early Modern writers, including Shakespeare, on superhero comics.<sup>72</sup> The lack of critical analysis of Shakespeare's plays in graphic novels can related to their marginal status in terms of the number of titles and sales within the realm of graphic novels as a medium.

In the arena of Shakespeare studies there is a growing body of work that addresses the reproduction of Shakespeare's plays in popular culture media. In regard to Shakespeare adaptations in graphic novels scholarly articles have begun to be published in the first decade

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<sup>70</sup> Comics Research, 'Academic Resources' <<http://www.comicsresearch.org/>> [accessed 01 October 2007].

<sup>71</sup> These Journals include *Image & Narrative*, <<http://www.imageandnarrative.be/index.php/imagenarrative/issue/view/5>>; *ImageText* <<http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/>>; Intellect Publishing, *Studies in Comics*, <<http://www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-Journal,id=168/>>; Taylor and Francis, *The Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, <<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/rcom>>.

<sup>72</sup> Jason Tondro, *Superheroes of the Round Table* (Jefferson: MacFarland, 2011).

of the twenty-first century. The published critical discourse on graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays reflects different paradigms in which to view the editions as products. Critical articles range from comparative analysis between the play-texts and the graphic novel adaptations, considerations of the cultural status of the medium and its ability to represent the plays, to formalist analysis of the products. The functionality of the graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays as a pedagogical tool is also an area of growing theoretical examination. This recent scholarship suggests an increased interest in the form as a mode of presentation and interpretation of Shakespeare's plays.

Much of the earliest critical enquiry of Shakespeare's plays as graphic novels focuses on the analysis of the construction of the cultural status of the medium and its influence in the categorisation of these publications as what Burt refers to as 'Schlockspeare'.<sup>73</sup> Comic book versions of the plays were first published at a time when the medium itself was condemned as a corrupter of youth. This is most significantly reflected in Frederic Wertham's 1954 polemic on comic books *Seduction of the Innocent* in which Wertham not only criticises the medium but specifically addresses the issue of Shakespeare's plays reproduced in the form. To Wertham the adaptation into comic books deformed the plays and robbed them of their beauty and everything that makes them good literature. This has informed the critical discourse of the early twenty-first century which primarily centres on the historical construction of cultural value and the contemporary remediation of the status of graphic novels.

Heuman and Burt, in 'Suggested for Mature Readers?', focus on the cultural value of Shakespeare comic books and align it with the historic construction of a juvenile audience. They propose that 'the imagined reader becomes pivotal in the formation of value of comic books' and that 'the persistent devaluing of comic books within the broader culture coincides

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<sup>73</sup> Richard Burt, 'To E- or not to E-? Disposing of Schlockspeare in the Age of Digital Media', in *Shakespeare After Mass Media*, ed. by Richard Burt (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 1-32 (p. 1).

with the image of the immature reader'.<sup>74</sup> They argue that the historical reception of the medium influences the current construction of cultural value. While Heuman and Burt's assertion is supported by the examination of the historical reception, there are other factors which influence the contemporary cultural status of Shakespeare graphic novels which will be included in this thesis. These factors include the status of the Shakespeare graphic novels as adaptations, the perceived simplification of the text, the focus on functionality and the anti-visual bias that informs critical analysis.<sup>75</sup>

The implication of the cultural status of the medium of graphic novels is also reiterated by Wetmore in 'The Amazing Adventures of Superbard: Shakespeare in Comics and Graphic Novels'. Like Heuman and Burt, Wetmore locates this status as linked to the history of reception of the medium itself. Wetmore also raises the issue that because of their materiality as a printed text, the graphic novels are perceived as a substitution for Shakespeare's works in a way in which films and theatrical productions are not.<sup>76</sup> In the theatre or on film, the viewer cannot control the progression of the transient images or avoid the words of the play. However, in graphic novel the reader can return to any point in the text and linger on illustrations in detail and even choose not to read all the text included. Wetmore also links this issue of the materiality of the Shakespeare graphic novel to the construction of them as a pedagogical tool for a juvenile audience.

Investigation of the reproduction of Shakespeare in graphic novels has also been concerned with developing a chronological history of the publication of editions. Burt's *Shakespeares After Shakespeare* offers a detailed listing, though not complete, of the various

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<sup>74</sup> Josh Heuman and Richard Burt, 'Suggested for Mature Readers?: Deconstructing Shakespeare's Value in Comic Books', in *Shakespeare After Mass Media*, ed. by Richard Burt (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 151-71 (p. 152).

<sup>75</sup> These factors are discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

<sup>76</sup> Kevin J. Wetmore Jr., 'The Amazing Adventures of Superbard: Shakespeare in comics and graphic novels', in *Shakespeare and Youth Culture*, ed. by Jennifer Hulbert, Kevin J. Wetmore Jr. and Robert L. York (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 171-98 (p. 174).

comic book and graphic novel editions of the plays. The extensive list collated by Michael P. Jensen includes not only adaptations of the plays but appropriations of characters to different plots, citations of the works and those that include Shakespeare as a character. Jensen summarises the content and briefly describes the editions but does not explore the effect of the adaptation on the texts or the construction of value. Burt locates graphic novels as items of mass culture and suggests the view that mass media ‘is often regarded as parodies that make fun of the elite, institutionalised Shakespeare’ as one of the reasons for the form not being taken seriously as instances of the plays.<sup>77</sup> Burt notes that reproductions of Shakespeare’s plays in graphic novels do not ‘make fun of’ Shakespeare, but none the less are rarely treated as a legitimate adaptations. Burt’s inclusion of graphic novels in his comprehensive survey of popular culture adaptations of Shakespeare is significant in the recognition of the form in Shakespearean scholarship.

Jensen also produced a detailed history of the publication of Shakespeare’s plays in a series of three articles in *The Shakespeare Newsletter* titled ‘Comic Book Shakespeare’.<sup>78</sup> Jensen gives a narrative of the development of Shakespeare comic books and includes in this the complex history of the merging of the publishing houses involved in editions of Shakespeare’s plays. He also discusses the rebranding of editions for specific commercial markets after these mergers. Jensen’s chronology is incomplete as the task of identifying all of the comic books and graphic novels of Shakespeare’s plays is difficult and ultimately provides limited value. Therefore the chronology developed in this thesis, which draws on

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<sup>77</sup> Richard Burt, ‘Shakespeare More or Less?’, in *Shakespeares After Shakespeare: An Encyclopedia of the Bard in Mass Media and Popular Culture*, ed. by Richard Burt, 2 vols (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007), V1, pp. 1-9 (p. 4).

<sup>78</sup> Michael P. Jensen, ‘Comic Book Shakespeare, Part I’, *The Shakespeare Newsletter*, 56:3, 270 (2006/2007) 81–120; ‘Comic Book Shakespeare, Part II’, *The Shakespeare Newsletter*, 57:1, 271 (2007), 2–40; ‘Comic Book Shakespeare, Part III’, *The Shakespeare Newsletter*, 57:2, 272 (2007) 42-80.

and adds to Jensen's work, is selective and includes only key developments in the history of the publishing of Shakespeare's plays as graphic novels and editions included in this study.<sup>79</sup>

Graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays have also been subject to formalist analysis. James P. Lusardi's overall project is to use performance criticism to engage with the graphic novels and marks a development in the mode of critical enquiry of Shakespeare graphic novels. Lusardi presents in his reading of the OP edition of *Othello*, adapted by Oscar Zarate, what is essentially performance criticism of the text drawing parallels between the adaptation into the visual-verbal medium of graphic novels and the production of the plays in the theatre or on film. He uses what he refers to as 'stage language' to describe the images in Zarate's *Othello* and proposes the role of the illustrator as analogous to the theatre or film director.<sup>80</sup> Lusardi produces a close reading of the text, albeit brief, and applies McCloud's theories of graphic storytelling to interrogate how the medium affects the reproduction of the play. His work is significant in that he does not address the graphic novel as a pedagogical tool but rather approaches the graphic novel as a medium for the performance of the play. Lusardi does recognise the limitation of the use of theatrical references as not always appropriate in the analysis of graphic novels and the ability of the medium to manipulate point of view and perspective aligns them to film as well as theatre. One important issue that he does raise is the lack of attention adaptations are given by comic book scholars and performance critics.

Similarly, Susan Viguers' article 'King Lear as a Book' argues that all illustrated editions of *King Lear* may be considered specific types of productions of the play. Her analysis of the OP edition of *King Lear*, illustrated by Ian Pollock, commends the artistic style in that it conveys emotion as well as the narrative. Viguers also aligns the cultural status of the Shakespeare graphic novels with the medium itself, its status as art, and the construction of the audience. Where her analysis is unique in published scholarship on Shakespeare

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<sup>79</sup> See Appendix 1 for Selected Chronology of Shakespeare's plays in Graphic Novels.

<sup>80</sup> Lusardi, 'Iconic Shakespeare', in *Shakespeare and the Visual Arts*, ed. by Holger Klein, pp. 136-53 (p. 140).

graphic novels is that she discusses the typography used for the play-text as an important feature. She notes that 'the look of the words is an essential part of how we read the play'.<sup>81</sup> She does not discuss this in terms of the conventions or constraints of the medium and her primary concern is for the visual effect. Like Lusardi, Viguers' work can be considered as performance criticism focusing on the presentation of the play in the material object.

The potential for the use of graphic novels in teaching in schools for a wide variety of subjects is also a growing area of academic enquiry. Graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays have also been considered from the perspective of their use in education and encouraging children to read the plays. An example of this is Perret's 'Not Just Condensation: How Comic Books Interpret Shakespeare' which focuses on the identity of the audience and the pedagogical use of graphic novels. Her concern is for the authenticity in regard to reproduction of the play-text and the realisation of the 'author's intentions'. She asserts that graphic novels 'can help students grasp the text' but warns that 'comic book readers who do not know the play cannot detect interpretative manipulation of the picture or the text'.<sup>82</sup> Perret argues that graphic novels are not a substitute for Shakespeare which implies she views them as something other and lesser than the text. While some graphic novels do present abridged versions of the plays and adapt the text, her criticism of the full text versions is that readers will focus on the pictures rather than the author's words. Perret also argues in 'And Suit the Action to the Word' that in the visual representation of the plays a picture 'interprets as much as it illustrates'.<sup>83</sup> Again her critique is targeted at the realisation of the author's intentions and the concern that the visual images may add the illustrator's interpretation or misrepresent the meaning of the play. Perret's work is an example of the broader critical field of comparative

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<sup>81</sup> Viguers, 215-31 (p. 221).

<sup>82</sup> Marion D. Perret, 'Not Just Condensation: How Comic Books Interpret Shakespeare', *College Literature*, 31:4 (2004), 72-95 (p. 83).

<sup>83</sup> Marion D. Perret, 'And Suit the Action to the Words', in *The Language of Comics: Word and Image*, ed. by Robin Varnum and Christina T. Gibbons (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 2001), pp. 123-44 (p. 127).

criticism of adaptations of Shakespeare, but is aimed specifically at graphic novels and has at its core the concern for the authenticity of the adaptation and its use as a pedagogical tool.

While all of these critics raise the question of cultural status of Shakespeare graphic novels, all of them focus on different aspects of the construction of that value. Wetmore, Heuman and Burt's location of cultural value in the history of the medium and the immaturity of the implied reader presents part of the case. In addition to this, Perret's analysis based on the authenticity of the reproductions and Lusardi's and Viguers' formalist criticism of the graphic novels as performance draws attention to the graphic novels as visual representations. This limited number of published articles currently available will be discussed and extended to add to the scholarship in this area. In addition, interviews with publishers, illustrators and editors of Shakespeare graphic novels have also been conducted and this information will be used in addition to the available scholarly publications. From these interviews with the producers of the graphic novels insight is gained into the thinking and influences on the visual representations and the editorial paradigms applied to the textual content. They also provide perspectives on the objective of the publishers in producing different editions and their concerns for the perceived authenticity of their adaptations.

## **V. Chapter Summaries**

The first three chapters of this thesis trace the introduction and reproduction of the adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in the graphic novel medium using key editions which exhibit significant developments. Chapter one examines the first comic book editions of Shakespeare's plays which were published in the 1950s. It also addresses the reception of these versions of the plays by the trade press and the anti-comics campaign of the 1950s and the implications of this reception for the comic book industry itself. Chapter two looks at the

development of the first graphic novel editions of the plays in the 1980s by the UK based Oval Projects and the reception of these. Though not commercially successful these editions are significant because they were the first to include the full text of the plays. They were also the first editions to move away from conservative illustration of the plays and are notable for the diverse range of artistic styles. Chapter three examines the production of graphic novels in the twenty-first century focusing on the publications by Classical Comics and manga editions produced by SelfmadeHero in the UK. These two series are indicative of the wide variety of adaptations of the plays currently available in the medium. The way in which they use the narrative capacities of the medium and the reception of these editions is explored.

The move from print based media to digital editions and the development of motion comic editions is also included in Chapter three. The defining characteristic of a graphic novel is the presentation of a story in two dimensional static images which form a sequential art narrative. With the advent of digital technology publishers were able to take the static printed images from graphic novels and add sounds along with limited animated movement to create electronic digital versions. The implication of this is that the materiality of the text is altered and what was once a hard copy published book becomes a digital book read via an electronic device such as a computer or mobile phone. The enhanced features have also created ‘motion comics’, a new genre which is neither graphic novel, nor animation, nor film, but combines features of all these media. The development of motion comics of Shakespeare’s plays by CC in 2010 and the ways in which this alters the user interface is examined in detail.

Chapter four explores the issue of authenticity of the adaptations. The producers of the comic books and graphic novels frequently use authenticity as a marketing tool and as a point of differentiating their publication from competitor products in the market place. Authenticity is promoted in terms of fidelity: fidelity of the text to the ‘original’ work, fidelity to authorial intention, setting and scenography and fidelity to the theatrical performance of the play.



Though Andrew states that ‘the most frequent and tiresome discussion of adaptation [...] concerns fidelity’<sup>84</sup>, it is clearly an important issue for the producers of Shakespeare graphic novels. The types of claims of authenticity made by the producers of the graphic novels and the basis of these claims are examined in this chapter.

In chapter five the commercial and marketing aspects of the Shakespeare graphic novels are interrogated. Market forces have significant influence on the production and material form of the graphic novels as publishers need to create a commercially viable product. Here the construction of the audience and the techniques used to promote the sales of the graphic novels are the key focus. The marketing of editions of Shakespeare’s plays reveals that the techniques used in contemporary marketing of Shakespeare graphic novels are similar to those introduced by Early Modern publishers. This chapter uses empirical data of retail sales in the UK and compares these with sales of other published editions of the plays to assess the market penetration of the graphic novels. One of the outcomes of this is the demonstration of the importance of the education market in the production of editions of Shakespeare’s plays. This presents the publishers of the graphic novels with the challenge of gaining sales in the education sector, and the barriers to this and the way in which they are being overcome are identified.

Finally chapter six is a comparative analysis of three different editions of graphic novel versions of *The Tempest* and shows how visual representation and editorial practices can present diverse interpretations of the play. The editions examined include full text editions published by Classical Comics (CC) in the UK in 2009 and by Can of Worms Press (CWP) in the UK also in 2009. A manga edition of *The Tempest* with abridged text published by SelfMadeHero (SMH) in the UK in 2007 is also included.

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<sup>84</sup> Andrew, ‘Adaptation’, in *Film Adaptation* ed. by James Naremore, pp. 28-37 (p. 31).

## CHAPTER 1 - SHAKESPEARE COMIC BOOKS IN THE 1950s

This chapter examines the first adaptations of Shakespeare's plays into the comic book medium which were published in 1950s. Firstly, who published these comic books and their declared intent in producing them will be investigated. The comic books themselves and the visual legacy that influenced the way the plays are presented will then be explored. Finally the reception of comic books as a medium and the anti-comics campaign of the period and its effect on the industry in the decades which followed will be discussed.

### I. Shakespeare and Comic Books of the 1950s.

The history of the medium of comic books begins in the nineteenth century when the Swiss artist, Roldophe Töpffer, developed the comic strip which consisted of a sequence of pictures in frames with related text printed underneath. Töpffer called this the 'picture-story' and he stated that, unlike an illustrated book, 'the drawings without their text would have only a vague meaning; the text, without the drawings, would have no meaning at all. The combination of the two makes a kind of novel'.<sup>1</sup> Töpffer created at least seven humorous fictional picture-stories between 1827 and 1844.<sup>2</sup> From Töpffer's work the modern comic strip was developed when the text was moved from the bottom of the images and placed in speech balloons within the illustrations.

Comic strips began to appear in newspapers and magazines, and in Britain and the USA the first comic books were published in the late 1890s which were collections of comic strips taken from daily newspapers. In the 1930s comic books began to be published with full length

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<sup>1</sup> As quoted in Robert C. Harvey, 'How Comic Books came to be', in *A Comics Study Reader*, ed. by Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 2009), pp. 25-40 (p. 38).

<sup>2</sup> Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith, *The Power of Comics: History, Form and Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2009), p. 25.

and original stories.<sup>3</sup> It was from the 1930s to the early 1950s that comic books reached the peak of their popularity and sales. It was estimated that in 1952 the monthly circulation of comics was 59.8 million.<sup>4</sup> Initially these publications were primarily targeted at young readers and featured amusing storylines, but during the 1940s the subject matter dealt with in comic books began to diversify. Increasingly comic books included action and adventures stories, as well as crime and romance, and were produced for adult readers as well as for children. It was also during this period that classic literary texts, including Shakespeare's plays, began to be adapted into the medium.

The Gilberton Company began publishing abridged comic book versions of literary classics in 1941 initially in the USA. Albert L. Kanter, one of the company founders, had identified the potential for comic books, which were popular reading material for children, to be used for education as well as entertainment.<sup>5</sup> Though literary classic works had been printed in comic-strip serials in newspapers, Gilberton were the first company to produce self-contained single title comic books of these works. CI editions were global products which were produced in twenty-six languages and printed and sold in thirty-six countries and had peak monthly sales of between two and four million. Collectively they sold over a billion copies worldwide.<sup>6</sup> The first comic books were produced under the Classic Comics imprint but in 1947 the name of the series was changed to Classics Illustrated (CI) and this was retained until production of new titles ceased in 1969. The combination of canonical works of literature in a format popular with children proved successful and Gilberton produced 169 titles from 1941 until 1969.

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed history of the development of comic books see Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith, *The Power of Comics: History, Form and Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Patrick Parsons, 'Batman and his audience: the dialectic of culture', in *The Many Lives of Batman: Critical Approaches to a Superhero and His Media*, ed. by Roberta E. Pearson and William Uricchio (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 66- 89 (p. 68).

<sup>5</sup> Les Daniels, *Comix: A History of Comic Books in America* (London: Wildwood House, 1973), p. 91.

<sup>6</sup> William B. Jones Jr., *Classics Illustrated: A Cultural History with Illustrations* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2002), p. 10.

Shakespeare's plays were not the first choice of classic literature for adaptation into the medium and it was not until February 1950 that *Julius Caesar* was published as No. 68 in the CI series. The introduction of Shakespeare's plays in the CI series was, Kanter stated, in response to the pleas of educators and parents 'in the hope of loosening the hold of video and Superman on countless youthful minds'.<sup>7</sup> These reproductions of the plays were intended to perform the function of introducing Shakespeare to young readers. Over the next six years CI released four more Shakespearean plays including *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (No. 87) in 1951, *Hamlet* (No. 99) in 1952, *Macbeth* (No. 128) in 1955, and *Romeo and Juliet* (No. 134) in 1956.

The primary objective of the comic books was to communicate the plot of the plays but they also sought to introduce young readers to Shakespeare's language. In a *New York Times* interview Kanter stated that 'In *Julius Caesar*, as with all other literary works we have presented as comic books, we have adhered rigorously to the author's plot and language'.<sup>8</sup> According to Kanter the Shakespeare comic book had been produced after months of research with the co-operation of authorities at New York University. All the CI Shakespeare comic books were traditional and conservative in that they illustrated the play in the period and setting in which the action takes place and though the text was reduced they retained the language of the works. The plays, like all the classic texts published by CI, were reduced to fit within the standard format of forty-eight pages and were printed in soft cover, and on inexpensive paper, in a format known as 'floppies'. The CI comics were longer than the other comic books available at the time, which were generally a standard thirty-two pages, and were also more expensive costing fifteen cents whereas other standard comic books cost ten cents. The CI comic books produced from the 1950s declared their status as introductions to, rather than substitutes for, literary classics. Their claim for educational use was also supported by

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<sup>7</sup> *The New York Times*, 'Shakespeare Bows to "Comic" Public', 9 March 1950, p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 24.

the inclusion of additional information on the authors as well as brief articles on history and science.

Though the CI range was by far the most extensive, and most successful in terms of sales, comic book adaptations of literature were produced by other publishers. In 1950 the 'Famous Authors Illustrated' series of comic books, formerly known as 'Fast Fiction', printed by Seaboard Publishing was launched in competition to CI and adaptations of Shakespeare's plays were included in their range. In August 1950 Seaboard published an edition of *Macbeth*, which was the sixth comic book they produced. This was followed by *Hamlet* in October 1950 and *Romeo and Juliet* in 1951. The Seaboard comic books conformed to the standard length of thirty-two pages and so were much shorter than the CI editions, but like the CI editions the 'Famous Authors' comic books featured illustrations depicting the traditional location in which the play was set and costumes which invoked that era.

Seaboard also promoted their comic books of classical texts as educational tools designed to introduce young readers to the literary canon using a popular medium. They also promoted their versions as accessible to the reader and the inside cover stated that 'no longer is it necessary to wade through hundreds of pages of text to enjoy these great stories'.<sup>9</sup> The key difference between the Seaboard editions and the CI editions was that the text in the Seaboard comic books was paraphrased rather than being an edited reproduction of Shakespeare's play-text.<sup>10</sup> However, as shown in Figure 4 some of the famous lines of the plays were reproduced entirely rather than be rewritten so promoting the educational value of these editions. Figure 4 also shows an example of an error made by the adapters in interpreting the text as it shows Gertrude with Claudius and Polonius watching Hamlet's meeting with Ophelia.

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<sup>9</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, illustrated by Henry Kiefer, adapted by Dana E. Dutch (Famous Authors Illustrated), inside cover.

<sup>10</sup> Michael P. Jensen, 'Comic Book Shakespeare Part I', *The Shakespeare Newsletter*, 56:3, 270 (2006/2007), 81-120 (p. 97).

**Figure 4:** Famous Authors Illustrated, *Hamlet*, 1950, p. 12.

The Seaboard series was short lived with only thirteen comic books, three of which were Shakespearean plays, published in this range. In 1951 Seaboard was acquired by the Gilberton Company and no further editions under the Famous Authors Illustrated imprint were published. Gilberton did reprint the acquired Seaboard titles under the ‘Classics Illustrated Junior’ range indicating that these paraphrased editions were targeted at a younger reader than the standard CI Shakespeare comic books.

Another short lived series was published in Britain in competition to the CI editions which were printed and sold in the UK. In 1949 Amex publishing produced the 'A Classic in Pictures' series of comic books and in 1950 included *Macbeth*, *Henry V* and *Julius Caesar* in their range which ran for only twelve issues. In what seems to be an obvious attempt to capitalise on the popularity of Classics Illustrated the 'A Classic in Pictures' series had a cover design quite similar to CI. As Jensen notes, 'it would be presumptuous to claim that this was intended to fool readers but it is smart marketing to let readers know at a glance that these comics also adapt literature'.<sup>11</sup> These were generally paraphrased retellings of Shakespeare's plays which included well-known speeches in full but were less rigorous in adhering to the Shakespearean play-texts. Though *Macbeth* was faithful to the play-text both *Julius Caesar* and *Henry V* contain an invented backstory to introduce the plays. *Henry V* contains the statement that it is 'freely adapted' but as Jensen notes 'it is not so much an adaptation as a comic book inspired by the play that uses selected elements of it'.<sup>12</sup>

The choice of which texts to adapt into the comic books and include in the CI range was made by Kanter and the Gilberton editors and was based on their assessment of what constituted a 'classic' text. The children who read these comic books and the parents who bought them would have had a familiarity with the classic literature, at least by name and reputation, they reproduced. These texts circulated in other popular culture media and many of the literature classics that Gilberton and Amex adapted were also produced for film and television. The list of CI titles featured books which were also commonly included in the high school and college curriculums of the period. As Jones notes 'Classics illustrated [...] to some degree mirrored the canon endorsed by high school and college English departments and that reflected the cultural assumptions of the era [...] 66 of the titles that appeared in the series

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<sup>11</sup> Jensen, 'The Comic Book Shakespeare Part 1', p. 104.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 113.

were recommended in the 1957 Boy Scouts of America *Reading* manual'.<sup>13</sup> At the end of their comics Gilberton included the statement 'now that you have read the Classics Illustrated edition don't miss the added enjoyment of reading the original, obtainable at your local school or public library'.<sup>14</sup> Gilberton's assumption that there was a cultural consensus on which texts were considered 'classics' can be seen in this promotional statement. CI confidently asserts that the original texts were easily accessible to young readers as they were so ubiquitous.

Similarly Seaboard was also explicit in linking their comic books with a cultural consensus on what constituted classic literature as well as cultural literacy and stated:

Here are the stories you will be talking about and hearing about all your life. Here are the authors everyone knows and speaks about in everyday conversation. When you read FAMOUS AUTHORS ILLUSTRATED you, too, will know the great characters of literature. You, too, can quote the famous lines and impress your friends.<sup>15</sup>

The idea that 'everyone' knows and speaks about these texts and their authors implies a shared agreement by the society on what is considered great literature. Familiarity with these classics acquired from reading the comic books provided the reader with knowledge of literature which was a shared cultural touchstone. The level of knowledge necessary to share in this common culture, that is the plots and the famous lines, could be gained from these abbreviated forms and it was not necessary to know the works in detail.

The Shakespeare comic book editions were not intended to be parodies or transgressions of the text but all publishers sought to position their adaptations as a means to educate young readers in classic texts. To meet the educational objective CI paid particular attention to producing their editions. The *Julius Caesar* adaptation was reported in *The New York Times* as having been prepared by Gilberton's 'twenty-man editorial staff at a cost of \$11,000'.<sup>16</sup> It

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<sup>13</sup> Jones Jr, p. 49.

<sup>14</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, illustrated by Alex A. Blum, Classics Illustrated No. 128 (New York: Gilberton, 1955), p. 44.

<sup>15</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, illustrated by Henry Kiefer, adapted by Dana E. Dutch (Famous Authors Illustrated), inside cover.

<sup>16</sup> *The New York Times* 'Shakespeare Bows to "Comic" Public', 9 March 1950, p. 24.



seems that cost of production to ensure a version of the plays which was acceptable to educators was more than worth it for Gilberton. In his interview with *The Times* Kanter stated that ‘twenty-five thousand schools in every part of the world use the “Classics Illustrated” series’. Though this figure cannot be independently verified the CI series was undoubtedly commercially successful and by 1950 had sold 200 million copies in total. The CI editions were the most popular and successful of the range of comic books of classic text and continued to be reprinted throughout the 1950s and 1960s, often with new cover illustrations but with unchanged text.<sup>17</sup>

## **II. Adapting Shakespeare’s Plays into Comic Books**

It has been suggested by Burt that historically ‘comic book adaptations tend to be among the most conservative in any medium; characters from Shakespeare, for example, are almost always in period dress’.<sup>18</sup> The conservatism that Burt refers to is clearly manifest in the first Shakespeare comic books published in the 1950s. These editions all use realistic illustrations and were traditional in that they set the plays in the period in which the action takes place. The character’s costumes and the scenery, though not necessarily historically accurate, invoke the particular period of the play. This stylistic choice was dictated by the publisher who linked the antiquarianism of the illustrations with the perceived authenticity of the adaptation of the play. It also echoed the visual representations circulating in film adaptations of the period as well as older traditions found in the theatre practice of the late nineteenth century that aimed

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<sup>17</sup> For detailed history of Classics Illustrated see William B. Jones Jr., *Classics Illustrated: A Cultural History, with Illustrations* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Richard Burt, ‘Shakespeare Stripped: The Bard (Un)bound in Comics’, in *Shakespeares After Shakespeare: An Encyclopedia of the Bard in Mass Media and Popular Culture*, ed. by Richard Burt, 2 vols (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007), V1, pp. 10-13 (p. 10).

for historical realism in the staging of Shakespeare's works.<sup>19</sup> The comic book artists had a long history of visual representations of Shakespeare's plays to draw on. Illustrations had been included in printed editions of Shakespeare's plays since 1709 and theatrical performances of the period were often the inspiration for these illustrations.<sup>20</sup> The comic book artists also used this visual legacy and the continuing influence of nineteenth-century theatrical representations can be seen in the images in Shakespeare comic books of the 1950s.

Henry C. Kiefer was responsible for illustrating three of the Shakespeare comic books produced in 1950. He illustrated the CI edition of *Julius Caesar* and the 'Famous Authors Illustrated' editions of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth* for Seaboard, so stylistically the images in the comic books from both of these publishers are very similar. Kiefer chose a conservative rendering of costume and period settings which is a reiteration of the antiquarianism of Victorian theatrical productions. The comic books of Shakespeare's plays produced in this era featured an open stage curtain framing the first illustration and in doing so highlighted the theatrical origins of the texts. The period setting of these editions, as Wetmore notes, was influenced by the images of these Victorian performances and served to connect the comic

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<sup>19</sup> For Victorian theatrical historical realism see Richard Schoch, *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and Richard Foulkes, ed. *Shakespeare and the Victorian Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

<sup>20</sup> For example, Rowe's 1709 edition uses an etching of Betterton performing in the role of Hamlet as the frontispiece for the play. The trend of using the theatre as the basis for illustrating Shakespeare continued throughout the nineteenth century and in 'Performing Shakespeare in Print', in *Victorian Shakespeare*, Vol. 1, ed. by Gail Marshall and Adrian Poole, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 47-72 (p. 56) Peter Holland notes that Knight's nineteenth century illustrated edition pictures of the scenic locations of the plays can often be exactly matched to the sets for Kean or Macready. Illustrated editions also used paintings of actors costumed as the characters of the plays. The production of illustrated editions of Shakespeare's plays and artworks inspired by the plays is long and complex. For details of the early history of illustrated editions of Shakespeare's plays see T.S.R Boase, 'Illustrations of Shakespeare's Plays in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*, 10 (1947), 83-108, Stuart Sillars, *The Illustrated Shakespeare 1709-1875* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Details of illustrated editions for children can be found in Velma Bougeois Richmond, *Shakespeare and Children's Literature: Edwardian Retelling in Words and Pictures* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2008). For the history of artwork which was inspired by the plays see W. Moelwyn Merchant, *Shakespeare and the Artist* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

books with the theatrical tradition of representing Shakespeare's plays.<sup>21</sup> Wetmore also criticises Kiefer's illustrations as being rigid and posed as they have a 'theatrical' composition based on the proscenium arch. The 'theatrical mode' of representation is described by Jorgens in his analysis of film version of Shakespeare as having

the look and feel of a performance worked out for a static theatrical space and a live audience. Lengthy takes in medium or long shot stress the durational quality of time, and, the frame acting as a kind of portable proscenium arch, meaning is generated largely through the words and gestures of the actors.<sup>22</sup>

Kiefer achieves this 'theatrical' style in the comic book illustrations by using mostly medium shots or long shots of stationary characters. The images appear to be static as he does not use the conventions of speed lines to imply movement or onomatopoeia to convey sound.

Kiefer's references to Victorian theatrical images rather than contemporary film are also seen in his illustrations of a dark haired Hamlet in the Famous Authors comic book. The characterisation is reminiscent of the Henry Irving and Edward Kean rather than the more recent representation of a fair haired Hamlet of Olivier's 1948 Academy Award winning film. For his Famous Authors edition of *Macbeth* Kiefer's illustration of Macbeth bears a striking resemblance to the portrait of Henry Irving dressed in the costume of the title role from the production at the Lyceum theatre in London in 1888. Alex A. Blum, who illustrated the CI comic book edition of *Macbeth*, published in 1955, also harked back to this image as shown on the cover of the comic book in Figure 5. The winged helmet of these illustrations is a historical inaccuracy which has become a cliché for the representation of the medieval Scottish Celt.

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<sup>21</sup> Kevin J. Wetmore Jr, 'The Amazing adventures of Superbard: Shakespeare in Comics and graphic novels', in *Shakespeare and Youth Culture*, ed by Jennifer Hulbert, Kevin J. Wetmore Jr., and Robert L. York (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 171-98 (p. 177).

<sup>22</sup> Jack J. Jorgens, *Shakespeare on Film* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991), p. 7.

**Figure 5:** Henry Irving as Macbeth (Drawing by J. Bernard Partridge)<sup>23</sup>, Famous Authors Illustrated *Macbeth*, cover, 1950; Classics Illustrated *Macbeth* 1955, cover.

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<sup>23</sup> Richard Foulkes, *Henry Irving: A Re-Evaluation of the Pre-Eminent Victorian Actor-Manager* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 154.

The 1888 Lyceum theatre production also produced an image of Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth which has informed subsequent visual reproductions of the character. One of the most recognisable images of Lady Macbeth is John Singer Sargent's painting of Ellen Terry in character wearing her 'beetle' costume and holding the crown above her head as shown in Figure 6. Though not a historically accurate representation of the costume of the period, this image of Lady Macbeth with long plaited hair and belted gown has become an iconic representation of the character which has been repeated in twentieth century film and theatre productions. The CI edition of *Macbeth* also reproduces this false historicism, as does the Famous Authors edition shown in Figure 7. This example illustrates again the influence that historic theatrical performances and artworks inspired by Shakespeare's plays had on the comic books.

**Figure 6:** Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth, John Singer Sargent, 1889<sup>24</sup>; Vivien Leigh as Lady Macbeth, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1955<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Holroyd, *A Strange Eventful History: The Dramatic Lives of Ellen Terry, Henry Irving and their remarkable families* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2008), p. 303.

**Figure 7:** Famous Authors Illustrated, *Macbeth*, 1950; Classics Illustrated, *Macbeth*, 1955.

Along with the theatrical images of the late Victorian period the Shakespearean films of the mid-twentieth century also provided a valuable resource for comic book artists. From the 1930s to the mid-1950s film versions of Shakespeare's plays were produced both in Hollywood and the UK generally in the historical realism mode. In 1936 the MGM film of *Romeo and Juliet* was a lavish production in which 'the studio spared no expense in its quest for realism and authenticity' in its depiction of Renaissance Italy and also used Professor William Strunk Jr.'s academic input to support it.<sup>25</sup> In 1953 Joseph L. Mankiewicz and John Houseman produced *Julius Caesar* also in period costume with realistic sets and a virtually uncut text. Laurence Olivier's *As You Like it* in 1936, *Henry V* in 1944, *Hamlet* in 1948 and *Richard III* in 1955 and Orson Welles' *Macbeth* 1948 and the unsuccessful *Othello* in 1952 also used historic realism. Shakespeare plays were also broadcast on television, for example Orson Welles as *King Lear* in 1953 and Lawrence Olivier's *Richard III* in 1956.

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<sup>25</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 131.

<sup>26</sup> Kenneth S. Rothwell, *A History of Shakespeare on Screen*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 38.

While all of these films reproduced the traditional historic period for setting the plays and used Shakespeare's language, the stories of Shakespeare were also used for other films which approached the text with less reverence. Musical production such as *The Boys of Syracuse* in 1940 based on the *Comedy of Errors*, and in 1948 *Kiss Me Kate* based on *The Taming of the Shrew*, proved popular. Theatrical staging at the time could also be more adventurous than the films in their setting and design. For example, Orson Welles staged an anti-Facist production of *Julius Caesar* in New York in 1937 performed in modern dress without scenery with a radically cut and rearranged script. While there were a wide variety of representations of Shakespeare's plays available it was the traditional historic mode of representation that was chosen by the comic book artists.

The settings for both the CI and Famous Authors comic books of *Hamlet* is reminiscent of Olivier's 1948 film with sparsely furnished cavernous interiors dominated by sweeping staircases. The artist Alex A. Blum also used Olivier as the model for his fair haired Hamlet in the CI comic book as shown in Figure 8.

**Figure 8:** Classics Illustrated, *Hamlet*, 1952, p. 1.

Although Harvey Kiefer used the Victorian actor Kean as his model for Hamlet in the Famous Authors edition, his illustrations of Gertrude and Claudius are modelled from Olivier's film. However, as the comic books were produced for a juvenile audience and sought the approval of parents and educators, they were notably free of references to the Freudian reading of the play given by Olivier.

**Figure 9:** Lawrence Olivier, *Hamlet*, 1948; Famous Authors, *Hamlet*, 1950, p. 15.

Though the compositions of Kiefer's illustrations do imply a theatrical quality he also drew on film techniques in creating the comic books. For example, in the CI edition of *Julius Caesar* when illustrating Cassius' story of saving Caesar from drowning, Kiefer employs the 'flashback' technique to illustrate the story which is only narrated in the text and not enacted



on stage. This is shown in Figure 10 where Cassius' narration appears in extradiegetic banners outside the images as a visual representation of the filmic 'voiceover' technique.

**Figure 10:** Classics Illustrated *Julius Caesar*, p. 4.

To fit Shakespeare's plays into a forty-eight page comic book the text of the plays of course had to be reduced. According to the *New York Times* the CI comic books contained 'selections from the Great Bard's classic verse' which were 'unexpurgated and unsimplified'.<sup>27</sup> Such heavy cutting of the text meant that often characters and scenes were omitted from the comic books. Though the text in the CI editions was heavily abridged the language was retained and they included explanations of archaic words and potentially

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<sup>27</sup> *The New York Times* 'Shakespeare Bows to "Comic" Public', 9 March 1950, p. 24.

confusing phrases. Extradiegetic text was included to explain the location of the action illustrated and to aid in the comprehension of the story where dialogue had been cut as shown in the example in Figure 11.

**Figure 11:** Classics Illustrated, *Macbeth*, 1955, p. 2.

In the 1950s comic books banners were widely used to form a narrative link between sequential images and to fill in the gaps in the storyline created by the much reduced texts. In his 1952 review of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the poet and storywriter Delmore Schwartz stated that the banners were intrusive and contained explanation 'which interferes with the natural dramatic unfolding'.<sup>28</sup> Though Schwartz does concede that they were to help the reader as much as possible and prevent them from 'being in the least perplexed'. For Perret, the concern with the use of banners is that they 'gain an objective authority because they are not associated with any one character [...] and discourage further consideration'.<sup>29</sup> Detail can be included in the banners which direct the received meaning by providing interpretation of the action that has occurred and the action that is to follow. Though Schwartz and Perret are

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<sup>28</sup> Delmore Schwartz, 'Masterpieces as Cartoons', in *Arguing Comics*, ed. by Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 2004), pp. 52-62 (p. 54).

<sup>29</sup> Marion D. Perret, 'Not Just Condensation', *College Literature*, 31:4 (2004), 72-95 (p. 76).

critical of the banners, in these heavily abridged comic books the extradiegetic text is essential to allow the reader to perform closure between subsequent illustrations which are geographically or temporally distant. The banners are specifically designed to be authoritative and to direct the reader who is not familiar with the text.

Though the illustrations highlighted the physical action of the plots, such as the battle scenes, they did not include violent, bloody or sexually explicit images. For example, the CI edition of *Macbeth* does not include illustrations of the murder of Duncan, which is also not in the onstage action of the play-text, and the daggers used for the deed are not drawn with blood on them after the murder has been committed. When a corpse is illustrated in the CI *Macbeth* it does not have wounds or blood, and the murder of Lady McDuff and her child, which is included in the onstage action of the play-text, is communicated in the extradiegetic text as shown in Figure 12.

**Figure 12:** Classics Illustrated, *Macbeth*, 1955, p. 12.

By omitting explicit violence, or the results of that violence, Gilberton aimed to ensure that their Shakespeare comic books were suitable for young readers and would not be deemed

offensive by parents and educators. Such censorship further located the Shakespeare comic books as literature for children and it is through this paradigm that criticism of the editions was framed.

### III. The Reception of Shakespeare Comic Books

From its inception the picture-story, or comic strip, was considered a medium of low cultural value based on the construction of its audience and its content. In 1845 Töpffer stated that his combination of images and words was more powerful than printed text alone and that ‘the picture-story, which critics disregard and scholars scarcely notice, has had great influence at times, perhaps even more than written literature’.<sup>30</sup> The lack of critical and scholarly attention which Töpffer complained of locates his graphic narratives as a medium below serious consideration. One of the reasons for this was articulated by Töpffer himself when he proposed that ‘the picture-story appeals mainly to children and the lower classes’.<sup>31</sup> The demographic he constructs of his readership is that of the illiterate or uneducated and this then classified the picture-story as of little literary worth. For some critics it was not the medium that was the problem with these early comics but the subject matter. As the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe suggested of Töpffer’s work ‘if for the future he would choose less frivolous subject matter and restrict himself a little he would produce things beyond all conception’.<sup>32</sup> Though Goethe recognised the potential of the medium the simple comic storylines portraying slapstick humour produced by Töpffer characterised it as unworthy of scholarly and critical interest.

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<sup>30</sup> Roldophe Töpffer, *Enter the Comics*, trans. by E. Wiese (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> As quoted by Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (New York: Kitchen Sink Press, 1993), p. 17.

It was not until 1924 when Gilbert Seldes included the comic strip in his *The 7 Lively Arts* that a significant critical work that defended and praised the medium was published. Seldes argued that objects of mass culture and entertainment, such as movies and comic strips, were worthy of enquiry and appreciation. In his defence of the medium Seldes articulated the primary arguments against comics when he states that,

Of all the lively arts the Comic Strip is the most despised, and with the exception of the movies it is the most popular. Some twenty million people follow with interest, curiosity, and amusement the daily fortunes of five or ten heroes of the comic strip, and that they do this is considered by all those who have any pretensions to taste and culture as a symptom of crass vulgarity, of dulness, [sic] and, for all I know, of defeated and inhibited lives.<sup>33</sup>

Seldes praised the medium for its ability not only to entertain but also provide insightful social analysis and stated of the *Krazy Kat* comic that ‘such is the work which America can pride itself on having produced’.<sup>34</sup> He argued that comics such as *Krazy Kat* presented commentary and analysis of society in an accessible form. The comic nature of the storylines allowed investigation of human behaviour, and moral and ethical issues, that were recognisable to the readers. Seldes is the first published critical work to propose the appreciation of the medium on its own merits rather than as an accessible form of literature for the uneducated.

An important issue that Seldes also raised was the reproduction of the comic strip in mass media, generally the newspapers, rather than in the traditional bound edition associated with literary works of value. Comics were disposable items rather than texts to be preserved. The extent of the readership and its popularity were interpreted as indicators of the low cultural value of the comic strip. It appealed to the masses rather than being exclusive, and, as Seldes observes, those who criticise the medium did so based on ‘taste’ as an indicator of social and cultural status.

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<sup>33</sup> Gilbert Seldes, *The 7 Lively Arts* (New York: Sagamore Press, 1924; repr. 1957), p. 213.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 245.

Seldes' promotion of comics as an art form did not immediately change the mainstream perception of the medium. In the following decades the primary attention that comic books received was a reiteration of the nineteenth century position that the medium was a low cultural form targeted at an unsophisticated audience. More than this, the idea that the comics were damaging to those who read them began to be raised. One of the first published attacks in the Western media aimed at comic books was an editorial which appeared on May 8<sup>th</sup> 1940 in an edition of *The Chicago Daily News*. The article was written by Sterling North, a writer of children's books, and titled 'A National Disgrace (And a Challenge to American parents)'. North described comics as 'badly drawn, badly written and badly printed – a strain on young eyes and young nervous systems – the effect of these pulp-paper nightmares is that of a violent stimulant'.<sup>35</sup> North's article proved so popular with readers that within a year it had been republished in various newspapers over forty times.<sup>36</sup>

The strategy of labelling things as harmful can be, as Jenkins argues, used to condemn items that do not conform to the aesthetics of the dominant authorities in a society. Jenkins stated that:

Materials viewed as undesirable within a particular aesthetic are often accused of harmful social effects or negative influences on their customers. Aesthetic preferences are imposed through legislation and public pressure; for example, in the cause of protecting children from the corrupting "influence" of undesired cultural materials. Those who enjoy such texts are seen as intellectually debased, psychologically suspect, or emotionally immature.<sup>37</sup>

Though Jenkins' analysis is of fan cultures and television his observations can be applied to the prevailing view of comic books in the middle of the twentieth century. In the 1940s the accusations levelled against comic books proceed from an ideological position that the comic book was an 'undesirable' object with no cultural or aesthetic value.

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<sup>35</sup> Stirling North, 'A National Disgrace', in *Arguing Comics*, ed. by Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 2004), pp. 34-44 (p. 38).

<sup>36</sup> David Hajdu, *The Ten-Cent Plague* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), p. 40.

<sup>37</sup> Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 16.

Comic books were not universally condemned in this period and there were those who argued in favour of comic books, particularly from a pedagogical point of view. In 1944 *The Journal of Educational Sociology* devoted an issue to the subject titled 'The Comics as an Educational Medium'. In the introduction to the issue Harvey Zorbaugh stated that despite opposition, comic books and their readers multiplied. He noted that more than 20,000,000 copies were sold monthly which were read by more than 70,000,000 children and adults. He also cites a recent national poll of opinion on the comics in which,

75 per cent of the adults questioned expressed the opinion that comic books are "good, clean fun." It is time the amazing cultural phenomenon of the growth of the comics is subjected to dispassionate scrutiny. Somewhere between vituperation and complacency must be found a road to the understanding and use of this great new medium of communication and social influence. For the comics are here to stay.<sup>38</sup>

This issue of *The Journal of Educational Sociology* also includes a bibliography of over 100 articles printed in the trade press and academic journals on the use of comic books as educational aides. The use of comic books in education was commercially important for the publishers of comic books of literary classics as it provided a large consumer base for sales and they promoted their editions as educational. However, the growing concern about the perceived detrimental affect on children by reading comic books threatened this market.

Gilberton attempted to distance their publications from the comic books industry which was under attack. In 1947 the Classics Comics edition of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* included a notice on the inside cover to inform readers of a change in the name of the series. The notice declared 'A new name by popular acclaim' and stated

The name Classics Comics is being changed. Starting in March, with issue number 35, the new name will be "Classics *Illustrated*". Why the change? Well, ever since our first issue you have said they really aren't "comics". We agree with you so we're changing the name'.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Matthew J. Pustz, *Comic Book Culture: Fanboys and True Believers* (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 1999), p. 35.

<sup>39</sup> Jones Jr., p. 89.

The next edition in the series published the following month carried the banner ‘Classics Illustrated...A newer, truer name’. Seaboard also promoted their adaptations as something other than comic books. They stated that

Here, finally, is a so-called “comic” you can be proud of. Ask your teachers, ask your parents if they think you should read Shakespeare, Sabatini, or great stories like BEAU GESTE and SCARLET PIMPERNEL. And here is the greatest surprise of all – everyone, adults as well as teen-agers, reads and enjoys FAMOUS AUTHORS ILLUSTRATED.

Though the publishers sought to differentiate between their products and the ‘harmful’ medium of comics some critics drew comparisons between the CI editions and other comic books. David Dempsey noted in his review of the CI *Julius Caesar* in the *New York Times Book Review* that ‘Brutus looks astonishingly like Superman’.<sup>40</sup> Dempsey’s review also points out how the format trivialises the great literary work by noting that ‘Julius Caesar is followed by a story called “Tippy, the Terrier”’. Tippy the Terrier was included on page forty-seven as a ‘filler’ but, as Jones notes, Dempsey’s review neglected to mention that the comic book also featured Shakespeare’s biography on page forty-six immediately following the text of the play.<sup>41</sup>

However by the end of the 1940s North’s negative view of comic books was echoed in the wider community. The allegation that comic books were aesthetically inferior objects and were harmful was not just a theoretical discussion that occurred in the popular media but a concern which was debated within communities. David Hajdu’s *The Ten-Cent Plague* gives a detailed account of the public reaction to the perceived threat of comic books which included the banning of comic books at schools and in homes, as well as public ceremonial fires where the offensive items were burned.<sup>42</sup> A survey in 1949 compiled by Harvey Zorbaugh, chairman of the department of educational sociology at New York University, sees a reversal of the

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<sup>40</sup> David Dempsey, ‘In and Out of Books’, *The New York Times*, 23 July 1950.

<sup>41</sup> Jones Jr., p. 89.

<sup>42</sup> Hajdu, p. 118.



public opinion he stated in *The Journal of Educational Sociology* five years earlier.

Zorbaugh's survey concluded that:

Approximately 50 percent of the American public was concerned about comics, with half of those people considering all comic books unsuitable for children and the other half believing only some such publications to be unsuitable.<sup>43</sup>

The public perception that comic books were damaging to those who read them led the comic book publishers to attempt to self-regulate the content of the medium.

In 1948 an organisation called 'The Association of Magazine Publishers' was established to define acceptable standards for comic books. The association produced the first Comics Code which was designed to prevent the publication of sexually explicit, violent and anti-authoritarian content in comic books. However, only fourteen of the thirty-five active publishers at the time were members of the organisation and because of this, and a lack of resources to screen pages before publication, the implementation of the code was not a success.<sup>44</sup> This failure to address the concerns of the public led to further accusations that the comic book publishers exploited their readers in the pursuit of financial gain and were unconcerned about the damage they were causing.

Public concern led to political action, and in 1953 The United States Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency was established to investigate the problems of anti-social behaviour in young people. One of the areas that came under scrutiny was the perceived link between comic books and juvenile delinquency. Though the Subcommittee focused on crime and horror comics, it had significant implications for the future development of comic books of all genres and the industry as a whole. One of the experts who testified to the Subcommittee was Dr. Fredric Wertham who in 1954 published *Seduction of the Innocent* in which he describes the damaging effect of comic books on the minds and behaviour of

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<sup>43</sup> Harvey Zorbaugh, 'The Comics - There They Stand!', *The Journal of Educational Sociology*, 18:4 (1949), 196-203, (p. 196).

<sup>44</sup> Hajdu, p. 131.

children. This proposition was not new or unique but *Seduction of the Innocent* claimed a scientific basis for its conclusions and is the most sustained work on the issue published at the time.

Over a seven year period Wertham had studied children in the court process after committing crimes or children in mental health institutions. He concluded that comic books, by both their content and the advertising of items such as knives and guns, were contributing to many children's maladjustment.<sup>45</sup> Wertham stated that comic books were symptomatic of what was perceived as an increasingly violent and anti-authoritarian society. His work supported the view that was expressed in the popular media of the time and was the basis of his testimony to the Subcommittee. The flaws in the construction of Wertham's study were raised at the time of the publication and have been extensively reviewed and criticised in recent works. Amy Kriste Nyberg's *Seal of Approval* not only criticises Wertham's study based on his selection of the demographic included, and his lack of scientific process in analysing the data, but also for his personal bias influencing his conclusions.<sup>46</sup> Nyberg argues that by only including children already in the court systems the study actively excludes those children who read comics and do not have behavioural problems so skewing the results. Also, as comic books were popular it was likely that the children included in Wertham's study were comic book readers. However, the conclusions that Wertham had reached verified the public perception of the medium at the time.

Though Wertham mainly focused on crime comics he also specifically targeted comic books of Shakespearean plays and those published in the Famous Authors series from 1950 as examples of how the medium corrupts even classic texts. In such a social climate even comic books of classic literature could not elevate the status of the medium and editions of Shakespeare's plays were subject to the same accusations of harm as many other comic

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<sup>45</sup> Fredric Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1954; repr. 1972), p. 10.

<sup>46</sup> Amy Kriste Nyberg, *Seal of Approval* (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 1998).

books. Wertham claimed that in *Macbeth* it is the ‘thrill of violence that is the chief attraction’ and argued that it was a crime comic in disguise.<sup>47</sup> He supported this claim by quoting the literary critic John Mason Brown who, in the ‘Saturday Review of Literature’, asserted ‘to rob a supreme dramatist of the form at which he excelled is mayhem plus murder [...] it never rises above cheap horror [...] What is left is not a tragedy. It is trashcan stuff’.<sup>48</sup> Wertham does not criticise Shakespeare’s works themselves for the violent content but condemns the medium in which they are reproduced. The comic books Wertham criticised were not sexually explicit and the violence depicted was in context of the narrative rather than exaggerated visual detail with no blood spilt in any scenes. In the case of *Hamlet* Wertham states that it is not just a play about violence but ‘has a plot, poetry, character development, philosophy and psychology. And yet in the course of the play Hamlet kills five people. It is the context that counts, not the quantity’.<sup>49</sup> Here Wertham articulates his objection to the way in which the plays are adapted into the medium. The abbreviation of the text and the paraphrasing of the Famous Authors editions removes the poetry of the language and the characterisation and focuses on the plot of the play alone.

The publishers of Shakespeare comic books in this period included statements in the paratextual material that the classic series were approved by parents and teachers. However, Wertham claimed that many children would skip the educational pages. He stated that comic books adapted from classical literature ‘emasculate the classics, condense them (leaving out everything that makes the book great), are just as badly printed and inartistically drawn as other comics’.<sup>50</sup> Here he explicitly articulates the undesirable aesthetics of the comic and the low cost production and materials identifies them as items of low culture. Wertham concludes that comic books are an invitation to illiteracy as the readers gaze on the pictures rather than

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<sup>47</sup> Wertham, p. 21.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 360.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. 36.

read the words. Wertham's concern here is not only in regard to the illustrated violence but also on the effect of mere 'picture-reading' of the plays. He stated that 'comic books are death on reading' and comic book classics showed a disregard for children and for literature, and that both Shakespeare and the child are corrupted at the same time.<sup>51</sup> The concern over the illustrations was that they assumed an importance above the text. That, as Miller suggests,

Words on the page have a performative power of evocation. If that power is distracted and diverted to illustration it will then not operate where it ought, on the spirit of the reader [...] the word evokes, the illustration presents.<sup>52</sup>

The idea here is that illustration was subordinate to the text and that the reading of the plays rather than the visual representation was the way to experience Shakespeare. For Wertham, the publication of the classics in comic books did not raise the status of the medium and in fact devalued the literary texts.

The classic comic book publishers countered this accusation with the assertion that comic book editions of classic literature promoted the reading of the original texts. The Classics Illustrated managing director Mayer A. Kaplan testified at the New York sitting of the senate committee to defend the accusations against these comic books. Kaplan stated that,

The taste for good literature and fine art must be cultivated in a child slowly. He must be made to understand it before he can like it. [...] a pictorial rendering of the great stories of the world which can be easily understood and therefore more readily liked would tend to cultivate that interest. [...] he will be able to visualise the protagonists: he will know how they looked and dressed and amidst what backgrounds and surrounding they worked, fought, loved and died.<sup>53</sup>

Wertham disputed this claim that comic books lead children to read the original texts. He does not reference empirical data but cites his personal experience that he is yet to see a child who was influenced to read classics or famous authors in the original by reading them in the comic book edition, and 'what happens instead is that the comic book version cuts the child off from

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<sup>51</sup> Wertham, p. 143.

<sup>52</sup> J. Hillis Miller, *Illustration* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992), p. 67.

<sup>53</sup> As quoted in Jones Jr., p. 199.

this source of pleasure, entertainment and education'.<sup>54</sup> Wertham declared that 'the studies of my group have shown conclusively that children who read good books in their comic book deformation do not proceed to read the original; on the contrary, they are deterred from that'.<sup>55</sup> This positions comic books in opposition to literature rather than as a legitimate form of narrative. Supporting Wertham's conclusions was the 1949 study of children's comic book reading habits conducted in the US by Katherine M. Wolf and Marjorie Fiske. They concluded that being a comic book fan was not only linked to low socio-economic status and caused arrested literary development and behavioural problems.<sup>56</sup>

Wertham's condemnation of the comics in the 1950s not only related to the content but also to the style of the artwork that was used in them. He states that one of the stock illustration styles in comic books was

to draw girls' breasts in such a way that they are sexually exciting. Wherever possible they protrude and obtrude. Or girls are shown in slacks or negligees with their pubic regions indicated with special care and suggestiveness.<sup>57</sup>

Not only were the images of women sexualised he also noted that they were often drawn wearing revealing costumes. The prevalence of these images in comic books, Wertham argued, exposed children to pornographic images and led to deviant sexual behaviour.

The Senate Subcommittee and the unfavourable media coverage led to the creation of the Comics Code Authority (CCA) in 1954, which was another attempt by the industry to self-regulate. The Comics Code was produced in 1954 aimed at addressing the criticism of the content of the comics. The CCA reviewed publications for compliance to a new Comics Code which banned graphic violence and sexually explicit material. It also forbade disrespectful

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<sup>54</sup> Wertham, p. 142.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 253.

<sup>56</sup> Pustz, p. 33.

<sup>57</sup> Wertham, p. 178.

representation of authority and stated that ‘in every instance good shall triumph over evil’.<sup>58</sup> To explicitly address the concern for the sexualised illustrations the Comics Code states that ‘All characters were to be dressed in clothing reasonably acceptable to society’ and ‘females shall be drawn realistically, without exaggeration of any physical qualities’.<sup>59</sup> This effectively banned the illustrations which Wertham had labelled as pornographic.

Though the CCA had no legal authority over publishers it was necessary to comply with the Code in order to be able to display the ‘Seal of Approval’ imprint on the cover of the comic book. Magazine distributors often refused to carry comics without the CCA seal of approval and so those who did not comply failed to sell issues through high street distributors. The Gilberton Company who published CI comics did not join the CCA because, as Hajdu states, they believed that ‘the link to serious literature imparted respectability’.<sup>60</sup> It seems that the distributors of the comics agreed with stance as the CI comic books continued to be sold in high street stores.

The concern over the link between comics and anti-social behaviour was not isolated to the USA alone. In Britain in the 1940s American comic books became popular and horror and crime comics were also being produced by British publishers. In Britain the anti-comics campaign was led by George Pumphrey, a head master in Sussex, who became concerned about the content of horror comics. In 1954 he produced a pamphlet *Comics and your Children* which referred to Wertham’s work on the dangerous effects of comics on young readers.<sup>61</sup> Pumphrey was also concerned with the ‘Classics Comics’ and criticised the advertising of *Macbeth* as ‘a dark tragedy of jealousy, intrigue and violence’ and reiterated

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<sup>58</sup> Comics Code 1954, <<http://www.comicartville.com/comicscode.htm>> [accessed 25 June 2007]

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Hajdu, p. 286.

<sup>61</sup> Martin Barker, *A Haunt of Fears: The Strange History of the British Horror Comics Campaign* (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 1984), p. 56.

Wertham's stance that they corrupted both Shakespeare and the child that read them.<sup>62</sup> The anti-comics campaign spread in the UK and the public outcry on the depiction of violence led to the introduction of the 'Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act' in 1955.<sup>63</sup> This was again based on the perception that comic books depicting violence or sexual scenes and anti-social behaviour were harmful to young readers. This led to the censorship of the content of comic books. In the 1950s crime comic books were banned in Holland and Sweden and a total ban rather than just censorship had also been requested in the UK by the Glasgow Association of the Educational Institute of Scotland and the National Union of Teachers.<sup>64</sup>

In Japan in 1940 the concern about the explicit violence and sexual images in comic books led to the dissolution of all independent cartoon and manga artists associations. One official government organisation, the New Japan Manga Association, was formed and from this time onward manga was censored at the national level. Since 1964 manga has been subject to Article 175 of the National Penal Code known as the 'Indecency Act' which stated materials that may be harmful could not be sold to youths younger than 18 years of age.<sup>65</sup> It was once again the subject of renewed calls for censorship between 1968 and 1970 when manga was blamed for inciting student involvement with anti-social and violent activities and attempts were made to ban them.<sup>66</sup> Manga in Japan, like the comic books in the West, were associated with social unrest, low morality and with youth culture.

Censorship of the content of comic books derived from a paternalistic point of view in which the state institutions dictated what was appropriate for the members of the society to read and to see. The chief concerns were with corruption of morals and with anti-authoritarian

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<sup>62</sup> George Pumphrey, 'Difficulty of Defining Harmful Comics', *Schoolmaster*, 19 February 1955, p. 285.

<sup>63</sup> Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act 1955,  
<<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/3-4/28/enacted>> [accessed 15 April 2008]

<sup>64</sup> Hajdu, p. 253.

<sup>65</sup> Sharon Kinsella, *Adult Manga: Culture and Power in Contemporary Japanese Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), p. 142.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p. 34.

attitudes portrayed in the comic books. The result of this concern was either state or self-regulation to ensure that comics only reflected the morality and standards of behaviour approved by the institutions of authority. This censorship on the content of comic books served to establish mainstream comics as targeted at a juvenile readership. It also led to significant reduction in the number of comic books and publishers of comic books globally. For example, in the USA in 1952 there were 630 different comic book titles published and in 1956, after the introduction of the Comics Code, there were only 250 titles published.<sup>67</sup> In Japan, following the censorship and media control, the number of manga in circulation fell from 16,788 to 942.<sup>68</sup>

Though the publishers of Shakespeare in comic books had attempted to distance their products from the denigration of the medium the resulting censorship and reduction of the market affected them. New editions of the Shakespeare's plays as comic books were not produced after 1956. Gilberton was the last remaining publisher of classic literature in comic books and it ceased production of the Classics Illustrated series in 1971. It would be over a decade later that the next innovation in adapting Shakespeare into the medium would occur with the publication of new editions by Oval Projects.

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<sup>67</sup> Roger Sabin, *Adult Comics: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 163.

<sup>68</sup> Frederic Schodt, *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983), p. 12.



## CHAPTER 2 – SHAKESPEARE GRAPHIC NOVELS OF THE 1980s

In 1982 Oval Projects (OP) launched their Cartoon Shakespeare series of graphic novels in the UK which were also published in the USA under the Workman imprint. These 1980s editions were the next major innovation in the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays into the medium. The graphic novels were longer than the comic books and were aimed at a more mature readership and included unabridged play-texts. The illustrations moved away from the conservative historical realism of the early comic books to more radical, stylised representations of the plays. This chapter examines the production, style and reception of the first full text graphic novels in the 1980s by Oval Projects.

### I. Shakespeare and the Graphic Novel

The censorship of comic books imposed by the Comics Code in the 1950s had significant ramifications for the industry and, in the decades following the introduction of the Code, two streams of comic book production developed. Comic books produced in line with the Code and carrying the 'Seal of Approval' were specifically marketed for juvenile readers and sold in high street stores. Comic books which did not comply with the Code, commonly referred to as 'Underground Comix', which were designed for a more mature readership and concentrated on adult themes began to be produced in the mid-1960s.<sup>1</sup> The Underground Comix included more complex stories and often included explicit images of sex and violence, which were forbidden by the Comics Code, and were the product of individual creators or small publishing houses. As they did not carry the 'Seal of Approval' they were not sold in high street stores and instead were sold through specialist comic books stores. These specialist

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed history of the development of Underground Comix see Roger Sabin, *Adult Comics: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1993)

stores catered for the more mature comic book readers and the growing number of comic book collectors.

In the 1970s the naming of the medium changed. To indicate the increased length and complexity of the stories, and to differentiate them from the perception of comic books as being produced for children, the medium began to be known as graphic novels. In 1978 Will Eisner published *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories* which was subtitled 'a graphic novel' and brought the term to prominence and common usage. Not only were these graphic novels longer and more complex stories but the artwork itself became more stylistically diverse. Instead of being the product of employees of a publishing house which imposing a 'house style' independent artists produced highly individual titles which were sold through the direct market of the comic book stores. Graphic novels were also produced in hard copy and bound editions with dust jackets similar to the presentation of standard text-only books rather than cheap soft cover floppies. The higher production values and increased length also led to a higher price so the graphic novels were not considered as disposable as the comic books had been.

The OP publication of Shakespeare plays began when the publisher Anne Tauté saw a draft copy of a graphic novel adaptation of *Macbeth* illustrated by the Brazilian artist Von. Von's adaptation had already been rejected by four publishers but it inspired Tauté to set up her own publishing company to produce graphic novel editions of Shakespeare.<sup>2</sup> In 1982 Von's *Macbeth* was the first full text graphic novel edition of a Shakespearean play published. OP extended their series of full text editions of Shakespeare graphic novels with the publication of *Othello* illustrated by Oscar Zarate in 1983, *King Lear* illustrated by Ian Pollock in 1984 and *Twelfth Night* illustrated by John H. Howard also in 1984. Von also

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<sup>2</sup> William Foster, 'The Bard in Bubbles', *Daily Telegraph Magazine*, 08 April 1984, 24-27 (p. 24).

adapted *Romeo and Juliet* in 1983 and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1985 as graphic novels for rival publisher Michael Joseph in the UK.<sup>3</sup>

Published under the series title 'Cartoon Shakespeare', the OP editions displayed higher production values than the CI comic book editions. The Shakespeare graphic novels featured the full text of the plays and were published in hard back with illustrated dust jackets. The graphic novels did not conform to a set page limit so the length of the editions varied between 92 and 140 pages depending on the length of the play that was adapted. Not only were they much longer, but the artistic and aesthetic values of the adaptations were promoted. Unlike the comic books of the 1950s such as the CI and Famous Authors series which were produced in a predetermined house style using only three different artists, each of the OP graphic novels were highly individual. The variety of artists used created a series in which the illustrations were stylistically diverse and ranged from the bold, heavily pencilled lines of Von's work to the more impressionistic images produced by Pollock.

However the Cartoon Shakespeare editions were not commercially successful and advertised editions listed as 'coming soon' on the dust jacket of *Othello* which included *The Tempest*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merchant of Venice* were not published and the series ceased production in 1985. Michael Joseph's graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays were also not commercially successful and though they had also stated their intention to produce graphic novels of *Hamlet* and *The Tempest* these editions were also not published.<sup>4</sup> However, the OP Shakespeare graphic novels continue to be readily available today as the titles were acquired by Can of Worms Press (CWP) who began reprinting the range in the twenty-first century.

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<sup>3</sup> Michael P. Jensen, 'Comic Book Shakespeare Part II', *The Shakespeare Newsletter*, 57:1, 271 (2007), 2-40 (p. 4).

<sup>4</sup> Foster, pp. 24-27 (p. 26).

## II. The Oval Projects Shakespeare

The use of different illustrators for each of the OP graphic novels produced a series of graphic novels in a variety of styles. The first edition in the OP Cartoon Shakespeare series was Von's *Macbeth* which, in terms of period setting, offers the most conservative presentation of a play in the series. It locates the play in medieval Scotland and uses realistic illustrations though moves away from the traditional rendering of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth of the early comic books as shown in Figure 13. Von's illustration style uses flat blocks of colour and heavy solid lines with little background detail.

**Figure 13:** Oval Projects, *Macbeth*, 1982, p. 52.

The angular illustrations are complemented by the square speech balloons and the lettering style. In his review of Von's *Romeo and Juliet* Nokes appropriately described the artist as

having a ‘square approach’ with ‘square backgrounds, square speech-bubbles and square jaws’.<sup>5</sup>

In terms of presenting a visual performance of the play *Macbeth* is probably the least successful of the OP series and makes least use of the affordances of the medium. Von’s illustrations appear particularly solid and static and many of the frames present ‘talking heads’, that is close ups or mid range shots of the characters, with little variation in facial expression and gesture. Adding to the impression of static images is the absence of narrative devices such as speed or motion lines and onomatopoeia. The large blocks of text dominate the pages and the illustrations at times appear to be no more than decorative borders as in Figure 14.

**Figure 14:** Oval Projects, *Macbeth*, 1982, p. 40.

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<sup>5</sup> David Nokes, ‘Vile Jelly’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 4 May 1984, p. 506.

In contrast to Von's illustrations, Oscar Zarate's work in *Othello* more fully exploits the narrative potential and conventions of the medium to present an interpretation of the play. Zarate, unlike Von, was an established graphic novel illustrator prior to producing *Othello*. Zarate's illustrations are less realistic and more stylised and he uses a range of shifting perspectives and panel sizes to create a sense of visual variety. Speed lines are used to imply character movement and he also uses narrative capabilities that are unique to graphic novels. Figure 15 shows an example of this in the multi-tracking of time within a single illustration.

**Figure 15:** Oval Projects, *Othello*, 1983, p. 57.

Here Zarate presents multiple images of characters simultaneously within a single panel and uses the device of a maze to direct the reader to follow the different actions presented. In the top right hand corner Iago is illustrated leaving the maze after his discussion with Cassio but Iago is also shown in conversation with Othello in the bottom left of the illustration. Though presented in the same panel these two scenes could of course not take place simultaneously but are spatially and temporally separated. The second narrative in the panel is that of Desdemona in conversation with Cassio shown in a series of multiple images as they make their way through the maze. Locating this scene in a maze also implies the secretive nature of the meeting and the duplicity of Iago in his involvement with both narrative threads.

Zarate also uses the conventions of panel shape and page layout to communicate his interpretation of the emotional content of the play. The jagged frames representing a broken mirror shown in Figure 16 visually communicate Othello's mental anguish and the shattering of his belief in the constancy of Desdemona. The soliloquy is presented in thought balloons and the interiority and anxiety is further highlighted by the multiple close ups of portions of Othello's face.

**Figure 16:** Oval Projects, *Othello*, 1983, p. 68.

One of the most notable narrative devices is the use of colour to convey the emotion of the play-text. For example as Iago implies Desdemona's affair with Cassio the panels are coloured green to indicate Othello's jealousy, the panels illustrating the murder of Desdemona are coloured black as shown in Figure 17.



**Figure 17:** Zarate's use of colour, Oval Projects, *Othello*, 1983, p.85 and p. 117.

In his interpretation of the play Zarate highlights Othello's otherness and character not only through the dark colour of his skin but also through the use of motifs. Othello is often illustrated with animals such as an eagle, his rooms are filled with tribal carvings, his chair is covered with zebra skin and his coat is of leopard skin. In Figure 18 as Othello tells the council of his wooing of Desdemona Zarate chooses not to use the 'flashback' mode to depict Othello's memory of the couple together, instead he has chosen to incorporate the details of Othello's tales. As Othello speaks, more and more exotic creatures are included in the

sequential images until he is surrounded by a jungle and the council chamber in which the speech takes place is completely obscured. The illustrations of animals and the fantastical tribes he describes surround him and so Zarate is highlighting the storytelling aspect of memory and implies the creative nature of Othello's narratives to Desdemona and further enforces Othello's exoticism.

**Figure 18:** Oval Projects, *Othello*, 1983, p. 17.

The third graphic novel published by OP was Ian Pollock's *King Lear* which presents the most abstract illustrations of the Cartoon Shakespeare series. Pollock, a freelance illustrator who had graduated from the Royal Academy of Art, was approached by Tauté to adapt a play in the OP range. In this edition the background of the images is sparsely detailed.

Interiors are indicated by a column or a chair, and exteriors are lightly sketched and are often merely streaks of washed colours. The characters themselves are rendered in a manner that varies and lacks detail and their features are not clearly outlined. They can also change size and shape to convey emotion. Nokes described the style of Pollock's illustrations as a 'surreal, nightmarish idiom of grotesque visual distortions'.<sup>6</sup> The fool is illustrated as being small enough to sit on Lear's head and alternatively large enough to be carried like a child, indicating the relationship between the characters.<sup>7</sup> For Nokes the effect of this presentation is that it abandons 'any sense of tenderness and humanity [...] and replacing them with a form of savage satire'.<sup>8</sup> Nokes also notes the social coding 'Edmund is a punk, with sunken eyes and a tombstone skull. Edgar is an aging hippy with long hair and John Lennon glasses. Goneril and Regan are a couple of flapper girls, the fool a bovver-boy in dungarees and braces'. This social coding provides the reader with Pollock's interpretation of the nature of the characters in the play and by removing setting detail Pollock further focuses the reader on the characters and words of the play.

Like Zarate, Pollock also exploits the affordances unique to the graphic novel. He uses embedded close up panels to present a single scene from a variety of perspectives as in the storm scene shown in Figure 19. This example also shows how Pollock uses abstraction of the physical forms as an extension of the emotional content of the play-text rather than showing concern for historical or realistic presentation of the action. Here the figure of Lear is exaggerated in comparison to the other characters in the illustration showing his heightened emotion.

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<sup>6</sup> Nokes, p. 506.

<sup>7</sup> Susan Viguers, 'King Lear as a Book: A Verbal/Visual Production', *The Shakespearean International Yearbook*, 4 (2004), 215-31 (p. 227).

<sup>8</sup> Nokes, p. 506.

**Figure 19:** Oval Projects, *King Lear*, 1984, p. 78.

In the final graphic novel of the series the illustration style returns from the abstract imaginings of Pollock's *King Lear* to the more realistic style of John H. Howard's *Twelfth Night*. Like Pollock, John H. Howard was an established painter and illustrator rather than a graphic novel artist but his illustrations are more conventional. The characters are clearly of human form and the background settings of the images are more detailed creating a more defined sense of place within the story world. Though the images are more realistic they also have a modernist rather than traditional approach to perspective so instead of giving the

illusion of depth the illustrations appear flat and two dimensional. Howard illustrations are static as he does not use speed lines to imply movement or onomatopoeia for sound nor does he use colour to imply the emotional content of the play. Though the panel shape used is generally rectangular Howard varies the size and uses changes in point of view to add visual interest and to emphasise key moments in the plot.

The setting for the play used by Howard is modernised but is not a defined period, juxtaposing what appears to be a version of a 1950s diner with officers carrying swords. The cigarette-smoking Olivia is often illustrated in a pants suit and Sebastian wears denim jeans, which serves to make Malvolio's appearance in yellow crossed gartered stockings all the more comedic. A notable feature of *Twelfth Night* is the change in typography which is type face rather than the bold capitalised hand lettering used in the other graphic novels of the series.

**Figure 20:** Oval Projects, *Twelfth Night*, 1984, p. 120.

The Cartoon Shakespeare graphic novels are a visual presentation of the words of the plays and the printed text not only conveys the dialogue itself but in the conventions of graphic novels the typography used can add to the interpretation of the words. The problem of rendering the words of the plays in print rather than orally is that most shifts in rhythm, emphasis, pitch, volume and pauses cannot be easily communicated. In graphic novels this limitation is addressed by using different styles of font to create variation in the verbal structure of the text. Large font size is used to indicate louder volume or to emphasise specific words in the dialogue. Changes in font style can also be used to emphasise words and to indicate a written or spoken text. For example in Howard's *Twelfth Night* the text on the letter Malvolio reads is in italics in contrast to the typeface font used for dialogue in the play so distinguishing between the written and the spoken word.

Though the typography used is one of the key visual elements in presenting the words in graphic novels it is a feature which has not been subject to critical comment from most scholars. The exception to this silence is Viguers in her analysis of Ian Pollock's *King Lear* where she states that

The type is uppercase, same size, solid black lines against white with one font used. Words are the same size regardless of who is speaking and whether people in the frame are tiny or large. This communicates voices that lack tonal modulation and is 'visually insistent' speech...reading of uppercase letters is more difficult than lower case and they call attention to themselves as graphic marks in a way lower case do not....Everyone speaks their lines in the same bold way and the result is language that bombards.<sup>9</sup>

In Pollock's *King Lear* upper case hand lettering is used for all dialogue so rather than being an indicator of volume it is a stylistic choice in visualising the text. If the upper case letters did in fact indicate volume or delivery the visual text would convey a heightened intensity, an intensity which would be dramatically untenable as well as undesirable.

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<sup>9</sup> Viguers, 215-31 (p. 221).

Viguers issues with the typography are many but are all based on the position that ‘the ideal typography and layout of a book should be transparent, invisibly facilitating our reading of the play’.<sup>10</sup> However, in analysing the typography of graphic novels the common conventions of representing the text in the medium should be taken into account. Capital letters are commonly used for text in all genres of graphic novels. One of the reasons for the use of capitals or sans serif font is because they reproduce clearly when reduced in size, and in the production of a comic book the artwork is generally reduced from a larger original to produce the final book.<sup>11</sup> The lettering used in the graphic novels is referred to as ‘hand-lettering’, though it is in fact computer generated font, but it is used to give the graphic novel what Eisner refers to as a different ‘personality’ than type set font. Eisner states that type set font is used as an attempt to ‘provide dignity to a comic [...] and has a kind of inherent authority but it has a mechanical effect that intrudes on the personality of free-hand art’.<sup>12</sup> The personality Eisner refers to is the differentiation between dialogue and written prose.

When type set font is used in a graphic novel it calls attention to the words as literature rather than the words as the dialogue of an illustrated character and part of the visual image. Pollock stated that in his edition of *King Lear* ‘it occurred to me that maybe they could have been typeset, but that would have taken away from the cartoon form’.<sup>13</sup> However, type set font rather than ‘hand-lettering’ is used in the OP edition of *Twelfth Night* which creates a different visual emphasis on the text. The text is less visually dominant and, in the conventions of graphic novel typography, implies a written text rather than a spoken one. Using this font the graphic novel also implies a more literary text rather than a comic book.

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<sup>10</sup> Viguers, 215-31, (p. 215).

<sup>11</sup> Gene Kannenberg Jr., ‘Graphic Text, Graphic Context: Interpreting Custom Fonts and Hands in Contemporary Comics’, in *Illuminating Letters: Typography and Literary Interpretation*, ed. by Paul Gutjahr and Megan Benton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), pp. 163-92 (p. 173).

<sup>12</sup> Will Eisner, *Sequential Art and Storytelling* (Tamarac: Poorhouse Press, 1990; repr. 2004), p. 27.

<sup>13</sup> Ian Pollock, ‘Fooling with Shakespeare’, *Illustrators*, 48 (1984), 14-16 (p. 16).

The reason for this change in typography for *Twelfth Night* is not specified by OP though it is possible that this design decision may have been made by the publishers to encourage the use of the graphic novel as a pedagogical tool and to appeal to educators. Unlike the comic book editions of the 1950s the OP graphic novels were not explicitly promoted as an educational tool for the introduction for juvenile readers to the works of Shakespeare. The promotional banner on the covers of the graphic novels, ‘the page becomes the stage’, clearly aligns them with performance of the plays rather than simply textual reproductions. However, the full text was a prominent feature that was promoted and the OP editions were implicitly marketed at the school age reader. In his review of the OP editions in the *Times Literary Supplement* David Nokes states that the graphic novel editions were clearly aimed at the ‘lucrative class set business’<sup>14</sup> and their inclusion of the full text, a plot synopsis and biography of Shakespeare points to the educational use of these editions.

Another innovation OP included in *Twelfth Night* which may also have been driven by the education market is the inclusion of a glossary of words in the back of the edition. Though the language in the OP editions was modernised they also retained the archaic words and used spelling which is not in common use in contemporary language. This promotes the publishers claims for the authenticity of the editions and also highlights the ‘otherness’ of the plays and reminds the reader that the origin of the text was the Early Modern period. However, it can also raise problems for comprehension by the reader because graphic novels do not include explanatory notes so the meaning of archaic words and phrases are not explained. This can cause a barrier to understanding of the dialogue for young readers and for those unfamiliar with the plays, which is problematic when targeting the education sector of the market. It was perhaps the needs of this market sector which led to the inclusion of a glossary of terms in what would be the final play published in the series.

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<sup>14</sup> Nokes, p. 506.



## II. Stylistic and Intertextuality: Graphic Novels and the Theatre

The OP Cartoon Shakespeare graphic novel series was a radical departure from the historical realism of the early comic books and notably different to the images of Shakespeare's plays circulating in other popular culture media. The historic and realistic representations of the plays continued to dominate the adaptations in film and television in the period prior to the product of the graphic novels. Film adaptations included Franco Zeffirelli's 1966 lavish and spectacular version of *The Taming of the Shrew* and his 1968 *Romeo and Juliet* which was the most financially successful Shakespearean film at the time. Though the text in both these films was heavily edited, with over half the text removed, traditional period settings were used which Cartmell notes 'firmly places the play in the traditions of Shakespeare on film, with Zeffirelli following Olivier's footsteps'.<sup>15</sup> In *Romeo and Juliet* Zeffirelli recreates fifteenth century Italy in a realistic mode which moves away from the theatrical spaces of Olivier's 1948 *Hamlet*. Jorgens describes it as 'rich colours and textures, elegantly restructured Renaissance interiors and costumes bathed in idyllic light resembling the paintings by old masters [...] using pared down text to create film realism'.<sup>16</sup> Another film of the period was Roman Polanski's 1971 version of *Macbeth*, though noted for its violence, was also a traditional rendering of the play in period setting but again with heavily edited text.

OP began publishing their graphic novel editions of Shakespeare's plays at the same time that perhaps the most ambitious projects of producing popular-culture adaptations of the plays was in progress. In 1975 the British Broadcasting Commission (BBC), with the aid of American funding, embarked on the most extensive program to film Shakespeare that has been undertaken to date. From 1978 to 1985 the BBC made thirty-seven films of

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<sup>15</sup> Deborah Cartmell, 'Franco Zeffirelli and Shakespeare', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film*, ed. by Russell Jackson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 216-225 (p. 219).

<sup>16</sup> Jack J. Jorgens, *Shakespeare on Film* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1991), p. 80.

Shakespeare's plays which were also screened in the USA as Masterpiece theatre productions. Though Cartelli and Rowe describe the housestyle of these productions as 'mannered' and 'decidedly uncinematic' they acknowledge that

although it is easy to dismiss retrospectively the majority of films generated by this project as airless, museum-quality productions, many functioned at the time as the only filmic realisation of a given Shakespeare play ever made in the post-silent film era, and still continue to do so.<sup>17</sup>

These were mostly shot in the studio and the stated goal was to make basic televised versions of Shakespeare's plays to reach a wide audience and to enhance the teaching of Shakespeare. Brief descriptions and guidelines included in the contracts for the productions stated that the plays were to be set in Shakespeare's own time or in the historic period of the events, they were to be no more than two and a half hours long to meet the television programming constraints, and they were to have 'maximum acceptability to the widest possible audience'.<sup>18</sup> As Susan Willis notes in her account of the BBC project, 'acceptability' has a range of possible meanings from inoffensive or innocuous to high quality and exciting. In the BBC adaptations 'acceptability' translated into conservative representation, period locations and the use of renowned British Shakespearean theatrical actors such as John Gielgud and Derek Jacobi which added to the status of the productions.

Though the BBC adaptations did omit lines and scenes, changed scene divisions and combined scenes or moved them, these versions of the plays Shakespeare had to be realistic in accordance with the contract for production and any form of extreme stylisation was not used.<sup>19</sup> Stylisation was linked to a sophisticated audience and the BBC guidelines differentiated between what Willis describes as the 'jaded theatre audience that has seen the plays umpteenth times' and the television audiences. The conservative and traditional

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe, *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Susan Willis, *The BBC Shakespeare Plays: Making the Televised Canon* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

adaptations were designed to achieve the maximum possible audience for the plays and ensure acceptance by educators as appropriate for teaching Shakespeare in schools. Educational materials were published to support the series and help Shakespeare to be studied in performance. The strategy was successful and with up to 5.5 million viewers for some of the most popular plays as well as overseas sales which not only paid for the series but made it profitable too.<sup>20</sup> There were of course other popular culture works of the period that departed from traditional representations such as Derek Jarman's 1979 film of *The Tempest*. Jarman's film presented the play in modern eclectic dress and cut much of the dialogue of the play and significantly reordered what remained. However Jarman's film was not as commercially successful as the BBC versions or the Zeffirelli and Polanski films which continue to be used in the teaching Shakespeare in schools.

The OP graphic novels editions of Shakespeare's plays represent a conscious move away from traditional visual representations of the film and BBC television versions of the plays. They did not seek to recreate realistic period sets as Zeffirelli did, or reference the theatrical space as Olivier and the BBC did, instead they were more expressionistic and painterly in their illustrations. Where the BBC avoided stylisation the OP graphic novels embraced it. It is perhaps this decision that ultimately led to the commercial failure of the OP venture. At this time, traditional setting of the plays was targeted to be acceptable to the maximum possible audience and ensure an afterlife for the productions as aids in teaching Shakespeare. By rejecting this mode of representation OP ultimately reduced their potential market.

Though modern dress productions, rather than historically accurate depictions, were unusual in film they had become common in the theatre by the 1980s. Theatre practitioners in Britain, such as Peter Brook and Trevor Nunn, were noted for their modern interpretations

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<sup>20</sup> Willis, p. 56.

and produced successful highly stylised and expressionistic performances of the plays. The influence of these more radical contemporary theatre performances on the OP graphic novels is demonstrated by Ian Pollock's edition of *King Lear* which was explicitly informed by a Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) performance of the work.

In 1982 Pollock was commissioned by the RSC to design a poster for their production of *King Lear* at the Barbican directed by Adrian Noble. The performance included Michael Gambon as Lear and Antony Sher playing the Fool. Pollock attended the rehearsals for the performance to make rough sketches of the actors and the staging and to take notes in order to produce the poster. The illustration on the poster he produced depicts a stage moment from Act I Scene 4 in which Sher's fool, with fake red nose and bowler hat, is seated on Lear's knee and Lear manipulates the Fool like a puppet. Gambon's Lear is illustrated with a balding head and a grey beard and wearing a plain robe. The image on the poster shown in Figure 21 also emphasised the size difference between Gambon's Lear and the Sher's Fool.

**Figure 21:** Ian Pollock's poster for the 1982 RSC production of *King Lear*

A month after producing the poster Pollock was contacted by OP to produce a graphic novel of a Shakespearean play and he elected to do *King Lear*. Pollock's graphic novel was directly influenced by the RSC performance and his Fool with a fake red nose and red hair is he stated 'a cross between Anthony [sic] Sher and that horrible wandering gypsy minstrel in "Death in Venice" [...] He's a mixture of the two'.<sup>21</sup> Pollock's graphic novels illustrations also depict Lear in a similar manner to the RSC poster. Pollock states 'I saw the Fool as a menacing wretch, like a ventriloquist's dummy' and so directly refers to the RSC staging and its influence on his representation of the characters used in the graphic novel.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Pollock, 14-16 (p. 14).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

Just as the illustrations in Pollock's graphic novel were informed by the RSC production, the graphic novel could be also be used as an influence on future theatrical productions. One performance that was explicitly influenced by Pollock's graphic novel was staged in October 2007 at Lane College in Eugene, Oregon in the USA. The Lane College theatre group presented a performance of *King Lear* inspired by the Ian Pollock graphic novel published by OP. For the director, Judith Roberts, not only did the content of the illustrations have an effect on the staging of the play, but also the style of the graphic novel influenced the physicality of the actor's performances. For example, the Fool is illustrated in the graphic novel as much smaller than Lear and is often illustrated often climbing on Lear and in constant movement around him. As Roberts' stated 'the actor playing the Fool imagined himself in these pictures. He was freely physical about Lear's person, like a pet, and he peered out from Lear's robe in the storm'.<sup>23</sup> This image of the fool looking out from Lear's robes is a reconstruction of the illustration of a splash page in the graphic novel at the start of Act 3 Scene 2 and features on the cover of the graphic novel. It was also the image selected for the advertising poster for the Lane College production shown in Figure 22.

The graphic novel determined the production design in other ways. Roberts used the swing Pollock illustrates for the Fool in Act I Scene 4 in the Lane College production and 'the stocks for Kent were built exactly as pictured'.<sup>24</sup> Costuming and scenes were also influenced by Pollock's illustrations, and Roberts used Regan's hairstyle from the graphic novel and Goneril's room draped in sconces as in the graphic novel. Staging was also affected by Pollock's illustration of the play an example Roberts gives is that the Lane College production

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<sup>23</sup> Judith Roberts, Director of Lane College Production of *King Lear*, 'E-mail Interview' to Margaret Roper, 24 April 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

showed a ‘full battle onstage of the English and French armies as in the graphic novel instead of “within”’.<sup>25</sup>

**Figure 22:** Poster for Lane Community College performance of *King Lear*, October 2007.

Though this single attributed example does not indicate a trend in graphic novels inspiring theatrical productions what it does provide is a concrete example of the potential of this occurring. Paul Gravett reported that a play based on Ian Pollock’s *King Lear* was also to be produced in Bristol in November 2008; however no record of this performance is available.<sup>26</sup> Also, in 1985 shortly after the publication of the graphic novel Pollock met with

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<sup>25</sup> Judith Roberts, ‘E-mail Interview’, 24 April 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Gravett, ‘Classical Comics: Turning Classics into Comics’,  
<[http://www.paulgravett.com/index.php/articles/article/classical\\_comics/](http://www.paulgravett.com/index.php/articles/article/classical_comics/)> [accessed 20 December 2008]

Anthony Quayle to discuss a production using Pollock's work at the Compass Theatre.<sup>27</sup>

Though this performance was ultimately not developed because Pollock states that the director decided on his own interpretation for the staging, it does again indicate the potential for theatrical performances to be inspired by graphic novels.

No graphic novel of Shakespeare's plays has as yet been transposed into a film version. However, the examples identifying the influence of historical performance on the comic books of the 1950s and the graphic novels of the 1980s locates these editions in conversation with both the theatrical and filmic performance of the plays. With Ian Pollock's *King Lear* and the theatrical production at Lane College of *King Lear* the circle of influence from performance to graphic novel to performance is complete.

### III. The Reception of Shakespeare Graphic Novels

When OP launched their graphic novel of *Macbeth* in the UK in 1982 Anne Tauté, the publisher of the Cartoon Shakespeare series, was surprised by the mixed criticism it received. In an interview with the *Daily Telegraph Magazine* she stated that she was amazed at 'how the British are so violently for, or so violently against, cartoon Shakespeare'.<sup>28</sup> Though she had received orders for the graphic novel from some booksellers she stated that 'when I went to see the buyer of W.H. Smith's who was a classics scholar, he told me that the book was disgusting and would have nothing to do with it'.<sup>29</sup> The manager of John Smith's bookstore, which is promoted as the oldest bookselling company in the English speaking world, also hated it and stated 'it offends the susceptibilities'.<sup>30</sup> Though Shakespeare's plays in standard

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<sup>27</sup> Ian Pollock, 'Re: King Lear at Bristol Theatre', E-mail correspondence to Margaret Roper, 10 October 2010.

<sup>28</sup> William Foster, 'The Bard in Bubbles', *Daily Telegraph Magazine*, 08 April 1984, 24-27 (p. 24).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 24.



scholarly editions and children's editions were commonly sold in the bookstores it was Shakespeare in the popular culture form of the graphic novel which they deemed offensive.

This negative criticism of the OP editions seems to stem from the tension between the cultural status of the content and the cultural status of the form. In his examination of Shakespeare in popular culture Lanier sums up this tension stating:

For most observers Shakespeare, as *the* icon of high or 'proper' culture seems to stand apart from popular culture. Popular culture, so the story goes, is aesthetically unsophisticated, disposable, and immediately accessible and therefore shallow, concerned with immediate pleasures and effects, unprogressive in its politics, aimed at the lowest common denominator, mass produced by corporations principally for financial gain. By contrast, Shakespeare is aesthetically refined, timeless, complex and intellectually challenging, concerned with lasting truths of the human condition and not fleeting political issues, address by those few willing to devoted themselves to laborious study.<sup>31</sup>

By combining the high culture content of Shakespeare in the popular culture form of the graphic novel OP had undermined these clear boundaries of cultural status between 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow'.

In his highly influential work *Distinction* Pierre Bourdieu suggests that what distinguishes works of high culture from popular culture has less to do with the quality of the works and more to do with the attitude habitually taken up towards them.<sup>32</sup> Bourdieu examined the nature of cultural goods consumed and the way in which they are consumed by individuals of socio-economic groups. Taste, Bourdieu argued, was a class marker and is linked with social and cultural practices and those in positions of authority can designate what is considered 'legitimate' culture, that is, what is recognised as aesthetically superior, and what is not. In this paradigm Shakespeare is legitimate culture and graphic novels are not, and Shakespeare in graphic novels is 'bad taste'. Bourdieu also observes that 'the most intolerable thing for those who regard themselves as the possessors of legitimate culture is the

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<sup>31</sup> Douglas Lanier, *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice (New York: Routledge, 1984), p. 4.

sacrilegious reuniting of tastes which taste dictates shall be separated'.<sup>33</sup> It is this social protocol that the OP graphic novels breached. Shakespeare adaptations in high culture media such as opera and ballet did not receive such negative criticism. Even Shakespeare in film and television had, by adhering to traditional realistic representation and period settings, eventually garnered acceptance and began to be used in teaching the plays. However, Shakespeare in graphic novels, a medium which was decidedly low culture, produced responses of disgust and offence.

The Cartoon Shakespeare series disrupted the hierarchy of value placed on cultural objects. As Bourdieu notes:

One can never escape from the hierarchy of legitimacies. Because the very meaning of a cultural object varies according to the system of objects in which it is placed, detective stories, science fiction or strip cartoons may be entirely prestigious cultural assets or may be reduced to their ordinary value, depending on whether they are associated with avante-garde literature or music – in which case they appear manifestations of daring and freedom – or combine to form a constellation typical of middle-brow taste – when they appear as simple substitutes for legitimate assets.<sup>34</sup>

Placing the Shakespeare graphic novels in mainstream bookstores which stocked scholarly editions of the plays located them within the 'system' of literary objects. Prior to this graphic novels and comic books had been physically separated from mainstream books by the commercial practices of the day. Instead of being published as floppies they were presented like books with hard covers and printed dust jackets. The covers feature Shakespeare's name in large font and advertise that they contained 'the entire text unabridged and unexpurgated' but do not state that they are a graphic novel. As Mark Schmidt notes in his recent review of *Othello* the publishers seem to be

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<sup>33</sup> Bourdieu, p. 56-57.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 88.

banking on Shakespeare's name and his godlike status as the nonpareil best writer of English to sell the book, rather than the fact that it's a comic. They didn't really want to talk about the fact that it was a comic book, even though they published it as a comic. They almost seem embarrassed by it.<sup>35</sup>

So not only were the graphic novels an illegitimate version of Shakespeare but by not declaring they were a comic and masquerading as a book they attempted to erode a barrier which would have identified them as objects of low culture.

Another potential source of the booksellers 'disgust' of the OP editions of Shakespeare was the implied readership of the graphic novels. In the 1980s comic books and graphic novels were distributed primarily through direct marketing to specialist comic book stores which developed as a result of the anti-comics campaign of the 1950s.<sup>36</sup> Comic books and graphic novels were effectively isolated from mainstream bookstore distribution and comic book readers became associated with a fan culture and comic book specialist stores became the realm of the fan.<sup>37</sup> Fans, as Pustz suggests, 'set themselves apart from and are set apart from the cultured world. They may be marginalized and ridiculed by mainstream society'.<sup>38</sup> Jenkins also notes that the image of the fan has been stereotyped as 'social misfits [...] devoted to crass entertainments'.<sup>39</sup> The stereotype of the comic book fan as a socially inept young male developed and, as Pustz notes, has endured. Reading comic books was therefore an indication of 'bad taste' and fan culture was not only associated with products of low culture but, as Fiske notes, was also 'associated with the tastes of the disempowered, of people who are subordinated by socio-economic system that determines the status of

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<sup>35</sup> Mark Schmidt, 'Graphic Novel Review: Othello', <<http://redroom.com/member/j-marc-schmidt/blog/graphic-novel-review-othello>> [accessed 12 June 2011]

<sup>36</sup> See Chapter 1 for detail of the anti-comics campaign of the 1950s.

<sup>37</sup> For discussion of comic book fandom see Matthew J. Pustz, *Comic Book Culture: Fanboys and True Believers* (Jackson: The University of Mississippi Press, 1999); and Jeffery A Brown, 'Comic Book Fandom and Cultural Capital', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 30:4 (1997), 13–31.

<sup>38</sup> Pustz, p. 20.

<sup>39</sup> Jenkins, p. 9.

individuals'.<sup>40</sup> The comic book shop acted as a barrier to those who did not associate themselves with this fandom. By placing the Cartoon Shakespeare graphic novels in bookstore shelves alongside legitimate literature this boundary between comic book readers and book readers was being eroded.

Unlike the early comic book editions of classic literature the OP range of graphic novels were exclusively Shakespearean plays so creating a clear tension between Shakespeare as an icon of high culture and the graphic novel medium. Also, unlike the early comic book editions, OP did not explicitly target young readers and did not market their product as an introduction to Shakespeare. Instead they positioned their editions as serious and legitimate artistic interpretations of plays in a graphic novel format reproducing the full text rather than simplified versions. The OP editions did not declare themselves as a lesser version of Shakespeare, they *were* Shakespeare.

The graphic novels also placed themselves in the hierarchy of cultural value attached to reproductions of Shakespeare's plays in different media by declaring a relationship to theatrical performance of the plays. In the 1980s theatre was a decidedly high culture medium. The growing area of performance criticism in Shakespeare studies argued that as the plays were written for the theatre it was in the theatre that the authentic Shakespeare was experienced. Not only did OP present their editions as books and legitimate textual instances of the plays but they also explicitly claimed equivalence to what was seen as a legitimate medium for Shakespeare, the theatre, and declared on their front cover 'the Page becomes the Stage'. In praising the OP editions A.L. Rowse stated that they 'takes the characters out of the classroom and back into the theatre [...] exactly where Shakespeare belongs'<sup>41</sup> and so reinforces this implied relationship between the theatre and the graphic novel. Here, though he

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<sup>40</sup> John Fiske, 'The Cultural Economy of Fandom', in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. by Lisa A. Lewis (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 30-49 (p. 33).

<sup>41</sup> Foster, pp. 24-27 (p. 24).

is supportive of the adaptations in graphic novels, Rowse also reiterates theatrical performance as the legitimate locale of Shakespeare's plays. If then the graphic novel was indeed recognised as a substitute for the theatrical experience its existence could be seen as a potential threat to the disruption of the accepted hierarchy.

Unsurprisingly then it was not only the booksellers who criticised the OP editions of the plays but criticism also came from noted Shakespearean actors of the period. Glenda Jackson called the OP *Macbeth* 'a thoroughly botched job' and Donald Sinden's assessment of the OP *Othello* was 'ghastly and dreadful'.<sup>42</sup> These actors saw themselves as the producers of legitimate Shakespeare, that is, Shakespeare on stage, as he was meant to be seen as performance critics had suggested. Sinden clearly was not opposed to all forms of Shakespeare in popular culture as he appeared in the BBC Shakespeare series *All's Well That Ends Well* in 1980. However, unlike the OP editions the BBC television versions were both traditional and conservative and graphic novels were placed below television in the hierarchy of value. At the core of this criticism of the graphic novels seems to be the graphic novels' pretensions to present a legitimate Shakespeare. The graphic novels are seen as an instance of what Lanier refers to as 'Shakespop' which is 'at best an amusing form of kitsch and at worst a travesty that threatens to displace the real thing'.<sup>43</sup> The threat of this, Bourdieu argues, is that the user of the graphic novels has not 'acquired legitimate culture through legitimate means' and so it is 'ill-gotten culture'.<sup>44</sup> In his review of Pollock's *King Lear* David Nokes, while praising Pollock's illustrations and describing him as 'like the artist-director', stated that the graphic novel 'will, I fear, be very influential with school-aged readers'.<sup>45</sup> Nokes 'fear' is that the graphic novel edition of Shakespeare will be received by young readers of the play as a

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<sup>42</sup> Foster, pp. 24-27 (p. 26).

<sup>43</sup> Lanier, *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture*, p. 9.

<sup>44</sup> Bourdieu, p. 87, 91.

<sup>45</sup> Nokes, p. 506.

legitimate way to experience the play. He does not specify what would be a more appropriate version of the play but a general belief that it is not the graphic novel version.

The OP editions of Shakespeare generated few trade press reviews at the time of their publication the exceptions being Nokes' *TLS* review and Foster's *Daily Telegraph* article. It is in the twenty-first century that OP editions have garnered interest from critics such as Lusardi's analysis of Zarate's *Othello* and Viguers' analysis of Pollock's *King Lear*. Pedagogical interest has been shown by Paula Wolfe and Danielle Kleijwegt who use Zarate's *Othello* as an example of a text that can be used to teach students how to read and interpret multimodal texts.<sup>46</sup> In a recent interview with *The Times* Michael Boyd, former director of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), also praised OP's *Othello* as 'one of my favourite-ever Othellos [...] I'll never forget the close-up it gave of Desdemona's strawberry-embroidered handkerchief falling. All one's anxieties about its loss being such a ridiculous coincidence disappeared in that single, awful, compelling, destiny-loaded frame. It was great'.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Paula Wolfe and Danielle Kleijwegt, 'Interpreting Graphic Versions of Shakespearean Plays', *English Journal*, 101:5 (2012), 30-36 (p. 30).

<sup>47</sup> Benedict Nightingale, 'The Bard - As they like it', *Times Online*, 14 April 2008, <<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/>> [accessed 20 June 2008].

**Figure 23:** Oval Projects, *Othello*, 1983, p. 69.

Though now garnering some critical praise in contemporary reviews the graphic novels are also now subject to criticism from Comics scholars. One issue raised by contemporary critics is the tension between presenting the full text, desired by the publishers to claim authority for the edition, and the need to meet reader expectations of the graphic novel medium. This breaches one of the key conventions of graphic novels which is that the amount of text per image is limited, albeit to an unspecified amount. The OP editions have significantly more text than is found in other graphic novels both in the 1980s and in contemporary publications. Comic book reviewers, such as Mark Schmidt, have criticised the word-to-text ratio in the OP full text editions and stated that Zarate's *Othello* 'Is dense and heavy going [...] I thought it looked bad. Too much text, too many characters standing around talking every one of those unabridged words'.<sup>48</sup> For Schmidt the *Othello* failed as graphic

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<sup>48</sup>Mark Schmidt, 'Graphic Novel Review: Othello', <<http://redroom.com/member/j-marc-schmidt/blog/graphic-novel-review-othello>> [accessed 12 June 2011]

novels not because of the lack of artistic skill of Zararte but because ‘you can see he was really struggling to bring this to life as a comic, burdened as he was with every one of those unabridged words, within the page limit’.<sup>49</sup> Such reviews highlight the reader expectation in regard to the amount of text which is included in a graphic novel. For Schmidt the OP graphic novel shows how *not* to adapt Shakespeare into the medium.

It is perhaps the confused identity of the Shakespeare graphic novels that eventually led to their commercial failure. Lanier notes that the ‘drive to keep Shakespeare and popular culture apart is shared by both those who lament popular culture has been displacing our cultural heritage, and by those who champion popular culture as the people’s alternative to an elitist literary canon’.<sup>50</sup> They may not have appealed to book readers and readers of Shakespeare because their graphic novel form identified them as objects of low culture associated with a fan subculture. For comic book readers they were too word heavy and did not identify themselves as graphic novels. Both market segments have responded against the presentation of Shakespeare in graphic novels because they symbolised an erosion of the divide between high and popular culture. The booksellers and actors who denigrated the OP editions saw themselves as the keepers of this cultural heritage and reacted against the presentation of Shakespeare in a low culture medium. Comics reviewers who criticised them saw them as corrupting the form of the graphic novel. Given the responses by the booksellers, actors and trade press it is not surprising that the Shakespeare graphic novels were not a commercial success. OP did not sell the 33,000 copies which were in the first print run of *Macbeth* and the series ceased publication after only two years. OP’s rival publisher Michael Joseph sold 15,000 copies of *Romeo and Juliet* illustrated by Von but planned editions of

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<sup>49</sup> Mark Schmidt, ‘Graphic Novel Review: Othello’,  
<<http://redroom.com/member/j-marc-schmidt/blog/graphic-novel-review-othello>> [accessed 12 June 2011]

<sup>50</sup> Lanier, *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture*, p. 3.



*Hamlet* and *The Tempest* never eventuated. A quarter of a century would pass before full text editions of the plays in graphic novel form would once again be published.

However, abridged comic book editions of the plays continued to be published throughout the last decades of the twentieth century. In the 1990s another series of Shakespeare comic books was planned by Classics Illustrated (CI). These were to be new editions rather than reprints of the original CI comic books. The new editions were longer, though still only less than fifty pages, so more of the text of the plays could be included but they were still heavily abridged. The illustrations in these editions were more detailed and realistic rather than the cartoonish style of the first editions of the 1950s. However the new series was short lived and only one Shakespearean play, *Hamlet*, edited by Steven Grant and illustrated by Tom Mandrake, was published in 1990.<sup>51</sup> The re-launch of the CI classics literature comic books was not commercially successful and the series ceased production after only six editions.

Following the demise of the full text graphic novel editions of Shakespeare's plays published in the 1980s the market focus shifted and the trend was now to promote illustrated texts specifically for use in education. In 1997 the original CI comic book editions of Shakespeare's plays were republished by Acclaim and rebranded as 'Classics Illustrated Study Guides' which were designed for use by school children. Along with the original abridged comic book adaptation these included essays on the play-text, themes and sources. Acclaim also added a new Shakespearean title to the range with the publication of *Henry IV Part I*.<sup>52</sup> This series was also not commercially successful and ceased production in 1998. Though Shakespeare comic books had previously been promoted to aid education this was the first time that the medium had been specifically published as a study guide. In response to

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<sup>51</sup> Jensen, 'Comic Book Shakespeare Part I', 81-120 (p. 97).

<sup>52</sup> Classic Comic Store, 'History of CI Vintage' < <http://www.classiccomicstore.com/history-civintage.asp> > [accessed 10 February 2010].

these editions Wetmore argues that the study guides were an attempt ‘to profit from the growth in translating and reducing Shakespeare as represented by the growth industry of Shakespeare substitutes’.<sup>53</sup> Indeed in the 1990s these so called illustrated ‘Shakespeare substitutes’ did proliferate with series such as ‘No Fear Shakespeare’ and ‘Picture This! Shakespeare’. For Wetmore these study guides have no aesthetic value and this marks a devaluation of the medium where ‘the comic book Shakespeare no longer even needs to be a good comic book. Now it just needs to be pictures and words’.<sup>54</sup> However, this move to study guides did not mark the end of the adaptation of Shakespeare into the graphic novel medium and in the twenty-first century new editions of the plays would be produced.

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<sup>53</sup> Kevin J. Wetmore Jr., ‘The Amazing Adventures of Superbard: Shakespeare in Comics and Graphic Novels’, in *Shakespeare and Youth Culture*, ed by Jennifer Hubert, Kevin J. Wetmore Jr. and Robert L. York (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 171-98 (p. 194).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p. 195.

## CHAPTER 3- SHAKESPEARE GRAPHIC NOVELS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

In the first decade of the twenty-first century there was a resurgence of publishing activity in regard to Shakespeare graphic novels which included the reissue of earlier versions. In 2007 Jack Jarve, a private collector of the original CI series, began reprinting these editions.<sup>1</sup> The OP full text editions were also reprinted, now by Can of Worms Press (CWP) and the series was renamed from 'Cartoon Shakespeare' to 'Graphic Shakespeare'. In addition to reprinting the 1980s editions CWP also added a new graphic novel of *The Tempest* to the series.

Shakespeare graphic novels were not only reissued but new developments in the adaptation of the plays into the medium were introduced and the range of editions available became more diverse. Full text editions, graphic novels with text translated to modern English and abridged manga editions have been produced by publishing companies and by independent artists. The proliferation of computing and personal electronic devices has also enabled the development of digital graphic novels and provided new affordances for adapters to work with and also altered the way in which the graphic novels of the plays are read and distributed. This chapter examines a range of recent adaptations of Shakespeare's plays into the graphic novel medium, the production of digital comics and their reception in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

### I. Classical Comics Shakespeare

In 2007 Classical Comics began publishing graphic novels of classic literature in the UK and, like CI before them, included editions of Shakespeare's plays in their range. The

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<sup>1</sup> Classic Comic Store, 'History of CI Vintage' <<http://www.classiccomicstore.com/history-civintage.asp>> [accessed 10 February 2010].

Shakespearean graphic novels published by CC are, like the OP graphic novels of the 1980s, full text editions. The unique feature of the CC graphic novels is that they are produced in three different text versions which are 'Original', 'Plain' and 'Quick'. Each version uses the same illustrations but the language of the play is changed.<sup>2</sup> The publisher states that the Original Text versions reproduce the full play-text in Shakespeare's language, the Plain Text versions translate the play into modern language and the Quick Text reduces the play to as few words as possible. The development of these editions is an attempt to provide products for a wide range of ages and reading abilities and so increase the potential audience.

The first Shakespearean play CC published was *Henry V* in 2007 which was followed in 2008 by *Macbeth*. In 2009 *Romeo and Juliet* was released, followed by *The Tempest* also in 2009 and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2011. These editions all conform to a house-style imposed by CC and their illustrations are highly coloured, detailed, and realistic and use the costumes and settings of the location and period in which the action of the play takes place. For example, *Macbeth* is set in medieval Scotland and *Romeo and Juliet* is set in Renaissance Florence. In the CC edition of *Henry V* the model for the illustration of Henry is the circa 1522 portrait by an unknown artist which is currently housed in the Portrait Gallery in London. This image, though painted approximately a century after the death of Henry V, is reproduced in the paratext of the CC graphic novel and is used as the basis for the illustration of the character in this edition and conforms to the historic idea of the image of the King.

This use of historical realism to visually present the plays was prevalent in the adaptation of Shakespeare in popular culture media such as the comic books and films of the mid twentieth century but it was also still present in the films of the late twentieth century. As Lanier observes historical realism and detailed period analogues were frequently used for Shakespeare's plays in the period and that these films used the realist and heritage traditions

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 4 for further detail on the translation of the text from Original to Plain and Quick text editions.

and conventions. Lanier uses the example of Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V* in 1989 to illustrate this tradition and states that the film 'looks back to the golden age of British Shakespeare on films of the 1940s and 1950s as well as more recent heritage films [...] bringing Shakespeare to the popular market place by adopting Hollywood style production values and aesthetics'.<sup>3</sup> After the success of Branagh's *Henry V* there were many films of Shakespeare plays produced in the following two decades. Branagh went on to direct and star in *Much Ado about Nothing* in 1994 and a full text version of *Hamlet* in 1996 and also played Iago in Oliver Parker's *Othello* in 1995.<sup>4</sup> Franco Zeffirelli also returned to Shakespeare making *Hamlet* in 1991 starring Mel Gibson and Glenn Close. Though he used an abridged text Zeffirelli's film is also rooted in this realist convention and uses elaborate medieval Scottish settings for his adaptation. Historical realism was also used in Michael Radford's *The Merchant of Venice* in 2004 which was located in sixteenth-century Venice. Detailed period analogues of the Merchant Ivory heritage style were used for Branagh's *Hamlet*, Michael Hoffman's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1999 and Branagh's 1930s musical of *Love's Labour's Lost* in 2000.

However, not all the Shakespeare films of this period harked back to these historical and heritage conventions and more experimental films which Cartelli and Rowe refer to as 'new wave' Shakespeare were made. Cartelli and Rowe describe these new wave films as often irreverent, citationally rich and offered 'a more radical interventionist approach to their material'.<sup>5</sup> Among such new wave films are Baz Luhrmann's radical postmodern, and highly successful, *Romeo + Juliet* in 1996 set in a modern cityscape, Julie Taymor's *Titus* in 1999

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<sup>3</sup> Douglas Lanier, 'Shakescorp Noir', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 53:2 (2002), 157-180 (p. 172).

<sup>4</sup> The films of Kenneth Branagh are examined in detail in Samuel Crowl, *The Films of Kenneth Branagh* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2006) and Sarah Hatchuel, *A Companion to the Shakespearean Films of Kenneth Branagh* (Winnipeg: Blizzard Publishing, 2000). For Shakespeare films of the late twentieth century also see Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe, *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007) and Richard Burt and Lynda E. Boose eds., *Shakespeare The Movie II* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Cartelli and Katherine Rowe, *New Wave Shakespeare on Screen* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 16.

set in an eclectic modern Rome and Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet* in 2000 placed the Danish prince in the corporate world of modern New York. The text of Shakespeare's plays was also appropriated for more radical works such as Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* in 1991 which was a reworking of *The Tempest*.

Instead of using these new wave representations of Shakespeare's plays or radically altering the language the CC publishers chose the traditional approach in both the visualisation and the use of the text. The CC editions make overt use of film references in their editions, but they are not from the films of the last decade of the twentieth century, instead they use earlier representation of Shakespeare on film. This can be seen in the use of what Cartelli and Rowe refer to as 'establishing and disestablishing sequences' which they describe as opening sequences in Shakespearean films used to foreground the relationships between the different influences they draw on.<sup>6</sup> In graphic novels such establishing sequences can also be used to signal these relationships. For example CC's *Henry V* establishes the theatrical origins of the graphic novel by illustrating the Chorus in costume on a stage as his lines are delivered to an unseen audience throughout the graphic novel.

**Figure 24:** Chorus in Classical Comics *Henry V*, 2007, p. 7.

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<sup>6</sup> Cartelli and Rowe, p. 41.

This also references Olivier's 1944 film version of the play which famously starts on location in a reconstruction of the Globe theatre. Though Branagh also used this establishing device for his 1989 *Henry V*, he updated it to place the Chorus backstage of a film set rather than a theatre. The graphic novel depiction is clearly not of the Globe and scene on the back of the stage owes more to Olivier's use of such painted scenes in his film than to a historic representation of a Renaissance theatre.

In the CC edition of *Romeo and Juliet* the artist Will Volley sets the play in Renaissance Verona and, unlike the *Henry V* graphic novel, his prologue is not located on a stage but addresses the reader in costume and on location in the town square where the action of the story will take place. By placing the Chorus in the streets of Verona rather than in a theatre Volley references a cinematic rather than theatrical relationship to the graphic novel.

**Figure 25:** Classical Comics, *Romeo and Juliet*, 2009, p. 7.

Will Volley's illustrations of *Romeo and Juliet* are also clearly influenced by Zeffirelli's 1968 film version of the play. Volley's dark haired Juliet is costumed as she is in the film and the nurse is dressed in the habit of a nun also as seen in the film. The composition of the final image of the dead lovers carried side by side through the streets of Verona also owes much to the Zeffirelli film.

Other graphic novels in the CC range also exhibit this relationship to films versions of the mid-twentieth century. The CC *Macbeth* illustrated by Jon Haward uses several of the characterisation, visual motifs, and scene construction from Orson Welles' 1948 film version. The influence of Welles' visual representation of the play is evident from the first frame of the graphic novel of the witches on the heath. The CC illustration of the three witches on a rocky outcrop bears a striking resemblance to the same scene in the Welles film.

**Figure 26:** Classical Comics, *Macbeth*, 2008, p. 1.; Orson Welles' *Macbeth*, image of witches, 1948.



Details such as the motifs of the Celtic cross Welles used for the helmets and the pikes of the advancing army led by Malcolm and the witches staffs are also repeated in the CC *Macbeth* graphic novel. Characterisation has also been influenced by Welles and the CC illustration of Lennox with his hair worn in two long plaits copies the representation of the character in the film version. Welles chose to end his film with a final image of Fleance holding the crown which has fallen from Macbeth's severed head alluding to the future of the Scottish crown and the prediction of the witches in the play. Haward repeats this reference to the future kingship by placing an illustration of Fleance shown with a ghostly image of a crown hovering above his head as the last illustration of the graphic novel.

The conservatism of setting and characterisation of these editions can be seen to be related to their target demographic. The authenticity of the setting of the play was promoted by the publisher of the CC editions who stated that their graphic novels not only provide the original text of Shakespeare but also 'educate readers on the historical periods in which the plays are set'.<sup>7</sup> However, though the costumes and settings are representations of a particular period, they are not necessarily historically accurate but rather construct a contemporary idea of the period. In the CC edition of *Macbeth* the costumes, rams horn hairstyles, background props of candelabra, and drinking horns imply a medieval period rather than accurately recreate it. By claiming the educational value of these editions the publisher signals the target demographic is the education sector and this mode of representation is appealing to that market. The editions are promoted for use in the classroom to teach Shakespeare and so by drawing on these older historical and heritage traditions of representing Shakespeare they are presenting a familiar image of the plays.<sup>8</sup> Like the BBC project of television Shakespeare, this

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<sup>7</sup> Gary Eason, 'Shakespeare gets Comic Treatment', BBC News, 11 May 2007, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/6647927.stm>> [accessed 15 May 2007].

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 5 for marketing of CC graphic novels.

conservatism is aimed at achieving the maximum possible audience for the plays and ensure acceptance by educators as appropriate for teaching Shakespeare in schools.

The CC graphic novels do show the evolution of the affordances of the medium when compared with earlier comic book and graphic novel adaptations. Though they are of course still composed of juxtaposed sequential images which allow ‘closure’ to construct a coherent narrative they make more use of banners and variation in panel size. In the CC graphic novels the panel size and shape is more diverse than in the earlier examples and their extended length, up to 160 pages, allows the adapters to reduce the number of words per panel. The CC graphic novels also use onomatopoeia, which was absent from the OP editions, to visually present sound. They also make significant use of speed lines to communicate movement of the characters to the reader and so create more seemingly fluid images rather than the static presentations of earlier editions.

Banners which were common in the abridged editions were reduced in the OP editions of the 1980s to identifying the act and scene only. In the CC editions the banners perform what Groensteen refers to as their controlling function which directs the readers understanding of the illustrations and the text.<sup>9</sup> An example of the effect of the controlling function of banners can be seen in the CC edition of *Romeo and Juliet* where the extradiegetic information at the beginning of each scene includes the temporal relationship between the illustrations. Act 1 Scene 1 of the fight between the Capulet and Montague men states the action occurs on ‘Early Sunday Morning’. The banners of each of the subsequent scene indicate the time and day of the action with the final scene of Act 5 in ‘The Piazza, Verona – Early Thursday morning’. This timing reiterates the information contained in the dialogue and specifies to the reader that in *Romeo and Juliet* the entire action of the play has taken place over just four days. In early printed editions of the play-texts this information is not included

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<sup>9</sup> Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, trans. by Bart Beaty and Nick Ngyuen (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007), p. 12.

in the stage directions. By explicitly confining the events of the play to such a strict timeline the editor heightens the reader's awareness of the intensity of the action of the play. The reader is then not free to interpret the passage of time throughout the play but rather the temporality is controlled by the information in the banners.

By using traditional period settings the CC editions of Shakespeare's plays exhibit the conservatism reminiscent of the CI comic books of the 1950s rather than the more radical editions of OP in the 1980s. However, not all graphic novels of the twenty-first century repeat this traditional mode and more diverse adaptations of the plays are also produced.

## **II. Manga Shakespeare**

One such radical departure from conservative representation is the development of Shakespeare graphic novels adapted to Original English Language (OEL) manga editions by SelfMadeHero (SMH) in the UK and Wiley Press (WP) in the USA.<sup>10</sup> From 2007 until 2009 SMH published the 'Manga Shakespeare' series which included fourteen plays and so makes it the most extensive series published to date. Concurrently WP published their 'Shakespeare as Manga' series in the USA which includes only four plays. Both these publishers produce graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays using heavily abridged text and the visual stylistic characteristics of manga.

Manga is the graphic novel form that developed in Japan and predominantly features black and white illustrations with generally has less text than the traditional Western style of graphic novel. Promoted as both entertaining and educational these Shakespeare graphic novels are the result of the increased popularity and mainstream acceptance of manga in the

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<sup>10</sup> Original English Language (OEL) editions of manga are printed in the standard Western format of a book read from the front to the back where as Japanese produced manga are read from the back to the front of the book.

Western world in the twenty-first century.<sup>11</sup> While the WP editions locate the plays in stylized period settings, the SMH editions are more radical adaptations of the plays and generally locate the plays in futuristic, fantasy or contemporary settings. For example the SMH editions of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* are set in post-apocalyptic futures and *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* are set in fantasy worlds inhabited by elves and imaginary creatures. *King Lear* is located at the time of British colonisation of America with Lear and his daughters illustrated as Native Americans, and *Romeo and Juliet* is set in modern day Tokyo. However, the history plays in the SMH Manga Shakespeare series such as *Henry VIII* are set in their appropriate, albeit stylised, historic periods.

The publisher of the SMH Manga Shakespeare series, Emma Hayley, stated that her goal was for ‘the books to be used as entertainment first and foremost, rather than seen as an educational aid’ and to present the play in a modern way.<sup>12</sup> Presenting the plays in a modern way translates in practice to the use of modern or imagined settings and costumes. The illustrators of this series were instructed to produce an alternative setting for each of the plays rather than a historically accurate one. As Kate Brown, the illustrator of the SMH *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* stated ‘the route of thought was to make the work appealing to a modern audience by giving it a contemporary or fantastical setting’.<sup>13</sup> By relocating the plays in these settings the SMH publishers promote the value of originality and have sought to differentiate their editions by making Shakespeare’s plays contemporary and appealing to a youth audience.

The supporters of the use of modern settings for the plays argue that they can address the concerns and ideas of the time of production and so emphasise the relevance of Shakespeare today. However, they can also be imposed on the plays to create novelty. An

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<sup>11</sup> Philip Stone, ‘Knowing your Manga from your Marvel’, *Booksellers: Graphic Novels and Manga*, (2008), 3-5 (p. 5).

<sup>12</sup> Emma Hayley, ‘Email Interview’ to Margaret Roper, 18 April 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Kate Brown, ‘E-mal Interview’ to Margaret Roper, 23 Jan 2009.

example of this modernisation of the plays is the SMH Manga Shakespeare edition of *Hamlet* which the reader is informed is set in ‘the year 2017. Global climate change has devastated the Earth. This is now a cyberworld in constant dread of war’.<sup>14</sup> The illustrations in this edition have little background detail and no vision of this ‘devastated world’ is conveyed to the reader. The indicators of the futuristic setting are the use of video screens and holographs for communication, and the characters have ports in their skin but the use of these plugs is unclear. In this example the futuristic setting seems imposed on the text as a novelty rather than being useful as a means of expanding the possible meanings or emphasising the relevance of the work for the modern concerns in relation to the environment or war. Such futuristic settings are common in different genres of manga and here the purpose of it is to create editions of Shakespeare’s plays that are also appealing to the target demographic of manga readers.

Manga shares the basic conventions of Western graphic novels illustrating the story in juxtaposed panels and the reader constructing the narrative through the act of closure.

However there are significant differences between these two types of graphic novels. Schodt describes the style of manga as

No colour and minimum shading is generally used, except for introductory pages [...] Manga uses cartoony simplistic style and there is a focus on the ‘essence’ or mood of an image rather than the text. Layouts are highly heterogeneous [...] a common convention used is that characters become cartoonish or take on the appearance of an animal when faced with strong emotions.<sup>15</sup>

Though they generally have more pages than Western graphic novels, manga have less text and contain more wordless panels. Rommens notes that ‘instead of filtering through

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<sup>14</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, illustrated by Emma Vieceli, edited by Richard Appignanesi (London: SelfMadeHero, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> Schodt, Frederic, *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983), p. 51.

supradiegetic narrative voices, manga shows what is happening in a less mediated way'.<sup>16</sup>

Without the text the illustrations alone must drive the narrative and this creates a faster pace of action as the reader is not slowed by the textual content. Page layout is also different with manga having fewer panels per page which also acts to increase the speed of reading.

The use of the conventions and grammar of the graphic novel medium to construct a continuous narrative and dictate narrative timing can be seen in the following example from the SMH manga edition of *Romeo and Juliet* shown in Figure 27.<sup>17</sup> Visual cues are used to create closure between panels, and panel size and page layout create timing and emphasis.

**Figure 27:** SelfMadeHero, *Romeo and Juliet*, 2007, p. 68.

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<sup>16</sup> Aarnoud Rommens, 'Manga and Storytelling', *Image and Narrative*, 1 (2000)  
<<http://imageandnarrative.be/narratology/aarnoudrommens.htm>> [accessed 12 December 2008].

<sup>17</sup> William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, illustrated by Sonia Leong, edited by Richard Appignanesi, (London: SelfMadeHero, 2007), p. 68.

In this example the first illustration shows an empty room with the word ‘Tick’ repeated across the illustration. Though no clock is visible it is understood by the reader that the words in the panel represent the ticking of a clock in an otherwise silent room. This onomatopoeia is used to convey to the reader the passing of narrative time within the single panel. The next panel shows only the eyes of Juliet and the bead of sweat on her brow indicates her tension. This is juxtaposed with an illustration of her watch, and the reader translates this as the source of the ‘Tick’ in the preceding panel and the passage of time as the source of her concern. The following image is that of her eyes again, this time the image is lighter, and there are three sweat beads in the corner indicating her increasing anxiety which is emphasised by the following image of the watch in close up which shows an hour has passed. The reader performs the act of closure between these images understanding that the Juliet is in the bedroom shown in the first image and waiting impatiently for time to pass. The sequence emphasises the passing of time by expanding this idea over several panels so increasing the tension of the scene. This sequence of five panels is an example of what McCloud refers to as ‘moment to moment’ transitions between panels.<sup>18</sup> The moment to moment transitions extend the scene and focus on the emotional content rather than move the action of the story forward from one event to the next.

The next panel on the page is larger than the first five panels indicating that this is a significant moment. The emotion of the scene is conveyed by the borderless panel and the illustration of Juliet surrounded by high white-capped waves. The characterisation of Juliet has changed from a realistic portrayal of a young woman to a more cartoonish illustration. This is a common technique used in manga to convey to the reader the heightened emotion of the moment. The reader is required to participate in making the meaning by linking the image of the clock with the idea of an extended waiting period and the foam capped waves with the

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<sup>18</sup> Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: Kitchen Sink Press, 1993), p. 54.

tide of emotion. It is in the last panel that the knocking on the door brings Juliet back to the present and her immediate environment. The knock indicates the return of the nurse but the nurse is not shown in the illustration. The reader is told the identity of the person entering the room in the text included in the panel. This is an example of closure within the panel where it is the textual information which controls the readers understanding of the action illustrated.

The visual legacy of film versions of Shakespeare's plays was also used by the manga artists to create the graphic novels. The use of film versions as a source of inspiration and preparation for the development of graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays was confirmed by Adam Sexton who stated that in researching for the WP manga editions of Shakespeare he not only reread the plays but 'saw every film version I was able to get my hands on'.<sup>19</sup> One film version Sexton refers to as of particular importance to him was Roman Polanski's *Macbeth* and the influence on the illustration of the text is apparent. The illustrations of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth of the WP *Macbeth* appear similar to Polanski's representation of the characters, as does the illustration of the witches as three women of various ages. Sonia Leong, the illustrator of SMH *Romeo and Juliet* cites Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo+Juliet* as being an inspiration in creating 'a funky feel'.<sup>20</sup> Hyeondo Park, the illustrator of WP's *Julius Caesar*, stated that his design for Mark Antony was based on Marlon Brando in the 1953 film version of the play. Park's representation of Cassius was influenced by Mr Burns from the cartoon series *The Simpsons* 'because they are a little similar. They are intellectually evil in that they conspire [sic] evil deed'.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Adam Sexton, 'E-mail Interview' to Margaret Roper, 03 March 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Sonia Leong, 'E-mail Interview' to Margaret Roper, 12 February 2009.

<sup>21</sup> Hyeondo Park, 'E-mail Interview' to Margaret Roper, 16 January 2009.



**Figure 28:** Wiley Press, *Julius Caesar*, Hyeondo Park's illustration of Marc Antony inspired by Marlon Brando, p. 11, and Cassius inspired by Mr. Burns, p. 14.

However, historical images were also used in the production of the SMH manga. The image of Henry VIII used in SMH Manga Shakespeare edition, which is the only graphic novel edition of this play, is based on the Holbein portrait of the King painted in 1537. This portrait has become an iconic image of Henry VIII reproduced in theatre, film and television and now used in the manga graphic novel and so meets reader's expectation of how this historical figure should appear.

While manga are generally longer than Western style graphic novels the additional length of the manga editions does not lead to a proportional increase in dialogue. As Emma Hayley, the publisher of the SMH Manga Shakespeare series stated:

To use the full text would have meant ignoring the nature of manga. Imagine pages and pages of talking heads of Hamlet as he delivers his monologues? It wouldn't have kept our readers' attention engaged. The integrity of the manga genre must be preserved if the adaptation is going to work at all.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Emma Hayley, 'Email Interview' to Margaret Roper, 18 April 2009.

So to adapt Shakespeare's plays to the manga format the text must be significantly reduced in order to adhere to the conventions of that medium. The editor must therefore strike a balance between the desire to claim authenticity as an adaptation of the text and to meet reader expectations.

One of the most common ways editors seek to achieve being both manga and Shakespeare is to retain the action but to simply remove words. Text which is not considered essential for understanding the action of the play is deleted. In practice this involves removing metaphoric language, similes, and descriptions which may expand or comment on the action of the play but do not move the story forward. By removing this text the communication is more direct, but removal of words disrupts the poetic rhythm of the iambic pentameter commonly used in the plays. The rhythm of the language is also affected by the significant abbreviation and poetic devices such as alliteration, repetition, and rhyme may be removed in the quest to shorten the text. Kermode argues that in the play-texts the descriptive and comparative dialogue functions to add to the pathos which 'can be enhanced by a succession of comparisons'.<sup>23</sup> The creation of a multiplicity of unfixed meanings through the poetic language used in the plays, Kermode suggests, allows the reader to reflect on the intent and requires reader analysis rather than just acceptance. Removing from the graphic novels what is perceived to be dialogue that is superfluous to the action or problematises meaning creates a simpler more direct communication with the reader.

It is this simplification of the reading that has led to the one of the major criticisms of the abridged graphic novels which is that they are 'dumbed down' editions of the text. Critics such as Perret argue that Shakespeare's plays in abridged graphic novels are not able to convey the ambiguity, scope and complexity of plays.<sup>24</sup> What remains in these abridged

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<sup>23</sup> Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language* (London: The Penguin Group, 2000), p. 29.

<sup>24</sup> Marion D. Perret, 'Not Just Condensation: How Comic Books Interpret Shakespeare', *College Literature*, 31:4 (2004), 72-95 (p. 74).

editions is the dialogue which in conjunction with the illustrations allows the reader to follow the story of the play and understand the relationships between characters. The reduction of the text to plot can affect what Gurr refers to as ‘personation’, that is the presentation of the nature of the character.<sup>25</sup> For Gurr personation was achieved through performance and gesture on the Early Modern stage, but for Kermode ‘the whole business of personation is in large part not in the gesture but in the linguistic detail’.<sup>26</sup> Though the graphic novels can present stereotypical gestures in their illustrations the static images cannot present a flow of movement, nor are able to use oral delivery to achieve Gurr’s idea of personation. For Kermode the narrative capacity of the visual cannot substitute for the dialogue of the play. Language, as Ryan suggests, can more easily express thoughts or interiority than visual images, and can evaluate what it narrates and pass judgments on characters.<sup>27</sup> By cutting the text of the play the graphic novels the complexity of thoughts or ideas expressed in the dialogue of the character cannot be fully represented by the visual. With the loss of dialogue there is a loss of ambiguity and detail and the characterisations become fixed and less ambivalent. A single meaning is therefore presented from the potentials that are expressed in the full play-text which contributes to the accusation that these abridged versions are the ‘dumbing down’ of Shakespeare.

The second means by which editors shorten the play text in abridged editions is by removing subplots and reducing the roles of characters. Neither the WP nor the SMH manga editions of the plays remove any of the subplots, but while they may not completely expunge a character a role may be greatly reduced. For example, the Porter in *Macbeth* in the SMH editions is reduced but not removed as the character is required to perform a function, that is, the opening of the gate to McDuff and Lennox. However the comedic role, which theatrically

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<sup>25</sup> Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574 – 1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 99.

<sup>26</sup> Kermode, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> Marie-Laure Ryan, *Avatars of Story* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. 19.

serves as a pause and an opportunity to build tension and suspense between Duncan's murder and the discovery of the body, is removed entirely in SMH and the Porter is a silent character that merely performs his plot function. In WP however the Porter's lines appear almost in their entirety which is not only an editorial choice in pacing the dramatic action of the play but also in line with the publisher's edict to retain the famous speeches. The reduction of such characters which serve to pause the forward movement of the narrative arc affects the pace and rhythm of the plays by compressing the action.

In abridged editions of the plays the dialogue is often reduced or expunged completely when the action or intention of the scene can be conveyed by the visual element alone. Inevitably the reduction of the text leads to loss of detail; however Hayley argues that the visual images can replace some of the text and states that 'Shakespeare's language had been cut where the comic format could carry the story'.<sup>28</sup> For example in SMH *Hamlet* in Act 2 Scene 2 the Player's speech is not included. These lines are replaced by a series of four images of the Player in various poses and under a spot light to indicate that he is delivering a speech, and finally a close up of a tear on the player's eye to indicate the show of emotion. These illustrations convey the intent of the scene without the complexity of the language. The final image allows the inclusion of an abridged version of Hamlet's soliloquy which follows the scene. In contrast the WP manga edition of *Hamlet* removes the Player's speech completely and does not allude to it at all. This edition only shows Hamlet greeting the players and asking them to play a scene for him that evening. The 'What a rogue and peasant slave am I' soliloquy that follows this scene is included however it is edited to remove all reference to the player's speech. Here again the WP editor follows the requirements of the publishers by reducing the text but retaining as much of this famous speech as possible.

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<sup>28</sup> Gary Eason, 'Shakespeare gets Comic Treatment', BBC News, Friday 11 May 2007, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/6647927.stm>> [accessed 15 June 2007]

The editors may also reduce the length of the play without disrupting the plot by removing entire scenes from the plays. The scenes that are removed in the graphic novels are those that Kermode refers to as 'lighting scenes' which he describes as episodes which are 'a little aside from the main movement of the story that is meant to illustrate a particular aspect of it'.<sup>29</sup> Once again, if the editor considers such scenes unnecessary in moving the plot of the play forward they are removed. One such 'lighting scene' which has been removed from the SMH edition of *Julius Caesar* is Act 3 Scene 3 in which the poet Cinna is attacked by plebeians. In the play this scene serves to highlight the disorder and chaos on the streets of Rome and the anger of the citizens directed at the conspirators who have killed Julius Caesar. By removing the scene the SMH edition removes the emphasis on this disorder. However this scene is not deleted from the WP edition and the illustrations used depict pitchfork-waving rioters, grinning and wide-eyed as they surround and kill Cinna. The inclusion of such a scene, along with the graphic visual interpretation, produces a greater sense of the passions Marc Antony has incited in the plebeians. Therefore its inclusion emphasises a particular aspect of the plot of the play which can be lost by expunging such a 'lighting scene'.

As Kermode states 'following the story, understanding the tensions between characters is not quite the same thing as following all or even most of the meanings'.<sup>30</sup> So while the abridged editions do provide the action of the plays what is lost is not only the poetic language but the complexity that is created by it. The specific characters may appear, the action of the plot is included, but the relationship and tensions between characters and the ambiguity of the text reduced. These editions must also meet the cultural recognition of the format of manga which necessitates the reduction of the text. This reduction does lead to simplification through presenting fixed meanings rather than the ambiguities inherent in the plays and it also compresses the action and leads to a faster reading time. By reducing the

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<sup>29</sup> Kermode, p. 94.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

language these editions provide a textually simplified version of Shakespeare's plays but with added complexity that the text is read in conjunction with the illustrations.

The manga editions are a more radical presentation of the plays of Shakespeare compared to the traditional full text editions published by CC, not only in their illustrations style but in their editing of the text. Though they were initially commercially successful their sales have reduced in recent years.<sup>31</sup> Since 2009 no further manga editions have been published in either the SMH or WP series and neither publisher has advertised current plans for further titles in the series.

### **III. Independent Publications**

Another development in the adaptation of graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays is the publication of editions by independent artists both in hard copy and as web comics. These present a wide variety of both illustration style and textual editing as they are not constrained by a specific style imposed by a publishing house producing a series of the plays. The independent publications are more reminiscent of the eclectic series by OP in the 1980s in which each play was illustrated by different artists specifically to provide a variety of styles. The editions by independent artists demonstrate that the current graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays are not a homogenous product and there is a wide variety available.

The artist Gareth Hinds has produced and published editions of *King Lear* in 2007 and *The Merchant of Venice* in 2008. Both of these graphic novels include abbreviated play-texts which have been edited by Hinds. In graphic novel adaptations which do not use formal framed panels alternative conventions are used to construct a coherent narrative. In Gareth Hinds' *King Lear* a page may be presented as a continuous illustration without formal panels

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<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 5 for analysis of sales figures of Shakespeare graphic novels.

as shown in Figure 29.<sup>32</sup> Though the movement from image to image is unbroken by frames and gutters the process of closure is still required by the reader to fill in the gaps between successive images. To produce a coherent narrative Hinds' uses the technique of drawing dotted lines and arrows to direct the reader to the next speech balloon in the sequence. Other dotted track lines are used to indicate entrances and exits of the characters in the illustrations. Emphasis is given to certain hinge-points through the use of close ups and by manipulating the sizes of the image on the page.

**Figure 29:** Gareth Hinds, *King Lear*, 2008, pages 36 and 37.

Rather than using the traditional historic mode of representing the plays Hinds uses a modern aesthetic in the illustration of his Shakespeare graphic novels which use indeterminate

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<sup>32</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, adapted by Gareth Hinds (Cambridge, Massachusetts: THECOMIC.COM, 2008).

settings and eclectic costuming. As Hinds states he uses a ‘melange of historical periods and styles’.<sup>33</sup> In this graphic novel the time period and location of the action are not defined by any scenic features in the illustrations. The costuming varies with Lear drawn in bare feet and dressed in a long, white robe, Kent appears in the uniform of a Victorian English soldier, Regan wears a 1920s style costume and Albany is dressed in the armour of a fifteenth-century Spanish conquistador. By using this mode of representation the adapter does not dictate a specific world in which the action takes place and instead allows the reader to imaginatively engage with the play. For Hinds, authenticity of the Shakespearean text is not expressed in period costume and instead he focuses on the originality of the scenography he uses. The full colour, decorative layout of the illustrations in *King Lear* indicates the focus of these publications is on the artistic images.

Graphic novels are also able to use impressionistic style illustrations to visualise the play. Unlike the theatre or film which uses actors, the graphic novel illustrator is not constrained in the depiction of the physical form of the characters. In extreme examples the characters do not resemble human beings at all such as Nicki Greenberg’s 2010 edition of *Hamlet* where the characters change shapes and even fragment. Greenberg draws Hamlet as an ink blot which resembles a lion, Gertrude is shaped like a sea horse with six breasts, and Polonius is shaped like a monkey. All the characters in Greenberg’s edition are drawn as black shapes and not costumed and the scenery is limited to representations of the stage, psychedelic patterns and illustrations of textiles.

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<sup>33</sup> Gareth Hinds, <<http://www.garethhinds.com/lear.php>> [accessed 06 August 2010].



**Figure 30:** Nicki Greenberg, *Hamlet*, 2010, p. 99.

Nicki Greenberg's *Hamlet* includes the full text of the play and at 415 pages and published in hard cover folio size, this is the largest and longest, and most expensive, of the Shakespeare graphic novels available. An establishing sequence is also used to reference the plays theatrical origins. The opening sequence of the book shows Hamlet illustrated on a stage backed by a curtain and a double splash page instructs the reader to 'Shhhhhh' just before the play is about to begin. Greenberg also adds another storyline to this presentation of the play by providing double splash pages of the actors backstage at the end of each Act. These backstage illustrations provide a second story where the actor playing Hamlet is shown firstly in an amorous embrace with the actress playing Ophelia and then he is observed by Ophelia in the arms of the actor playing Gertrude. In this way Greenberg has in fact created a graphic novel on the presentation of a stage play of Hamlet. In this edition aesthetic value of the illustrations is implied not through realistic drawings but through the originality of the representation.

**Figure 31:** Backstage image from Nicki Greenberg's *Hamlet*, p. 289.

#### **IV. Shakespeare's Storytellers: Onstage and Offstage Worlds**

A notable development in the twenty-first century graphic novels is the increased use of the medium's ability to multitrack time. Visual representation of narratives of offstage action in the plays which were rarely visually presented in the CI editions of the 1950s and the OP editions of the 1980s have become more prevalent in the twenty-first century editions. Where this offstage action was illustrated in earlier comic books, such as in the example of CI *Julius Caesar* discussed in chapter one, they were presented in the 'flashback' mode. However in the contemporary graphic novels the artists use the affordances and conventions of the medium to present and interpret narrated events in the play-texts.

Though the plots of Shakespeare's plays work through a chronological sequence of events this chronology is often interrupted by what Hardy refers to as 'Shakespeare's storytellers'. Hardy notes that these storytellers disrupt the forward movement of the play and interrupt events so that 'time shifts away from the dramatic action and focuses attention on another story'.<sup>34</sup> The narratives of these storytellers can be of past events or future predictions, they may describe action which takes place offstage within the time frame of the play or they may be imaginative elaborations or stories. Examples of such narratives include the Bloody Sergeant's description of Macbeth's deeds in battle, Prospero's recounting of his exile from Milan, and the description of the death of Falstaff. At these moments the forward movement of the plot is suspended and the audience is provided with information that is outside the frame of the action on the stage.

Berry proposes the term 'inset' to describe such episodes where the imagined spectacle is at odds with the actual spectacle on the stage and all insets 'demand a break from the dramatic *now*'.<sup>35</sup> Though Shakespeare's insets have a variety of functions one of the key reasons for their inclusion in the plays according to Brennan is for these descriptions to substitute for action which could not be performed onstage due to the limitations of the early modern theatre.<sup>36</sup> The production of Shakespeare in graphic novels is not subject to such limitations and the illustrator has the freedom to draw action which could not be staged theatrically. Though Hardy states that showing a narration is 'bound to shift emphasis' she does not elaborate on the outcome of this in regard to the interpretation of the play.<sup>37</sup> By examining the ways in which the conventions of the medium are used to illustrate these insets and signal their status within the play this shift of emphasis and its impact on the reading of the play can be explored.

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<sup>34</sup> Barbara Hardy, *Shakespeare's Storytellers* (London: Peter Owen, 1997), p. 27.

<sup>35</sup> Francis Berry, *The Shakespeare Inset* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 12.

<sup>36</sup> Anthony Brennan, *Onstage and Offstage Worlds in Shakespeare's Plays* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> Hardy, p. 27.

Expository insets are those which Berry describes as narrating ‘facts anterior to the imminent action which must be grasped by the audience before they can follow the dramatic situation’.<sup>38</sup> These actions may be distant in time or can be an interior plot requirement that narrates an incident within the time span of the play rather than show it. When visually representing these scenes the graphic novel illustrator must make clear that they are reported and not part of the dramatic *now* to ensure the plot is coherent. To achieve this, the visual conventions of the medium are used.

In memorial expository insets the speaker can be shown within the frame together with an illustration of what is being described. Both the visual representation of the inset and the illustration of the narrator can convey the emotional content of the image. In coloured graphic novels the visual representation of memory is often shown in monochrome to differentiate it from the dramatic action. An example of this is in the CC edition of *The Tempest* in Prospero’s account of how he and Miranda came to be on the island shown in Figure 32.<sup>39</sup> By showing the image of Prospero in his library in a blue hue it is made clear to the reader that this is an illustration of the words Prospero speaks and is outside the action of the play. The visualisation of this also adds emotional content to the image as it shows Prospero reading with his back turned to the affairs of state which are being taken care of by his brother highlighting Prospero’s negligence of his duties of office. The illustration of Prospero telling this memory to Miranda in the dramatic *now* is shown simultaneously in full colour so differentiating between the two time frames presented.

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<sup>38</sup> Berry, p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, illustrated by Jon Haward, edited by John McDonald, colouring and lettering by Nigel Dobbyn (London: Classical Comics, 2009), p. 18.

**Figure 32:** Classical Comics, *The Tempest*, 2009, p. 18.

In the black and white manga editions where colour is not available for the illustrator, other visual conventions can be used to indicate that the inset depicted is outside the action of the play. In the SMH manga Shakespeare edition of *The Tempest* the shape of the speech balloons is used to indicate the difference between narration of Prospero's memory and dialogue in the dramatic *now* of the play as shown in Figure 33.<sup>40</sup> The illustration includes a close up of Prospero's hand writing indicating that he is focused on his study. The other side of the frame shows an illustration of his brother Antonio dressed in military uniform. This characterises Prospero as a man of thought and Antonio as a man of action. The square speech balloon used differentiates this inset from the action of the play where all other speech is in rounded balloons. This differentiation is made clear by the small image of Miranda shown at the bottom of the page where the rounded speech balloon indicates her words are within the dramatic time of the play.

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<sup>40</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, illustrated by Paul Duffield, edited by Richard Appignanesi (London: SelfMadeHero, 2007), p. 25.

**Figure 33:** SelfMadeHero, *The Tempest*, 2007, p. 25.

Memories can also be shown in thought bubbles rather than in speech balloons to alert the reader that they are a private visual reconstruction by the storyteller. An example of this technique is found in the CC edition of *Romeo and Juliet* shown in Figure 34 which depicts the nurse's memory of the weaning of Juliet.<sup>41</sup> Here the nurse is illustrated in close up, her eyes are directly addressing the reader so focusing on the personal nature and the emotional content of the memory she is sharing. The monochrome colouring of the imagined scene again implies the temporal distance of the memory. It shows her holding the child Juliet affectionately as she leans on her shoulder and two doves fly above them as symbols of peace and love. This visualisation of the nurse's speech moves the focus of the reader from the comic nature of her character, and her prattling irrelevant interjections in the scene, to the

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<sup>41</sup> William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, illustrated by Will Volley, adapted by John McDonald, colouring by Jim Devlin, lettering by Jim Campbell (London: Classical Comics, 2009), p. 33.

emotional content of the words. This highlights the maternal nature of her relationship with Juliet and emphasises their emotional bond.

**Figure 34:** Classical Comics, *Romeo and Juliet*, 2009, p. 33.

In these examples the illustrator has chosen to illustrate action which is narrated, but not presented, in the play. This visual repetition of the verbal content of the plays has been criticised for moving the focus of the reader from Shakespeare's words to the image. Perret suggests that the reader may be more inclined to remember what they have seen rather than what is being said.<sup>42</sup> Jackson also notes, in regard to film, that the inclusion of

Scenes not represented in Shakespeare's theatre by screen writers have sometimes been thought to be an undesirable challenge to the supremacy of poetic description. This is clearly the case when an incident described in dialogue is enacted for the camera.<sup>43</sup>

The criticism of this visualisation in film can also be applied to the graphic novels. The illustration of the insets can shift the emphasis from the words of the speaker to the visual representation of the dialogue. For Brennan there is also the concern for the interpretation of the truth of events whether they are shown or described as he notes that 'we might tend to

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<sup>42</sup> Marion D. Perret, 'And Suit the Action to the Word', in *The Language of Comics: Word and Image*, ed. by Robin Varnum and Christina T. Gibbons (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 2001), pp. 123-44 (p. 134).

<sup>43</sup> Russell Jackson, 'From Play-script to Screenplay', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film*, ed. by Russell Jackson, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 15-34 (p. 27).

think that accounts of offstage events may be less trustworthy than those we have witnessed'.<sup>44</sup> The illustrator can imply the truth of these insets by not only including them in the graphic novel but by the manner in which they are illustrated.

The implications of the perceived truth of the insets can be significant where the illustrator has chosen to include events which are imagined by characters in the play. As Jackson states, again in regard to film, additional sequences can be problematic and particularly those 'which illustrate (and perhaps implicitly validate) what a character imagines'.<sup>45</sup> He uses the example of Oliver Parker's 1996 film *Othello* to highlight the problems these additional sequences can raise. In Parker's *Othello* a sequence was added which shows Desdemona and Cassio naked and in bed together. In the play-text this action is merely imagined by Othello. Jackson argues that such visualisation can imply that the scene being shown to the audience is true, particularly if the audience is not familiar with the play. This significantly alters the interpretation of the play from Othello being manipulated by Iago's lies and Desdemona falsely accused of adultery and instead it casts Othello in the role of the deceived husband.

In the SMH edition of *Othello* the illustrator has also chosen to include Othello's imagined vision of Cassio with Desdemona as shown in Figure 35.<sup>46</sup> The illustration of this scene is divided into two juxtaposed panels. On the left hand side of the page a panel shows two illustrations of Cassio and Desdemona together in an embrace and Othello's eyes appear at the bottom of the panel. This indicates that it is an illustration of Othello's thoughts. On the right hand side of the page Cassio and Bianca are illustrated together and Cassio's hat appears at the bottom of this illustration to indicate that this is his memory of the event he is

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<sup>44</sup> Brennan, p. 11.

<sup>45</sup> Jackson, 'From Play-script to Screenplay', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film*, ed. by Russell Jackson, pp.15-34 (p. 28).

<sup>46</sup> William Shakespeare, *Othello*, illustrated by Ryuta Osada, edited by Richard Appignanesi (London: SelfMadeHero, 2008), p. 145.



describing. The visual conventions used by the illustrator make it explicit that one version of the scene occurs in Othello's imagination by placing it in contrast with illustrations of the narrative from Cassio's point of view.

**Figure 35:** SelfMadeHero, *Othello*, 2008, p. 145.

The style of illustration of the inset can also affect the reader's modality assessment of the words of Shakespeare's storytellers. Modality of an image is defined by Chandler as its 'reality status' or the 'authority of its value as truth or fact'. Chandler states that 'modality judgments involve the comparison of textual representations with models drawn from the everyday world and with models based on genre'.<sup>47</sup> In the conventions of graphic novels a change in illustration style can represent a change in the modality of the narration, the more realistic the image the more it is presented to the reader as truth. Similarly, the more abstract

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<sup>47</sup> Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 65.

the image is the more it is presented as fantasy or fallacy. Therefore different illustration styles can lead to different interpretations by the reader of the reliability of the accounts given in Shakespeare's plays. Graphic novel illustrators can communicate their interpretation of the insets as either truth or fantasy by the selection of these non-verbal sign systems used.

In the SMH edition of *Henry VIII* this convention is shown in the visual representation of Norfolk's description of the Field of the Cloth of Gold shown in Figure 36.<sup>48</sup> In this example Norfolk, and his onstage audience of Buckingham and Abergavenny, are illustrated in front of a copy of the sixteenth century painting of 'The Field of the Cloth of Gold' which is currently housed in the Royal Gallery. This painting shows the meeting of King Henry VIII with King Francis I in 1520. Here the graphic novel uses an existing historical image to visually depict Norfolk's verbal description and so emphasises that it was an actual historic event rather than a construct of the author of the play. This adds to the believability of Norfolk's reporting and focuses on the spectacle of the event. However, it also detracts from the implied criticism of the 'fierce vanities' of the event which Norfolk's narrative is meant to highlight in the context of the play.

**Figure 36:** SelfMadeHero, *Henry VIII*, 2009, p. 14.

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<sup>48</sup> William Shakespeare, *Henry VIII*, illustrated by Patrick Warren, edited by Richard Appignanesi (London: SelfMadeHero, 2009), p. 14.

Conversely the use of a less realistic and more abstract style in visualising an inset signals to the reader the imaginative element of the narrative. Mercutio's Queen Mab speech in the CC edition of *Romeo and Juliet* is shown in Figure 37.

**Figure 37:** Classical Comics, *Romeo and Juliet*, 2009, p. 40.

The illustrator uses the style of illustration to signal the modality of the inset and clearly shows that it is an imaginative narrative rather than a factual recounting of events or a memorial reconstruction. Here the grotesque images contrast with the realistic illustration of the characters in the graphic novel to suggest a fantasy world. The contrast is further enhanced by the use of the thick purple outline around the speech balloons also indicting a difference between these words and the rest of the dialogue of the play in the dramatic *now*.

These examples show the various ways in which the illustrator of a graphic novel can address the complex narratives of Shakespeare's plays using the conventions of the medium to overcome the limitations of the narrative capacity of images. The mode of illustration is

used to convey to the reader that the inset is outside the dramatic *now* of the play. The style of illustration chosen by the illustrator of the inset can also comment on the truth or imaginative nature of the narrative. They can highlight the emotional content of the inset and so emphasise the relationships between the characters in the play-text and rather than replace the text they are understood in conjunction with the words.

## **V. The Reception of Shakespeare Graphic Novels in the Twenty-First Century.**

When the CC editions were launched one reviewer in the trade press declared them ‘Shakespeare dumbed-down in comic strips for bored pupils’.<sup>49</sup> Conversely they were applauded as ‘a fun way of getting into the stories’ by the Director of the National Association of the Teaching of English.<sup>50</sup> These conflicting opinions of the editions reflect the tensions in the reception of Shakespeare graphic novels. The historical construction of the medium as an object of low cultural status has no doubt played a role in this reception. However, there are other key factors evident in the responses from the trade press, Comics scholars and Shakespearean scholars. These factors include their status as adaptations of canonical works, that they can be seen as simplifications with little artistic merit and that they are perceived as pedagogical tools for juvenile readers.

In the growing realm of Comics scholarship little attention is given to graphic novels which are adaptations of published novels or classical works. Lusardi raises this issue and states

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<sup>49</sup> *London Evening Standard*, ‘Shakespeare dumbed-down in comic strips for bored pupils’ <<http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/news/article-23408893-shakespeare-dumbed-down-in-comic-strips-for-bored-pupils.do>> [accessed 14 November 2007].

<sup>50</sup> Gary Eason, ‘Shakespeare gets Comic Treatment’, *BBC News*, 11 May 2007, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/6647927.stm>> [accessed 15 June 2007].

that even some devotees of comic books are not prepared to take them seriously as performative art that can accommodate an astonishing range of materials. Much less have students of literature and drama in performance been disposed to do so.<sup>51</sup>

Much of the recent Comics scholarship is concerned with original works in the medium, such as Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman* and Alan Moore's *Watchmen*, or those of biographical nature such as Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*.<sup>52</sup> One of the reasons for this is, as Hutcheon proposes, that 'in both academic and journalistic reviewing, contemporary popular adaptations are most often put down as secondary, derivative'.<sup>53</sup> Though Hutcheon's observation is in relation to film adaptations of classical texts it is also applicable to graphic novel adaptations of Shakespeare. Originality is an attribute which is afforded contemporary cultural value and though the graphic novels comprise an original visual component the text is of course an edition of a pre-existing work. As derivatives of the 'original' work, adaptations of Shakespeare's plays are frequently judged in terms of fidelity to the original, and its success or otherwise measured against how closely it resembles the source text.<sup>54</sup> This mode of criticism immediately compares the graphic novel to the original play-text and so variations can be seen as failures using this fidelity assessment.

The graphic novels are not only an adaptation of an original work but they can also be criticised as being simplifications of that work. There are two modes of simplification that are attached to Shakespeare graphic novels. The first is the simplification of the language which may be either through editorial cuts reducing the text or through the modernisation of the language used. In abridged Shakespeare graphic novels the amount of text removed from the play is based on factors including the limitation on the length of the graphic novel, the genre of graphic novel, the target audience for the work and the theoretical principles governing the

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<sup>51</sup> James P. Lusardi, 'Iconic Shakespeare: Oscar Zarate's *Othello*', in *Shakespeare and the Visual Arts*, ed. by Holger Klein (Lewiston: The Edwin Mullen Press, 2000), pp. 136-53 (p. 147).

<sup>52</sup> Comics Research, 'Academic Resources' <<http://www.comicsresearch.org/ComicsDissertations.html>> [accessed 01 October 2007].

<sup>53</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *Theories of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> See Chapter 4 for detailed examination of the issue of authenticity.

publication. The length of the graphic novel is defined by the publisher and can vary from thirty-two pages as in the early comic books of the 1950s to over 400 pages as in the recent edition of Nicki Greenberg's *Hamlet*. However, the mere length of the graphic novel is not a measure of the amount of text it includes as some formats historically have fewer words per image. The amount of text is also based on the publisher's target audience and those aimed at a younger demographic, or promoted on the basis of entertainment rather than education, include less text. There are two main criticisms made by scholars and the trade press of these abridged graphic novels of the plays which are that they are 'dumbed down' and that they are not 'Shakespeare'. Though this criticism is reiterated in the discourse, it is more an artefact of cultural anxiety rather than disputing publisher's claims as no publisher of abridged editions claims their editions to be substitutes for the complete plays.

An example of a heavily abridged graphic novel is the SMH manga edition of *Hamlet* which includes approximately 6,500 words from the approximate 32,000 words of the 'full text' edition. What is removed is the metaphoric dialogue and descriptions and words that can be communicated by the artwork. The text that is included primarily serves to progress the plot. The reduction of the dialogue and the size restriction leads to simplification by removing subplots and any ancillary text that does not function to move the plot forward, thereby reducing the ambivalence of the plays. The other means of simplifying the text are by the removal of archaic or difficult words, or by paraphrasing the text in contemporary English. These translated texts do reduce the ambiguity and complexity of Shakespeare's language and are produced for a readership which cannot, or choose not to, read the original text.

The second mode of simplification of Shakespeare graphic novels is by the inclusion of illustrations and even full-text original language editions are accused of simplification by the inclusion of illustrations. The visual images can aid in the understanding of the text but also present the illustrator's interpretation of the play instead of the multiple readings theoretically

possible from a text-only edition. The artist's choice of illustration assists the reader in regard to differentiating characters and understanding the emotion of a scene or dialogue and so simplifies the text. The artist may also include information that is not in the text and so add an interpretative element to the drawings. The concern for 'picture-reading' is raised by Perret who states that the concern is the reader 'may remember what the comic book showed rather than what the playwright said'.<sup>55</sup> For Perret providing such detail stifles the reader's imaginative engagement with the play and her concern is for how much the pictures 'dictate a single reading' and 'how much is teased out by the reader'.<sup>56</sup> That is, the more detailed and realistic the illustrations the less opportunity the reader has to imaginatively visualise the play. For analysts such as Perret, this criticism centres on the illustrations presenting a specific interpretation rather than allowing the reader to engage imaginatively with the text. The reader may pass over the words and still gain understanding of the narrative through the action depicted which reduces Shakespeare's work to plot rather than poetry.

The simplification of the texts, and therefore the reduction of difficulty, is equated to the 'dumbing down' of the text. This accusation is not only an assessment of the books themselves but also a criticism of those who read or promote their use. For example, in his review of Shakespeare graphic novels in *The Telegraph*, Roger Lewis states that they are simplifications of the works for the consumption by those unwilling or unable to read the scholarly editions. He argues that while adaptation is common in twentieth century versions of the plays the graphic novels are aimed at teachers who he refers to as the 'twerps in the staffroom'.<sup>57</sup> Lewis's attack on graphic novels is primarily concerned with the removal of 'difficulty' from reading Shakespeare and because 'fluffy-minded teachers no longer want their students to do things that might be hard'. In this argument, simplification through

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<sup>55</sup> Perret, 'Not Just Condensation', 72-95 (p. 94).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 89.

<sup>57</sup> Roger Lewis, 'The Bard Gets a Comic Twist', *The Telegraph*, 17 May 2007, p. 12.

reduction and modernisation of the text and the inclusion of illustrations devalues the reading of the plays by removing the difficulty aspect.

In 'Popular Discrimination' Fiske argued that 'difficulty' has come to be an indicator of the value of literature and a means for differentiating highbrow and popular culture. He stated that the difficulty of 'highbrow' texts functions not only as a measure of the quality of the text itself but it also 'works to exclude those who do not have the cultural competence to decode' the texts.<sup>58</sup> Fiske notes that difficulty is finally a measure of social exclusivity rather than textual quality. Difficulty is seen as a form of cultural capital by imparting objects with a certain kind of 'rarity' and so, he argues, it distinguishes between high cultural artefacts and the mass cultural artefacts. When seen as products aimed at consumers not familiar with Shakespeare, and promoted as simplified, or easier to understand, the graphic novel versions of the plays are devalued. By criticising Shakespeare graphic novels for simplifying the texts the idea of difficulty as a social marker is reinforced and the cultural status of the graphic novel is reduced. In this paradigm Shakespeare is hard and graphic novels are easy. However this criticism avoids the issue of the multiliteracy required to analyse and interpret visual images and is centred on the presence of the words rather than the representation of the meaning of the text.

Shakespeare graphic novels are also devalued by the current discourse which focuses on the utilitarian aspect. This is done through identifying them as functional items and pedagogical tools to assist children and those not familiar the plays. Groensteen observes that comic books are often seen as functional items because 'in addressing children, they are expected to make a contribution to their education by helping them to learn to read,

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<sup>58</sup> John Fiske, 'Popular Discrimination', in *Modernity and Mass Culture*, ed. by James Naremore and Patrick Brantlinger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 103-16 (p. 109).



encouraging them to love “beautiful texts” and “great authors””.<sup>59</sup> This linking of the idea of functionality to an immature audience is particularly relevant to graphic novels of Shakespeare’s plays. By promoting them as functional items that have a purpose they are not ‘art’ but a learning tool.

The idea of functionality defines the Shakespeare graphic novels value in terms of their ‘use’ and ‘relevance’. Fiske describes use and relevance as ‘two markers which distinguish working class art from high art’ and as defining popular culture items. He states ‘popular culture objects must have a use’, which is an idea in opposition to high art where functionality devalues it.<sup>60</sup> Like the CI publisher in the 1950s the publishers of Shakespeare graphic novels, including manga editions, have also promoted their products as educational tools. As they are educational items, the implied audience for graphic novels is perceived as juvenile rather than adult. This construction of the demographic of the reader of graphic novels is exemplified in the reception of Nicki Greenberg’s *Hamlet*. Although this graphic novel includes the full text of the play and includes adult themes such as showing the actor playing Hamlet in sexual embraces with the actors playing Ophelia and Gertrude, in 2011 it was awarded ‘Picture Book of the Year’ by the Australian Children’s Book Council.<sup>61</sup>

One of the most controversial aspects of comic books and graphic novels, and one that has significantly contributed to the low status of the medium, is the aesthetic evaluation of the art of the graphic novels. The artwork is criticised for its use of stereotypes and particularly the depiction of the human form. Historically women in graphic novels have been depicted with exaggerated physical features and revealing costumes which sexualise the images.

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<sup>59</sup> Thierry Groensteen, ‘Why are Comics Still in Search of Cultural Legitimization?’, in *Analytical and Theoretical Approaches to Comics*, ed. by Anne Magnussen and Hans-Christian Christiansen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2000), pp. 29-42 (p. 35).

<sup>60</sup> Fiske, ‘Popular Discrimination’, in *Modernity and Mass Culture*, ed. by James Naremore and Patrick Brantlinger, pp. 103-16 (p. 105).

<sup>61</sup> Carolyn Webb, ‘For Kids, or Not for Kids – this is the question’, <<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/for-kids-or-not-for-kids--that-is-the-question-20110819-1j29m.html>>, [accessed 21 November 2011].

Though sexualised illustrations of gender and revealing costumes are common in contemporary graphic novels, it is notable that it is rarely addressed as a convention of illustration in the medium. The work of both Eisner and McCloud discuss the issue of stereotypes but do not address the overt sexualisation of the characterisation in graphic novels. Similarly, Carrier's monograph *The Aesthetics of Comics* gives a detailed analysis of the visual images used, as does Matthew Putz's *The History of Comics*, but both are silent on the exaggerated illustration of gender. However, it is a feature which has come to be associated with the medium and has generated criticism and devaluation of the artwork.

In Trina Robbins assessment this typification of gender has become more pronounced since the 1980s and she states that;

Towards the end of the twentieth century a change in gender stylisation of men and women occurred in mainstream comic books [...] men became more muscular, their necks thickened, while their heads grew smaller. The female, on the other hand, developed longer legs while breasts attained incredible proportions, perfectly round in shape, and often larger than their heads.<sup>62</sup>

This trend was quantified in a research project conducted at Portland State University which focused on American superhero graphic novels. In their survey of covers of superhero comic books the Portland group found that in 1960 publications there were no sexualised images of women while 27% wore revealing costumes.<sup>63</sup> By the year 2000 these figures had risen significantly and almost 60% of female characters on covers were sexualised or wearing revealing costumes. The research also noted a rise in the depiction of extremely muscular male characters in the same period from 6% in 1960 to 19% in 2000. One reason for the illustrations becoming more exaggerated and sexualised since the 1980s may be due to the relaxation in censorship of graphic novels. Stewart and Chop note that in the last revision of

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<sup>62</sup> Trina Robbins, 'Gender Differences in Comics', *Image & Narrative*, 4 (2002)

<<http://www.imageandnarrative.be/gender/trinarobbins.htm>> [accessed 07 January 2009], (para. 10 of 14).

<sup>63</sup> Dan Rudh, Andrew Meichtry, Anne Laudwehr, Michael Iacob and Jordan Augustdt, 'Depiction of Gender in American Superhero Comic Books, 1960-2010', <<http://www.superherostudy.blogspot.com>> [accessed 06 August 2011], p. 28.

the Comics Code carried out in 1989 there was no longer any mention of exaggerated physical features.<sup>64</sup> This trend of exaggerated physical features has been reversed in the last decade but it still features in the art of comic books and informs the perception and assessment of their artistic value.

Though the Portland research group focussed on superheroes this style of illustration of gender is found in other genres including the graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays. Robbins suggests that the increase in prevalence of exaggerated physical features of both genders is because they appeal to the fantasies of young male readers. She argues that this is due to the prevalence of male comic book writers and because the majority of readers are male. A review of the SMH series of graphic novels illustrates this point of view as the depiction of gender varies depending on the genre of the play. The romantic comedies, which could be expected to attract more female readers, such as *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Romeo and Juliet* have more naturalistic physical features and more modest costumes. Plays which are more action oriented and so presumably with greater appeal to male readers, such as *Macbeth* and *Richard III*, display impossibly proportioned male and female characters.

Ultimately the purpose of this exaggeration of female and male characteristics is to fulfil the desire for visual pleasure. This visual pleasure Mulvey notes assumes two forms; 'pleasure that is linked to sexual attraction (voyeurism) and pleasure that is linked to narcissistic identification'.<sup>65</sup> Mulvey's analysis is of film and how the fascination with film is reinforced by pre-existing patterns of fascination already at work within the individual.<sup>66</sup> She argued that the image of the woman is central to the weaving of erotic pleasure into film. There is erotic pleasure in looking at another person as an object as well as pleasure and

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<sup>64</sup> Jennifer Stewart and Amy Chop, 'Women in Comics', <<http://www.thedragonweb.com/womenincomics.html>> [accessed 15 May 2011], (para. 8 of 23)

<sup>65</sup> Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Movie and Methods Volume II*, ed. by Bill Nichols (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 303-14 (p. 307).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 309.

fascination with likeness and recognition. Narcissistic identification is manifest when the reader sees the illustrations as extensions of themselves. In graphic novels the appearance of characters can be coded for strong physical and erotic impact.

The objectifying of the female image and narcissistic view of the male can be seen in the illustrations in Shakespeare graphic novels. The female can be displayed as erotic object within a story as well as an erotic object for the reader. For example in the SMH Manga Shakespeare *As You Like It* an explicitly voyeuristic sequence is included in the illustrator's interpretation of the story which has no basis in the text of the play and is shown in Figure 38.<sup>67</sup>

**Figure 38:** SelfMadeHero, *As You Like It*, 2008, p. 32.

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<sup>67</sup> William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, illustrated by Chie Kutsuwada, edited by Richard Appignanesi (London: SelfMadeHero, 2008), p. 32.

The presence of Touchstone in the bathroom as Rosalind and Celia dress after taking a shower eroticises the relationship between the clown and the women. The voyeurism of the illustrations is highlighted by the clown's hidden presence in the scene and exaggerated by his use of binoculars as Celia puts on a bra with her back to him. This introduction of Touchstone adds a complexity to the decision to invite him on their journey and raises questions in the reader's mind as to the nature of his relationship with them. The scene also serves to provide voyeuristic pleasure for the reader in locating it in a shower room and by the exaggeration of Celia's cleavage. In this manga edition the scene also loses any comic potential as the punning banter between the characters is heavily abridged and the text assumes a subordinate role to the illustrations. In this subordination the female as the passive subject of the male gaze is highlighted. This illustration also impacts the comedic element and in the later part of the play adds a more aggressive sexual undertone to Touchstone's wooing of the passive and pastoral innocent Audrey.

Fantasies of the male physical form are also evident in the illustrations in Shakespeare graphic novels. Both the CC *Macbeth* and the SMH Manga Shakespeare *Macbeth* provide examples of the exaggeration of masculine features. The CC image of Macbeth is modelled on the stereotypical superhero character familiar in traditional Western graphic novels. The CC illustrations show Macbeth with an exaggerated broad chest and muscular arms, an image of narcissistic identification for the male gaze. The way in which Macbeth is illustrated in the battle scenes in the CC edition is reminiscent of superhero battles where he is poised mid-air, cloak billowing around him and swinging his bloodied sword. The SMH *Macbeth* features male characters with impossibly proportioned bodies. They are extremely broad shouldered and narrow waisted with muscular arms and often appear bare-chested. These exaggerated features highlight the physicality of the characters of the plays. In this edition Lady Macbeth

is illustrated wearing a dominatrix costume which not only sexualises the image but provides an interpretation of her character.

**Figure 39:** SelfMadeHero, *Macbeth*, 2008, illustrations of Macbeth, p. 15, and Lady Macbeth, p. 50.

The extent of the exaggeration of gender attributes and of focus on specific body parts not only depends on the genre of the play but also on the target audience for the edition. The physical exaggeration of characters in the CC editions is not as pronounced as in some editions of the SMH manga series and emphasises the value statements being made by these publications. As an educational tool the CC editions are targeted at schools so the illustrations necessarily have to be deemed suitable for young children and approved by authorities. The SMH editions mantra of entertainment and appeal to teenagers supports Robbins assertion of the role that the sexualised images can have in appealing to this demographic.

The importance of this illustration style in graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays is that it elicits criticism of the images in the editions. The art can be denigrated as cartoonish and unsophisticated. Using sexualised images for visual pleasure rather than a serious attempt at

characterisation, or to provide a deeper understanding of the play, can also devalue the artwork. It associates the graphic novels with the much maligned superhero genre rather than a literary text and the perspective that they are objects of low cultural status.

In order to raise the cultural status of Shakespeare graphic novels it is necessary to raise the status of the medium so graphic novels become a legitimate form of literature. The Comics scholar Mila Bongco argues that

The problem confronting the reassessment of comics reflects the dilemmas which attend the study of other forms of popular culture: the attempts to smooth the friction between refined aesthetics and mass popularity and the struggle to legitimize its status through critical academic approval – in short, a preoccupation with acceptance and hierarchies.<sup>68</sup>

The problems that Bongco raises have, in recent years, been addressed through commercial and institutional legitimising practices which have served to elevate the medium from its marginalised status of anti-literature to a more accepted mainstream form.

Recent developments in the commercial practices of the sale and distribution of graphic novels have aided in recuperating their status as mainstream objects for mature readers as well as children. Graphic novels and comic books are now commonly sold in bookstores alongside other forms of literature. This not only increased their exposure to more consumers but also served to reinvent them as mainstream rather than objects associated with the fandom. The accessibility of graphic novels was further enhanced with the development of digital comics which can be used on personal electronic devices. Increased accessibility has led to a greater acceptance of the medium and dissociation with fandom. This re-categorising of the consumer of graphic novels from a 'fan' to a reader is one element that has served to elevate their cultural status.

Another legitimising practice is the awarding of prizes. In the comics industry the Eisner Awards and the Harvey Awards, both of which began in 1988, are conferred on comic

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<sup>68</sup> Mila Bongco, *Reading Comics: Language, Culture and the Concept of the Superhero in Comic Books* (New York: Garland, 2000), p. 14-15.

books voted by creators of comics as the best in various categories.<sup>69</sup> As Simone Murray observes, book awards which are ‘sometimes disparaged by critics and writers alike’ draw attention to particular texts by broadcasting interest beyond their immediate literary community and typically increase sales and gain wider public recognition.<sup>70</sup> However, the winners of the Eisner and Harvey Awards do not gain wide recognition outside the Comics community. It was in 1992 that Art Spiegelman’s graphic novel *Maus – A Survivor’s Tale* was awarded a special Pulitzer Prize that a graphic novel was recognised in the broader literary community. This graphic novel tells the story of Spiegelman’s father, a survivor of the concentration camps in WWII Germany and depicts the Germans as cats and the Jewish prisoners as mice. *Maus* was also significant because it demonstrated the ability of the medium to be used effectively for biographical and serious subject matter. The attention and prestige that this award conferred on *Maus* as an individual work, and the graphic novel medium in general, gave the medium a value and status which had not formerly been acknowledged.

Following on from, and supporting, the growing mainstream recognition of the medium is the recent compilation of ‘Best Seller’ lists for graphic novels. In March 2009 the *New York Times* commenced publication of a Best Sellers list for ‘graphic books’ that now appears alongside the bestseller lists for fiction and non-fiction. Once the realm only of comic book websites and comic book magazines, the publication in mainstream newspapers of these lists is significant as the readers are not only members of a comic book subculture. The link between other culture industries, particularly film, and transmedia franchises is clear by the titles which feature in the Best Seller lists of graphic books. Works such as *Watchmen*, *Batman*, *Persepolis*, and *Scott Pilgrim* are included and all of these have been made into films

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<sup>69</sup> See <<http://www.harveyawards.org/>> and <<http://www.eisnerawards.org/>> for details of award categories.

<sup>70</sup> Simone Murray, *The Adaptation Industry: The Cultural Economy of Contemporary Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 103.



with worldwide distribution in the early twenty-first century. Notable though is that by November 2009 the top selling graphic book was *The Book of Genesis* and other classics such as *The Wizard of Oz* and *Pride and Prejudice* began to appear in the list, which also included a graphic book biography of Bertrand Russell.<sup>71</sup> The significance of the biography in the graphic novel form is that it uses the medium to present truth. The fantasy genre still dominates the manga list and this is likely to be a reflection of the more juvenile target audience for mainstream manga. In 2012 Stan Lee's and Terry Douglas' *Romeo and Juliet: The War*, a futuristic retelling of the work was the first, and only, graphic novel based on a Shakespearean play to appear on *The Times* best seller list.

The growing recognition of the aesthetic value of the art in graphic novels has also served to elevate the status of the medium. Carrier argues that the location of art influences the cultural value of the object and states 'the difference between museum art and comics is less a fact about how the work is produced than a difference in our attitude towards its interpretation'.<sup>72</sup> Including the artwork of graphic novels in exhibitions in galleries and museum increases the cultural value of the medium. Kim Munson cites the *Masters of American Comics* exhibition in the Hammer Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles in 2005 as a turning point in the recognition of the aesthetic value of the visual component of comic books. She argues that 'it kicked off a new acceptance for serious scholarship and research of comics and comic art'.<sup>73</sup> In what seems to be contradiction in her criticism of 'picture reading' Perret's states that 'today the content and the graphic technique of many comic books are mature enough to attract college-educated readers and to deserve the

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<sup>71</sup> New York Times, 'Best Seller List'

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/06/books/bestseller/bestgraphicbooks.html?ref=bestseller>> [accessed 27 November 2009].

<sup>72</sup> David Carrier, *The Aesthetics of Comics* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), p. 82.

<sup>73</sup> Kim Munson, 'Beyond High & Low: How Comics & Museums Learned to Co-exist', *International Journal of Comic Art*, 11:2 (2009), 283-98 (p. 290).

term ‘art’’.<sup>74</sup> This statement also clearly links the cultural status of graphic novels to the social status of the reader.

The rise in production values of graphic novels has also aided in constructing them as legitimate forms of literature. Initially graphic novels were produced as low cost disposable items rather than printed in bound editions for library shelves. Once published on low quality paper in magazine format they are now available in many forms including hard cover and folio size formats. The increased production values and quality of the graphics has also increased the cost of the graphic novels. The increase in price also increases the cultural status as it implies not only a more affluent readership but also a more adult audience for the product.

In the twenty-first century graphic novels have also been legitimised by their incorporation into higher education as objects suitable for academic enquiry. Though the Comics scholar Bart Beaty notes ‘there are no signs on the horizon that departments of Comics Studies are soon to be created’, the study of comics is being included into the pre-existing disciplines of Art, Literature and Media studies.<sup>75</sup> David Huxley, a lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University, observes that historically the study of comic books and graphic novels in universities in the UK has had ‘a dazzling lack of respectability’. In Huxley’s review of the history of the introduction of comics courses in the UK he notes that

I think the case can be made that in the last two years we have reached a ‘tipping point’, whereby the reputation of comics is, if not assured, can only improve, and that any remaining criticisms will seem as stupid as someone saying that films are not worthy of serious study.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Perret, ‘Not Just Condensation’, 72-95 (p. 72).

<sup>75</sup> Bart Beaty, ‘In Focus: Comics Studies Fifty Years after Film Studies’, *Cinema Journal*, 50.3 (2011), 106-10 (p. 107).

<sup>76</sup> David Huxley, ‘A Dazzling lack of respectability: Comics and Academia in the UK : 1971 – 2011’, <<http://comicsforum.org/2011/07/29/a-dazzling-lack-of-respectability-comics-and-academia-in-the-uk-1971-%e2%80%93-2011-by-david-huxley/>> [accessed 27 September 2011].

For example, in 2010 Dundee University in Scotland introduced post-graduate degrees in the study of Comics and in 2012 Birkbeck University in London also introduced a comics course. Education institutes have the authority to allocate cultural capital to artefacts and the location of graphic novels in education, both as material objects to examine and as legitimate reading texts for literary study, endows them with a higher social status.

Library collections of graphic novels are also increasing in both educational institutions and in public libraries and guides and advice on collections are now being published.<sup>77</sup> In 2007 Burt noted that the Folger library did not include comic books or graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays in their collection.<sup>78</sup> In the last two years the Folger has not only included these but has also hosted presentations by creators. The importance of the location of consumption of graphic novels is articulated by Guillory who stated that 'the intrinsic difficulty of literary language marked the distinction between high cultural artefacts and the mass cultural artefacts and the distinction also defined the social spaces appropriate for the consumption of these artefacts'.<sup>79</sup> Therefore the reading of graphic novels within institutions provides them with a higher cultural status than that associated with popular culture products which are consumed in leisure.

The number of academic peer reviewed journals being published which focus specifically on graphic novel is also increasing. This trend began in Europe and with the publication of online journals such as *Image & Narrative*, and in the USA *ImageText* began to be published by the University of Florida in 2002. In the UK in June 2010 Routledge began publication of the first academic peer reviewed journal for comics in Britain, *The Journal of*

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<sup>77</sup> Examples include David S. Serchay, *Libraries Guide to Graphic Novels for Adults* (New York: Neal-Schuman Publishing, 2010); Francesca Goldsmith, *The Readers' Advisory Guide to Graphic Novels* (New York: American Libraries Association, 2010); and Steve Miller, *Developing and Promoting Graphic Novel Collections* (New York: Neal-Schuman Publishing, 2005).

<sup>78</sup> Richard Burt, 'Shakespeare More or Less', in *Shakespeares After Shakespeare: An Encyclopaedia of the Bard in Mass Media and Popular Culture*, ed. Richard Burt, 2 vols (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007), V1, pp. 1-9 (p. 4).

<sup>79</sup> John Guillory, *Cultural Capital, The problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 172.

*Graphic Novels and Comics*. This was followed by *Studies in Comics* produced by Intellect Publishing also in 2010. Before the introduction of these journals articles on graphic novels only appeared sporadically under other areas of enquiry such as popular culture journals or education journals. Though Chute's statement 'that it is no longer necessary to prove the worthiness and literary potential of the medium of comics'<sup>80</sup> was somewhat premature in 2006, the current commercial and academic status verifies that graphic novels have now achieved this position.

## VI. Digital Comics

The first online digital comic was produced in 1984 but it was not until the first decade of the twenty-first century that there was a substantial growth in the number of digital comic books and graphic novels produced. This growth has been possible through technological advances and the proliferation of personal electronic devices such as smartphones and tablet computers with high resolution screens to view the images.

Digital comics can vary significantly in the way they use the affordances available in the medium. Comic books and graphic novels can use computers as a 'transmissive' medium where they are either migrated from their pre-existing print version or scanned to produce a copy which is a reproduction of the print edition in an electronic form to be read on a computer. This can be done using an application, such as Comixology, which displays each page of the comic book on the computer screen as it would be seen in the printed edition. Digitized versions of print editions can also be published directly online. An example of this is Dan Carroll's adaptation of *Hamlet*. Carroll's 2009 edition of *Hamlet*, also known as *Stick Figure Hamlet* because of the simple line drawing used, was published in hard copy as well as

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<sup>80</sup> Hillary Chute and Marianne DeKoven, 'Introduction; Graphic Narrative', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 52:4 (2006), 707-28 (p. 728).

reproduced online.<sup>81</sup> The electronic and print versions look the same with the same illustrations and same page layout experienced by the reader.

**Figure 40:** Dan Carroll's *Hamlet*, 2009, Act 3 Scene 4, pages 5 and 6.

There are of course material differences between the printed version of a comic book and a digital version and the user interaction with them. As Ryan suggests, media is never simply a 'hollow pipe' which transfers information, but imposes a 'configuring action' on the narrative and the extent of this action can vary.<sup>82</sup> When a comic book is migrated from a print edition to a computer the scroll button or finger swipe replaces the turning of a page, the illustrations on the page become images on a screen. However, in these migrated examples the presentation of the narrative within the graphic novel is not altered from one medium to another, the images and pages are the same and the reproduction takes no advantage of the new affordances of the electronic medium itself.

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<sup>81</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, adapted by Dan Carroll, <<http://www.stickfigurehamlet.com/>> [accessed 23 August 2011].

<sup>82</sup> Marie-Laure Ryan, 'Introduction', in *Narrative Across Media: The Languages of Storytelling*, ed. by Marie-Laure Ryan (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), p. 17.

The increased use of small screen devices such as smartphones for reading comics has lead to the development of applications which can also alter the display of these migrated editions to cope with the limitations of the screen size of the devices. An example of this is the application which allows the CI comic books from the 1950s to be read on a small screen device.<sup>83</sup> Viewing the comic in this way affects the story as the narrative conventions of the page layout which can be used to control timing, suspense and highlight hinge-points of the story are no longer available. Therefore, in this instance the transmedial adaptation has a larger impact on the reading experience than that of the full page digital versions.

In other instances the computers affordances are used by the graphic novel creators in the initial development of the narrative. These graphic novels are ‘born-digital’, that is they are designed and produced for the digital medium. In April 2012 Marvel comics released their first edition under the product name ‘Infinite Comics’ which was produced by Mark Waid.<sup>84</sup> The Infinite Comics use sequential images and word balloons just like print editions but also elements that are unique to the digital comics. In traditional digital comics, a book opens to a splash page or a single panel with drawn action and dialogue boxes viewed at the same time. In Infinite Comics elements of the page layout can be delayed and require a finger swipe to add detail to the panel displayed on the screen such as dialogue boxes, foreground artwork or other panels on the same page.

In May 2012 the ‘Deepcomix’ application for iOS for use on tablets was released. ‘DeepComix’ uses ‘parallax view’ which allows the reader to move around the image on the screen. The reader can view the image from different perspectives, panning across the screen or viewing it from different angles and distances, by either swiping the screen or moving the tablet device itself. This requires the adapter to create a ‘deeper’ three dimensional image

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<sup>83</sup> Comic Book Resources, <<http://www.comicbookresources.com/?page=article&id=38685>>, [accessed 25 May 2012].

<sup>84</sup> Ben Morse, ‘Marvel Infinite Comics Unveiled’, <[http://marvel.com/news/story/18266/marvel\\_infinite\\_comics\\_unveiled](http://marvel.com/news/story/18266/marvel_infinite_comics_unveiled)>, [accessed 05 June 2012].

instead of the fixed and flat two dimensional panel of the printed comic book. In describing DeepComix the creators of the application state that:

DeepComix is positioned in a 3D environment. For the first time the point of view of the reader, the real protagonist of the comics medium, is free to move and explore the panels. This solution, which is static and moving at the same time, is the key to understand this new type of comics. It is not an interactive game, although the reader is physically interacting with the story. It is not an animation though the images move, hide and appear dynamically in front of us.<sup>85</sup>

The application was developed to use the capabilities of the computer in presenting a story, rather than by creators as a way of overcoming the limitations of the graphic novel medium.

Mark Waid observed

When I saw this technique, at first I thought it was sort of neat. Then I got over it quickly, because it doesn't enhance the story as used, it's just "neat." [...] So I want to use parallax...but what the hell is the purpose? Is it to slowly reveal some background element that the characters aren't aware of? If so, how do you cue the reader to ride along with you and get what you want them to get out of it?<sup>86</sup>

So although Deepcomix extends the possibilities of digital graphic novels it also presents a challenge for creators as to how to use it to create a digital comic.

The advent of digital comics has also presented several challenges for Comics scholars in regard to issues such as the relative value of printed and digital comics, the impact on the industry and defining the medium. For some critics comic books and graphic novels are specifically printed works and as the original form of the medium they are considered superior to digital versions. David Scheidt writes:

For true comic fans, digital comics aren't going to replace printed traditional ones anytime soon. Digital comics are getting bigger and bigger, but these people have been supporting local comic shops forever. We like to support our local comic stores. We like the weight and the feeling of turning pages. The same could be said about book readers vs Kindle readers. There's an elegance to holding a book in your hands; holding a kindle or an iPad, it's not the same feeling. Never will be. [...]there is nothing like reading the comic book in its original form.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Deepcomix, <<http://www.deepcomix.com/>>, [accessed 27 May 2012].

<sup>86</sup> Mark Waid, <<http://markwaid.com/writing101/whats-keeping-me-up-nights-now/>>, [accessed 24 June 2012].

<sup>87</sup> Dave Scheidt, 'Digital Comics and a Neat Upgrade: Not a Replacement', 28 December 2011, <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dave-scheidt/digital-comics\\_b\\_1171871.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dave-scheidt/digital-comics_b_1171871.html)>, [accessed 15 May 2012].

Here Scheidt uses the print versus digital debate to distinguish between ‘true’ comic book readers and others, and between authentic comic books and those in the new medium. The language used bears a striking similarity with that used in the debate between the ‘authentic Shakespeare’ of the stage and the ‘lesser Shakespeare’ in the new medium of graphic novels.

Supporters of digital versions argue they complement rather than replace the printed medium but there is an anxiety that the digital technology will alter the structure of the comic book industry and eventually lead to only digital editions being available. Printed comic books and graphic novels since the 1960s have been sold in specialists Comic Book stores which have been the main point of distribution for the publishers. When digital versions were first introduced by Marvel and DC in 2007 they were not available until six months after the printed editions were released and were the same price as the printed editions and so allowed comic book stores exclusive access for a period of time. However, in May 2011 digital comic books and graphic novels began to be released on the same day as the printed versions and the popularity of personal electronic devices has aided in the digital market growth. It was estimated in 2010 that digital comics represented 1-3% of all sales and in 2011 this figure had grown to an estimated 7% of all sales in the industry and is projected to rise to over 20% in 2012.<sup>88</sup>

Comic book sales were also supported by the collectors market where printed editions were investments which would grow in value over time. This of course was built on the premise that there were a limited number of printed comics available. With digital comics this number is of course unlimited and raises the question as to the effect this will have on comic book fans, who have to date, have been the primary market for the products. As the comics reviewer Lance Parkins observes:

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<sup>88</sup> Brigid Alverston, ‘NYCC: IV2C White Paper Presentation Spotlights Comics Sales & Trends’, <<http://www.comicbookresources.com/?page=article&id=41559>>, [accessed 25 October 2012].



what current comics fans have bought into is the fetishisation of the object. We have been encouraged to think of comics as limited edition art prints, as investments, as things ... things that must be kept safe and treasured and stored carefully. Digital comics are not, can not, will never be, those limited editions, keep-them-safe investments [...] You can't fetishise a digital comic.<sup>89</sup>

While the traditional market for comic book sales may seem to be under threat from new technology the producers aim to expand their market base by attracting new readers due to the accessibility of the media and also reduce the costs and problems associated with printing and distributing hard copy editions. These concerns have been raised with the introduction of new media in the past such as radio, film, television and DVDs. While the digital media will no doubt impact and change the comic book market dynamics it is too early to predict what changes will occur.

In Comics scholarship there is also an ongoing debate as to whether the move from print to digital formats means that they are still comics or if digital comics represent a new medium. For Ryan 'a medium will be considered narratively relevant if it makes an impact on either story, discourse, or social and personal use of narrative [...] For a type of information support to qualify as a distinct narrative medium, it must also offer a unique combination of features'.<sup>90</sup> Using this definition versions which use computers as a conduit through which digital versions of printed editions are read and do not make use of the new affordances of the medium would be defined as comics. Similarly these digital versions also meet the definitions of comics and graphic novels described in the introduction proposed by Kunzle, Harvey and McCloud.<sup>91</sup> However, those which are 'born-digital' and make use of the possibilities enabled by the technology such as Infinite and Deepcomix can be considered a new medium as they offer distinct and unique features which are also not included in current definitions. The experience they offer the reader is fundamentally different to the two dimensional static

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<sup>89</sup> Lance Parkins, 'Comics: The Digital Future', 14 February 2012, <<http://lanceparkin.wordpress.com/2012/02/14/comics-the-digital-future/>>, [accessed 24 June 2012].

<sup>90</sup> Ryan, *Avatars of Story*, p. 25-6.

<sup>91</sup> See Introduction for definitions of comics and graphic novels proposed by Kunzle, Harvey and McCloud.

images. Simply calling these new forms ‘digital comics’ is too broad a term to encompass the range of digital forms available and particularly those that which add new narrative channels such as sound and movement. The definitional debate is one which has been carried on by Comics scholars and as new innovations and applications are developed they will continue to shape what the terms ‘comic book’ and ‘graphic novel’ mean.

## **VI. Shakespeare in Interactive Motion Comics - *Macbeth***

Another development made possible by technological advances is the ‘Motion Comic’ which adds sound and movement to digital comics creating, in Ryan’s terms, another distinct narrative medium. The first motion comic produced was *Broken Saints* published online in 2001.<sup>92</sup> This motion comic used ‘Cut-out Animation’, which is a form of animation that uses flat characters and props that are moved against a static background. The figures used for this type of animation were originally cut out from paper but more recently digital technology has allowed this to be generated from computer graphics. The first motion comics commercially released, and the first to use the term motion comics, were adaptations of *Batman* and *Watchmen* which were produced to coincide with the release of the films of these titles in 2008. These motion comics retained the features of the graphic novels such as the inclusion of speech balloons but are augmented with cut out animation and sound. Character voices are added so the dialogue is not only visible but audible too. Sound effects and music are also added to create a more fully realised visual-aural performance. The *Ironman* series of motion comics released in 2011 takes the development of graphic novels in digital media one step further and removes the speech balloons from the images creating a more traditional looking animated work.

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<sup>92</sup> Brooke Burgess, Ian Kirby, and Andrew West, *Broken Saints*, <[http://www.digitalmotioncomics.com/motion\\_comic/broken-saints](http://www.digitalmotioncomics.com/motion_comic/broken-saints)> [accessed 15 November 2010]

Motion comics are produced from the original graphic novel illustrations with movement digitally imposed and it is this repackaging of content that is a key difference between animated film and motion comics. In motion comics, as in graphic novels, the action appears in disconnected frames rather than as continuous scenes which occur in animated film. The transformation of the graphic novel into a motion comic does not produce a smooth flow of action, rather it is a series of 'jump-cuts' where there is a pause between images. This draws attention to the original static frame by frame construction of the graphic novel. Movement is only added to certain elements of the images so it is far more rigid and restricted than in animation and can be as little as the movement of mouths, the blinking of eyes and the repetitive movement of arms and legs. There is no pretence at realism and the movement is applied solely to create visual interest for the viewer.

In October 2010 CC released the 'Interactive Motion Comic' of *Macbeth* as a DVD. The DVD includes all three textual versions which are available as printed editions as Original, Plain and Quick texts. The addition of voices, sound effects and movement changes the graphic novel from a mute, two-dimensional, static illustration to a visual and aural reproduction of the play. The motion comic can no longer be considered a book, nor can it be considered animation or theatre or film, but instead is a unique medium that has significant impact on the viewing and reading of the plays.

One of the key issues with digital reproductions is the impact on destabilising the graphic novel text. The reproduction in a digital medium allows the reader or viewer to have control over the order and timing of the performance. The user of the motion comic can replay a selected scene if they wish, or the user can skip scenes and move backwards and forwards through the play. This sort of control has always been available to a reader of the printed text but not the audience at a live performance. For Worthen this individual control signals a cultural transformation of Shakespearean drama where 'performance is no longer an

evanescent thing, a local thing, nor even a time-bound temporal thing'.<sup>93</sup> Worthen identifies the implications of digital technology in relation to performance as it now 'allows instantaneous shuffling between the now-discrete moments of performance' and 'articulates performance for personal consumption, read in the private, portable, legible structure of the book'.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, though the producer of the digital media has control over the content that is included, it is the user who controls how that content is received. The CC *Macbeth* motion comic includes the words of the text in the speech balloons in conjunction with the audio soundtrack of the dialogue so it can be read as well as seen and heard. As the three textual versions are included on the DVD the user can also select the text and audio track.

The publishers of the *Macbeth* motion comic use the celebrity status of the actors providing the voice track to promote this product. The DVD is labelled with a banner which states 'with full audio featuring the voices of Sir Derek Jacobi and Juliet Stevenson'. Both Jacobi and Stevenson have the status of recognised performers of Shakespeare and provide the voices of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in the Original text edition included on the DVD. Stevenson also voices the Quick and Plain texts of the motion comic but other actors are used for the voice of Macbeth in these editions. The reason for this according to the publisher Clive Bryant was the limited time Jacobi was available and he was used in the recording of the original text because 'that is the most important'.<sup>95</sup> No other cast are listed in the paratext or on the DVD, the reason for this according to Bryant is that it became 'too complex'. The DVD does include the *dramatis personae* but only in regard to the illustrated figures rather than the actors voicing the characters. The addition of the voices to the graphic novel also has the effect of highlighting the disconnect between the typographical appearance of the text and the verbal performance. Though the typography may present the text in a standard way the

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<sup>93</sup> William B. Worthen, 'Shakespeare 3.0' in *Alternative Shakespeares 3*, ed. by Diana E. Henderson, (Routledge: London, 2008), pp. 54-77 (p. 60).

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>95</sup> Clive Bryant, 'Re: Interactive Motion *Macbeth*', E-mail correspondence to Margaret Roper, 07 February 2011.

voicing of the dialogue provides modulation of tone, rhythm of delivery and emphasis through pauses and volume of delivery. The extradiegetic information in the banners is more pronounced in the motion comic than it is in the graphic novel. This is primarily because the act and scene divisions and locations of the action are read out by a voice which is outside the play world. The sudden shift in tone from the dialogue to the narrator creates an aural jolt to the viewer who is reminded once again that what is being shown is the performance of a play-text. The voices add texture to the language and emotional content which in the graphic novel is only implied in the illustrations and typography.

The illustrations used in the motion comic of *Macbeth* are exactly the same illustrations which are in the graphic novel, but the presentation is altered because of the medium in which it is reproduced. In the graphic novel the size and shape of the individual frames contributes to the narrative by emphasising certain actions through the use of large panels. The shape and colour of the frames adds visual variety and can contribute to the narrative, for example, jagged edged frames communicate anger or excitement, and the wavy green frame containing the images of the porter allude to his drunken state. However, in the motion comic the narrative contribution of the panel and the frame is erased as the images appear without frames and are shown in a standard sized screen. In the motion comic, splash pages are not seen as a whole as they are too large to fit the screen and be seen in appropriate detail. In many panels there is a difference in the location of the speech balloons in order to show them within the screen shot.

The change of the size of the panels affects the narrative timing of the motion comic. Timing in the printed graphic novel is dictated by the size of the frame and dialogue contained within it and it is also driven by the reader who chooses how long to linger at each panel. However in the motion comic the timing of the panel is predetermined in the 'movie mode' option which automatically plays the panels in sequence. By shutting off the movie mode the

reader must move the panels forward manually and so is in control of the speed of the reading.

The timing of the narrative in the printed graphic novel is also dictated by the speech balloons. In the graphic novel all the text appears at one time in the panel and before the reader begins they can see the dialogue associated with the action illustrated in the frame. However in the motion comic of *Macbeth* the speech balloons appear only as each speaker begins their dialogue. The viewer must wait on the verbal delivery of the lines before the text of the next speech is revealed on the screen. This serves to concentrate the viewer on the speaker rather than being distracted by the presence of the next lines of the dialogue. The viewer does have navigation keys which allow them to pause as required and move back and forward between specific frames and to skip to specific acts and scenes. In this way the viewer is also a reader and not a passive receiver of the text but can create different sequences of viewing and replay or skip frames as they wish.

The continuous action of the motion comic is broken by a short delay in changing from one image to another. This creates a stuttered effect rather than the smooth flow expected in animation or in film. However the digital reproduction allows the producers to employ cinemagraphic techniques to the visual presentation of the play. Close ups are used in the motion comic to provide emphasis particularly when these focus on the face of a character or particular features such as eyes or hands. Another cinemagraphic technique is the use of panning shots where the image is slowly revealed by moving across it. This produces visual variety and interest but is also necessary for larger panels to be shown within the confines of the screen. For example when the first panel showing the witches on the outcrop begins the view pans from the top of the illustration to the bottom, wind and thunder are heard and

lightning flashes in the sky as bats fly by.<sup>96</sup> This provides the viewer with the idea of threat even before the witches are brought into view and before the dialogue begins. In this way the panning is used to create added tension by limiting disclosure. Such tension within a single panel is not created in the graphic novel where the reader sees the image in its entirety immediately and sees the following and images on the page. The creation of tension is used throughout the motion comic and transforms small images in the graphic novel, such as the illustration of MacDonald's head on a pike. In the motion comic this panel becomes a slow panning shot with a voice over and lasts for twenty-five seconds on the screen which is significantly longer than other larger images. In the printed graphic novel this panel occupies less than a fifth of a page so it is far more prominent in the motion comic.

The sound effects used in the CC *Macbeth* motion comic are limited to the sound of wind and the storm in the outside scenes, horses and dogs and any creature that is illustrated. Offstage action is implied by sounds which are not directly related to the illustration such as the distant sound of the voices of banqueters as Macbeth stands outside the castle contemplating the murder of Duncan. Sound effects are also used to reproduce the onomatopoeia which appears in the graphic novel, however sound is not used to replace the visual presence of words in the illustrations. The onomatopoeia are included in the motion comic so rather than just hearing a scream the user sees the word 'Scream' as well as hears the sound. This allows the sound to be included if the motion comic is viewed and the audio track is not played. It also highlights the graphic novel source of the visual image as it is a technique which is not routinely used in animation or film. The only background music included is with the appearance of the spectre of the dagger and at Act 4 where Hecate's song is sung.

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<sup>96</sup> As shown in Figure 26 in this chapter.

The violence illustrated in the graphic novel is not censored in the motion comic and is in fact emphasised. The motion comic includes all the battle scenes of the graphic novels as well as the murders such as the stabbing of Banquo and McDuff's son, with the addition of showing blood being spattered from the victims. Indeed the only censorship of the illustrations of the graphic novels occurs in the image of Lady Macbeth which is featured on page 21 of the graphic novel. As she speaks the dialogue 'come to my woman's breasts' the illustrations shows Lady Macbeth holding her breasts in her hands. The motion comic has added movement to her cupped hands but has removed them from her breasts and placed them over her stomach. This implies that such a sexualised image, though appropriate in a static illustration, is not appropriate as a moving image, particularly one targeted for the education sector.

The paratextual material included in the *Macbeth* motion comic is limited and does not reproduce all the information contained in the published graphic novel. Only the prologues from the graphic novel are included on the DVD which gives historical background and summarises the social and political context in which the play is set in 1040. Information on Shakespeare himself and the historical figure of Macbeth and the history of the play which is in the graphic novel is not included in the DVD. However, there is some additional information given to the user of the motion comics in comparison to the printed editions. The user is given the information of each frame which includes a reference to the page number in the graphic novel so that the printed edition can be used in conjunction with the motion comic. As the control-text used to produce the graphic novels is not identified in the paratextual material it is unclear as to what edition of the play this script line numbering is referring. The motion comic of *Macbeth* is therefore constructed so it can be read as well as heard, and viewed and compared to pre-existing printed material.



Where the CC *Macbeth* differs from other motion comics is in the inclusion of the ‘interactive’ functionality. The motion comic is not an ‘open source’ critical edition as it does not allow links to other related web addresses. However, embedded in the motion comic is hypertext which is linked to highlighted words which appear in the dialogue on the screen. Specific words within the speech balloons are shaded and by hovering the cursor over the shaded word a definition or a contemporary English translation appears on the screen. It is unclear where these explanatory notes have originated from as the source information is not included in the motion comic. The information provided by this interactive mode is only there to assist the reader in understanding specific archaic words or phrases. These notes do not include editorial rationales for emendations, historical information or etymological information which is often included in editor’s notes in modern critical editions. The interactive nature of the CC *Macbeth* edition provides the ability to access specific portions of the text randomly, which Worthen notes, is closer to a book than a temporally bound performance.<sup>97</sup> This function further empowers the user of the *Macbeth* motion comic to control what information is transmitted.

The target audience for the CC interactive motion comic is the education market and it was first released exclusively to this market segment. Individual licenses for a single user are available as well as site licences which allow a school to use the motion comic on multiple screens. The site license edition also comes with educational tools such as panels with wordless balloons which are designed to be used for class exercises as well as suggested learning activities. Work is underway on the Interactive Motion Comic edition of *Romeo and Juliet*. This uses the same motion style and also appears in the three different textual editions

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<sup>97</sup> William B. Worthen, ‘Performing Shakespeare in Digital Culture’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture*, ed. by Robert Shaughnessy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 227-47 (p. 232).

available. The voicing of the text was completed in May 2010 but as yet the release date has not been published and the reason for this delay is unclear.<sup>98</sup>

The CC *Macbeth* Interactive Motion Comic presents a new medium for production of Shakespeare's plays. As with the printed graphic novel, the visual representation of the action of the play in the motion comic bears a relationship to the theatrical and film performances. This relationship is further enhanced with the addition of movement and the inclusion of the audio soundtrack of the dialogue. Though its origin is a graphic novel, the motion comic presents a new medium in which Shakespeare can be adapted.

As a new medium the motion comics are also subject to the debate on locating them in the hierarchy of value of different modes of presentation. Just as the relative value of printed comics and digital comics is debated, motion comics are also compared with the hard copy versions. In his article 'The 10 Best Motion Comics' the comics reviewer Chris Cummins states:

The problem with motion comics is that by their very nature they are a lesser product. Not possessing the nuances of a comic strip or the visual flair of a cartoon, these things are weird creatures travelling through the night in search of their own identity [...] Motion comics are designed for people who are too lazy to read a graphic novel. Yet they are crafted in such a fashion that their inferior animation is their primary selling point [...] Motion comics have been called the Cliff's [sic] notes of the comics industry [...] as long as you view motion comics as a companion to their source material instead of a replacement they offer a lot of enjoyment.<sup>99</sup>

This rhetoric is familiar and reflects the criticisms initially associated with comic books and graphic novels. It constructs the motion comic as an inferior medium and the audience of the medium lacking 'taste' and therefore has low cultural value when compared to the original printed books. Though he denigrates the motion comics, Cummins article is in fact an example of a legitimising practice similar to the 'best seller' lists of graphic novels as it

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<sup>98</sup> Clive Bryant, E-mail Correspondence, 'Interactive Motion *Macbeth*' to Margaret Roper, 07 February 2011

<sup>99</sup> Chris Cummins, 'The 10 best Motion-comics', 14 June 2011, <[http://www.toplessrobot.com/2011/06/the\\_10\\_best\\_motion\\_comics.php](http://www.toplessrobot.com/2011/06/the_10_best_motion_comics.php)> [accessed 26 October 2011]

begins to create a canon of motion comics. The publication of graphic novels is now moving into electronic books and publishers such as DC and Marvel now produce print and digital products and motion comics. The anxiety over the potential for motion comics to usurp the traditional mode of presentation is clear in Cummins review and reflects the same concerns expressed in the move of Shakespeare from the stage to the cinema and to the graphic novel.

Shakespeare in motion comics reduces the differentiation between a reproduction as a graphic novel and performance and is a new digital medium into which Shakespeare's plays are translated. The development of digital technology has, as Worthen states, meant that 'our understanding of Shakespearean drama no longer oscillates dualistically between page and stage, page and screen, screen and stage'.<sup>100</sup> Shakespeare could now be adapted to the stage, the screen, graphic novels and comic books, digital comic books, Infinite comics, Deepcomix and motion comics. Digital technologies are creating new mediums with different and unique narrative capacities; the challenge for adapters is how to use them.

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<sup>100</sup> Worthen, 'Performing Shakespeare in Digital Culture,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture*, ed. by Robert Shaughnessy, pp. 227-47 (p. 228).

## CHAPTER 4 – AUTHENTICITY

A common feature of all the comic books and graphic novels examined in the history of production in this thesis is that the producers promote the editions' relationship to Shakespeare's plays through claims of authenticity. Authenticity of the editions is claimed either through fidelity of the text, fidelity to authorial intention, relationship to theatrical performance or historical accuracy in the setting of the play. For the producer of the CI series authenticity meant adhering 'rigorously to the author's plot and language'.<sup>1</sup> The OP publishers claimed to reproduce the 'full unabridged text' and that in their graphic novels 'the page becomes the stage'.<sup>2</sup> CC used the full text and historical accuracy of the settings to promote their authenticity and SMH and WP linked their manga editions to Shakespeare's original words and performance of the plays. The concept of authenticity is then clearly important to the producers of the comic books and graphic novels. This chapter will scrutinise the types of claims made by the creators, editors and publishers of comic books and graphic novels and the basis for them.

### I. Adaptation, Fidelity and Authenticity

Most studies of the transmedial adaptation of literary texts focus on the adaptation of the texts into film. Comparative analysis of the fundamental relationship between the film and the source text, as noted by critics such as Brian McFarlane in *Novel to Film* and Sarah Cardwell

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<sup>1</sup> *The New York Times*, 'Shakespeare Bows to 'Comic' Public', 9 March 1950, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, illustrated by Ian Pollock, edited by David Gibson, lettering by June Sinclair (London: Oval Projects, 1984), front cover.

in *Adaptation Revisited*, can frequently lead to fidelity criticism.<sup>3</sup> The value of ‘fidelity criticism’ as a model for analysis of adaptations has long been questioned by commentators beginning with what is often cited as the seminal monograph on adaptation studies, George Bluestone’s 1957 *Novels into Film*. Bluestone argued that fidelity criticism was an inadequate model as it privileges the source text above the adaptation. In such comparative analysis variation from the source text can be interpreted as a flaw or failure in the adaptation and as Bluestone notes ‘the novel is the norm and the film deviates at its peril’.<sup>4</sup> Value judgments of the fidelity to the source text, or more precisely the lack of it, are as Stam observes, ‘profoundly moralistic, awash in terms such as *infidelity*, *betrayal*, *deformation*, *violation*, *vulgarization* and *deseccration* each accusation carrying its specific charge of outraged negativity’.<sup>5</sup> Stam argues that when we say an adaptation has been ‘unfaithful’ to the original the term gives expression to the disappointment felt when the adaptation fails to capture the key narrative, thematic and aesthetic features of its literary source. Lack of fidelity in this paradigm is a negative criticism of the adaptation.

In *The Adaptation Industry* Simone Murray states that fidelity criticism is ‘an antiquated model’ but she also observes that:

virtually all academic studies of book-to-screen adaptation is an attack on the model of fidelity criticism as an inadequate schema for appreciating the richness of and the motivations driving adaptation [...]and most academic books include a ritual rejection of fidelity discourse.<sup>6</sup>

Though Murray argues that adaptation studies have moved on from the previously ‘core business’ of comparative aesthetic analysis she also notes that ‘fidelity discourse simply will

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<sup>3</sup> Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Sarah Cardwell, ‘Adaptation studies revisited: purposes, perspectives, and inspiration’, in *The Literature/Film Reader*, ed. by James M. Welsh and Peter Lev (Plymouth, Scarecrow Press, 2007), pp. 72-86.

<sup>4</sup> George Bluestone, *Novels into Film* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Stam, ‘Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation’, in *Film Adaptation*, ed. by James Naremore (London: The Athlone Press, 2000), pp. 54-76 (p. 54).

<sup>6</sup> Simone Murray, *The Adaptation Industry: The Cultural Economy of Contemporary Literary Adaptations* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 7.

*not go away*'.<sup>7</sup> This is evident in the arena of Shakespeare adaptations where the issue of fidelity to a stable original text still looms large and has historically been a feature of much of the analysis of adaptations of the plays.

Rothwell notes in his review of the history of analysis of Shakespeare on film that initially the interrogation was often limited to the question of

Is it Shakespeare?' which concealed a deeper insecurity what might be called 'the anxiety of inauthenticity' the fear that any derivative of Shakespeare must necessarily lose the aura of the original and things haven't changed very much. In the history of Shakespeare on film first commentators rose to the bait of the impossible question 'is it Shakespeare?', next they avoided or manipulated it, and lastly ignored it all together'.<sup>8</sup>

The problem with the question of fidelity is not so much the analysis itself but the use of fidelity assessments as the measure of the value of an adaptation.

For Rothwell the outright rejection of the comparative analysis model is as flawed as the reliance on fidelity to the original as the measure of success of an adaptation. Recognition of the similarities and differences is an important way of examining the interpretation of the play presented in the adaptation. Though James M. Welsh states that 'the most basic and banal focus in evaluating adaptations is the issue of "fidelity"' he is still concerned with the text as a basic measure of the adaptations of Shakespeare's plays.<sup>9</sup> For Welsh fidelity to the language of Shakespeare's plays is of key importance. He states that 'Shakespeare's prime achievement was his poetry. He should not be valued for his borrowed plots. What a Shakespeare film looks like is of secondary importance, what it *sounds* like is of primary importance.'<sup>10</sup> Sanders also observes that there is some merit in comparative analysis of adaptations because the spectator or reader 'must be able to participate in the play of similarity and difference

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<sup>7</sup> Murray, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Rothwell, 'Preface', in *Shakespeare into Film*, ed. by James M. Welsh, Richard Vela and John C. Tibbits (New York: Facts on File, 2002), pp. ix-xxi (p. ix).

<sup>9</sup> James M. Welsh, 'Issues of Screen Adaptation: What is Truth?' in *The Literature/Film Reader*, ed. by James M. Welsh and Peter Lev (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2007), pp. xiii-xxviii (p. xiv).

<sup>10</sup> James M. Welsh, 'What is a "Shakespeare Film" anyway?' in *The Literature/Film Reader*, ed. by James M. Welsh and Peter Lev (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2007), pp. 105-114 (p. 112).

perceived between the original and the source text'.<sup>11</sup> In order to participate in this way understanding the fidelity to the original is essential as a comparator but not as a touchstone for value judgement.

The fidelity model is commonly raised by scholars in analysis of graphic novel adaptations. In reviewing graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays Marion D. Perret argues that adapter has an obligation to present 'Shakespeare's vision' rather than indulge in 'personal interpretation [...] by using images which distract from the words of the author, or imply more than the text states'.<sup>12</sup> The role of the adapter is therefore constructed as merely a conduit through which Shakespeare's works and words are presented and the adapter is required to capture some core essence of the work.

In contrast it has been argued by Comics scholar Troni Grande that examination of the text in relation to fidelity to an original proceeds from a 'high-culture reading position' and does not recognise the 'hermeneutic potential' of the medium.<sup>13</sup> Rather than being irrelevant, or the object of the gaze of high-culture, the interrogation of the fidelity of the text is an important way of revealing how and why adaptation is carried out and the ways in which the adapter has used and interpreted the source material.

The ongoing attention given to the fidelity of adaptations of Shakespeare's plays can be based on a concern that these adaptations somehow devalue Shakespeare's works and that their production threatens the status of the original and can be seen as 'a travesty that threatens to displace the real thing'.<sup>14</sup> This concern proceeds from an anxiety that by attributing authenticity to adaptations, such as the graphic novels, Shakespeare's works will

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<sup>11</sup> Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. 45.

<sup>12</sup> Marion D. Perret, 'Not Just Condensation: How comic books interpret Shakespeare', *College Literature*, 31:4 (2004), 72-95 (p. 91).

<sup>13</sup> Troni Grande, 'Manga, Shakespeare and the Hermeneutic problem of "Double Access"', p. 12, <[http://ourspace.uregina.ca/bitstream/10294/3091/1/QueenCityComics-3-Troni\\_Grande.pdf](http://ourspace.uregina.ca/bitstream/10294/3091/1/QueenCityComics-3-Troni_Grande.pdf)> [accessed 06 July 2011]

<sup>14</sup> Douglas Lanier, *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 9.

be eroded. This anxiety positions adaptations in opposition to the ‘genuine’ Shakespeare rather than recognising the role that adaptation plays in maintaining and indeed promoting Shakespeare. Though the graphic novels may radically reshape and edit the text they in fact preserve the notion of an original and authentic Shakespeare by using it as an object for comparison. That is, the relationship is mutually reinforcing as the adaptation pays homage to the original and promotes Shakespeare’s place in culture. In turn the original Shakespeare adds context through which to interpret and analyse the adapted work.

The producers of Shakespeare graphic novels display an anxiety that their adaptations will not be received as genuine instances of the plays and explicitly promote the idea of authenticity by comparing their adaptation to the original play. For the producers of graphic novels the fidelity of the textual content of the graphic novel is used to claim authenticity for the edition and therefore attach the cultural value attributed to Shakespeare. These claims range from being ‘authentic’ reproductions of an ‘original text’, both of which are controversial terms, to being ‘equivalent’ to Shakespeare’s works. Such claims invite criticism from reviewers such as Mark Schmidt in his review of the OP *Othello* who notes that in contrast to the publisher’s claims ‘it’s not actually “the entire text, unabridged and unexpurgated” at all. The stage directions are not included. There are one or two, but they’ve been abridged’.<sup>15</sup> Schmidt concern is not the lack of fidelity because the stage directions have been excised but the publishers need to promote the graphic novel in this way rather than simply as a graphic novel adaptation.

Fidelity of the text is not the only measure that producers of graphic novels use to claim authenticity and they also draw attention to the commonalities between graphic novels and the theatrical performance of the plays. This is done not only through overt visual references, such as the inclusion of stage curtains in illustrations, but also through the promotional strap

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<sup>15</sup> Mark Schmidt, ‘Graphic Novel Review: Othello’, <http://redroom.com/member/j-marc-schmidt/blog/graphic-novel-review-othello> [accessed 12 June 2011]



lines on the covers of the editions. To compare these editions with performance is to draw equivalents between the adaptations and the original mode of representation of the plays. Fidelity is also implied through the use of historically realistic period settings in which the action of the play takes place. The fidelity of the text to the source material, the link to theatrical representation and the reproduction of historic settings are all ways in which the graphic novels are promoted as 'authentic' Shakespeare. By examining these claims not only is the basis for them revealed but also the extent of the anxiety for authenticity expressed by the creators of the editions.

## **II. The Control-Text and Editorial Intervention**

In his review of Shakespeare graphic novels Wetmore notes that to 'ignore the image is to ignore half (or sometimes more than half)' of the graphic novel.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, to ignore the words used in conjunction with those images is to ignore half of the graphic novel. However this is what often occurs in many of the published articles on Shakespeare graphic novels. The review of the text and the editorial practices which have been applied to it is a topic which is not often specifically addressed. This oversight may be interpreted as a tacit acceptance of the proposition that the graphic novels adapt the text and therefore further analysis is not of value. If the text included in the Shakespeare graphic novels is mentioned in the critical discourse it is either in regard to abbreviation of the text as being not representative of the authentic play or the text is discussed in terms of its visual presentation. Though these two areas of analysis are important, the means of abbreviating the play and the control-text used are obvious omissions.

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<sup>16</sup> Kevin J. Wetmore Jr, 'The Amazing Adventures of Superbard: Shakespeare in Comics and Graphic Novels', in *Shakespeare and Youth Culture*, ed. by Jennifer Hulbert, Kevin J. Wetmore Jr. and Robert L. York (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 171-98 (p. 172).

In his analysis Wetmore does acknowledge that some of the text has been removed from the graphic novels he discusses, but he makes no statement as to what edition of Shakespeare's plays he is comparing the graphic novels. Wetmore criticises the *Picture This! Shakespeare* and *No Fear Shakespeare* series as being 'unartistic' graphic novels 'but at least one is getting the full text (or close to it)'.<sup>17</sup> Though undoubtedly aware of the complexity of the term 'full text', what it means and how it is established, he does not include this discussion in his analysis. Lusardi's analysis of Oscar Zarate's *Othello* focuses on the illustrations though he does note that it is a conflation of both the quarto and the Folio editions of the play. Viguers' analysis of Ian Pollock's *King Lear* does discuss the text and notes that it is a conflated edition of the play but primarily focuses on the visual presentation rather than the verbal content itself. Finally, Perret's claim that 'no matter who the audience is the adapter must shorten the play, thus changing the structure'<sup>18</sup> is clearly outdated as full length editions of some plays are available. The crucial issue of the identity of the source of the text in the graphic novel is not directly addressed nor are the editorial practices applied. Both of these issues are central to the question of how the adapter has used the source texts in creating their editions of the plays

The claims of graphic novels to be 'full text' or 'original' are problematic because of the history of publishing Shakespeare's plays. All editions of Shakespeare's plays have been mediated in some way as no authorial manuscripts exist. Instead of the author's manuscript the existing Early Modern witnesses are used as the basis for the play-text in the production of an edition. The theoretical principles of editing Shakespeare's plays have evolved, developed

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<sup>17</sup> Kevin J. Wetmore Jr, 'The Amazing Adventures of Superbard: Shakespeare in Comics and Graphic Novels', in *Shakespeare and Youth Culture*, ed. by Jennifer Hulbert, Kevin J. Wetmore Jr. and Robert L. York, pp. 171-98 (p. 172).

<sup>18</sup> Perret, 'Not Just Condensation', pp. 72-95 (p. 77).

and been debated over the last four centuries and have produced a variety of editions.<sup>19</sup> The objective of the editor of the plays has historically been to recover the text ‘in the form in which we may suppose that it would have stood in a fair copy, made by the author himself’.<sup>20</sup> With the rise of performance based criticism in the late twentieth century this position was modified to include ‘recovering and presenting texts of Shakespeare’s plays as they were acted in the London playhouses’.<sup>21</sup> The outcome of this is that the text of Shakespeare’s plays can vary markedly based on the editorial paradigm applied. To seek to recover a single ‘original’ and ‘authentic’ text has been called by critics such as Holderness as an ‘unrealistic aim’ because the ‘plays were altered on writing, publication and for the theatrical event’.<sup>22</sup> It is because of the impossibility of recovering the original play-text that the editor instead seeks to produce an ‘authoritative’ text.

In the late twentieth century the theoretical school of ‘New Textualism’ argued that the reconstruction of the manuscripts which would have emanated from the author’s hand was delusional. In New Textualism it was the materiality of the existing Early Modern publications of the plays that was central for editing Shakespeare. This idea is important because some of Shakespeare’s plays exist in multiple forms from the Early Modern period in which the text can differ markedly. The focus on the material texts available resulted in one of the most significant changes in the production of editions and is characterised by the move from a single authorised version of a play to multiple versions.<sup>23</sup>

The problem of multiple existing play-texts has been solved in two ways by editors. The editor either selected between the existing quartos and Folio editions to produce a single

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<sup>19</sup> For history of editorial practices see John Jowett, *Shakespeare and Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare’s Modern Collaborators* (London: Continuum, 2008); Gabriel Egan, *The Struggle for Shakespeare’s Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> W. W. Greg, *The Editorial Problem in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942), p. x.

<sup>21</sup> Stanley Wells, ‘Introduction’ *The Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. xxxvii.

<sup>22</sup> Graham Holderness, *Textual Shakespeare* (Hatfield: University of Herefordshire Press, 2003), p. 247.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Gurr, ‘Maximal and Minimal Texts: Shakespeare V. the Globe’, *Shakespeare Survey*, 52 (1999), 68–87 (p. 68).

authoritative play-text or the existing texts were conflated to produce a single play-text.

Conflation of different editions of the plays is demonstrated in the case of *King Lear* where the 1608 quarto contains passages that were not in the 1623 Folio edition. The solution of editors, from Pope's 1725 edition until recently, has been to conflate these to produce a play-text which contains all the lines published in the Early Modern period. However, in contemporary editorial practice the quarto and Folio versions of *King Lear* are now commonly regarded as two different, but equally valid, play-texts.<sup>24</sup>

It is through the inclusion of editorial notes that the authority of an edition is substantiated. Decisions such as the control-text used and the emendations made to it are stated in editorial notes which are included in most modern critical editions or, as in the case of *The Oxford Shakespeare*, published as a separate book. Such paratextual material highlights the instability of the text and recognises the editorial paradigm applied in reproducing the plays in each publication. Without such transparency of the editorial process the reader is unaware of the basis of a particular edition of the play and the amendments that have been made.

The editorial paradigm used has implications for the assessment of the claims of authenticity made by the publishers of graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays. Firstly claims of graphic novels to be 'original' and 'unabridged' are comparative terms which when subject to scrutiny clearly reveal their lack of foundation. Such claims can only be made by referencing the particular publication from which they are derived. In New Bibliographical terms the idea of 'original' pertains to the lost and so ultimately unrecoverable manuscript by the author, or the play as it was performed. In New Textualist terms 'original' implies equivalence with the plays as they were published in the Early Modern period. Neither of

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<sup>24</sup> For example *The Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1986); *The RSC Complete Works*, ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2007) and the Arden and Cambridge series.

these claims can be substantiated for the graphic novel editions and particularly without reference to the control-text.

The full text editions of graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays published by Oval Projects (OP), Can of Worms Press (CWP) and Classical Comics (CC) include claims of authenticity of the text. On the covers of the CC editions is the statement 'Original Text' and the OP and CWP covers declare that they are 'Full and Unabridged' and 'the complete play'. It is unclear whether these claims are made in regard to authorial authenticity, or historical authenticity, or both. None of these publications references the control-text the claims are based on, nor do they include comments on the editorial interventions applied. This implies to a reader who is unaware of the history of the editing of Shakespeare's plays that what have is a reproduction of the author's original work.

The declaration of the source text can be used by creators of graphic novels to demonstrate the authenticity of their adaptations. Though not declared on the book itself, the editor of the CC full text editions, John McDonald, stated that the control-text he used for the graphic novels was the quarto editions of the plays. This was a decision, according to McDonald, which was taken by the Chairman of CC after having consulted with teachers and academics. McDonald states that the

Quarto was generally considered to be the most "genuine" edition of the play [...] there were also questions about the revision techniques used for the Folio editions, with regard to actor numbers and stage direction accuracy.<sup>25</sup>

By his inclusion of quotation marks around the word genuine, McDonald signals his awareness that this is a problematic term. This statement though oversimplifies the extensive bibliographical investigations of the existing quarto and Folio editions and, of most impact to the reader, it is also a position which is not stated in the graphic novels themselves.

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<sup>25</sup> John McDonald, 'Email Interview' to Margaret Roper, 08 Jan 2009.

To date McDonald has adapted the script of five of Shakespeare's plays as CC graphic novel editions which are *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry V*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Tempest*. It is of course only possible for McDonald to implement his stated philosophy of editing where a quarto edition of the play exists. For *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*, where no quarto edition exists, it could be presumed that the CC graphic novels are based on the Folio editions of the plays. However, there is evidence that rather than using the text of the Folio itself recent scholarly editing theories and practices have influenced the play-text used in the CC graphic novels. This is highlighted in the example of the CC edition of *Macbeth* which was published in 2008. In this edition Act Four, Scene 1 includes the words of a Middleton song from his play *The Witch* which were not included in the 1623 Folio edition of *Macbeth*. The Folio simply has a stage direction which states 'Musicke and a Song. Blacke Spirits etc'.<sup>26</sup> The words of the song were added to the text of the play in the 1986 *The Oxford Shakespeare*. The Oxford editors stated that the basis for this inclusion was that the text printed in the Folio showed signs of being adapted and included episodes involving Hecate which they believed were not written by Shakespeare. They support their editorial intervention by stating that 'The Folio text only cites the opening words of the songs; drawing on *The Witch*, we attempt a reconstruction of their staging in *Macbeth*'.<sup>27</sup> The CC edition of *Macbeth* includes the song as reconstructed by the Oxford editors. In contrast the OP *Macbeth* which was printed in 1983, and so was published prior to *The Oxford Shakespeare* which 'reconstructed' the witches' song, does not include any part of the song. This is an example of how the academic activity and new editions of the plays of Shakespeare can influence the text used in the graphic novels.

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<sup>26</sup> William Shakespeare, *The First Folio of Shakespeare*, The Norton Facsimile, based on Folios in the Folger Shakespeare Library Collection prepared by Charlton Hinman, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London and New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), p. 752.

<sup>27</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, (Adapted by Thomas Middleton), in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 975.

The theory of using the quarto editions of the plays also confronts an additional complexity where there are several quarto editions available such as in the case of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Henry V*. In such cases the editor must select which edition to use or whether to conflate the texts. For *Romeo and Juliet* there are four quarto editions as well as the Folio edition of the play, however, most modern editors regard Q2 as the most authoritative though this does vary.<sup>28</sup> For example, the editors of the Oxford edition have selected Q2 of *Romeo and Juliet* as the text for their complete works edition in contrast to *The RSC Shakespeare* edition which uses the Folio though includes the quarto text variants. A review of the CC graphic novel shows that Q2 has also been used for this edition of the play but is not mentioned in the paratextual material. In the case of *Henry V* the play exists in the so-called ‘bad quarto’ Q1 of 1600, which was reprinted in 1602 as Q2, and also appears as Q3 printed in 1619, which was incorrectly dated as 1608.<sup>29</sup> The CC edition of *Henry V*, in contrast to McDonald’s assertion that the quarto edition is used, in fact presents a conflation of the Folio text and Q1. This editing philosophy is not unusual and is used in some modern editions of *Henry V*.<sup>30</sup> This demonstrates that the control-texts used for the CC editions are not only undeclared but also inconsistent with the stated intent of the editor. These variations highlight the indeterminacy of the text and how the selection of the control-text can result in very different editions of the plays.

The editor of the abridged ‘Shakespeare Manga’ editions, published by Wiley Press (WP), has chosen to use contemporary modern scholarly editions as the control-text. WP describes their manga editions of the plays as ‘based on the play by William Shakespeare’ with the editor Adam Sexton identified along with the illustrator and Shakespeare as co-producers of the editions. Sexton states that his control-text was ‘the latest Penguin editions of

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<sup>28</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *The Norton Shakespeare* (New York: London: W. W. Norton, 1997), p. 871.

<sup>29</sup> Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, *Modernizing the Spelling of Shakespeare’s Texts with Three Studies in the Texts of Henry V* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, ed. by T. W. Craik (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 18.

the plays as they seemed rigorous in respect to scholarship, but sensible, not arcane'.<sup>31</sup> Once again this source text is not stated in the WP manga Shakespeare edition itself so the editorial interventions used to produce the Penguin edition are not available to the reader, and the significant abridgement by Sexton, though declared, also goes unspecified.

In contrast to the silence concerning the source of the text used and the editorial practices applied with the OP, CC, CWP and WP series of graphic novels, the edition of *King Lear* by Gareth Hinds clearly states in the preface which control-text is used. Unlike other graphic novel editors Hinds names several editions that he had consulted in the process of producing his graphic novel. Hinds notes that in the case of *King Lear* there are many differences between the quarto and Folio texts and that most modern editions are conflated texts. However, he states he 'preferred the Quarto, so based the text for this book primarily on the Quarto, adding selections from the Folio where I judged appropriate'.<sup>32</sup> This statement of Hinds alludes to the idiosyncratic nature of the editing of the text he has applied and he has included some of the details of his interventions in the notes at the end of the book. He highlights where he has cut speeches which he considered were made clear in other parts of the text, but also has made cuts on the basis of taste. For example, in Act V Scene 4 Hinds cuts Lear's dialogue as it 'includes a venomous attack on female sexuality, which I preferred to leave out'.<sup>33</sup> Hinds' sensitivity to the misogynist language of the play is also shown in his decision to abridge Lear's dialogue at the death of Cordelia and he notes 'I cut out the sexist part of Lear's lament here. The full line is "*Her voice was ever soft, an excellent thing in women*".'<sup>34</sup> Here Hinds applies a twenty-first century sensibility to the editing of the seventeenth-century play and in doing so not only has the text been 'condensed to about half

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<sup>31</sup> Adam Sexton, 'Email Interview' to Margaret Roper, 03 March 2009.

<sup>32</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, adapted by Gareth Hinds (Cambridge, Massachusetts: THECOMIC.COM, 2007), Preface.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p. 121.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 122.



the original' but also selectively edited to impose his personal philosophy.<sup>35</sup> His editing based on moral judgement of the text is a contemporary reiteration of the nineteenth-century Bowdler editorial philosophy. Though Hinds is more explicit than other editors in stating his textual interventions his notes on the abridging of the text, and the changes he has made, are not comprehensive. Given the inconsistent nature of his emendations it is unclear where his interpretation of *King Lear* differs from modern scholarship or Early Modern publications and so the reader unfamiliar with the editorial history of the plays is denied the ability to question the authority of the text on that basis.

Both the SMH and WP manga editions also claim authenticity of their texts by promoting that, although the text is abridged, they only use Shakespeare's words rather than paraphrasing the play-text. The introduction to the WP editions states that 'we have never paraphrased the playwright's language, however we have summarised the action. Everything you read in *The Manga Edition* was written by William Shakespeare himself'.<sup>36</sup> Similarly the paratext in SMH editions includes the claim to use Shakespeare's original text and that the text has not been modernised. The editorial history previously discussed exposes these claims of original words, or words written by the author himself as clearly problematic. To further the perceived authority of the editions the WP editor was given the direction by the publisher 'to retain as many of the famous speeches as possible'.<sup>37</sup> As Lanier notes, this retention 'focuses on passages as instances of Shakespeare's cultural authority, his privileged place in a system of cultural stratification'.<sup>38</sup> This promotes reader recognition that the manga adaptation is indeed authentic 'Shakespeare'.

The graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays claim a level of authenticity for the text and in doing so seek to attach Shakespeare's cultural status to the publications. This is reinforced

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<sup>35</sup> Gareth Hinds, <<http://www.graethhinds.com/lear.php>> [accessed 06 August 2010]

<sup>36</sup> Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. by Adam Sexton, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> Adam Sexton, 'Email Interview' to Margaret Roper, 03 March 2009.

<sup>38</sup> Lanier, *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture*, p. 53.

by the promotional descriptions used such as ‘original’, ‘unabridged’ and ‘full text’. The SMH and WP abridged editions use the text to claim cultural value by stating they do not rewrite the plays and only use ‘Shakespeare’s words’. However, the history of editorial intervention in the reproduction of the plays and the absence of authorial manuscripts makes these descriptions problematic. All graphic novels use a mediated publication of Shakespeare’s work on which to base their editions but do not explicitly state the control-text or the editorial interventions that have been applied. Such silence on editorial practice further complicates their stated relationship to the work, denies the instability of the text of the plays and does not provide the reader with the information on what has been changed, added, or removed from the text. However, as all the producers of these graphic novels seem compelled to make statements in regard to their text it demonstrates the anxiety for their graphic novels to be perceived as authentic Shakespeare.

### **III. Authenticity and the Modernised Text**

All Shakespeare graphic novels modernise the language of the plays to some degree. Wells and Taylor articulate the need for modern spelling as old spelling creates an unnecessary barrier whereas modernisation allows the reader to concentrate on the text itself rather than being ‘distracted by obscure and archaic language’.<sup>39</sup> Though this alteration of the text is not without its controversies it is a process which is commonly employed in the reproduction of modern critical editions. The editor’s role, Jowett notes, in modernising a play-text ‘is not to translate the words [...] nor seek to normalise features of syntax or archaic but distinct words’.<sup>40</sup> Here Jowett differentiates between paraphrasing and editing the text. There are of course difficulties in modernising the text due to lack of equivalence between

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<sup>39</sup> Wells and Taylor, p. 25.

<sup>40</sup> John Jowett, *Shakespeare and Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 132.

Early Modern use of words and contemporary use as well as instability of the usage of a particular word in the period. However, as Jowett argues, modernisation is justified as it removes miscommunication that the texts may have accrued through the passage of time.<sup>41</sup> It is through modernisation that Shakespeare's plays retain their accessibility for the contemporary reader.

This modernisation is achieved either by retaining the text and modernising the spelling and punctuation, or by paraphrasing the words in contemporary English. The OP and CC full text editions of graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays modernise the play-text but they also retain archaic words or spelling not in common use in contemporary language. This highlights the 'otherness' of the plays and reminds the reader that the origin of the text was the Early Modern period. However, this also raises a problem for comprehension by the reader because graphic novels do not include editorial notes so the meaning of archaic words and phrases are not explained. This can cause a barrier to understanding of the dialogue, particularly for young readers, and for those unfamiliar with the plays. The deliberate use of archaic words and spelling serves as an attempt to maintain a measure of authenticity and authority of the text of the graphic novels.

The paraphrasing of the language into contemporary English is a more contentious issue raising the question of whether a text meets the expectation of 'Shakespeare'. For Erne modernising Shakespeare's texts is 'a serious scholarly task' whereas paraphrasing the text in contemporary English 'results in a travesty'.<sup>42</sup> Erne's comment reflects the cultural anxiety for retaining an authentic Shakespeare, and central to this is the language of the plays. Dennis Kennedy articulates the anxiety in regard to contemporary language adaptations and states that

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<sup>41</sup> Jowett, p. 135.

<sup>42</sup> Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare's Modern Collaborators* (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 14.

The idea of translating the plays into contemporary English is anathema to most Anglophone Shakespeareans, and probably to most Anglophone audiences. The reasons for this protectionism, however, may not be as obvious as they seem... The reasons have as much to do with the traditions of high culture and the entrenched position of the Shakespeare industry as with the inherent superiority of the originals.<sup>43</sup>

The translating of the text into modern English highlights the tension between easing access to the plays and maintaining authenticity. The publishers of the paraphrased editions argue that they are supporting Shakespeare's cultural status and centrality by making the works accessible to a wider audience while retaining the essence of the plays. Paraphrasing is done in some Shakespeare graphic novels aimed at young or less advanced readers, and for those readers who seek familiarity with the action of the play rather than familiarity with the play-text. This changes the dynamics of the relationship between the text and the reader. Rather than being presented with a work in a language the reader must accommodate the text is made to fit and accommodate the reader. That is, as Wetmore notes, paraphrasing results in 'the reader, rather than going to Shakespeare and the original language, insists that Shakespeare come to him or her'.<sup>44</sup> While recognising the rewriting of the language the producers of the modernised and paraphrased editions also make claims in relation to the authenticity of the texts.

Two separate editions which include paraphrased text are produced by CC for different target audiences. The 'Plain' and 'Quick' text editions use the same illustrations as the CC 'Original' text editions, so the spatial layout of the action and of the dialogue is the same, but the language has been translated into contemporary English and reduced. McDonald, the editor of CC, stated that the objective of the Plain and Quick text editions is 'to familiarise readers and students with the original Shakespearean text [...] The Quick and the Plain texts

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<sup>43</sup> Dennis Kennedy, 'Introduction: Shakespeare Without his Language', in *Foreign Shakespeare*, ed. by Dennis Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 1-18 (p. 5).

<sup>44</sup> Wetmore Jr., Kevin J., 'Dude Where's my Bard?', in *Shakespeare and Youth Culture*, ed by Jennifer Hubert, Kevin J. Wetmore Jr. and Robert L. York (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 1-42 (p. 22).

are meant as stepping stones to the Original text'.<sup>45</sup> What McDonald is referring to in regard to reader's familiarising themselves with the 'text' is in fact the familiarisation with plot and the action of the play, that is, the sequence of events and the characters.

The paratext in the CC editions states for the Plain text 'If you've ever wanted to fully appreciate the works of Shakespeare, but find the original language rather cryptic, then this is the edition for you'.<sup>46</sup> The publisher here implies that the language of Shakespeare's plays is not required to gain 'full appreciation' and such appreciation is found in the plot and action. CC states that for the Quick text 'We take the dialogue and reduce it to as few words as possible, but still retain the full essence of the story. This edition allows the readers to enter into and enjoy the stories quickly'.<sup>47</sup> The terms 'full essence' and 'full appreciation' imply that these translated editions are equivalent to the original text editions, a claim that can be interrogated by looking at examples of the translation.

McDonald states one of the challenges he had in producing the CC editions of the plays was 'rephrasing the florid and roundabout ways of saying things into straightforward modern language, yet retaining the beauty and essential meaning of Shakespeare's words'.<sup>48</sup> This of course leads to the question of what constitutes the 'beauty' and 'essential meaning' of Shakespeare's words. For McDonald this means to retain as much of the 'lyricism' of Shakespeare as possible. He stated that one of the most challenging aspects of editing the graphic novels was

translating Shakespeare's dialogue into twenty-first century speak (I don't use slang or schoolyard or pop terminology, as this gets old quick and would constantly need to be updated – just plain English that's relevant to today and tomorrow). Most word-for-word translations are very dry and don't sound quite right – that's because it's not enough to just translate the original text word for word – it doesn't work well that way and sounds wooden and even a little naïve — e.g. in the beginning of *Macbeth*, when

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<sup>45</sup> John McDonald, 'E-mail Interview' to Margaret Roper, 08 January 2009.

<sup>46</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, illustrated by Jon Haward, edited by John McDonald, colouring and lettering by Nigel Dobbyn (London: Classiscal Comics, 2008), p. 142.

<sup>47</sup> Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, edited by John McDonald, p. 142.

<sup>48</sup> John McDonald, 'E-mail Interview' to Margaret Roper, 08 January 2009.

the soldier is reporting on the battle to Duncan, he says “doubtful it stood, as two spent swimmers, that do cling together and choke their art” – a word-for-word translation would be “it was doubtful who would win, the armies were like two exhausted swimmers that hold onto each other and prevent each other from doing their work” – very long-winded and clunky... “on a knife-edge, both armies were exhausted and deadlocked” – much more concise and dramatic, yet exactly what Shakespeare is saying. Because a straight word-for-word adaptation won’t bring out, in modern terms, all the subtle little nuances of Shakespeare’s words, I also have to rephrase the text, so that it sounds authentic – believable in a modern context. Of course, the rephrasing stays as close as possible to the original meaning.<sup>49</sup>

This example by the editor demonstrates how the text is modernised by substituting the original less familiar similes used with the more common metaphors of ‘knife-edge’ and ‘deadlocked’. McDonald refers to his aim to make it sound authentic, that is, the language he uses is far enough removed from colloquial speech to produce a sense of difference from everyday language and to give the impression of ‘Shakespearean’ speech. His use of metaphors creates a heightened language and differentiates the Plain text versions from the simplified dialogue of the Quick text versions of the plays.

Original Text

Plain Text

Quick Text

**Figure 41:** Classical Comics, *Macbeth*, 2008, Original, Plain and Quick Text, p. 9.

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<sup>49</sup> John McDonald, ‘E-mail Interview’ to Margaret Roper, 08 January 2009.

When subjected to scrutiny McDonald's claim that the Plain and Quick text editions retain the 'essential meaning' of the language can be challenged. The example in Figure 21 shows the changes that have been made to the CC Original text edition to produce the Plain and Quick texts. Of this example McDonald states that words used in the Plain text are 'much more dramatic, yet exactly what Shakespeare is saying'.<sup>50</sup> This statement of 'exact' equivalence is not supported by translation theories which, as Benjamin suggests, proceed from the position 'that absolute equivalence is not possible'.<sup>51</sup> Shakespeare's poetry includes similes and metaphors to reinforce and describe and it is this emphasis that is reduced in the paraphrased editions of the plays. For example as shown in Figure 21 the words 'worthy to be called a rebel for that the multiplying villainies of nature do swarm upon him' is not equivalently expressed in 'that most vile of men' which is the translation in the Plain text edition. Rather than producing an exact meaning of the words of the plays these translated editions produce an approximation and so speeds up the narrative by reducing the reading time required. The translation into contemporary dialogue also alters the 'otherness' of the play by removing the word patterns, rhymes, word play, puns and figurative language which is an integral feature of Shakespeare's play-texts. It is what McDonald describes as the 'florid' language that is the poetry of the text and what has historically been considered intrinsic to the notion of authentic 'Shakespeare'.

While the translation of the play texts into contemporary English is a means of increasing the accessibility of the plays they cannot be received as authoritative reproductions of Shakespeare's plays. These contemporary language editions can be classified as appropriations rather than adaptations using Sanders definition of an appropriation being a

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<sup>50</sup> John McDonald, 'E-mail Interview' to Margaret Roper, 08 January 2009.

<sup>51</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', trans. by Steven Rendall, *Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction*, 10:2 (1997), 151-65 (p. 152).

‘more decisive journey away from the informing source’.<sup>52</sup> However, despite their significant rewriting of the plays these editions seek to draw on their relationship to an authentic Shakespeare by claiming an equivalence of intent.

#### **IV. Visual Presentation of the Text**

Not only has the language of Shakespeare’s plays been subject to a long history of editorial investigation to produce authoritative editions but the visual presentation of the text is also considered to be inextricably linked to perceptions of authenticity. The visual presentation encompasses issues such as the lineation and spatial layout of the text as well as the typography and punctuation used. The visual presentation of the text in graphic novels varies significantly from the layout commonly found in scholarly editions and can affect the graphic novels claims of authenticity. The style and manner of visual presentation is imposed by the adapter and also influenced by the conventions of graphic novels. As Emma Hayley, the publisher of the SMH Manga Shakespeare series said in regard to abridging the text of Shakespeare’s play ‘Obviously you are going to lose some of the poetry of Shakespeare, that’s inevitable’.<sup>53</sup> Though this loss of poetry which Hayley acknowledges is often referred to in newspaper and journal reviews of the graphic novels, it is discussed in term of the loss of language in the play rather than in regard to the visual presentation of the text.

Shakespeare’s poetry is defined by Wright as ‘language composed in verse, that is, language of which an essential feature is measured units’.<sup>54</sup> The practice of abridging the play-texts not only removes language but it also disrupts the measured units of verse in Shakespeare’s plays. Wright also asserts that the visual presentation of the text is essential. He

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<sup>52</sup> Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. 26.

<sup>53</sup> Eason, ‘Shakespeare gets Comic Treatment’, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/6647927.stm>> [accessed 15 June 2007].

<sup>54</sup> George T. Wright, *Shakespeare’s Metrical Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. ix.



states that the 'line' is an 'indispensable unit of verse and the one by which we recognise its nature'.<sup>55</sup> That is, an integral component of the poetry of Shakespeare's play-texts is the way in which the lines of the text are printed. In modern critical editions the printed text is presented as either prose or verse. The graphic novels present the play-text as dialogue in speech balloons. The lineation in graphic novels is based on the size, placement and shape of the speech balloon in the panel. This significant reshaping of the lineation of the text in graphic novels has been criticised as having implications for the reading of the plays and obscuring the identification of the text as either poetry or prose.

The setting of verse as prose in graphic novels was first raised in 1952 by Delmore Schwartz in a review of the CI editions of the plays. Schwartz's concern was for the young reader encountering Shakespeare for the first time in these comic books and stated that

This failure to make clear that speeches are often poetry and not prose may seem not as serious, at first glance, as it actually is. For the speeches are bound to be read incorrectly; worse still, when the juvenile reader does at some later date encounter poetry printed as poetry he is likely to be annoyed, if not irritated to the point where he refuses to read whatever is printed in poetry at all<sup>56</sup>

Schwartz argued that poetry required 'a more laborious and unfamiliar effort' and his concern was with the relative ease of reading prose. This criticism reiterates Fiske's proposition that the difficulty of a literary text is used as a measure of cultural value.<sup>57</sup> Schwartz was critical of the CI editions and considered them 'mutilations' and 'distortions' of literary masterpieces and was sceptical of their claims of leading the young reader to the original works. At its core Schwartz's concern is about authenticity and reading the play 'as it was written' and this includes how the play looks on the page. He also places poetry and prose in a hierarchy of

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<sup>55</sup> Wright, p. ix.

<sup>56</sup> Delmore Schwartz, 'Masterpieces as Cartoons', in *Arguing Comics*, ed. by Jeet Heer and Kent Worcester (Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 2004), pp. 52-66 (p. 55).

<sup>57</sup> Fiske, John, 'Popular Discrimination', in *Modernity and Mass Culture*, ed. by James Naremore and Patrick Brantlinger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 103-16. See also Chapter 3 for a discussion on 'difficulty' as a culture marker.

value where poetry is considered a higher form of literature. Therefore, Schwartz argues, setting the text as prose decreases the cultural value of the comic books. The importance of the visual aspect in recognising poetry is also raised by Viguers who states that ‘our understanding is affected by what we see – our eye as well as our internal ear tells us to read poetry differently than prose’.<sup>58</sup> So for Viguers, like Schwartz, the lineation in the graphic novels affect the reading as they do not indicate the way in which the reader should approach the text, either as poetry or prose.

The convention of graphic novels is to represent the play-text as dialogue in association with the character speaking the lines. In graphic novels the text of the play is located in speech balloons and the speaker of the dialogue is indicated by the ‘tail’ of the balloon which points to the mouth, or thought bubbles which emanate from the head of the character. Though the majority of graphic novels do not differentiate between poetry and prose there is recognition by the editors that the control-text does include poetry. The editor of CC full text editions, John McDonald, stated that lineation was one of the concerns when selecting the quarto texts as the control-text for the graphic novel editions as the quartos ‘provide better consistency for syllabic authenticity in the iambic pentameter’.<sup>59</sup> This concern for the aural quality of the play-text is also evident in the spelling used in these editions. CC Original text editions use the outmoded punctuation of placing an apostrophe in the past participles. The CC graphic novels include in their introduction ‘A Note on Pronunciation’ which states:

To help with enunciation and voice projection in early theatres, words that ended with “-ed” had the last syllable accented – unless to do so would have spoiled the iambic rhythm, in which case it was spoken just as we say the word today. ...whenever you see a word ending “-ed” it should have its “e” pronounced to preserve the rhythm of the speech.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Susan Viguers, ‘King Lear as a Book: A Verbal/Visual Production’, *The Shakespearean Year Book*, 4 (2004), 215-31 (p. 215).

<sup>59</sup> John McDonald, ‘E-mail Interview’ to Margaret Roper, 08 Jan 2009.

<sup>60</sup> William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, illustrated by Will Volley, edited by John McDonald, colouring by Jim Devlin, lettering by Jim Campbell (London: Classical Comics, 2009), p. 6.

The purpose of this is to highlight the verbal delivery of the dialogue. Using archaic spelling not only promotes the claim to authenticity of the editions but is also used to mark an awareness of the meter of verse lines. However, though the CC editions attempt to maintain the verse metre through the use of this spelling, the lineation is generally not maintained and so a critical visual aspect of the poetry is lost.

The editor's awareness of the poetic line structure can also be expressed in examples of the words being presented in the lineation of scholarly editions. For example, in CI edition of *Hamlet* the soliloquy shown in Figure 42 is presented in full in a large speech balloon. In this example the lineation of the soliloquy is maintained. Such presentation is a literary convention of the publication of Shakespeare's plays, rather than the words as dialogue as is the convention on comic books and graphic novels, and highlights the origins of the text.

**Figure 42:** Classics Illustrated, *Hamlet*, 1952, p. 13.

Twenty-first century editions also show a concern for acknowledging that much of the language of the plays is commonly presented as poetry. The CC editions of *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer's Nights Dream* and *The Tempest* all highlight the iambic pentameter in the dialogue by inserting a space between the lines to suggest the rhythm of the verse as shown in Figures 43 and 44.

**Figure 43:** Classical Comics, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2011, p. 65.

**Figure 44:** Classical Comics, *The Tempest*, 2009, p. 131.

The editor of the CC series, John McDonald, applies this strategy inconsistently throughout the series and also inconsistently within the individual graphic novels both in presentation of dialogue between characters and soliloquies. The use of spaces between the lines of speech in this way is a visual means of communicating the poetic rhythm of the language and the literariness of the text. It is a feature which is peculiar to comic books and graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays and is not found in other adaptations of classic literature into the medium.

The criticism of graphic novels presenting poetry as prose is based on the comparison to the 'authentic' lineation used in modern critical editions. However, the concept of authenticity

is once again problematic. Since Rowe's 1709 edition, editors have altered the lineation of many passages from the First Folio to 'correct' the poetic metre to produce the regular verse line or to present Folio prose passages as verse. In Rowe's and Pope's 1725 editions

Shakespeare became a 'poet' and verse lineation was corrected and prose was converted to verse. These changes were generally retained in editions published throughout the eighteenth century. However, this reshaping does have its critics such as Bertram who states that the relining erases from the plays the clues to the theatrical delivery of the lines, the pauses and the emphases. He states that the lines in Rowe's edition were 'turned into neurotic pentameter' and we have lost

Shakespeare's subtle touches; to abolish the pauses, the silences, and the rushes [...] the gain is that with a little forcing we can now recite speeches to the accompaniment of that most inspiring instrument – the metronome'.<sup>61</sup>

For Bertram, not only are the words of the play important, but so is lineation as it communicates information on the meaning of the play. Though the lineation of these modern editions has been constructed through significant editorial intervention, and still a subject of contention amongst academics, it is now the generally accepted 'look' of a Shakespearean play.

Bertram's emphasis on the affect of altering lineation is in regard to the oral recitation of the play-text as a performance. Like Bertram, Russ McDonald is also primarily concerned for the auralty of the play and argues that the setting of poetry as prose removes from the text the devices such as syllabic stresses and inversions of these stresses as well as enjambment and caesuras. These poetic features create what Russ McDonald refers to as 'aural variety' and 'aural texture'.<sup>62</sup> They are used, he argues, to control the rhythm and tempo of speech by providing metrical beat and pauses in the dialogue. For Ros King the line length of a piece of verse is as much 'a form of punctuation as is the colon or the period. Words can be given

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<sup>61</sup> Paul Bertram, *White Spaces in Shakespeare* (Cleveland: Bellflower Press, 1981), p. 58.

<sup>62</sup> Russ McDonald, *Shakespeare and the Arts of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 98.

greater or less prominence depending on their position in the line. Often the line and the sense are coterminous'.<sup>63</sup> By setting the entire text as prose in the graphic novels the emphasis on specific words is altered, as is the rhythm of the dialogue, and the variation in the verbal structure of the play is also removed. By using techniques to identify lineation of the poetry the creators of the graphic novels are referencing and promoting their relationship to the original text.

Graphic novels are also criticised for using punctuation and typography which is not consistent with the scholarly editions and affects the rhythm of the dialogue and alters the verbal structure of the play. Punctuation and typography influence the meaning by giving an indication of the delivery of the lines in performance and providing rhythm to the text. Punctuation in modern critical editions is commonly altered because as Bate and Rasmussen note 'punctuation in Shakespeare's time was as much rhetorical as grammatical' and was unstable in comparison to contemporary punctuation.<sup>64</sup> This position that the function of punctuation was 'rhetorical' mainly composed as directives for public speaking, reading aloud, or stage performance is based on the movement from an oral to print culture. Crewe supports this position and states that 'the early modern printed text is a voiced text, the modern text is a read one' and so modern editors amend the text to meet the needs of contemporary readers.<sup>65</sup> For Crewe the concern is that change of punctuation is carried out 'silently' by editors and also inconsistently. The issue of the effect of punctuation on the plays has been a concern for editors and in particular the excessive use of exclamation marks.

Graphic novels also 'silently' edit the punctuation and feature an increase in the overall use of punctuation marks in the dialogue when compared to the Early Modern editions of

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<sup>63</sup> King, Ros, 'And Stand a Comma: Reinterpreting Renaissance Punctuation for today's users :-)', *The Shakespearean International Yearbook*, 2 (2002), 111–26 (p. 119).

<sup>64</sup> William Shakespeare, *The RSC Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: Macmillan), p. 58.

<sup>65</sup> Jonathan Crewe, 'Punctuating Shakespeare', *Shakespeare Studies*, 28 (2000), 23–41 (p. 29).

Shakespeare's plays and modern critical editions. The example below highlights the changes in punctuation in an extract from a graphic novel.

**Example: Text of Folio *Macbeth* Act 1, Scene 3, Lines 148 – 192.**

The **bolding** of the words is taken from CC *Macbeth* and (!) indicates where an exclamation mark has been included in the CC *Macbeth*

*Mac. Speake* if you can: **what are you?**

1. All hail *Macbeth*, (!) hail to thee **Thane of Glamis** (!).  
 2. All hail *Macbeth*, (!) hail to thee **Thane of Cawdor**. (!) 150  
 3. All haile *Macbeth*, (!) that shalt be **King** hereafter. (!)  
*Banq.* Good Sir, why doe you **start**, and seem to **fear**  
 Things that do sound so **fair**? i'the name of truth  
 Are ye **fantastical**, or that indeed  
 Which outwardly ye **show**? My Noble Partner 155  
 You greet with **present Grace**, and great prediction  
 Of **Noble having**, and of **Royal hope**,  
 That he seems **rapt** withal: to **me** you speak **not**.  
 If you can look into the **Seeds of Time**,  
 And say, which Grain will **grow**, and which will **not**, 160  
 Speak then to **me**, who neither beg, nor fear  
 Your favors nor your hate.  
 1. **Hail**. (!)  
 2. **Hail**. (!)  
 3. **Hail**. (!) 165  
 1. **Lesser than Macbeth**, and greater.  
 2. **Not so happy**, yet much happier.  
 3. **Thou shalt get Kings**, though thou be none:  
**So all hail Macbeth**, and *Banquo*. (!)  
 1. *Banquo*, and *Macbeth*, all hail. (!) 170  
*Macb.* **Stay** you imperfect Speakers, tell me more:  
 By *Sinels* death, I know I am **Thane of Glamis**,  
 But how of **Cawdor**? the **Thane** of Cawdor **lives**  
 A **prosperous** Gentleman: And to be **King**,  
 Stands not within the prospect of belief, 175  
 No more then to be **Cawdor**. Say from whence  
 You **owe** this strange Intelligence, or why  
 Upon this blasted Heath you stop our way  
 With such Prophetique greeting?  
**Speak**, I **charge** you. (!) *Witches vanish.* 180  
*Banq.* The Earth hath **bubbles**, as the **Water** has,  
 And these are **of** them: whither are they vanish'd?  
*Macb.* Into the **Air**: and what seem'd **corporal**,  
 Melted as **breath** into the Wind.  
 Would they had stay'd. (!) 185  
*Banq.* Were such things here, as we doe speak about?  
 Or have we eaten on the **insane Root**,  
 That takes the Reason Prisoner?  
*Macb.* Your **Children** shall be **Kings**. (!)  
*Banq.* **You** shall be King. (!) 190  
*Macb.* And **Thane** of **Cawdor** too: went it not so?



The most commonly added punctuation mark in the graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays is the exclamation mark which Warren notes is also added to modern editions of the plays and is 'the most blatant example of editorial intrusion into the Shakespeare text'.<sup>66</sup> The Folio and Quarto texts are conspicuously lacking exclamation marks, though it is noted that question marks were also used for exclamation marks in Early Modern printing. In the 36 plays in the 1623 Folio there are a total of 338 exclamation marks, *Henry V* has none and *Macbeth* has only three.<sup>67</sup> Though modern critical editions have an increased number of exclamation marks, the graphic novels have them in abundance. The portion of Act 1 Scene 3 of the CC *Macbeth* set out in the example above includes fifteen exclamation marks added to this text compared to the Folio and the modern critical edition in the *The Oxford Shakespeare*.

The CC edition is not unique in this area and all graphic novels, including the abridged editions, of Shakespeare's plays show a significantly increased use of exclamation marks when compared to the Folio and quarto editions of the sixteenth and seventeenth century. The use of exclamation marks is important as punctuation can change the verbal delivery of a line producing a more staccato and declamatory speech. It can also change and limit the interpretation by the reader as exclamation marks are used to indicate a sudden cry. The use of the exclamation mark produces a definite interpretation on how the line is delivered or read and according to Warren 'precludes other potentially valid interpretations'.<sup>68</sup> Therefore by altering the punctuation the reading of the text is affected and the dialogue is interpreted as exclamations rather than speech. The text in the example above also shows another way that editors seek to produce variety using typography and that is to highlight specific words to the reader using bold font. The text in graphic novels not only conveys the words of the play but,

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<sup>66</sup> Michael Warren, 'Repunctuation as Interpretation in Editions of Shakespeare', *English Literary Renaissance*, 7 (1977), 155-69 (p. 158).

<sup>67</sup> Charles Edelman, 'What is Asking and What is Wondring': Dramatic punctuation in Shakespeare, In; *Shakespeare Readers, Audience, Players*, ed. by R.S. White, Charles Edelman, Christopher Wortham (Perth, Australia: University of Western Australia Press, 1998), pp. 106-20 (p. 110).

<sup>68</sup> Warren, 155-69 (p. 159).

like the illustrations, is a component of the visual narrative. It is a device that is particularly used where the typography of the graphic novel is all capital letters and this convention operates in two major ways, which is as either rhetorical or visual emphasis. Bolding of words and phrases also functions to provide visual variety to the dialogue in a panel.

While typography, bolding and punctuation can alter the text the effect is not as significant on the concept of authenticity as abridging and translating the words of the play itself. As Foakes notes, the issue of modernising and changing punctuation is somewhat overstated from the perspective of the general reader though he does of course recognise that punctuation can affect the meaning of a line of dialogue. He states that

most readers, I believe, want a text that guides them comfortably in the reading of the play, and though there may be places where punctuation varies from the original text(s), it is not often that such variations may have a significant effect in terms of plot or character.<sup>69</sup>

Though the plot and character may not be significantly altered the typographical and layout changes made by the graphic novel producers can impact their perceived authenticity.

However, it is the fidelity of the textual content to the original source that is highlighted by the publishers and creators as the measure of authenticity of the graphic novel editions. These graphic novels present the text not as poetry or prose specifically but as dialogue ‘spoken’ by characters in a visual and verbal performance of the play. This link to performance is also used as a means of claiming authenticity for the graphic novels.

## **V. Graphic Novels as Performance**

The producers of graphic novels promote the authenticity of their editions by linking them to the performance of the plays. However, locating graphic novels of Shakespeare’s

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<sup>69</sup> R. A. Foakes, ‘Performance Theory and Textual Theory: A Retort Courteous’, *Shakespeare*, 2:1 (2006), 47-58 (p. 57).

plays in the discourse of performance criticism presents a seemingly insurmountable obstacle. The term performance has been traditionally used in regard to Shakespeare's plays to describe instances which are visually and/or aurally realised such as theatre, film, recorded readings, and animation. The different media used for the representation of Shakespeare's plays exist within a hierarchy of value based on the mode of performance. The hybrid form of static illustrations in combination with the written words in the graphic novels presents a new medium to be considered within this framework. Though the presence of the written word can locate the graphic novel in the realm of textual criticism, the visual representation of the plays in graphic novels can also align them with performance criticism. However, the recognition of illustration as a mode of performance is a contested issue. The claims of the publishers of graphic novels and the language used to align the graphic novels with specific modes of performance reveal the anxiety for recognition of the authenticity of these adaptations.

Performance criticism locates the authenticity of the plays not in the text as a literary object but in the realisation of the text in performance. The performance of the plays as the authentic mode of reproduction has been a growing area of Shakespeare criticism since the late twentieth century. Critics such as Brown suggest that 'readers and critics have become increasingly aware that the plays were written for performance and reveal their true natures only in performance'.<sup>70</sup> This position is contested by Erne and in his work, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, he argues that Shakespeare intended his work for publication as well as performance.<sup>71</sup> This 'stage versus the page' rhetoric promotes the idea that authenticity is not located in the published works but in production. To incorporate graphic novels in the discourse of performance criticism the term 'performance' needs to be extended to include static visual representations of the play. This expansion of the definition of performance is a point of contention amongst critics and exposes an anxiety for the potential disruption of the

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<sup>70</sup> John Russell Brown, *Discovering Shakespeare: A New Guide to the Plays* (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 1.

<sup>71</sup> Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

hierarchy of cultural value attributed to different modes of reproduction of Shakespeare's plays.

Shakespeare graphic novels and illustrated editions have, until recently, been excluded from performance criticism. Holland proposes that illustrations of Shakespeare's plays can be considered a performance of the texts as 'all illustrations constitute forms of performativity, performing the text in their modes of visualisation and making the text perform in its negotiation with these images'.<sup>72</sup> For Holland the limiting of performance studies to only stage, screen and radio ignores the question of the potential of illustration and print. Illustrations visualise the play but for Bate they fall short of meeting the criteria required to define them as a performance of the play-text. The key issue for Bate is that illustration 'makes meaning of a single moment, whereas the unstoppable motion of time [...] is the very essence of drama'.<sup>73</sup> By defining the continuity of action as integral to the definition of performance Bate excludes illustrated editions and graphic novels from this discourse.

Viguers supports Bate's position and states that 'potentially, all illustrated editions [...] might be considered productions of the plays', but illustrations 'do not in themselves move the book into a fully conceived production that has parallels to a theatre experience'.<sup>74</sup> Here Viguers narrows the definition of performance even further by aligning it specifically to stage production. By using the comparison to theatre she is privileging it as a form of performance over others and as the authentic mode for the reproduction of the plays. However, Viguers does suggest a compromise position where illustrated editions and graphic novels are seen as neither strictly a book nor as a fully realised performance and suggests that they should be

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<sup>72</sup> Peter Holland, 'Performing Shakespeare in Print: Narrative in Nineteenth Century Illustrated Shakespeares', in *Victorian Shakespeare*, Vol. 1, ed. by Gail Marshall and Adrian Poole (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 47-72 (p. 49).

<sup>73</sup> Jonathan Bate, 'Pictorial Shakespeare: Text, Stage and Illustration', in *Book Illustrated: Text, Image and Culture 1770-1930*, ed. by Catherine J. Golden (New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 2000), pp. 31-59 (p. 33).

<sup>74</sup> Viguers, pp. 215-30 (p. 215).

considered as ‘book performances’. This suggestion can lead to a fragmentation of the discourse of performance criticism into separate defined areas such as theatre, film, television and books. Such fragmentation of the definition of performance can discourage acknowledgement of the similarities in, and intersection of, the modes of reproduction. Viguers’ suggestion also demonstrates an anxiety over the potential to treat all modes of production as of equal value or validity, and implies that there is an ‘authentic’ medium for engaging with Shakespeare’s plays.

The concern over the attribution of value evident in Viguers’ analysis of graphic novels is reflected in the wider discourse of performance criticism. Not all modes of performance of Shakespeare are considered equal. Instead a hierarchy of cultural value is constructed which privileges the stage as the ‘authentic mode’ of reproduction of the plays. In the realm of Shakespeare studies there has historically been, as Holderness notes, a ‘substantial resistance’ to new media such as film and television.<sup>75</sup> In 1987 Davies stated that, for Shakespeare, theatre remained the ‘legitimate’ medium for production and only recently had it ‘become respectable to concentrate serious discussion on the media of cinema, radio and more especially television’.<sup>76</sup> This position is also noted by Worthen who stated that ‘from a performative perspective, stage production is, in a sense, the final cause for the writing of plays, which are fully realized only in the circumstances for which they were originally intended: theatrical performance’.<sup>77</sup> Though the plays were of course originally written for the stage this theoretical position denotes performance other than theatrical, such as film versions of the plays, as less authentic.

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<sup>75</sup> Graham Holderness, *Visual Shakespeare: Essays in Film and Television* (Hatfield: University of Herefordshire Press, 2002), p. ix.

<sup>76</sup> Anthony Davies ‘Shakespeare and the Media of Film, Radio and Television’, *Shakespeare Survey*, 39 (1987), 1–11 (p. 1).

<sup>77</sup> William B. Worthen, *The Authority of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 4.

The difference in status was articulated by Holderness who notes that the theatre ‘has become in the twentieth century a decidedly high culture domain’ whereas film has only received significant and serious critical attention in the last decades of the twentieth century.<sup>78</sup> The attribute of ‘liveness’ is promoted as the point of differentiation between the theatre and other media.<sup>79</sup> The physical presence of actors and the audience is the key feature used to distinguish between theatre as high art and recorded or illustrated performances and a lower form of art. For example, the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) education manifesto states the uniqueness of the live production as ‘complicity experienced by a live audience’ and ‘there is no substitute for the shared experience of seeing Shakespeare live’.<sup>80</sup> In this paradigm to see a theatrical performance is to experience the authentic Shakespeare and if theatre is where the authentic Shakespeare is experienced then reproductions in other media must inevitably have a lower status.

An outcome of this disparity between degrees of authenticity attributed to modes of representation is that producers of graphic novels specifically stress the products relationship to stage performance in the paratextual material included in their editions. Such promotion can be seen on the covers of the OP Graphic Shakespeare editions which include a logo that states ‘the page becomes the stage’. The cover of Nicki Greenberg’s *Hamlet* includes text describing this graphic novel as ‘a staging of the play’. These statements draw parallels between the graphic novel and the theatre and locate theatrical performance as the benchmark for comparison of other representations of the plays. Other publishers also highlight their graphic novels as theatre and go further in equating them to ‘liveness’. CC claim on the covers of their publications that their graphic novels are the ‘play brought to life’. SMH manga editions declare in their paratextual material that their adaptations ‘bring to life’ the

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<sup>78</sup> Holderness, *Visual Shakespeare*, p. x.

<sup>79</sup> Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>80</sup> Royal Shakespeare Company, ‘Education Manifesto’, <<http://www.rsc.org.uk/downloads/manifesto.pdf>> [accessed 21 April 2011]

words of the stage. The editor of SMH, Emma Hayley, reiterated this position and stated that 'Shakespeare intended his plays to be seen on a stage rather than read'.<sup>81</sup> By endorsing the 'page becomes the stage' model, and by comparing the graphic novels to the theatrical event, Hayley is also reiterating the discourse which privileges the stage over other modes of performance. Aligning graphic novels with the theatre aims to garner the higher degree of authenticity placed on theatrical performance.

The abridging which the SMH and WP manga editions are subject to is also linked to performance and theatrical practice. In order to claim recognition of the authenticity of these adaptations the publishers align their process of adaptation with that of a performance of the play. The WP manga editions state:

A note on authenticity: In order to fit our adaptations into a book of less than 200 pages, the writers and editors of the *Manga Editions* have cut words, lines, speeches and even entire scenes from Shakespeare's plays, a practice almost universal among stage and film directors.<sup>82</sup>

Though it is common to expunge words, characters or even scenes from visual performances of Shakespeare the extent of the cuts in the manga editions is significant. Both the SMH and WP editions of the plays contain only approximately 30% of the play-text in comparison to modern critical editions. This proportion is similar to the amount of text used in Zeffirelli's film versions of Shakespeare's plays where it has been estimated that *Taming of the Shrew* retains 30% of the text, *Romeo and Juliet* 35% and *Hamlet* 37% of the text.<sup>83</sup> Like film and theatre, graphic novels are a multichannel medium and so the text may be reduced and substituted with visual images without disrupting the coherence of the story.

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<sup>81</sup> Emma Hayley, 'E-mail Interview', to Margaret Roper, 18 April 2009.

<sup>82</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, illustrated by Eve Grandt and Candice Chow, edited by Adam Sexton (New York: Wiley Press, 2008), p. 3.

<sup>83</sup> Deborah Cartmell, 'Franco Zeffirelli and Shakespeare', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film*, ed. by Russell Jackson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 216-26, pp. 216.

Graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays occupy a space between performance and the text. The hybridity of the graphic novel and its link to theatre is noted by Adam Sexton who likens the experience of reading the graphic novels to 'reading the text of the play while attending a performance'.<sup>84</sup> It is the printed visual/verbal nature of the editions which has produced contention over how to classify them. However, the graphic novels' visual representation of the plays does align them with performance. Graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays should not be thought of as literature or performance, but rather as literature *and* performance.

As this review of the claims of authenticity has shown, the producers of the graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays promote the authenticity of their editions as both literature and performance. The prevalence of these claims by the creators and editors of the editions and the press releases and interviews by the publishers highlights the importance of authenticity for these Shakespeare adaptations. One reason for this is as Lanier observes that 'any claim to the 'authentic' or 'essential' Shakespeare – the 'real thing' carries with it considerable cultural power'.<sup>85</sup> For the producers of graphic novels the claims for authenticity and cultural recognition are central to their commercial concerns to produce a financially profitable product. The importance of authenticity for commercial success is directly related to the target demographic of the graphic novels which can be demonstrated by examining the sales figures and the marketing strategies used to promote them.

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<sup>84</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, illustrated by Eve Grandt and Candice Chow, edited by Adam Sexton (New York: Wiley Press, 2009), p. 3.

<sup>85</sup> Lanier, *Shakespeare and Popular Culture*, p. 9.



## **CHAPTER 5 - MARKETING AND SALES OF SHAKESPEARE GRAPHIC NOVELS**

This chapter examines the marketing practices, sales and the consumer use of Shakespeare graphic novels and explores the commercial reasons for the promotion of authenticity. The marketing of graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays present several problems in terms of generating commercial sales. Firstly, any new versions of the plays are entering a mature market and so must compete for sales against established editions already available. Secondly, they compete against other graphic novels for sales. Finally, whilst graphic novels are used for entertainment and education the consumers' needs in these sectors can differ. In order to ensure their financial viability the publishers must not only design their product to meet the needs of the customers, but also advertise and promote the editions to their target audience.

The material presentation of the graphic novels is central to achieving sales and the paratextual strategies used in the advertising of publications of Shakespeare's plays since they first appeared in the late sixteenth century have remained largely unchanged. A review of the Early Modern publications of Shakespeare's plays allows an analysis of the ways in which the plays were promoted in that period and an insight into the techniques that are in use in contemporary marketing of the graphic novels. Retail sales figures of the graphic novels are also analysed in this chapter. They reveal that the commercial success of graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays is critically dependent on the education sector of the market. The ways in which the editions are promoted and their use in education is examined.

### **I. Marketing Books**

A commercial market place for reading material was created in the sixteenth century with the proliferation of printing presses which enabled inexpensive texts to be available for

public consumption. The expansion of education systems in the Early Modern period increased literacy rates, and so the number of potential readers rose leading to an increase in the number and variety of publications. This growth has accelerated in the last century due to the decreasing cost of materials and the development of digital technology in the book publishing industry driving production costs down. The market place for books is now a crowded one. At the beginning of the twenty-first century it was estimated that over 120,000 new book titles were published each year in the UK alone, and worldwide this figure is more than one million.<sup>1</sup> In addition to these new titles, old books are reprinted and used books are also resold. Books are also loaned privately, commercially or accessed through libraries. Electronic books, made possible through developments in mobile technology, are increasingly gaining market share and present another form of competition for the sales of printed books.

The demand for books derives from the two main uses of the products which are for education or entertainment. As a form of entertainment books must compete with other mass entertainment industries, such as television, film and the internet, for consumer attention in order to be commercially viable. The education segment of the market creates a more stable consumer group for the sale of books and also creates an adult population familiar with authors and titles they were introduced to in school. However, with the increasing use of multimedia products rather than print, and the budgetary limitations of education institutions which encourage the reuse of books, the purchase of new materials by the education sector is constrained. In the face of such competition and constraints the way in which a book is presented, both materially and through advertising, to potential customers is crucial to maximising its commercial profitability. The presentation, promotion and advertising of a book to potential customers are collectively referred to as marketing.

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<sup>1</sup> Gabriel Zaid, *So Many Books: Reading and Publishing in the Age of Abundance*, trans. by Natasha Wimmer (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2003), p. 9.

The two conflicting models of marketing which have been portrayed by critics and the media over the last century can broadly be described as either a manipulator of consumers or as an enabler of consumers. The construction of marketing as a manipulator of consumers was prevalent in the mid-twentieth century and is associated with a Marxist discourse of the capitalist machine driven by the producers of goods. In Adorno and Horkheimer's term marketing was an exercise in 'mass deception'.<sup>2</sup> In this model marketing was an industry whose purpose was to exploit the passive consumer to buy products which they did not need and could in fact be damaging to them. Promotion and advertising were portrayed as the Orwellian 'rattling of a stick inside a swill bucket'.<sup>3</sup> In this paradigm the unsuspecting consumer is deceived into purchasing products with polished sales pitches in order to maximise the profits of the manufacturer. This is a producer led model, where the product is developed by the manufacturer who uses marketing to generate the customer demand and to appeal to the masses. In the book publishing industry the appeal to the masses was perceived as an appeal to the lowest common denominator. This attitude is expressed in the publisher Geoffrey Faber's statement in 1934 that for the public 'all its thinking is done for it. For those who will hit the taste of the masses the reward is large. Hence the ever growing temptation is to write for the herd, to publish for the herd, to buy for and sell to the herd'.<sup>4</sup> Mass production was viewed as detrimental to quality of the products made, and marketing was the means by which the profits from these low quality products was maximised.

The late twentieth century saw a more nuanced perception of marketing as more customer driven where mass production was balanced with the proactive anticipation of the customer's needs. In this model the consumer is the creator of the need and industry responds

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<sup>2</sup> Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. by J. M. Bernstein (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> George Orwell, *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying* (London: The Camelot Press, 1936), p. 66.

<sup>4</sup> Claire Squires, *Marketing Literature: The Making of Contemporary Writing in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 43.

with a product that will meet that need. Kotler has succinctly defined contemporary marketing as

the business function that identifies current unfulfilled needs and wants, defines and measures their magnitude, determines which target markets the organisation can best serve, and decides on appropriate products.<sup>5</sup>

In this model consumers are more sophisticated and can interpret the advertising strategies used. They are also more discerning in their choice of purchase and have the ability to discriminate within the range of products on offer. The producer of goods must first perceive that a need exists, identify the target audience, then understand and meet the needs of these consumers. The target audience is defined based on location, gender, age, socio-economic basis, as well as how they would use the product and the benefit it would serve.<sup>6</sup> The contemporary marketing model therefore uses promotion and advertising based on a predetermined demographic in the population.

In order to ensure commercial success books, like all products, must meet the necessary qualities that the customer requires which Kotler refers to as the ‘expected product level’.<sup>7</sup> These absolute essentials vary depending on the intended use of the product and so the promotion and advertising are the means by which the target audience is informed of the products existence and its attributes. To aid the consumer in product differentiation in an already established market the producer may offer an ‘augmented product level’ which includes additional benefits and attributes to distinguish the product from its competitors.<sup>8</sup> The type of augmentation selected by the producer is based on the perceived needs of their target audience.

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<sup>5</sup> Philip Kotler, *Principles of Marketing* (London: Prentice Hall, 1980), p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Angus Philips, ‘How Books are Positioned in the Market: Reading the Cover’ in *Judging a Book by its Cover*, ed. by Nicole Matthews and Nickianne Moody (Ashgate: Hampshire, 2007), pp. 19–30 (p. 20).

<sup>7</sup> Kotler, p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 27.

In the book industry the key means of marketing a text to its target audience is through the material presentation of the book and the promotional information used. The way in which books are marketed not only affect the reader's interaction with the book but also the consumer's selection of it as a product that will meet their specific needs. The material which is outside the text has been defined by Genette as the 'paratext' of a book and consists of all the material which 'enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers'.<sup>9</sup> Genette has further divided this paratextual material to include what he has labelled 'peritext', the material presentation of the text and the matter which appears within the book, and 'epitext' which is located outside the book. The peritext includes the physical appearance of the book such as size and format, the cover, the title page, and any additional information presented in the book. The epitext can include material such as interviews with authors, advertising posters and critical reviews of the text. Paratext is an important tool in the marketing of books and is used by publishers to differentiate their products and to appeal to their target audience. By examining the paratexts of editions of Shakespeare's play and graphic novels, these marketing strategies can be identified.

## **II. The History of Marketing Shakespeare**

In Early Modern publications the paratext consisted primarily of the 'front matter' which includes the cover and any additional pages before the body of the text. As Saenger suggests, 'one of the most valuable ways to understand front matter in the Early Modern period is to recognise that these pages constitute an early, coherent and very versatile system

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<sup>9</sup> Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 1.

of advertising'.<sup>10</sup> The information in the front matter was not only about the text itself but included statements designed specifically to encourage the purchase of the book. Voss's examination of early modern book publishing notes different techniques such as promoting reputations, establishing expertise, advancing knowledge and encouraging investment appealed to the different needs of the purchasers.<sup>11</sup> Five key marketing strategies used by in the Early Modern period can be identified in the front matter of Shakespeare's plays. These include promotion of sales by using the author's name, using the plot or characters, the use of third party recommendations, the promotion of the book as an augmented product and by using claims of authenticity.

The name of Shakespeare as the author begins to appear on printed versions of his plays from 1598. Shakespeare had put his name in the dedication of the publications of *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* as a means of self-promotion and plea for patronage. However, the use of the author's name on the front matter of the published plays represents a bookseller's strategy for increasing sales. In this period, prior to copyright laws, the printer or publisher was not obliged to name the author so the commercial impetus is clear and, as Saenger notes, 'the publisher would not have enshrined any author as an authorial presence unless doing so would have increased the value of the book'.<sup>12</sup> In order to be of commercial importance the author must have a reputation in the public sphere and around 1598 Erne suggests that 'something happened that changed the marketability of Shakespeare's name'.<sup>13</sup> Erne proposes that this change may have been due to the publication of Francis Meres' *Palladis Tamia* in which he names Shakespeare as one of the great writer of the period. Meres places Shakespeare amongst the 'Six English poets singled out for special praise' and so

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<sup>10</sup> Michael Saenger, *The Commodification of Textual Engagements in the English Renaissance* (Adlershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Paul J. Voss, 'Books for Sale: Advertising and Patronage in Late Elizabethan England', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 29:3 (1998), 733–56 (p. 734).

<sup>12</sup> Saenger, p. 29.

<sup>13</sup> Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 65.

places him ‘amidst the literary giants of the time’.<sup>14</sup> According to Erne’s theory the appearance of Shakespeare’s name as a marketing tool comes from the basis of a third party recommendation of the quality of his works, and promotion of the skill of the author, an example of what Genette defined as epitext.

The author’s reputation and the theatrical success of his plays also aided in the recognition of the name of Shakespeare as a quality statement on the publications. Indeed it seems that Shakespeare’s name was such a good marketing tool that ‘within the next ten years, four non-Shakespearean plays with title pages bearing his name or initials’ appeared in an attempt to make money from his name.<sup>15</sup> So by the early seventeenth century Shakespeare’s name as author was a financially valuable commodity. The bookseller Walkeley Taylor articulates in simple terms the commercial value of Shakespeare’s name in the 1622 publication of *Tragedy of Othello, the moor of Venice* where in the front matter in the note ‘The stationer to the reader’ there appears the statement that ‘The Authors name is sufficient to vent his worke’.<sup>16</sup> However, in the case of Shakespeare’s plays where multiple editions were available it was necessary to employ other strategies as well.

Early Modern publishers used the popularity or recognition of the characters of Shakespeare’s plays as a marketing tool. This can be seen as a version of ‘you have seen the film, now read the book’ advertising which is used in contemporary book selling. The 1598 *The History of Henrie the Fourth* does not include the author’s name but the front matter includes the statement ‘with the battell at Shrewsburies, betweene the King and Lord Henry Percy, surnamed Henrie Hotspur of the North’.<sup>17</sup> This historic episode would have been well

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<sup>14</sup> Erne, p. 67.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 68.

<sup>16</sup> Gary Taylor, ‘Making Meaning Marketing Shakespeare 1623’, in *From Performance to Print in Shakespeare’s England*, ed. by Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), pp. 55-72 (p. 60).

<sup>17</sup> Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 289.

known to the public at the time even though the events it recalls occurred two centuries earlier. The publisher has also included Lord Percy's nickname of Hotspur to further aid public recognition of this legendary character. The title page features the statement 'with the humorous conceits of Sir John Falstaffe' advertising that appeals to the fans of the character of Falstaff. Publications throughout the seventeenth century commonly referred to the characters of Falstaff and Pistoll such as the 1600 edition of *2 Henry IV* which included 'With the humours of Sir John Falstaffe, and swaggering Pistoll'.<sup>18</sup> The publisher here is appealing to the demographic of people who have seen the plays, or have heard of them, and will recognise the characters.

Two types of third party recommendations are found in the front matter of the early printed copies of Shakespeare's plays. These take the form of promoting the public acclaim of the play or promoting that members of the nobility have attended the play. This strategy was used even prior to the appearance of the author's name on the publication. The 1597 quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* printed by John Danter of London does not include Shakespeare's name but the title page of the quarto states 'as it hath been often (with great applause) plaid Publicly, by the right Honourable the L. of Hundson his Servants'.<sup>19</sup> The public acclaim is the key marketing issue here and popularity is used as an indicator of quality and an assurance that the purchaser will enjoy it as many others have. In the hierarchical society of the Early Modern period the advertising that the play was enjoyed by the nobility elevated the status of the text. The importance of Royal patronage, or at least attendance at a performance of the play, was commonly used in the front matter of these publications. For example W.W. who printed *A Pleasant Conceited Comedie CALLED Loves labours lost* in 1598 included on the title page

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<sup>18</sup> Murphy, p. 291.

<sup>19</sup> William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet, The First Quarto*, Facsimile produced from the British Museum Copy, c 34, k55 (London: Charles Praetorius, 1886).



‘As it was presented for Her Highnes this last Christmas’.<sup>20</sup> Linking the plays to the monarch elevates the status of the play and can appeal to the aspirations of the potential buyer to share in the culture of the elite strata of society.

The publication of subsequent editions of Shakespeare’s plays created the need for the Early Modern printers to provide an augmented product level to increase sales. This strategy was aimed at not only differentiating their product from any competitor’s but also encouraging those who had purchased an earlier edition to buy the book again. For example the 1605 quarto (Q2) of *The Tragicall Historie of HAMLET, Prince of Denmark* included on its title page the statement ‘Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppie’ in order to distinguish it from the 1603 (Q1) edition.<sup>21</sup> The inclusion of this statement not only differentiates the edition from Q1 but also, according to Murphy’s chronology, it makes the first recorded claim of authenticity of the text as being from Shakespeare’s copy.<sup>22</sup> Previously the terms ‘newly corrected’ and ‘newly augmented’ or ‘newly amended’ or a combination of these had been used to imply the superiority of the book over previous publications. The inclusion of the claim to the ‘true and perfect Coppie’ signals the beginning of competing claims of the recovery of the author’s original work which became in the following centuries, and is still today, one of the key marketing tools used for the sale of editions of Shakespeare’s plays.

The First Folio brings together these five key strategies of Early Modern book marketing into one product aimed at a particular demographic, psychographic and behavioural market segment. The Folio itself is dedicated to the Earl of Pembroke and the Earl of Montgomery so implying that it is suitable for the nobility and also positions itself as an aspirational purchase for those of lower socio-economic status. The material object itself is a

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<sup>20</sup> William Shakespeare, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, 1598, *Shakespeare Quarto Facsimilies*, No.10 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957).

<sup>21</sup> Murphy, p. 295.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, ‘Chronological Appendix’, pp. 287-386.

large, well presented, expensive book and purchase of it would reflect on the intellectual and social position of the owner. The Folio also includes the advertising tool of peer endorsements from friends and colleagues, most notably Ben Jonson who dedicates a verse ‘To the memory of my beloved, THE AUTHOR, Mr. William Shakespeare: And what he hath left us’.<sup>23</sup> Not only does Jonson’s dedication praise the work but he, like Meres in 1598, compares the author with great classical poets and states ‘I will lodge thee by Chaucer, or Spenser’ thereby recommending the quality of the plays and poems. The editors also state that ‘these Playes have had their triall alreadie’ so alluding to their history, popularity, and longevity on the stages of London and giving assurance to the purchaser that the risk of regretting the money spent on the book is significantly reduced.

The Folio front matter also promotes the authenticity of the texts included and states ‘Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories & Tragedies. Published according to the True Originall Copies’. The publishers assert the superiority of the Folio and state that they

have published them as where before you were abused with divers stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious imposters that exposed them, even those are now offered to your view cured and perfect of their limb<sup>24</sup>

The editors promote the Folio versions of the play-texts as written by the author himself and so encouraging those who may already own editions of the play that they have corrupted, and therefore, inferior texts. Hemings and Condell also include in the front matter of the Folio an appeal ‘To the great variety of Readers’ to buy the book because the fate of all books depends on the readers capacities ‘and not of your heads alone, but of your purses’ and ‘what ever you do, Buy’. It seems to be a somewhat undignified and crude marketing strategy that is similar in contemporary marketing to the ‘every home should have one’ recommendation. The plea to

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<sup>23</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Works of William Shakespeare in reduced facsimiles from the famous first folio edition of 1623*, with Introduction by J.O. Halliwell-Phillips (London: Chatto & Windus, 1876), p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7.

buy the book is appealing on a psychographic level basically stating that if an individual believes books to be important they should purchase this one, as the belief alone is not enough to sustain the publication of the books. Therefore by buying the book you are making a statement about your personal values.

The 1664 third edition of the Folio once again employed the augmented product marketing strategy. This edition included seven plays which did not appear in the first or second editions. These plays included *Pericles Prince of Tyre*, *The London Prodigall*, *The History of Thomas Lord Cromwel*, *Sir John Oldcastle Lord Cobham*, *The Puritan Widow*, *A York-shire tragedy* and *The Tragedy of Locrine*. Murphy's listing of early modern publications shows that an author's name appears on *Thomas Lord Cromwell* 1602, *The London Prodigall* 1605, *The Puritan* 1607, and *Sir John Oldcastle* 1619, and is noted on the title page as W.S.<sup>25</sup> Only *Pericles* has been accepted by modern scholarship to be included in Shakespeare's canon. The inclusion of these plays in the 1664 edition could be read as a genuine error of judgment that W.S was William Shakespeare, or could be seen as a deliberate ploy by the editors to sell more books based on this expanded canon.

From the eighteenth century to the contemporary editions these marketing strategies which began in the Early Modern period have persisted. However the element which came to assume crucial status in marketing Shakespeare's plays is the idea of 'authentic'. Many of the eighteenth century editions included statements to the effect 'collated with the oldest copies and corrected', or 'the genuine text' and 'being restored from the blunders of the first editors'.<sup>26</sup> These editions also saw the introduction of the notes on the text giving historical data, explaining archaic words or editorial interventions. The Malone edition of 1790 was, as de Grazia notes, indicative of a shift towards the use of authenticity as a value in the marking of Shakespeare. The Malone edition included material such as essays on the English stage and

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<sup>25</sup> Murphy, 'Chronological Appendix', pp. 294-300.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, pp. 300-320.

the chronological order of the plays as well as the statement that it contained the plays and poems of Shakespeare ‘collated verbatim with the most authentick copies, and revised’.<sup>27</sup>

Since Malone’s edition the use of authenticity as a key product attribute has been used to market many new editions of Shakespeare’s plays and the graphic novels.

The twentieth century saw a proliferation in the numbers of editions of Shakespeare’s plays produced by different publishing houses to fill an increasing demand.<sup>28</sup> This demand was driven by increased literacy rates, inclusion of Shakespeare in the education curriculum, reduced costs in publishing and the promotion of Shakespeare as the central figure of the literary canon. The late twentieth century also saw an increase in the use of publisher’s brand names to suggest the quality and authenticity of the editions. For example, the ‘Oxford’ imprint and its inclusion in the title on their editions is used as a marketing tool as the name carries the implied intellectual standards and scholarly traditions of the prestigious university to which it is attached. It also implies that the editions are targeted at an educated consumer or the education market. Entertainment and the cachet of a brand name were the marketing tools used in the publication of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) edition of the Complete Works in 2007. The RSC brand features prominently on the books and brings with it an implied expertise in the realm of Shakespeare, a clear link between the text and the theatre and links to Royal patronage. The cover also claims that ‘the result is a fresh and definitive Complete Works for the twenty-first century’ and ‘includes all the information needed by a student of Shakespeare’.<sup>29</sup> This marketing seeks to align itself with the current academic and educational focus of Shakespeare in performance.

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<sup>27</sup> Margareta de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 49.

<sup>28</sup> For detail on the various editions available see Ann Thompson, *Which Shakespeare? A User’s Guide to Editions* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1992).

<sup>29</sup> William Shakespeare, *The RSC Shakespeare*, ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Hampshire: Macmillan, 2007), front cover.

All of the marketing strategies included in the paratextual material have the basic aim to differentiate the product from its competitors and to attract the target audience. This market segmentation has its critics such as Kastan who states that ‘marketing considerations rather than intellectual ones have largely determined what we can find on bookshop shelves, and marketing considerations have in a large part dictated wasteful duplication of scholarly energy’.<sup>30</sup> In what reads like a tone of exasperation at the competing claims of authenticity Kastan asserts that there is not a single text of a play and that early printed versions, modern versions, the performances of the play, the film and television versions, different editions and even different translations all constitute a text of the play. Graphic novels can also be added to this list. Despite Kastan’s objections new revised editions of the plays continue to be published and the competing claims of authenticity are still a key marketing strategy and a measure by which the value of an edition is judged.

### **III. Marketing of Shakespeare Graphic Novels**

Shakespeare graphic novels represent a relatively new product in the range of editions of his plays which are available. This extension of the product range creates a new market segment to which the products can be presented as not only desirable but as meeting the target audience’s specific needs. The marketing strategies of graphic novels echo those of the Early Modern period and use the author’s name, the plot or characters, third party recommendations, and authenticity to promote them. Added to these is an emphasis on the contemporary concern for attracting young readers to the plays but presenting them in a more easily accessible form. Wetmore states that the most common concerns about Shakespeare for readers are that the works are inaccessible and they are perceived as boring. He summarises the three key

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<sup>30</sup> David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 123.

strategies with which these issues are overcome for the youth audience as ‘translation, reduction and reference’.<sup>31</sup> Publishers of graphic novels promote the concepts of simplicity and originality of the presentation of the texts as well as the obvious visual nature of the graphic novels. These strategies are used in graphic novel editions of Shakespeare to allay concerns of boredom and inaccessibility and to make Shakespeare ‘cool’.

The covers of graphic novels are a critical paratextual element to promote sales as they are the first interaction with the prospective buyer. The target audience can be identified by looking at the covers of Shakespeare graphic novels which Perret noted are ‘arguably the ultimate visual condensation’ as it suggests the adapter’s treatment of the major themes.<sup>32</sup> The covers show the style of the illustration and give indicators as to the potential reader of the product and emphasise the most marketable elements of the graphic novels for the target demographic.

In the examples in Figure 45 of CI editions of Shakespeare’s plays all of the covers show illustrations of swords, mainly used in battle, and all imply an action sequence.

**Figure 45:** Classics Illustrated covers of *Julius Caesar*, 1950, *Hamlet*, 1952 and *Romeo and Juliet*, 1956.

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<sup>31</sup> Kevin J. Wetmore Jr., ‘Dude Where’s my Bard?’, in *Shakespeare and Youth Culture*, ed by Jennifer Hubert, Kevin J. Wetmore Jr. and Robert L. York (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 1-42 (p. 3).

<sup>32</sup> Marion D. Perret, ‘Not Just Condensation: How Comic Books Interpret Shakespeare’, *College Literature*, 31:4 (2004), 72-95 (p. 83).

This is an unusual means of promoting *Romeo and Juliet*, which is more widely advertised in contemporary marketing as a romance. The CI cover of *Julius Caesar* notably does not show Caesar himself but instead shows two roman soldiers in battle. The cover of *Hamlet* is dominated by the image of the ghost so highlights the supernatural aspect of the play. The demographic these comic books were aimed at was young male readers aged seven to fourteen years old and the images selected are those thought most likely to appeal to that audience. The painted images on the covers and are all highly detailed and the characters shown are in a realistic style rather than the more cartoonish style commonly used for the superhero and funny animal comics of the time. The realism of the images implies a seriousness and sophistication of the CI editions as they attempted to distance themselves from comic books and the negative perception of the medium in the 1950s.<sup>33</sup> The costume used is traditional and in keeping with the period in which the play is set and again implies that the material is treated in a historical and serious manner. The educational aspect was increased by the inclusion of a short biography of Shakespeare as well as instalments of the history of Britain and, in the case of *Macbeth*, a history of the descendents of Banquo. These comic books promoted Shakespeare's plays as primarily of education value and the enjoyment of his work as essential for cultural literacy.

The design of the cover in order to appeal to specific age group is clearly evident in the CC editions of Shakespeare's work. Each of the plays published by CC appears in three different language versions which are the original text, plain text and quick text, and each edition targets its promotional material at different age groups.<sup>34</sup> The covers reflect the implied age of the reader, and as shown in the example of *Henry V* in Figure 46, they become more cartoonish and colourful as the text becomes more simplified for younger readers. For the Original text targeted at the fourteen and over age group and the publisher selected a

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<sup>33</sup> See Chapter 1 for details of the anti-comic campaign of the 1950s.

<sup>34</sup> See Chapter 3 for detail on the different CC text editions.

predominately black embossed image, the only colour being the play's title and the CC imprint. The colour black is used in publishing to communicate sophistication in the text.<sup>35</sup> This can be important to the target demographic as cartoon images are associated with picture books and so with a juvenile or lower ability reader. The covers used for the plain and quick text editions are aimed at a younger age group. The Plain text presents a close up image of Henry V in full battle armour as the central hero of the play and is targeted at an eleven to fourteen year old age group. The Quick text is targeted at a seven to ten year old age group and features an image of Henry and his soldiers riding into battle, again promoting the action aspect of the play which has been judged by the publisher to be the most appealing to this demographic.

**Figure 46:** Classical Comics, *Henry V*, 2007, covers of the three textual versions.

A contrast can be seen in the cover of the Gareth Hinds' *King Lear* which also declares it is a graphic novel rather than a comic book so is aimed at a more mature readership. The complexity of the art work and the ornate type script differentiate this graphic novel as a work

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<sup>35</sup> Philips, 'How Books are positioned in the Market' in *Judging a Book By its Cover*, ed. by Matthews and Moody, pp. 19-30 (p. 21).



that deserves the term ‘art’ rather than simplistic visual representation of Shakespeare’s play. Hinds promotes his work not as education but for the mature reader of Shakespeare’s work that choose to see it augmented with artistic visual images.

**Figure 47:** Gareth Hinds, cover of *King Lear*, 2008.

In contemporary sales Squires states that the author is cited as the single most common reason for buying a book, so the author’s name provides significant promotional capital.<sup>36</sup> Squires proposes that the reason for this is that the author becomes a ‘brand’ and ‘the privileging of the author’s name either by its greater size or visibility becomes an indication of the importance of the author’s brand to the book’s marketing’.<sup>37</sup> This importance of the author’s name as a marketing strategy is also shown in the graphic novel publications. Along

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<sup>36</sup> Squires, p. 87.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 87.

with the visual images on the cover of the graphic novels the name ‘Shakespeare’ as the author appears prominently on all editions.

Shakespeare is not only promoted as the author of the text but in the paratextual material of all the graphic novels, whether full text or abridged, he is also promoted as an iconic figure. All the graphic novels include a brief biography which highlights the importance of Shakespeare as a cultural figure. Shakespeare is also promoted as an individual genius through statements such as that which appears in SMH editions:

there have been preposterous theories disputing Shakespeare’s authorship [...]the implication is that the ‘real’ Shakespeare had to be a university graduate or aristocrat. Nothing less would do for the world’s greatest writer.<sup>38</sup>

Such statements function, as Genette notes, to put a high value on the text by declaring the importance of the author and so form a manner of instruction on how to read the text.<sup>39</sup> If, as SMH declare, Shakespeare is the world’s greatest writer then the book should be read as one of the world’s greatest texts.

In marketing the Shakespeare graphic novels a consumer need must first be perceived to identify the target audience. A review of the paratextual material clearly identifies this target audience as school aged children as all graphic novels include claims of authenticity, and all publishers provide epitextual material to assist in teaching Shakespeare in schools. The use of claims of authenticity in the promotion of graphic novels is reminiscent of the advertising art used by the Early Modern publishers of Shakespeare’s plays. This claim is crucial in that the education market is the most lucrative for publishers of Shakespeare and it is driven by cultural policy such as the inclusion of the mandatory study of Shakespeare’s plays in the National Curriculum in the UK. In order to meet the demands of this behavioural market

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<sup>38</sup> William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, illustrated by Sonia Leong, edited by Richard Appignanesi (London: SelfMadeHero, 2007), p. 195.

<sup>39</sup> Genette, p. 198.

segment the editions must promote their educational value, and to do this must promote their authenticity and their link to the source text.

Shakespeare's iconic status in contemporary society and mandatory inclusion in education in the UK may seem to imply that marketing to achieve sales is not required. However, as the Chairman of Classical Comics Clive Bryant found, the mere presentation of a new product bearing Shakespeare's name was not sufficient to guarantee commercial success. As Bryant stated of the CC graphic novels he 'thought the sales would be the least of our concerns. An idea as strong as this is a world-changing concept, and commercially it would take care of itself. We were wrong!'.<sup>40</sup> Bryant cites the reasons for the difficulty of selling the CC editions as the cultural perception that graphic novels are considered a 'dumbing down' of Shakespeare and the constraints of education budgets.

CC closely link their marketing with education and include suggestions on the use of the texts in classrooms and teacher's guides on their website. As the CC marketing manager Karen Wenborn stated the rationale behind the series was unashamedly educational and designed so that they would be endorsed by educators and could be used across different age groups so ensuring the broadest target audience possible.<sup>41</sup> The publisher has identified the basic need for the target audience as a need to understand the text. Therefore the expected product level has been identified as the need to include the full text and the product has been augmented with epitextual material to assist students. For Bryant it is the education sector which is the primary problem in achieving commercial success. Bryant believes that the number of downloads from the CC website of free class exercises for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 is an indicator that the product itself is seen as a useful tool in teaching Shakespeare. He attributes the lack of penetration of the education market as an outcome of restricted and

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<sup>40</sup> Clive Bryant, Chairman of Classical Comics, 'E-mail Interview' to Margaret Roper, 13 January 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Eason, Gary, 'Shakespeare gets Comic Treatment', BBC News, 11 May 2007, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/6647927.stm>> [accessed 15 June 2007].

reducing school budgets, and parental and student resistance to the graphic novel medium to present Shakespeare's plays.<sup>42</sup> To combat this perception of Shakespeare graphic novels CC have targeted their promotion at education shows and highlighted the authenticity of their products in both the textual content and the illustrations.

Even the heavily abridged manga editions of the plays published by both WP and SMH promote their use for education by also producing epitextual material to be used for teaching Shakespeare. Wiley Press's marketing material positions the manga editions as a means of simply understanding Shakespeare and state 'The Shakespeare Manga Edition series is sure to give any Shakespeare student a head start in class, and a visual aid'.<sup>43</sup> Though this marketing is to the education segment, unlike the CC editions they are promoted as an aid rather than a substitute for the plays.

Originality and entertainment are also key promotional values used for Shakespeare graphic novels, particularly for the abridged editions. The peritext of the Wiley Shakespeare manga series emphasises the excitement and simplicity of the text so focusing on the entertainment value as well as the educational value. For example the WP *Macbeth* includes this summary as an invocation of the excitement of the play:

Passion and poison. Deception and revenge. Betrayal and assassination. Ambition and murder. Politics and greed. Plots and counterplots. Supernatural visitations and evil manipulation. Packed with drama, excitement, and emotion, Shakespeare's tragedies are a natural in the fast-paced manga format.<sup>44</sup>

The SMH Manga Shakespeare series also promotes the originality and entertainment value of their publications as contemporary and radical on their website by using phrases such as 'cutting-edge', 'trend-setting', 'dynamic' and 'cinematic' to describe the graphic novels. SMH proclaims that its intent in the publication of Manga Shakespeare is to create new

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<sup>42</sup> Clive Bryant, 'E-mail Interview', 13 January 2009.

<sup>43</sup> Wiley Press, <<http://eu.wiley.com/WileyCDA/Section/index.html>> [accessed 23 May 2009].

<sup>44</sup> Wiley Press, 'Cliffsnotes', <<http://www.cliffsnotes.com/WileyCDA/section/id-310791.html>> [accessed 09 August 2008].

audiences and new fans of the ‘great Bard’ and that the adaptations make them ‘more accessible to today’s readers’.<sup>45</sup> The entertainment value is explicit in the website promotional statement that the ‘attractive art and simple story-telling methods enthuse readers to approach Shakespeare’s work in the way he intended – as entertainment’. This statement reiterates the perception that reading Shakespeare’s plays is tedious and the abridged edition in the visual form makes Shakespeare fun. This positions the manga editions as rescuing Shakespeare from being an object of academic enquiry and returning the plays to the cultural space of popular entertainment.

Another way of marketing the manga editions as entertainment is to promote the development of a fan culture. SMH attempted to do this by including a fan site on the web pages.<sup>46</sup> Promotions were advertised at comic festivals in the UK in which fans could meet the illustrators of the editions. In May 2008 the ‘1<sup>st</sup> Annual Cosplay Event’ was staged by SMH at the London comic con. Cosplay is a common practice at comics’ exhibitions and encourages fans to dress in the costume of their favourite character, in this case specifically characters from Manga Shakespeare. The fan response was muted with only two entrants in the Shakespeare cosplay competition. Though it was advertised as the first such event no further cosplays have been organised and the last event promoted on the Manga Shakespeare fan site itself was October 2010. From this it can be surmised that the promotion of a fan culture associated with the Shakespeare editions was not a successful marketing strategy and the SMH mantra of their editions being entertainment first rather than educational was a miscalculation of the commercial market place for Shakespeare adaptations. The SMH manga Shakespeare website does continue to promote the use of manga as a ‘superb teaching tool’ and ‘a proven educational aid’ indicating that the education sector is now seen as the primary market for these editions.

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<sup>45</sup> SelfMadeHero, <<http://www.selfmadehero.com>> [accessed 22 September 2007].

<sup>46</sup> Manga Shakespeare, <<http://mangashakespeare.ning.com/>> [accessed 18 November 2008].

To meet the demand created by the increase in use of personal electronic devices the publishers of Shakespeare graphic novels are beginning to produce electronic editions such as the Interactive Motion Comic of *Macbeth*.<sup>47</sup> Another new product which has been developed by the Canadian Oxford University Press also seeks to expand into this electronic book market. The Oxford University Press in Canada publishes hard copies of the CC editions of Shakespeare graphic novels and in October 2010 launched the Oxford Shakespeare Project. The Oxford Shakespeare Project is an online resource using multimedia which the publisher claims is ‘making Shakespeare a meaningful, personal, and rich multimedia experience for students today’.<sup>48</sup> The project produces ‘Shakespeare Online’ which includes a personal play script and a website registration. The registration allows a single user access to the website for a one year subscription which links with the period of time a student would be required to study a particular play.

One of the key words repeatedly used in the promotional epitext of the online Oxford product is the term ‘personal’. Here we have a Shakespeare education tool that can be tailored specifically to each individual and they have the freedom to use the information as they wish. Promotional materials highlight the mobility of the electronic media for use at school or home or ‘on the move’. The range currently includes *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*. The Oxford Online editions include the play-text with highlighted portions of text which link to explanatory notes and notes on scansion and verse structure. It also includes a synopsis of each scene and a glossary of terms. There are also links to performances of the play including film and theatre. For example the user of the online *Romeo and Juliet* edition has access to two different audio readings of the plays, the film versions of Baz Luhrmann’s 1996 *Romeo + Juliet* and Zefferelli’s 1969 film, as well as theatre performance from the Stratford Festival in

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<sup>47</sup> See Chapter 3 for detail on the CC Interactive motion comic edition of *Macbeth*.

<sup>48</sup> Oxford University Press, ‘Oxford On-line’, <[http://www.oupcanada.com/school/grades\\_9-12/english/graphic\\_novel\\_shakespeare.html](http://www.oupcanada.com/school/grades_9-12/english/graphic_novel_shakespeare.html)> [accessed 16 February 2011]

Canada in 1995 and 2002. In addition to these performances of the plays the Oxford Online Shakespeare also includes the CC 'Quick Text' graphic novel edition of the play. Unlike the interactive motion comics the graphic novel used here is static and is displayed page by page as a direct electronic copy of the printed version. The inclusion of the graphic novel as one way to experience the text in this product from Oxford University Press signals a promotion of the educational value of the graphic novels.

Another important issue for the education sector of the market is that the electronic editions of graphic novels are significantly cheaper to purchase than the printed copies. A site license for Interactive *Macbeth* is currently £175 allowing access by unlimited networked computers and the Oxford Online edition is available for an annual fee of approximately \$5 per student. Therefore the electronic publishing can overcome the financial barrier which Bryant found restricted access to this market segment. At the turn of the twenty-first century critics such as Burt predicted that electronic publishing would offer wider possibilities such as the inclusion of additional paratextual material, visual, audio, historic, adaptations, illustrations and interactive mediation by the reader. Burt sees this as a reversal of the trend of twentieth century media where

adaptations of the plays helped legitimate new media such as films at its very inception, radio in the 1930s and television in the 1950s, it now appears that electronic publishing may confer legitimacy on Shakespeare rather than the reverse.<sup>49</sup>

These editions are now a reality and proliferating. Electronic publishing may also confer legitimacy on the graphic novel editions of Shakespeare's plays by providing a medium that is suited to the visual nature of the graphic novels and is widely used by the target audience for the product. The target audience is students and the acceptance and use in educational institutions is essential for the success of the Shakespeare graphic novels.

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<sup>49</sup> Richard Burt, 'To e- or Not to e-? Disposing of Schlockspeare in the Age of Digital Media', in *Shakespeare After Mass Media*, ed. by Richard Burt (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 1-32 (p. 2).

Ultimately the purpose of all of these different marketing strategies is to ensure the sales of the graphic novels are sufficient to generate profits for the publishers. The specific advertising and promotion tools used are selected based on the perceived need of the target audience. For the publishers of Shakespeare graphic novels, the success or failure of these marketing strategies is measured in units of sales of their products.

#### **IV. Sales of Shakespeare Graphic Novels**

In the twenty-first century the sale of graphic novels forms a significant component of revenue for the book publishing industry. Schodt estimated that in the USA in 1954 the annual circulation of comic books was approximately 1 billion copies. However, driven by censorship issues and public criticism, as well as the advent of alternative entertainment such as television and the cinema, this had decreased to 138 million in 1983.<sup>50</sup> The economic downturn in the comic book market was reversed in the early twenty-first century and in 2007 in the UK Stone estimated the value of the sales was £12.5 million which increased by 31.6% in the following year. Nielsen Bookscan reported that the number of new International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs) for graphic novels in the UK in 2008 was 2,900, an increase of two thirds since the previous year and over three times the number published in 2003.<sup>51</sup> Until 2008 graphic novels, and in particular manga, were the primary growth area in the publishing industry and in the USA the sales of manga had tripled in the four years from 2004 to 2008.<sup>52</sup> This trend was due to the increasing popularity of manga in the West and a growing number of films based on comic books.

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<sup>50</sup> Frederick Schodt, *Manga, Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1983), p. 127.

<sup>51</sup> Philip Stone, 'Knowing your Manga from your Marvel', in *Booksellers: Graphic Novels and Manga*, (2008), 3-5 (p. 4), <<http://www.cde.ceromedia.com>> [accessed 26 Jan 2009].

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.



The sales figures for Shakespeare graphic novels give an indication of the market penetration of the product and an indication of the potential influence of the genre. The sales of Shakespeare graphic novels can be analysed by comparison to sales of standard editions of Shakespeare's plays and also by comparing their sales to other graphic novels. Analysis of the sales figures also provides insight into the consumer demographic and the drivers which influence the marketing and the consumer's choice of purchase of Shakespeare texts. The sales figures can also be compared to those of graphic novels in general and this analysis also provides insight into the key influences in the purchase of graphic novels.

Publishing sales figures are difficult to source and are at best indicative rather than absolute. None the less the information available is sufficient to draw conclusions in regard to the commercial success and broader cultural influences that motivate the purchase of the products. In the following comparative analysis of sales of Shakespeare graphic novels to Shakespeare texts as a whole the Nielsen Bookscan data for the combined sales for 2007 to 2009 and sales for 2010 for the UK has been used. The limitation of this data is that its Total Consumer Market (TCM) is 90% of all retail-only book purchases in the UK and does not include international purchases or resale of used items. This can of course affect the analysis of international publications such as those of Wiley Press published in the US. It should also be noted that the figures do not include internet sales either directly from the publisher or through online booksellers and education distributors. However, as it uses point of sale data rather than distribution data it has a level of accuracy which makes it suitable for use for comparative analysis. The total sales data presented in the tables below has been normalised to average monthly sales for the period to negate any affect that different publication dates have on the figures. This normalisation of the data implies an even distribution across the relevant time period which may not be the case but is necessary to take account of variation in

the publication dates of the books. The data has also been restricted to include only those books that relate directly to Shakespeare's plays so biographical books have been excluded.

The Nielsen Bookscan sales figures of Shakespeare books from 2007 to 2009 presented in Table 1 shows that four of the top six books in terms of unit sales were York Notes study guides for *Othello*, *The Tempest*, *King Lear*, and *Measure for Measure* with combined sales of almost 55,000 units.<sup>53</sup>

Rank	Title	Imprint	Total Retail Sales 2007-2009	Average Monthly Sales
1	RSC Shakespeare: The Complete Works (Paperback and Hardback)	Palgrave Macmillan	20,814	770
2	York Notes "Othello"	Longman	21,628	601
3	York Notes "Tempest"	Longman	12,457	346
4	Arden Shakespeare "Hamlet"	Arden	12,181	338
5	York Notes "King Lear"	Longman	11,565	321
6	York Notes "Measure for Measure"	Longman	9,121	253
7	Norton Shakespeare	WWNorton & Co.	6,191	242
8	The Oxford Complete Works (Hardback and Paperback)	OUP	8,389	233
9	Heinemann Advanced Shakespeare "Othello"	Heinemann	7,171	199
10	Complete Works: The Special Editions	Wordsworth	6,357	177
11	Heinemann Advanced Shakespeare "Hamlet"	Heinemann	5,500	153
12	Romeo and Juliet Manga Shakespeare	SMH	5,052	140
19	Hamlet: Manga Shakespeare	SMH	3,277	91

**Table 1** : Retail of Sales of Shakespeare Books 2007-2009 in the UK as provided by Nielsen Bookscan, August 2010. Rankings are according to average monthly sales of books throughout period of release.

The dominant position of study guides in these figures attest to the primary retail market for Shakespeare's plays being the education market. This is driven by the inclusion of Shakespeare as a mandatory element in the education system in the UK. The study of Shakespeare plays also forms a component of many university undergraduate courses and college courses. The sales figures also show that far from being marginal in the retail sales

<sup>53</sup> Data of retail Shakespeare book sales provided by Nielsen Bookscan, August 2010.

market two of the manga editions published by SMH appear in the top twenty books sold in this period.

One outcome of the reliance on the educational market to generate demand is the significant influence the texts selected for study in schools in the National Curriculum has on which plays are published as graphic novels. Table 2 lists the titles of the Shakespeare graphic novels and the number of units sold from 2007 to 2009.

Rank	Title	Imprint	Total Retail Sales 2007-2009	Average Monthly Sales
1	Romeo and Juliet : Manga Shakespeare	SMH	5,052	140
2	Hamlet: Manga Shakespeare	SMH	3,277	91
3	Macbeth the Graphic Novel: Original Text	Classical Comics Ltd	1,855	80
4	Midsummer's Night Dream: Manga Shakespeare	SMH	1,826	79
5	Twelfth Night: Manga Shakespeare	SMH	282	71
6	The Tempest: Manga Shakespeare	SMH	1,877	67
7	Richard III: Manga Shakespeare	SMH	1,785	64
8	Macbeth the Graphic Novel: Plain Text	Classical Comics Ltd	1,291	56
9	Much Ado About Nothing: Manga Shakespeare	SMH	327	55
10	Macbeth the Graphic Novel: Quick Text	Classical Comics Ltd	1,026	45
11	Macbeth: Manga Shakespeare	SMH	852	45
12	The Merchant of Venice: Manga Shakespeare	SMH	171	43
13	Romeo and Juliet : Original Text	Classical Comics Ltd	167	42
14	Shakespeare's "Macbeth" : The Manga Edition	John Wiley & Sons	791	34
15	King Lear : Manga Shakespeare	SMH	207	30
16	Henry V : Quick Text	Classical Comics Ltd	650	25
17	Henry V: Plain Text	Classical Comics Ltd	645	25
18	Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" : The Manga Edition	John Wiley & Sons	571	25
19	Julius Caesar : Manga Edition	SMH	370	19
20	Henry VIII : Manga Shakespeare	SMH	154	17

**Table 2** : Retail sales figures of Shakespeare Graphic Novels Jan 2007-Dec 2009 in the UK provided by Nielsen Bookscan. Ranking based on average monthly sales figures.

It is the demands of the education sector which has the most influence on what plays are published. For example the first texts published by SMH in 2007 were *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* which are two of the most popular of Shakespeare's plays and routinely appear on school curricula. The next two plays published by SMH were *Richard III* and *The Tempest* which seem less obvious choices except that both of these plays were included in the Key Stage 3 list of plays in 2007 and 2008.<sup>54</sup> The CC editions are also selected based on what will be most appealing to the schools and commercial concerns dictate that the most popular texts are developed first. As Bryant states the most successful texts 'comes down to what is being taught in schools, and what the adult was taught at school – which probably reduces to a top-ten Shakespeare'.<sup>55</sup> Shakespeare's inclusion in education is therefore the most dominant market influence on the publishing and pivotal to the sales of the plays in graphic novels.

Just as the inclusion of a specific play in the UK curriculum generates activity, the removal of a play from the recommended list also affects the publishers. In 2008 The Shakespeare Comic Book Co. Ltd abandoned its plan to publish a graphic novel edition of *Richard III* because it had been removed from the Key Stage 3 list of set texts for the following year.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, the CC edition of *Richard III* which was also planned for release in 2008 was also removed from the list of their upcoming publications.<sup>57</sup> Therefore the selection of texts in the education policy dictates the market demands for titles and it is this demand that the publishers must respond to meet the needs of their target audience.

It is also the focus on the education market as the source of sales for Shakespeare graphic novels that leads the publishers to provide augmented products by developing free educational materials. These educational materials include information for teachers on how

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<sup>54</sup> For National Curriculum requirements in the UK see <<http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/>>.

<sup>55</sup> Clive Bryant, 'E-mail Interview', 13 January 2009.

<sup>56</sup> Steve Greaves, adapter and publisher of Comic Book Shakespeare, E-mail correspondence, 'Re: Comic book Shakespeare series' to Margaret Roper, 23 January 2009.

<sup>57</sup> Classical Comics, <<http://www.classicalcomics.com/titles.html>> [accessed 21 October 2011].

the graphic novels can be used in the classroom as well as classroom exercises and Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 set text guidelines. The publisher of CC Clive Bryant stated that the website for resources for 2008 Key Stage 3 tests received 150,000 hits but the popularity has not translated to a consummate number of sales.<sup>58</sup> The reason for this is not only linked to the status of graphic novels in culture but also the significantly higher cost of the books in comparison to other text only editions of the plays. Bryant states that ‘While most teachers recognize the benefits that our books offer, they are hamstrung by lack of budget’ and he believed that entry into this segment would take at least three years.<sup>59</sup> This estimated time frame is based on the assumptions of the ongoing inclusion of Shakespeare in education and the broader acceptance of graphic novels as an aid in learning.

The other potential market demographic for the sales of graphic novels of Shakespeare’s plays besides students is those customers who routinely purchase and read graphic novel in general. The Nielsen Bookscan sales figures for 2008 show that the actual number of units sold is comparatively low compared to other graphic novels. In terms of sales of graphic novels Shakespeare editions were listed as fourteenth overall with 6,611 books sold. This figure included ten titles and the top selling edition was *Romeo and Juliet* which sold 1,458 copies.<sup>60</sup> To put the popularity and size of Shakespeare graphic novels in this segment of the market into perspective this figure can be compared to the sales of the top rated graphic novel *Batman* in UK which sold a total of 54,125 units in the same period. Therefore, in terms of the graphic novel market, Shakespeare sales are marginal. One reason for this is the strong link between the sales of graphic novels and other forms of entertainment. This is evident in the sales of *Batman* which achieved the number one sales position in the same year that the Hollywood film of *Batman* was released. This link between cinema and sales is more clearly

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<sup>58</sup> Clive Bryant, ‘E-mail Interview’, 13 January 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Paul Gravett, ‘Is this a graphic novel I see before me’, in *Booksellers: Graphic Novels and Manga*, (2008), 6-8 (p. 6), <<http://www.cde.ceromedia.com>> [accessed 26 Jan 2009].

demonstrated with the top selling single graphic novel for 2009 which was *Watchmen* written in 1987. In 2009 when the Hollywood film of *Watchmen* was released the graphic novel sold approximately 26,000 copies.<sup>61</sup> So while entertainment is the key driver for the sales of graphic novels in general it does not drive the sales of Shakespeare's plays in the medium.

Though no Shakespeare graphic novels to date have been published in conjunction with a film release, the selection for publication can be based on other cultural events. For example SMH *Henry VIII*, one of the least performed of Shakespeare's plays, was published in May 2009 due to collaboration with the Historic Royal Palaces to coincide with the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Henry VIII's accession to the throne.<sup>62</sup> However, as indicated in Table 2 by the low sales of *Henry VIII* this strategy did not prove to be successful and so, unlike the relationship between film and graphic novels, the target audience of the manga edition did not respond to this co-marketing strategy. The lack of sales success of *Henry VIII* is of course also linked to the absence of this play from the list of those which are routinely taught in secondary schools in the UK.

Another concern for the publishers of graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays is that since 2008 the value of sales of graphic novels has decreased globally. Manga sales, which were the fastest growing segment of the graphic novel market, reached their peak in 2008 and have declined over the last three years. This is a trend that has also been prevalent in Japan in the last decade and is expected to continue. In 1996 the Manga market in Japan was estimated at 584.7 billion yen but by 2006 the sales had dropped to 481 billion yen, and in 2007 it had fallen again to 406.7 billion yen.<sup>63</sup> Publishers of traditional western style graphic novels have also suffered reduced sales. In the USA in 2011 one of the largest publishers of comic books,

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<sup>61</sup> Stone, 4-6 (p. 4).

<sup>62</sup> Emma Hayley, publisher of SMH Manga Shakespeare series, 'E-mail Interview' to Margaret Roper, 18 April 2009.

<sup>63</sup> Compipress, '2006 Japanese Manga Market Drops Below 500 billion Yen' <<http://www.compipress.com/news/2007/03/10/1622>> [accessed 03 May 2011].

DC, recorded a 21% decrease in sales for the month of January.<sup>64</sup> This trend of decreasing sales is also noted in the retail data from 2010 for graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays collated by Nielsen Bookscan. In Table 3 the sales from 2010 are compared to the average figure from 2007-2009 and show a significant decrease in the monthly sales for all titles listed. It also shows that *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth* continue to dominate the sales and six different editions of these plays are included in the top 10 titles sold. These two plays have been routinely included in school curriculums again showing the influence of this market sector on the production of titles and sales of the graphic novels.

Rank 2010	Title	Imprint	Average Monthly Sales 2010 (Average Monthly Sales 2007-2009)
1	Romeo and Juliet : Manga Shakespeare	SMH	75 (140)
2	Macbeth the Graphic Novel: Original Text	Classical Comics Ltd	57 (80)
3	Macbeth the Graphic Novel: Plain Text	Classical Comics Ltd	49 (56)
4	Macbeth: Manga Shakespeare	SMH	44 (45)
5	Hamlet: Manga Shakespeare	SMH	44 (91)
6	Romeo and Juliet : Original Text	Classical Comics Ltd	39 (42)
7	Midsummer's Night Dream: Manga Shakespeare	SMH	34 (79)
8	Macbeth the Graphic Novel: Quick Text	Classical Comics Ltd	34 (45)
9	Much Ado About Nothing: Manga Shakespeare	SMH	29 (55)
10	Twelfth Night: Manga Shakespeare	SMH	29 (71)

Table 3 : Retail sales figures of Shakespeare Graphic Novels for 2010 in the UK as provided by Nielsen Bookscan. Ranking based on average monthly sales figures for each book.

The recent global reduction in graphic novels sales, and more locally the retail sales in the UK of Shakespeare graphic novels, has been mainly attributed to a general movement away from the printed book culture to electronic media. An increase in sales in the future would be

<sup>64</sup> Comics Alliance , 'Comic Book Sales 2011', <<http://www.comicsalliance.com/2011/07/21/comic-book-sales-2011>> [accessed 05 August 2011].

directly dependent on the increase use of the Shakespeare graphic novels in the education sector and the ability to expand into digital media forms.

## **V. Graphic Novels in Education**

As Albanese notes, in the production of new Shakespeare products pedagogical agendas persist: 'Shakespeare is, above all, schoolroom matter'.<sup>65</sup> It is in school where most people are introduced to the play-texts and experience reading Shakespeare for the first time. The UK retail sales figures demonstrate that the education sector is commercially the most significant for Shakespeare graphic novel publication rather than their use for entertainment as the sales are marginal compared with comic book and graphic novel sales as a whole. The study of Shakespeare's plays was included as a mandatory component in the National Curriculum in 1989. Shakespeare is included in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 in the National Curriculum and added to this are the students who study the plays at GCSE level as well as undergraduate levels that also form part of the target consumer. By embedding Shakespeare in the education system the student's understanding of the plays is linked to academic success. The results achieved in examinations can determine the future course of study for the student, or exclusion from tertiary education. For the educational institutions themselves the results achieved by their students are important as they are used to rate them in comparison to other institutions. The outcome of this is that considerable effort is put into the investigation and research into pedagogical methodologies to achieve the best possible outcomes.

The major problems identified by educators teaching Shakespeare are the nature of the works as well as the cultural construction of Shakespeare. Not only are they play-texts rather than prose works, but the unfamiliar language of the plays is also a barrier to understanding

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<sup>65</sup> Denise Albanese, *Extramural Shakespeare* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 5.



by the students. Shakespeare can also be perceived as a cultural artefact by students and belonged to a previous generation. In other words Shakespeare could be not only difficult but boring and ‘uncool’. This idea is reiterated in Wiley Press’s promotion of its Shakespeare Manga editions where they state ‘For better or for worse we all have to conquer Shakespeare at some time’.<sup>66</sup> The idea that Shakespeare needs to be ‘conquered’ rather than enjoyed reinforces the concept of difficulty of the plays and informs the manner in which they are approached by students.

The ‘Shakespeare in Schools Project’ was carried out by the Cambridge Institute for Education from 1986 to 1994 and designed to investigate and develop pedagogical methods to teach Shakespeare more effectively. The project was led by Dr. Rex Gibson and involved teachers sharing and discussing methodology used for teaching Shakespeare. The aim of this project was to research the most effective ways of teaching Shakespeare and to provide guidance teachers and ‘improve the quality of school students’ experience of Shakespeare’.<sup>67</sup> The quality of experience, according to Gibson, is not only to understand Shakespeare’s work but also to enjoy the engagement with the works and so achieve improved examination results and foster an ongoing appreciation.

The Shakespeare in Schools project concluded that pedagogical methodology was one of the main reasons why students were ‘turned off’ by Shakespeare. Gibson advocated active experiential learning to teach Shakespeare which insisted on the texts as dramatic scripts rather than literature and encouraged both the participation in and observation of performance of the plays.<sup>68</sup> This experiential learning was designed to make Shakespeare fun for students by combining education with entertainment.

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<sup>66</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, illustrated by Tintin Pantoja, edited by Adam Sexton (New York: Wiley Press, 2009), back cover.

<sup>67</sup> Rex Gibson, *Secondary School Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge Institute of Education, 1990), Forward.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1.

The demands from the education sector is that in order for Shakespeare to be taught effectively it must be entertaining to the students, and ‘engagement’ with the plays is one of the key terms used. The concept that Shakespeare and entertainment should not be mutually exclusive has driven the development of educational tools and products which are designed to encourage students to participate in experiential learning. Examples of these are the Folger Library’s Shakespeare education programme and the RSCs programme ‘Stand Up for Shakespeare’ and the ‘Shakespeare Toolkit’ products which focus on teaching through performance and participation.

The publishers of graphic novels have also developed tools for experiential learning in order to promote the sales of their products to the education sector. A component of the RSC education programme in Stratford-upon-Avon in 2009 was a workshop using SMH manga Shakespeare editions and facilitated by the manga illustrators.<sup>69</sup> SMH not only run manga workshops with the RSC and The Globe but also promote their own workshops through their website and also produce free downloads of class room activities.<sup>70</sup> Students are provided with guidance on drawing manga and developing their graphic interpretations of characters and scenes of the plays. Such links to recognised Shakespeare institutions adds cultural cachet and legitimacy to the graphic novels themselves and also links them to performance based experiential learning promoted by educators.

The use of comic books and graphic novels in schools as text books and tools for education is a divisive issue. It has been the subject of enquiry since the 1930s and interest in their pedagogical use initially arose from the popularity of the medium amongst children. Educators became interested in ways in which the mass popularity of the comic books could be translated into learning outcomes. Sones reported in 1944 that in the USA the use of

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<sup>69</sup> C. T. Tang, ‘Manga Shakespeare As you Like It: Reasons for Teaching Shakespeare’ (unpublished master’s dissertation, University of Birmingham, The Shakespeare Institute, 2009).

<sup>70</sup> SelfMadeHero, <<http://www.selfmadehero.com/>> [accessed 23 February 2009]

comics in the classroom had generated over one hundred critical articles in educational and non professional periodicals over the preceding decade.<sup>71</sup> He noted that the use of comics in education was widespread and, in regard to teaching literature, comics of classical texts were commonly used in classroom activities. Comics he states could be used as ‘horrible examples’ or as aids for the ‘improvement of reading, language development, or acquisition of information’.<sup>72</sup> Sones concluded from the published trials that comic books were an effective pedagogical tool for students with a wide range of reading abilities and encouraged student’s interest in learning. In opposition to this recommendation of comics in education critics such as Rosencrans argued that comic books were detrimental to learning and ‘the reading of comics destroyed reading comprehension, imagination, and caused eyestrain’.<sup>73</sup> Comic books led students away from reading literature Rosencrans argued and should not be used in schools.

The early interest in the pedagogical use of comic books faltered due to the growing public concern on the detrimental effects of comic books on children in the 1950s.<sup>74</sup> It was not until the 1970s that scholarly articles on the benefits of comic books began to appear again, albeit infrequently, in education journals.<sup>75</sup> The primary focus of these articles was the ability of comic books to engage young readers, in particular those of lower ability. However, as Yang states the legacy of the comics controversy of the 1950s still loomed and ‘many educators who advocated comics condescended them in the same breath’.<sup>76</sup> These advocates used anecdotal evidence to support their claims on the benefits of comic books and there was,

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<sup>71</sup> W. W. D. Sones, ‘The Comics and Instructional Method’, *Journal of Educational Sociology*, 18:4 (1944), 232-40 (p. 232).

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p. 238.

<sup>73</sup> Larry D. Dorrell, Dan B. Curtis, Kuldip R. Rampal, ‘Book-worms without books? Students reading comics in the school house’, *Journal of Popular Culture*, 29:2 (1995), 223-35 (p. 226).

<sup>74</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>75</sup> Examples include K. Haugaard, ‘Comic Books: Conduits to Culture?’ in *Reading Teacher*, 27 (1973), 54-55; B. Brocka, ‘Comic Books: in case you haven’t noticed, they’ve changed’, in *Media and Methods*, 15:9 (1979), 30-32; K. Koende, ‘The careful use of comic books’, in *Reading Teacher*, 34 (1981), 592-95.

<sup>76</sup> Gene Yang, ‘History of Comics in Education’, <<http://www.humblecomics.com/comicsedu/history/html>> [accessed 14 April 2011].

as Yang notes, neither the depth nor urgency of the 1940s work. It was not until the late 1980s that the pedagogical use of the medium was again investigated. Commentators such as Strum mark the turning point of this resurgence in interest in using comics in schools as the publication of *Maus* in 1986.<sup>77</sup> This work endowed the medium, now known as graphic novels instead of comic books, with credibility particularly when it was awarded a special Pulitzer Prize.

This rise in cultural status of the graphic novel has generated renewed interest in their potential for use in education. In the twenty-first century the educational value of the use of graphic novels to engage students is actively researched and promoted by education institutions. Research into the pedagogical use of graphic novels continues and focuses not only their use to improve reading skills but also as a means for gaining critical and analytical skills. The need for a new pedagogical approach to literacy was proposed by ‘The New London Group’ of academics in 1996 who argued that traditional language-based approaches to literacy was no longer appropriate for contemporary society.<sup>78</sup> They argued that the reading of multimedia texts required the use of a combination of skills from linguistics and art such as visual analysis, semiotics, film theory and iconography to decode the purpose of a text and the context of its production. In a society dominated by visual images they argued that the students must be taught the skills needed to understand how images worked. Mere exposure was not enough to enable people to decode and analyse media and so visual literacy should be included in formal education.

Graphic novels are promoted as a means for developing this visual literacy. As Schwarz proposes, with graphic novels a student must interpret the ‘visual elements of colour, shading, panel layout, perspective, and even lettering style which aids them to think critically about

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<sup>77</sup> Strum, James, ‘Comics in the Classroom’, *The Chronicles of Higher Education*, 05 April 2002, p. 14.

<sup>78</sup> The New London Group, ‘A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures’, *Harvard Educational Review*, 66:1 (1996), 60-92 (p. 61).

visual media'.<sup>79</sup> Educators such as Versaci also use graphic novels as a medium to develop analytical and critical thinking skills. The medium, he suggests, can encourage students to question their assumptions about literature itself and how artistic value is accorded to particular works or genres.<sup>80</sup> An example of research in this area is the Educomics project conducted in 2008. This was a European Union education project under the Life Long Learning Programme Comenius Action and investigated the 'added-value' of the use of printed and digital comics as an education medium.<sup>81</sup> The study included pilot programmes in a range of schools in Europe and covered a variety of subjects. It concluded that graphic novels were not merely an aid to reading but also provided an opportunity to develop different cognitive skills necessary for literacy in contemporary society.

Though advocates now promote the use of graphic novels for a wide range of subjects, particular focus has been given by education bodies to their use to influence the reading habits of young boys. Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) is a non-departmental public body funded by the Scottish Government and is responsible for reviewing the school curriculum, developing assessment and providing national guidance and advice. LTS recommend the use of graphic novels in general in education and provides guidance on the potential use in classrooms. LTS encourage the use of graphic novels as they state they can be important in encouraging reading amongst older students, particularly boys.<sup>82</sup> The Department of Schools and Families (DCSF) in the UK funded the 'Boys Into Books' research projects in 2005 and 2006 also concluded that graphic novels were an effective way of encouraging boys to read

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<sup>79</sup> Gretchen Schwarz, 'Graphic novels for Multiliteracies', *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacies*, (2002), <[http://www.readingonline.org/newliteracies/jaal/11-02\\_columln/](http://www.readingonline.org/newliteracies/jaal/11-02_columln/)> [accessed 19 November 2008].

<sup>80</sup> Rocco Versaci, 'How Comic Books Can Change the way our Students see Literature: One teacher's Perspective', *The English Journal*, 91:2 (2001), 61-67 (p. 63).

<sup>81</sup> State of the Art Comics in Education, Project Deliverable Report, <[http://www.educomics.org/material/deliverables/Deliverable1\\_StateoftheArt.pdf](http://www.educomics.org/material/deliverables/Deliverable1_StateoftheArt.pdf)> [accessed 26 September 2010].

<sup>82</sup> Mel Gibson, 'Graphic Novels Across the Curriculum', <<http://ltscotland.or.uk/resources/g/graphicnovels>>, p. 1. [accessed 15 May 2008].

and engaging them in education.<sup>83</sup> They concluded that graphic novels were more representative of the leisure reading done by boys aged from nine to fourteen years old. The International Boys' Schools Coalition (IBSC) has also investigated the use of graphic novels in education and concluded they were an effective means to engage boys in reading. One trial conducted by the IBSC specifically focused on the use of graphic novels to teach Shakespeare.

In 2005 the IBSC conducted a research project in which the Puffin Books manga edition of *Macbeth* was used to teach Shakespeare and the project report was presented at the annual conference in 2006. The classes involved were all comprised of boys but consisted of heterogeneous groups in regard to the individuals 'reading ability' and 'reading engagement'. The researchers concluded that graphic novels generally engaged boys in reading and

the visual dimension of the graphic novel value-added to the traditional word-only text by enhancing comprehension of language, plot, relationships between characters and the emotional state of the characters [...] the graphic novels provided scope for higher-order thinking and facilitated the development of skills in visual literacy.<sup>84</sup>

The response from the students included that graphic novels improved their understanding of *Macbeth* because 'the graphics were extremely detailed and painted vivid images' and the reader could 'see facial expressions and body movements [...] that portray emotions'.<sup>85</sup> The research concluded that graphic novels used for teaching Shakespeare's plays can be valuable but does caution that this is not a 'blanket solution' for disengagement in reading. The reason for this was that while the students agreed that they aided their understanding of the play the survey found that they were not enjoyed by all the boys.

The text used in this project was a manga edition illustrated by T. Tomai which located *Macbeth* in a futuristic setting, used abbreviated text and had black and white images. The

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<sup>83</sup> School Libraries Association, 'Riveting Reads plus Boys into Books', <<http://www.sla.org.uk/boys-into-books.php>> [accessed 10 June 2010].

<sup>84</sup> Di Laycock, 'IBSC Action Research Project 2005/2006 Middle School Team Report: How might graphic novels engage boys in school reading?', 1-36 (p. 35) <<http://www.ibsc.org/page.cfm?p=1290>> [accessed 12 December 2007].

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p. 31.

students exit survey results in the IBSC project indicated that no students had actually enjoyed reading the graphic novel edition of *Macbeth*, and over half the students stated that they did not enjoy it. The reasons for the lack of enjoyment focused on the artistic style of specific graphic novels and the inappropriateness of using a graphic novel to study Shakespeare.<sup>86</sup> The researchers concluded that the choice of the graphic novel to be used in the class was important as ‘black and white illustrations, the juxtaposition of futuristic images with traditional language, and the use of a contemporary format to study a traditional literary icon, all created problems for some students’.<sup>87</sup> The researchers do not specifically recommend more traditional renderings of the plays, such as using more historical settings, colour or highly detailed drawings, but it is implied in this conclusion.

LTS also specifically promotes the use of Shakespeare graphic novels to assist students in understanding and enjoying the reading of the plays. Their website includes SMH *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* Manga Shakespeare, Ian Pollack’s *King Lear*, Simon Greave’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Puffin Books Manga *Macbeth* and CC *Macbeth* as recommended for teaching Shakespeare. The report ‘Graphic Novels Across the Curriculum’ written by Dr. Mel Gibson and published on the LTS website includes the findings of her studies made in visits to schools in North-East England. Gibson states that ‘a graphic Shakespeare series was in use in most schools, with Oval Books [sic] Cartoon Shakespeare series editions of *Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth* being particularly effective’.<sup>88</sup> For the students and teachers referred to in Gibson’s report the issue of the inclusion of visual images was not seen as a cause for concern and that students found the graphic novels an aid in understanding Shakespeare by removing some of the associated difficulty of the plays. Gibson states that ‘Pupils were happy as they saw it as

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<sup>86</sup> Laycock, 1-36 (p. 32).

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p. 36.

<sup>88</sup> Gibson, ‘Graphic Novels Across the Curriculum’, p. 12.

‘cheating’, teachers happy because as these were the full text, they actually weren’t’.<sup>89</sup> The reason the teachers thought it was not cheating was because the students were reading the full text of the plays in original language rather than abbreviated or paraphrased texts.

Despite this research the use of graphic novels of Shakespeare’s plays in education and the manner in which they should be used is debated. Though Wetmore states, ‘each new youth-culture appropriation is quickly reappropriated by the educational or scholarly industries’ there are both financial and cultural barriers to the use of Shakespeare graphic novels in teaching.<sup>90</sup> Advocates such as Mel Gibson argue that the research supports the conclusion that they aid in understanding the plays. The graphic novels can also be seen as more democratic as they aid readers of various levels of ability to participate rather than Shakespeare’s plays remaining the preserve of the more able and engaged readers.

Conversely there is also significant concern from some commentators in the presentation of the plays in the medium. One of the key objections raised against using Shakespeare graphic novels in education are that the visual images provide a fixed interpretation of the play. This was reiterated by the criticisms made in the IBSC research of the use of graphic novels where some respondents stated that their enjoyment of *Macbeth* was reduced because of ‘the images prevented the use of one’s imagination’.<sup>91</sup> A respondent in the IBSC project also noted the potential for receiving a fixed meaning from the images and stated that some students ‘like to use our imaginations, and imagine characters in a way we prefer than being shown them’.<sup>92</sup> Mel Gibson also notes in the LTS report that some of the disadvantages of using visual representations of the plays such as film can ‘fix an image of a

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<sup>89</sup> Gibson, ‘Graphic Novels Across the Curriculum’, p. 12.

<sup>90</sup> Kevin Wetmore Jr. and Jennifer Hulbert ‘This Bard’s for You(th), or ‘Get over yourself Ophelia!’’, in *Shakespeare and Youth Culture*, ed. by Jennifer Hulbert, Kevin J. Wetmore Jr. and Robert L. York (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 221–30 (p. 227).

<sup>91</sup> Laycock, 1-36 (p. 33).

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p. 33.



particular character too firmly in the students' minds'.<sup>93</sup> The concern is that it is the pictures the student remembers rather than the words of the plays. Perret notes;

the power of pictures can become a problem unless the teacher leads the class to see the version differs from its source. Since for most of us sight is the dominant sense, the floundering student may remember what the comic book showed rather than what the playwright said.<sup>94</sup>

Though this objection has been raised when using other visual representations of the play for teaching, such as film, it is the materiality of the graphic novels that increases the anxiety about received interpretation. Perret states of graphic novels that 'as they are a printed media they allow time for the reader to grasp and savour the meaning of a particular phrase or image' which is a meaning generated by the interpretation of the illustrator rather than the student reader.<sup>95</sup>

Another barrier to extending the use of Shakespeare graphic novels in education is the historic cultural perception of the medium. Mel Gibson notes the cultural impediments which exist in introducing graphic novels to classrooms inherited from the history of reception of comic books. She states that graphic novels can be seen as 'somehow undermining literacy and morality'.<sup>96</sup> The medium itself was also raised as a concern by the IBSC researchers, though not as an expression of the concern for the corruption of the students but respondents in the study expressed concern for studying a traditional literary icon in a contemporary format.<sup>97</sup> The historic association of graphic novels with picture books and children's literature, or as an aid to less able readers, can inform the student's relationship with the material text. This concern was expressed by the students involved in the IBSC study and demonstrates the expectation of the students when they study Shakespeare. As a central figure in the literary canon there is almost a reverence attached to Shakespeare's texts and an

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<sup>93</sup> Rex Gibson, *Teaching Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 205.

<sup>94</sup> Perret, 'Note Just Condensation', 72-95 (p. 91).

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p. 92.

<sup>96</sup> Gibson, 'Graphic Novels Across the Curriculum', p. 1.

<sup>97</sup> Laycock, 1-36 (p. 33).

expectation that they are difficult and the language is challenging. By reading it as a graphic novel some students felt they were experiencing a less authentic Shakespeare and of lesser value than reading the text-only edition.

In both the IBSC report and in the LTS report the graphic novels were shown to aid in understanding of the plays themselves and to engage readers through the inclusion of the illustrations which provided guidance to the students. The final recommendation of the IBSC report stated that ‘graphic novels should not be considered as a replacement for the traditional text types, but rather as an additional tool’.<sup>98</sup> This use of the graphic novels as an adjunct to, rather than a replacement for, traditional text only critical editions is prevalent and informs the teaching materials produced by the publishers of Shakespeare graphic novels. Critics such as Isaac recommend use of illustrated editions as comparative tool where one version can be discussed with another.<sup>99</sup> Perret also suggests that the editions used in the classroom need to be ‘well-chosen’ and some are more use than others and cites the Classics Illustrated 1990 edition as superior to the 1950s edition.<sup>100</sup> She suggests that the graphic novel is an introduction to Shakespeare’s texts rather than a substitute for them. In making this judgment it is critical to remember that there is a wide variety of graphic novel editions. The demographic of the class and the attributes of the graphic novels needs to be assessed when using them as either a substitute or support for a text only edition.

Development of methodologies for their use in teaching assists in overcoming a barrier to the introduction of graphic novels and legitimising them as a medium in which to study Shakespeare. In publications such as *Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare’s Hamlet* published in 2002 and *Teaching the Graphic Novel*, methods for using graphic novels for

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<sup>98</sup> Laycock, 1-36 (p. 35).

<sup>99</sup> Megan Lynn Isaac, *Heirs to Shakespeare* (Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 2000), p. 20.

<sup>100</sup> Marion D. Perret, ‘More than Child’s Play’, in *Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare’s Hamlet*, ed. by Bernice W. Kilman (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2002), pp. 161-64 (p. 161).

teaching are discussed.<sup>101</sup> The reports produced by bodies such as LTS and IBSC also specifically deal with pedagogical approaches in using the texts. The graphic novel publishers also fill this need by providing teaching materials and suggestions which support the use of their editions in the classroom. SMH produce education aids including glossaries for the plays and plot summaries as well as a download pack to be used on electronic whiteboards. CC produce free downloads of classroom activities based on their graphic novels of the plays. These include the set sections of the play to be studied at Key Stage 3 in the three versions as well as no text versions of the images to be used in class exercises. The teaching material includes play synopses, definitions of literary terms and tasks to test the student's understanding of the sections. They also add entertainment to the education experience by including games and puzzles, colour in pages and sections such as 'Shakespeare's insults' to make the learning experience fun. CC also produces separate study guides for sale to aid students learning and educators teaching the plays. These educational aids augment the graphic novels and are an attempt to encourage and enable the use of the graphic novels in the education market.

The extent of the investment and effort made by the publishers of Shakespeare graphic novels to encourage the use of their editions in schools is indicative of how crucial the education sector is to achieve commercial success. The inclusion of Shakespeare in the curriculum ensures an ongoing market for sales and is the primary stimulus for the continuous development of new editions of the plays. Which plays are produced as graphic novels is dictated by the education market as publishers respond to changes in the plays included in the curriculum to ensure they have the products available to meet the requirements of this lucrative market. The concern for, and the competing claims of authenticity of the editions is

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<sup>101</sup> Bernice W. Kilman, *Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare's Hamlet* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2002); Stephen E. Tabachnick, *Teaching the Graphic Novel* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2009).

also driven by this market as publishers understand that educational credentials of the graphic novels is paramount in gaining acceptance as a pedagogical tool. Indeed it is difficult to conceive of a commercially successful Shakespeare graphic novel that is not linked to educational use.

The publishers' challenge is to meet the needs of this market segment which is primarily to 'conquer' Shakespeare and understand the plays. Increasingly there is also a pedagogical impetus to make learning Shakespeare fun to increase students' engagement with what is perceived to be difficult texts. With this in mind the editions are promoted as authentic representations of the plays which assist students in understanding the plays in a format which is attractive to this demographic. The development of cost effective alternatives such as electronic editions overcome the financial barrier to the wide spread use in the education sector leaving only the cultural perception of the medium to be resolved. The use of graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays in education is a self-reinforcing activity, the inclusion in such institutions increases the cultural value attributed to them and this in turn increases their acceptance as a legitimate mode of representing the plays.

## CHAPTER 6: THE COMPARISON OF THREE *TEMPESTS*

The adaptation of Shakespeare into graphic novels by different artists and editors provides an opportunity for comparative analysis of how the source material is used to create different interpretations of the plays in the medium. This chapter examines how the choices adapters make in editing and illustrating Shakespeare's works interpret the plays by comparing three recent versions of *The Tempest* in graphic novels. Included in this analysis are editions published by Classical Comics (CC) and Can of Worms Press (CWP) which highlight the colonial politics of the play. Also included is the SelfMadeHero (SMH) edition which emphasises the romantic aspects of the play. Key elements of these editions will be compared and contrasted in order to explore how the choices made by adapters can alter presentation and interpretation of the play. These include the scenography and illustrations style, the presentation of the text and how characterisation and emphasis on aspects of the play can infer different readings.

### I. Scenography and Style

#### Classical Comics

The illustrations of the CC edition of *The Tempest* are consistent with the house style of the publisher and are visually rich and detailed. These editions are aimed at the education market and employ an aesthetic reminiscent of the pictorial realism of the Victorian stage to promote their claims of authenticity. The detailed illustrations provide the reader with a fully realised scene emphasising the physical location of the play. Stylistically the images used in the CC edition of *The Tempest* are realistic, and the human characters, though to an extent exaggerated, are of approximate human proportions with detailed facial expressions that

convey the emotion of the dialogue. The island on which Prospero lives is depicted as a lush and fertile place with forest groves, waterfalls and abundant wild life. Haward's design of the island is an Arcadian landscape of natural wilderness, unspoiled by civilisation as is reflected in Gonzalo's view of the island as a land where 'nature should bring forth / Of its own kind all foison, all abundance' (2.1.163-164).<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 48:** Classical Comics, *The Tempest*, 2009, p. 49.

The play-text of *The Tempest* does not specify a particular historic period and in the CC edition Haward has used the costuming of the characters to invoke the Jacobean period in which the play was written with the male characters dressed in doublet and hose. Period costuming is a practice which functions to endow the graphic novel with a perceived historical accuracy. The use of these costumes and detailed settings adds to the realism of the story which can then be interpreted as taking place in the period of expansion of the British Empire with the discovery and settlement in new lands. This link is also noted in the paratextual material which cites the 1610 pamphlet *A Discovery of the Bermudas, other wise*

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<sup>1</sup> All line references are taken from William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by ed. by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1999)

*Called the Ile of Divels* as the source of Shakespeare's inspiration for the story.<sup>2</sup> The stereotypical exotic island paradise which Prospero rules also implies a rich conquest. His cell is illustrated with domestic furnishings, windows, and all the trappings of civilisation which show that he has imposed his will on this location.

In this graphic novel the illustrations dominate the page, and the action rather than the text is highlighted. The illustrations are heavily drawn with dark outlines that give solidity and force to the character and as McCloud notes it is a style which gives 'an awareness of the object as something with weight and physical presence'.<sup>3</sup> The backgrounds of the illustration are also highly detailed requiring the reader to pause the reading of the text in order to observe all of the elements of image. The complexity of the images calls the reader's attention to them and so the timing of the reading is dictated by the viewing of the images rather than by the text. The use of vivid colours also serves to produce a graphic novel where the artwork is visually striking and assumes prominence on the page. The images are framed in black or are unframed and often bleed to fill the edges of the page. This convention is used to imply space and emphasise that the story world is a fully realised location that extends beyond the border of the image.<sup>4</sup> Haward's illustrations focus on action with the characters and the background elements of the images such as birds, butterflies and spirits, often depicted in motion. The facial expressions and gestures of the characters are also exaggerated to add to the perceived emotional energy of the graphic novel.

This is exemplified in the sequence of illustrations of Prospero's vow to break his staff in Act 5 Scene 1 of the play shown in Figure 49. The entire space of the panels is filled with activity such as flying spirits and lightning. The tension of the scene is further heightened by the flaming circle Prospero stands inside and the expression on his face in the close up used in

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<sup>2</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, illustrated by Jon Haward, edited by John McDonald, colouring and lettering by Nigel Dobbyn (London: Classical Comics, 2009), p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: Kitchen Sink Press, 1993), p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 53.

the final illustration of the sequence. Haward's illustrations in the CC edition show this as a moment of decision rather than action and it is not until the last image of the graphic novel that the broken staff and drowned book are shown.

**Figure 49:** Classical Comics, *The Tempest*, Act 5 Scene 1.

The typography in the CC edition of *The Tempest* is entirely capitalised hand lettering, creating what Viguers described as 'visually insistent' speech.<sup>5</sup> That is, the effect of this font

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<sup>5</sup> Susan Viguers, 'King Lear as a Book: A Verbal/Visual Production', *The Shakespearean International Yearbook*, 4 (2004) 215-31 (p. 221). Also see Chapter 3 for discussion of typography.



design creates a constant strong note and which lacks the nuances of tone of actual speech. Though both the CC and CWP editions present the full text the CC edition is more heavily punctuated using significantly more exclamation marks than the CC edition. This gives the text a verbally as well visually heightened emotional tone and complements the bold illustrations and the aggression depicted in the images of the graphic novel. In breaking the text of this soliloquy across the whole sequence the word to image ratio is reduced. By placing the text in this scene in speech balloons the soliloquy is not a private meditation but an invocation spoken aloud by Prospero.

The illustrations of the characters in the CC edition of the play are clearly influenced by the 1992 *Animated Tales* version of the play.<sup>6</sup> In this puppet-animated film by Stanislav Sokolov the characters are costumed in doublet and hose referencing the historical period of the action. Just like the *Animated Tales* the CC graphic novel depicts Prospero in red breeches and hose with a jewel capped staff from which his magical power is emitted, Stephano is illustrated as overweight and with a bulbous red nose, Trinculo wears motley and Ariel is a white, winged human-like form, just as they are depicted in Sokolov's film. One specific aspect of the island setting in the *Animated Tales* which is repeated in the CC edition is the rocky landscape is sometimes illustrated in the form of a human face. Semenza notes that in Sokolov's adaptation these faces are barely indistinguishable from the landscape indicating that the island itself is animated with benign, natural spirits. He states the point of this 'is that nature is the true source of life' and are the source of 'the sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not'.<sup>7</sup> The CC edition also uses this when the eyes of the island spirits open and watch the intruders as they pass by. For Semenza, this acts to convey Caliban's side of the story by 'a comparison between Prospero's violent and unnatural artistry

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<sup>6</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest: The Animated Tales*, adapted by Leon Garfield, directed by Stanislav Sokolov, BBC Wales, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> Gregory M. Colón Semenza, 'Teens, Shakespeare, and the Dumbing Down Cliché: The Case of the Animated Tales', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 26: 2 (2008), 37-68 (p. 59).

on one hand, and the [...] the landscape itself, whose animating spirits are understood by and actually seem protective of Caliban, the island's true native'.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 50:** Classical Comics, *The Tempest*, 2009, showing human faces in the landscape, p. 74 and p. 86.

**Figure 51:** BBC, *The Tempest: The Animated Tales*.

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<sup>8</sup> Semenza, 37-68 (p. 60).

## Can of Worms Press

In contrast to the forested island of the CC edition, Grillo's illustrations in the CWP *The Tempest* show an island with an almost completely barren landscape. This is the opposite to Gonzalo's description of the island and instead reflects Antonio's and Sebastian's view of the island as lacking 'means to live' (2.1.53). Grillo's desolate landscape creates an impression of isolation from civilisation and the island is, as Adrian states, 'uninhabitable and almost inaccessible' (2.1.40).

**Figure 52:** Can of Worms Press, *The Tempest*, 2009, p. 43.

The idea of a harsh environment is also shown in the illustration of Prospero's cave which is empty of the furniture and objects of a home though he has been on the island for over twelve years. The cave mouth of Prospero's home is covered by a curtain and the only item in the cave is Prospero's magic cloak which, when it is removed by Miranda, is placed on the ground to sit on. By illustrating such a stark interior Grillo creates the impression of hardship and poverty in contrast to the domestic comfort shown in the CC edition. Prospero inhabits the island, rather than imposing his will on it, and it is an undesirable place.

Grillo's choice of costuming for the characters is stylised and implies an Early Modern

period in the attire of the nobility with ruffs and buckled shoes and the motley costume worn by Trinculo. However, the inclusion of the twentieth century costuming of Stephano disrupts the reading of the play in its historical context. Grillo has illustrated Stefano as W. C. Fields implying a connection between the characters of the butler of the play and the comedian. Fields was renowned for his portrayal of misanthropic, drunken characters and recognisable by his top hat and tails and bulbous nose. Using him as a template for Stefano references both the comic element of the character and his drunken state for the contemporary reader with this cultural knowledge. Trinculo is illustrated wearing the motley hat of a jester but is a caricature of Woody Allen. He is carrying a staff on which is the head of Groucho Marx, complete with cigar in mouth. Grillo's inclusion of these twentieth-century cultural references in his adaptation plays on the reader's 'double access' to both high and popular culture in order to decode the images.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 53:** Can of Worms Press, *The Tempest*, 2009, Trinculo and Stefano, p. 67.

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<sup>9</sup> Jostein Gripsrud, 'High Culture Revisited', *Cultural Studies*, 3:2 (1989), 194-207 (p.199).

The CWP edition of *The Tempest* employs a very different illustration style than the CC edition in representing the play. Grillo's illustrations in the CWP edition are less defined and sparse with little background detail, and the characters are lightly sketched in a more painterly style. Grillo also uses pale muted colours in his panels in contrast to the solid and bright colours of the CC illustrations. The composition of the panels in the CWP edition generally depicts characters at a distance in the frame and there are few close ups. For the reader this diminishes the communication of the emotional responses of the characters as their facial features cannot be clearly distinguished in the illustrations. The less realistic illustrations and simplification of the characters creates what McCloud suggests is an amplification of meaning because attention is focussed on the idea rather than the detail as is the case with intricate illustrations.<sup>10</sup> The lack of detail of the background and characters causes the reader to focus on the dialogue rather than the illustrations. The reader is not distracted or slowed by the need to take in the detail of the visual image in much the same way a bare stage for a theatrical performance of the play focuses the audience attention on the actors on the stage.

The softening of the colour palette in the CWP edition makes the illustrations less visually striking and, instead of the images dominating the page, it is the large speech balloons that become the most prominent visual feature of the graphic novel. The speech balloons create white space within the frames, generally taking up the top third of the entire illustration. The white space, combined with the muted colours of the illustrations draws the reader's eye to the speech balloons and so highlights the text rather than the image. The outcome of this structure is that it is the text and its spatial layout rather than the illustration of the graphic novel that dictates the pace of reading. The CWP edition uses type set, lower case letters and a clear font for the text which produces a more literary representation of the words. Bold font is used only to convey exclamations in the text and so creates a more subdued range

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<sup>10</sup> McCloud, p. 27.

of tone more in keeping with the subtle muted illustrations of the graphic novel.

The literary nature of the source text is emphasised in the illustration of Act 5 Scene 1 in the CWP edition where Grillo chooses to use only one frame to present the action as shown in Figure 42. He dispenses with the common stage direction for Prospero to draw a circle and includes all of Prospero's soliloquy at 5.1.34-57 in a single frame. The text appears on what looks like a scroll of paper that dominates the panel. This layout of the text also retains the verse structure of the play-text highlighting it to the reader as a significant moment in the play and directing the reader to approach it as poetry rather than dialogue.<sup>11</sup> As the text is not in a speech balloon, it is thought by Prospero rather than spoken, and in contrast to the CC edition it becomes a private meditation. Prospero himself is shown as only a small figure in the corner of the panel standing on a cliff and throwing his book into the sea. The sparse detail of the image does not require the reader to linger over it and it is the reading of the text which dictates the timing of the panel. Here Grillo has interpreted this as a moment of action rather than decision. For Grillo the breaking of the staff is rhetorical rather than actual and the final illustration of the graphic novel shows Prospero standing with his staff in hand.

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<sup>11</sup> See Chapter 4 for discussion of lineation in graphic novels.

**Figure 54:** Can of Worms Press, *The Tempest*, 2009, Act 5 Scene 1, p. 117.

## **SelfMadeHero**

The location of the action in the SMH Manga Shakespeare edition of *The Tempest* is described as being in the twenty-first century after an energy crisis ‘has plunged mankind into a second Dark Age’.<sup>12</sup> The choice of the location was selected by the illustrator Paul Duffield but was also dictated by the publisher who required that all editions in the Manga Shakespeare series were either set in the future or in an imaginary place. The illustration of the island shows derelict buildings, rusted pipe work, and broken overhead cables indicating that in the past it was a place of industry but its human inhabitants have now abandoned it. Duffield stated that the general idea behind the setting of the play was that ‘humanity has reduced itself to a more feudal system [...] in this setting, technology can be seen as a kind of sorcery, kept

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<sup>12</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, illustrated by Paul Duffield, edited by Richard Appignanesi (London: SelfMadeHero, 2007), back cover.

alive by a few knowledgeable people seen as sorcerers'.<sup>13</sup> Derelict oil pumps and felled forests feature in the background of several illustrations throughout the text as the remnants of a failed society.

**Figure 55:** SelfMadeHero, *The Tempest*, 2007, p. 57.

Rather than the rich island paradise of the CC edition, or the barren outcrop of the CWP edition, the SMH Manga Shakespeare locates the action in a place damaged by man and uses this to highlight the failings of civilisation. By using this setting the SMH edition makes claims as to the relevance of the play to contemporary concerns of the human impact on the environment such as climate change. The costuming of the characters is a mixture of styles and periods that the illustrator used 'to give the idea that this could be anywhere and anytime to add to the mystical feel of the play'.<sup>14</sup> Though Duffield states the costumes were intended to produce an eclectic production design, the paratext and setting works against this intention and instead produces a period analogue directing the reader to approach the text through this futuristic setting.

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<sup>13</sup> Paul Duffield, 'Email Interview' to Margaret Roper, 01 January 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Duffield, 'E-mail Interview', 01 January 2009.



The SMH edition of *The Tempest* uses the illustration style commonly associated with manga where the human characters are stylised rather than realistic. The backgrounds of the images are not detailed and it is the characters rather than the scenery that dominate the pictures. Like the CWP edition, the lack of detail in the images does not require a pause in the reading in order to take in the detail of the illustration. This illustration style combined with an abbreviated text, and pronounced use of wordless panels, increases the speed of reading creating the fast pace characteristic of the manga form. The action of the visual narrative is created by use of a montage of illustrations of the characters from constantly shifting points of view, in a variety of panel shapes and sizes which adds to the visual energy of the graphic novel.<sup>15</sup> The SMH *The Tempest* depicts many close-up images of the characters or portions of their bodies such as the hands or eyes rather than the distant images and long shots used by Grillo in the CWP edition. The effect of this is that character and emotion of the play is highlighted by focussing the reader on the expressions and gestures. The dominance of character over setting makes the relationships between the characters, rather than the physical action of the play, the focal point of the narrative.

The use of montage in SMH rendering of *The Tempest* is exemplified in the visual narrative which illustrates Act 5 Scene 1 on the play. The text is significantly reduced in comparison to the CC and CWP editions but this sequence is spread over four pages. Prospero is first shown holding his staff as a wind swirls around him shown by the motion lines and leaves in the air indicating the supernatural power contained in the moment. The following six illustrations show different aspects of him drawing a circle on the ground, viewed from a variety of distances and points of view. The supernatural energy is again communicated by the background waves and the flames which rise from the circle. The next illustration shows Prospero in a passive stance holding his staff before him whilst the sun behind him casts his

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<sup>15</sup> See Chapter 3 for use of montage in manga.

shadow across the ground. The use of the long shot here and the absence of movement create an image of quiet contemplation in comparison to the aggression of the CC illustration of the scene. The text is not contained in speech balloons which indicate the words are thought rather than spoken again adding to the impression of peace. The close up of Prospero's hands on the staff and the wordless panel showing the broken staff focuses the reader on the emotional significance of the action.

**Figure 56:** SelfMadeHero, *The Tempest*, 2007, Act 5 Scene 1, pp. 168-72.

The final image of the sequence depicts Prospero's book, which is in fact a copy of the graphic novel the reader is holding, descending in the calm sea away from the sun and towards darkness. The 'silence' of the panels and the lack of focus on Prospero himself create a gentle rather than aggressive renunciation of his throwing off of his 'rough magic'. Duffield's rendering of this scene is a literal translation of the words of the text as action rather than as resolution made by Prospero.

The illustration of this scene in the three different graphic novel editions of *The Tempest* indicate the way in which the stylistic approach of the adapters creates different moods and emphasis. The CC edition with its bold and colourful realistic illustrations draws attention to the action of the play, and the detailed images cause the reader to focus on the images rather than the text. The CWP edition with its muted colours, stylised characters and long shots of the barren landscape insists on the imaginary nature of the play and gives prominence to the text which dominates the illustrations in the panels. In the SMH edition the futuristic setting points to the dangers and failures of civilisation imposing its will over the natural world. The use of montage, close ups and wordless panels produces a more intimate drama which accentuates the emotional responses of the characters. Therefore the stylistic choices and the genre affect the representation of the play and the prominence of text versus image. The choices made in the illustrations can also be used to convey the adapter's interpretation of the main themes of the play.

## **II. Postcolonial and the Romantic *Tempests***

In the last decades of the twentieth century adaptations and critical responses to *The Tempest* can be broadly divided into two basic themes. Lanier describes these as one that emphasises the charming qualities of the play 'its fantasy and romantic elements and

benevolent tone’ and one that ‘focuses on the troubling legacies of colonial and patriarchal politics’.<sup>16</sup> The relationship between Ferdinand and Miranda is the focal point of the adaptations which interpret the play in the romantic mode. In this paradigm Prospero is portrayed as the benevolent father figure and the supernatural elements of the play are accentuated. The postcolonial interpretation interrogates the narrative of the relationship between Prospero, as the coloniser of the island, and Caliban, as the indigenous inhabitant who is dispossessed and subjugated. The tension between these characters in the play is explored through the relationship between that of master and servant. Vaughan and Vaughan note the prevalence of this interpretation in the twentieth century and state that though Caliban is to some literary critics ‘still a monster or benevolent wild man, he is now most frequently symbolizes the exploited native[...]who struggles for freedom, dignity, and self-determination’.<sup>17</sup> These two broad strands of interpretation, the romantic and the postcolonial, can be seen in the three editions of graphic novels of *The Tempest* examined in this chapter. The CC and CWP explicitly, and implicitly, produce a postcolonial interpretation of the play whereas the SMH edition focuses on the romantic and relationship aspects of the play. In theatrical performances Caliban has been played as: ‘(1) a fish, (2) a dog with one or two heads, (3) a lizard, (4) a monkey, (5) a snake, (6) half-ape, half-man, with fins for arms, (7) a tortoise’.<sup>18</sup> The description of Caliban in the dramatis personae of the Folio as ‘a savage and deformed slave’ does not specify his physical form as either human or bestial. It is in the text of the play that adapters have found the basis of their visual representation of Caliban using references such as ‘monster’, ‘moon-calf’, ‘fish’, ‘deformed’, and ‘disproportioned’.

More recently, Caliban has also been played as human figure in theatrical productions

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<sup>16</sup> Douglas Lanier, ‘The *Tempest* in Popular Culture’, in *The Tempest: Shakespeare in Performance*, ed. by David Bevington and Peter Holland (London: Methuen, 2008), pp. 33–48 (p. 33).

<sup>17</sup> Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Shakespeare’s Caliban, A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. xxii.

<sup>18</sup> David Suchet, ‘Caliban in *The Tempest*’ in *Players of Shakespeare I*, ed. by Philip Brockbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 167–79 (p. 185).

of the play which presents *The Tempest* as a critique of European imperialism and colonisation.<sup>19</sup> Regardless of the physical form he takes, Caliban can be attributed with human emotions or the wild behaviour of an animal in the illustrations.

In the graphic novels the illustrator's decision in the depiction of Caliban as recognisably human or as bestial affects the interpretation of the character as either a monster which must be controlled, or a deposed native of the island who is a victim of colonisation. Vaughan and Vaughan note that representations of Caliban have changed over time and in the late seventeenth century he was 'a pure monster' in keeping with the era's concern of the distinction between savagery and civility.<sup>20</sup> In the eighteenth century, he continued to be a 'personification of various vices but here and there a hint of potential virtue crept in'. The Romantics saw Caliban as natural and was often portrayed as the missing link following Darwin's theory of evolution.<sup>21</sup> However, it is not merely the physical appearance of Caliban in the graphic novels that dictates the interpretation of him as human or animal, it is also informed by the extent to which recognisably human emotions are attributed to the character. It is the expression of emotion by Caliban that allows the reader to empathise with his point of view of events. Similarly, the artist's choice in how to present Prospero interprets the character. Prospero can be illustrated as a benign paternal figure or alternatively as a powerful magician and aggressive tyrant through his physical appearance and actions.

The CC edition of *The Tempest* depicts Prospero as a bearded man with long flowing hair who is dressed in colourful cape and an elaborate Jacobean period costume of breeches and stockings. He is introduced in the first image of the graphic novel conjuring the storm which tosses the ship on the waves shown in Figure 57. Prospero is in the foreground of the

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<sup>19</sup> For example the 2009 production directed by Janice Honeyman and coproduced by the RSC and the Baxter Theatre company of South Africa represented Caliban as the indigenous human inhabitant of the land subjugated by the coloniser Prospero. For further examples and detailed summaries of theatrical productions of the play see Christine Dymkowski, *The Tempest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; repr. 2005)

<sup>20</sup> Vaughan and Vaughan, *Shakespeare's Caliban*, p. xxii.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. xxii.

illustration and points his staff with a glowing crystal tip towards the sea in a pose of energy directed towards the ship. From this illustration the supernatural powers of Prospero are highlighted and the staff is shown as the conduit for that power. Haward uses a heavily detailed realistic style where Prospero's dark hair, heavy features and broad physical build typify him as powerful and aggressive rather than a benign elder figure.

**Figure 57:** Classical Comics, *The Tempest*, Introduction of Prospero, p. 1.

This style also sets reader expectation so when Caliban is depicted the idea of 'other' is judged against how closely he resembles a human being, not only visually, but his human qualities are also judged by this comparison. In this CC edition the illustrator Haward has chosen to depict Caliban as a crouched, scaled creature with glowing red eyes, bearing no resemblance to the human form. There is a significant difference between Caliban and human beings and Caliban is clearly 'other'.

In the CC edition Haward also elects to show Caliban in Act 1 Scene II prior to his

introduction in the play-text itself. The illustration is of a view from inside Prospero's cave with Prospero and Miranda at the entrance of the cave standing in light; their backs are to the reader as Prospero tells Miranda of the treachery of his brother in deposing him as the Duke of Milan.

**Figure 58:** Classical Comics, *The Tempest*, p. 21.

In the foreground of the picture is Caliban in the shadows of the cave, watching the exchange through red glowing eyes. He is shown as a hunched creature with barnacles on his scaled muscular arms and has long sharp talons. Caliban's back is covered by a shell, a visual translation of Prospero calling him a 'tortoise' (1.2.317). Rather than being a criticism of his slowness to respond to Prospero's command by the adapter's choice in illustration it now becomes an insult of his physical form. This, Vaughan and Vaughan argue, is a misreading of the text which became a popular way of illustrating Caliban in the nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup> The placement of him as an unobserved viewer of the scene hidden within Prospero's home

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<sup>22</sup> Vaughan and Vaughan, *Shakespeare's Caliban*, p. 13.

creates a feeling of threat. He is not included in the conversation, or known to be present, and so he is an outsider and intruder in the family unit.

The bestial nature of Caliban is also reinforced by the illustrations in the CC edition which highlight his animal behaviour. The illustrator has chosen to visually present the action of the words ‘I must eat my dinner’ (1.2.332) by including a frame in which Caliban is shown laying on the ground reaching out for a tortoise that is walking past him shown in Figure 45. The background shows the hem of Prospero’s cloak so Caliban is on the ground before him which reinforces the power relationship between the two characters and the dominant position of Prospero. The next panel is wordless and shows a close up image of Caliban clasping the tortoise in his taloned hand and biting the head off it with blood spraying from his mouth. The onomatopoeia ‘CRUNCH!’ in the panel emphasises the brutal nature of the action. As Caliban has been illustrated with the features of a tortoise this action also implies a form of cannibalism and so further emphasises the divide between human and animal, and civilisation and barbarism.

**Figure 59:** Classical Comics, *The Tempest*, 2009, p. 33.



However, other illustrations of Caliban in the CC edition complicate the simplistic image of a monster by attributing human qualities to him. This shows an interpretation of the play which is imposed by the illustrator and not stated in the play-text itself. For example, as Prospero recalls his release of Ariel from the tree where Ariel was imprisoned by Sycorax (1.2.277-84) images of the narrated story are shown. Caliban is illustrated in one frame looking at the skeleton of his dead mother as tears roll from his eyes. In the next frame he is shown walking away from the skeleton, the use of the overhead long-shot highlighting his isolation until he meets Prospero in the next frame of the sequence.

**Figure 60:** Classical Comics, *The Tempest*, p. 31.

This display of the recognisably human emotions of grief, loss and isolation invites the reader to empathise with Caliban and so experience the illustrated events from his point of view. This is crucial in interpreting the relationship between Caliban and Prospero as through the illustration of the back story he is no longer simply an animal but a creature endowed with human emotions.

The language of oppression in the text is mirrored in the illustration of oppression in the CC edition. The status of Caliban as a ‘slave’ controlled by threats of supernatural curses is explicit in the text, and in the illustrations he is also subject to physical violence. The first interaction that is shown between Prospero and Caliban in the CC edition emphasises the

nature of their relationship and is shown in Figure 61. When Caliban emerges from his cave at Prospero's command he stands upright, defiantly cursing Prospero. Prospero is shown striking Caliban to the chin with his staff, the large onomatopoeia in the frame and the broad motion marks convey the strong force of the blow as Caliban's head is thrown back. The illustrator shows the view from behind Caliban so the focal point in the image is furrowed brow and eyes of Prospero to focus on the aggression of the action and placing the reader in front of the blow of the staff.

**Figure 61:** Classical Comics, *The Tempest*, p. 35.

Though illustrated as physically stronger than Prospero it is Prospero's supernatural powers and the threats of violence that prevent Caliban from retaliating after this assault. Caliban is also subject to physical assault by Trinculo. In the illustrations of Act 3 Trinculo is shown kicking him on the back of the head after he has been shown licking the shoe of Stephano. This episode highlights Caliban's humiliation and his subjugation by the men he has adopted as his new masters.

This graphic novel depicts what Vaughan and Vaughan call 'Prospero's unravelling' in

recent productions where they note he is ‘no longer all-wise and benevolent, the modern Prospero is troubled by anxiety and anger [...] he shows little patience or sensitivity with Ariel, Miranda or Caliban’.<sup>23</sup> Besides his physical attack on Caliban the CC edition also depicts Prospero pushing Miranda away, using magic to make her pet monkey disappear and raising his staff in threat to Ariel. These illustrations are in sharp contrast to the description of Prospero in the paratext in the CC edition as ‘a caring, brilliant and learned father with magical powers’.<sup>24</sup>

The inconsistency of Haward’s characterisation of Caliban in the CC edition is also shown in the first splash page of the Epilogue where there is a significant change in the depiction of Caliban. Prospero has broken his staff indicating that his power over Caliban and the island are at an end. Caliban stands on the rock where Prospero stood in the first image of the graphic novel which had been the site of display of his power in creating the tempest. Caliban is illustrated in the stereotypical pose of the conqueror, upright for the first time in the graphic novel and looking out to the distance with his spear in hand. It is an image of power and self-determination and is the archetypical depiction of the noble savage. The coloniser is leaving the island and it is reclaimed by the indigenous owner of the land emphasising the postcolonial interpretation of the play.

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<sup>23</sup> Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Vaughan and Vaughan, p. 118.

<sup>24</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, illustrated by Jon Haward, edited by John McDonald, colouring and lettering by Nigel Dobbyn (London: Classical Comics, 2009), p. 137.

**Figure 62:** Classical Comics, *The Tempest*, Caliban after exit of Prospero, p. 128.

In Oscar Gillo's illustrations in the CWP edition the human figures are more stylised than the CC edition with lighter lines and disproportionately large hands and feet. This produces less realistic representations of characters. Prospero is drawn as a bearded, bald and thin elderly man and so is less physically imposing than the CC depiction. The costume he wears is less symbolic than that of the CC character and this Lindley notes emphasises his humanity at the expense of his magic powers and 'is a much more realistic representation of the clothes of a man cast away for 12 years'.<sup>25</sup> He appears frail with age and weak, which is also in contrast to his portrayal in the CC edition as a physically imposing character. The first image of Prospero is similar to the CC interpretation and shows Prospero standing on a rock at the edge of the sea of white capped waves with his cloak billowing in the wind behind him. He points at the sea with a greatly exaggerated hand so showing that it is he who is causing

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<sup>25</sup> David Lindley, *The Tempest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 55.

the storm at sea. This characterisation of Prospero as physically slight and in ragged costume with long grey beard does not imply he is physically threatening or aggressive.

**Figure 63:** Can of Worms Press, *The Tempest*, 2009, Introduction of Prospero, p. 6.

Though the illustration in the CWP edition of Caliban is once again as an obviously non-human character he is also drawn in the same indefinite style. Grillo's treatment of Caliban in the CWP edition is signalled in Hazlitt's analysis which is included in the introductory paratext of the graphic novel. Hazlitt states that in Caliban 'the poet here shows us the savage with the simplicity of a child, and makes the strange monster amiable' and that he was an earthy character 'whose deformity whether of body or mind is redeemed by the power and truth of the imagination displayed in it'.<sup>26</sup> Rather than being a savage and aggressive beast Caliban is for Hazlitt a creature of nature 'whose figure acquires a classical dignity' when compared to the drunken behaviour of Trinculo and Stefano.<sup>27</sup>

Unlike the muscular Caliban of the CC edition, the illustrator of the CWP edition has chosen to represent him as a far more fragile creature, thin, and naked except for a loin cloth.

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<sup>26</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, adapted by Oscar Grillo (London: Can of Worms Press, 2009), p. iii.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p. i.

Caliban also has a short rope around his neck implying that he was at one time restrained by Prospero and may be again in the future. He is introduced in a wordless panel which follows Ariel's textual introduction of him as 'Caliban, her son' (1.2.284) shown in Figure 49. The illustration is of a green creature wearing a crown of teeth and crouching on all fours holding a fish in his mouth in a pose is reminiscent of a dog holding a bone.

**Figure 64:** Can of Worms Press, *The Tempest*, 2009, Caliban, p. 20.

The idea of the dog like creature is further enforced by the many illustrations which show Caliban with a lolling tongue and only rarely is he illustrated walking upright. He is shown lapping the water and cherries given to him by Prospero from a bowl in the same way an animal would drink. Caliban is also not illustrated displaying recognisably human emotions. By denying Caliban the physical and emotional expression of human qualities the reader sees him as a creature of nature who is the disinherited indigenous owner of the land. Though he is an animal, he is not a physically threatening or violent creature who has been domesticated by the coloniser of the island to serve him. The effect of this stylistic choice is that the dynamic between Prospero and Caliban is different than that of the CC edition of the play.

The relationship between Prospero and Caliban in the CWP edition is virtually free of

the physical threat implicit in the characterisation, and explicit in the violence shown, in the CC edition. It is through the words of the text rather than the illustrations that the relationship of master and servant is expressed. It is in the final illustration, shown in Figure 50, that the postcolonial reading is reinforced and this final image occurs after the end of the play-text. In a cameo Caliban is shown with a gleeful smile and lolling tongue, gaze directed at the reader, feasting on shellfish. The rope which was once tied around his neck is gone and his subjugation is at an end and he has attained the freedom of his natural state before the colonisation by Prospero.

**Figure 65:** Can of Worms Press, *The Tempest*, 2009, Final image of Caliban after exit of Prospero, p. 134.

The SMH Manga Shakespeare edition of *The Tempest* varies stylistically and textually from the CC and CWP editions. The focus of the SMH edition is on the romantic relationship between Miranda and Ferdinand and the supernatural powers at work on the island rather than a postcolonial reading of the play. The cover of SMH Manga Shakespeare edition features

Prospero with his staff in hand as he looks down upon Ferdinand and Miranda who are clasping hands. Here the romantic relationship between the young couple is highlighted immediately and their defensive pose implies that there is some danger they must overcome together. The illustrator, Paul Duffield, stated that he was unaware of the critical theory and analysis of the play from a postcolonial perspective and had not considered the play in this way, and his illustration choices reflect this.<sup>28</sup> Duffield stated that the key of the play for him was the repair of the damaged relationships between the characters of Prospero and his brother Antonio. This healing was primarily signified by the romantic relationship between Miranda and Ferdinand.

The first image of Prospero in the SMH graphic novel is of him standing with Miranda watching the ship tossed in the tempest in a mirror shown in Figure 51. Prospero is illustrated with grey receding hair neatly tied back in a long plait; he has a trimmed beard and wears a hooded robe. The image is that of calm control and paternal compassion as he looks at Miranda who is upset by the image of the ship in the storm that she sees in the mirror.

**Figure 66:** SelfMadeHero, *The Tempest*, 2007, first image of Prospero, p. 17.

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<sup>28</sup> Paul Duffield, 'E-mail Interview', 01 January 2009.



The SMH introduction of Prospero is therefore very different to those shown in the CC and CWP editions, where he is illustrated as a magician wielding his power. In the SMH edition Prospero is introduced as a father, his magical powers are not on display, which signals that the familial relationship is central to this interpretation. This representation of Prospero as a benign figure is an older convention in the theatre which has largely been replaced by an ‘irascible’ Prospero who Lindley notes has dominated the stage for the last forty years.<sup>29</sup> In the first scene of the graphic novel it is illustrations of close ups of Miranda which dominates the pages which signals her centrality to the interpretation of the play. Duffield’s characterisation of Miranda is childlike and demure and she is not sexualised through physical exaggeration or by her costume. The text retains the references to her virgin status and the threat of rape by Caliban and the illustrations emphasise her innocence and the patriarchal protectiveness of Prospero.

Caliban in the SMH edition more closely resembles human form than in the CC and CWP representations. He is introduced in the *dramatis personae* not as the ‘savage and deformed slave’ as in the Folio, but as ‘a witch’s son and Prospero’s slave’ emphasising his subjugated status rather than his physical form.<sup>30</sup> He is depicted more in the Darwinian school of Caliban illustrations and is of human form but with pointed ears and fangs and a body covered in fur.

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<sup>29</sup> Lindley, p. 46.

<sup>30</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, illustrated by Paul Duffield, edited by Richard Appignanesi (London: SelfMadeHero, 2007), p. 6.

**Figure 67:** SelfMadeHero, *The Tempest*, 2007, Caliban, p. 110.

Caliban is introduced firstly as an immature creature with large innocent eyes crouched at the tree where Ariel is imprisoned with a look of confused concern. The first image of the mature Caliban emerging from his cave at Prospero's command is more muscular, with taloned hands and scowling. Throughout the text he is never illustrated either feeding or enacting violence, even his meeting with Trinculo and Stephano is more of childlike innocence and naivety rather than the abusive relationship shown in the CC edition.

In this abridged edition of the play the selection of what text to include also influences the romantic reading of the play. The romantic aspect of the play is emphasised by the inclusion of most of the dialogue between Ferdinand and Miranda in the play-text in particular in Act 3 Scene 1. This scene is illustrated over eleven pages and the images are predominantly of Miranda and Ferdinand embracing as shown in Figure 53.

**Figure 68:** SelfMadeHero, *The Tempest*, 2007, p. 120.

These also include close-ups of their faces as they look at one another and a full page image of the young couple gazing into each other's eyes. The use of the close ups focuses on the emotion of the scene rather than the text and by extending the text over so many pages the importance of the relationship in this representation of the play is emphasised. Kastan argues that *The Tempest* is obviously more about European dynastic concerns than European colonial activities and that Prospero's engineering of this relationship is driven by a desire to secure power in Milan.<sup>31</sup> However, Duffield's illustrations imply Prospero's motivation is not dynastic control but paternal concern for the happiness and future of his daughter.

As the romantic aspect of the play is also emphasised, the focus on the relationship between Prospero and Caliban is reduced. Caliban's dialogue is heavily abridged as are the

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<sup>31</sup> David Scott Kastan, 'The Duke of Milan/and his Brave Son', in *Shakespeare's Romances*, ed. by Alison Thorne (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 226-45 (p. 231).

scenes in which he appears and so his voice and actions are limited to furthering the plot. This grants Caliban only a functional voice and does not explore his relationship with Prospero. This also diminishes the postcolonial reading in favour of the romantic aspects of the play by reducing the focus on the subjugation and dispossession of Caliban.

The romantic aspects of the text are also emphasised by the spatial layout given to the dialogue. For example Act 2 Scene 1 has over 200 of the 330 lines of the scene expunged. The dialogue that remains conveys the key plot points of the scene, that is, the King and his party have landed safely on the island, they are separated from the Prince, they are subject to the magical spells of Ariel and Antonio and Sebastian plot to kill the King. However, in this heavily edited scene the editor of the text has chosen to include all sixteen lines of Gonzalo's speech describing how he would rule the island as natural paradise where 'nature should bring forth all abundance to feed my innocent people' ( 2.1.148-57, 2.1.160-65). This speech of an imagined Utopia, which is seemingly inconsequential in communicating the plot of the play, is laid out over three pages. The illustrations feature a splash page with the idealised scenes of men and women and children at play with images of Gonzalo's face peaceful and placid in the corners of the frame. These pages provide a respite from the forward movement of the plot and so carry significance. This, set in context with the location of the play in a post-apocalyptic world, emphasises the healing of society by compassionate rule and serves to accentuate Duffield's focus on the healing of the relationships between the characters.

**Figure 69:** SelfMadeHero, *The Tempest*, pp. 80-81.

Here Duffield's handling of the scene adds to the romantic reading of the play by, as Kieran Ryan suggests, inviting the reader 'to recognise and play experimentally with imaginative alternatives, which strengthen our conviction that a different kind of world could actually be realised'.<sup>32</sup> Similarly the blessing of Miranda and Ferdinand's union by Ceres, Iris and Juno in Scene 4:1, though abridged, is illustrated over four pages. This does not move the plot forward but instead it focuses on the romantic love of the young couple with Juno's blessing of 'Honour, riches, long continuance, hourly joys be still upon you' (4.1.106-7). The landscape of derelict buildings is replaced by grass and trees, and flowers bloom around the feet of Ceres as she approaches. The bounty of nature is aligned with the young couple and through their love there is hope for healing of the past and the creation of a new future. The images recall the pastoral romance tropes of innocence and harmony in nature in contrast to the corruption and decay caused by civilisation. In Duffield's adaption of *The Tempest* not

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<sup>32</sup> Kieran Ryan, 'Shakespearean Comedy and Romance', in *Shakespeare's Romances*, ed. by Alison Thorne (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 27-53 (p. 31).

only can Prospero, the rightful Duke of Milan, be restored through the union of Ferdinand and Miranda but there is hope for the renewal of the land itself.

It is through the combination of images and text that the adapters of graphic novels can interpret *The Tempest* as either a critique of colonialism or as a pastoral romance. In the CC and CWP editions the colonial politics are emphasised. With its bold, realistic illustrations the CC edition locates the action in the seventeenth century at the time of colonial expansion and also encourages a colonial reading by focusing on the power relationship between Caliban and Prospero. Haward depicts an aggressive Prospero who imposes his will on the island and dominates the native Caliban through supernatural powers and physical violence. Though Caliban is illustrated as obviously bestial he is also shown expressing human emotions and so invites the reader to empathise with his oppressed status. The CWP also emphasises the power relationship between Prospero and Caliban. Grillo's illustrations show through the implied restraint and dog-like behaviour of Caliban that he is controlled by Prospero. In contrast the SMH edition downplays this reading by heavily editing Caliban's dialogue and presenting a calm and paternal Prospero rather than an aggressive magician. The romantic aspect of the place is accentuated by the focus on the relationship between Miranda and Ferdinand as a symbol of renewed hope in the future. Images of the young couple dominate the graphic novel and the graphic novel is free of illustrations of aggression or violence. Duffield's setting of the play in a land that has been damaged by industrialisation is juxtaposed with his illustrations of an imagined island paradise which could be achieved by man working in harmony with nature and each other. The focus of the play is on healing the relationships between Prospero and the Milanese court, and man and nature, symbolised through the union of Ferdinand and Miranda. These editions of *The Tempest* demonstrate that the adapters of Shakespeare's plays in graphic novels do not merely repeat the works but using the combination of images and text produce radically different and unique interpretations.

## CONCLUSION

The objective of this thesis was to examine the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays into the graphic novel medium. Using examples of comic books and graphic novels produced over the last sixty years questions raised about the adaptation of Shakespeare's play-texts, including how the plays are presented and what are the influences on styles of presentation, have been addressed. This thesis has also explored how the narrative capacities of the medium have been used and developed over time, as well as the commercial influences on the comic books and graphic novel adaptations.

The graphic novel medium is comprised of 'juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequences intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer'.<sup>1</sup> The Shakespeare graphic novels are an example of transmedial adaptation where the play-text is transposed from a medium which uses language only to a multichannel medium which uses illustrations and language. The two narrative channels of images and language have different limitations and possibilities in creating a narrative. The multi-channel nature of the medium overcomes some of the limitation of language and images alone and uses the conventions of the medium to construct a narrative.<sup>2</sup> The images can aid in negating some of the limitations of play-text alone by showing characters and settings and communicating emotion through typification, typography, colour and panel shape. Sequential images in the graphic novels overcome some of the limitations of single illustrations in expressing causality by presenting the past and future of an image. The text within the images and included in banners aids the reader and serves to contextualise the image so limiting and directing the understanding of the reader. The presence of the text and image together create

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<sup>1</sup> Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: Kitchen Sink Press, 1993), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Marie-Laure Ryan, 'Introduction', in *Narrative Across Media: The Languages of Storytelling*, ed. by Marie-Laure Ryan (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), pp. 1-40 (p.10).

the unique affordances of graphic novels which are used by adapters to present Shakespeare's plays in the medium.

While the visual and verbal nature of the graphic novel has resonances with the theatre and films it also has narrative capacities that are unique to the medium. The font style and size of the text can be used to convey emotion and the inclusion of text in thought balloons can express interiority. The use of onomatopoeia within the illustrations visually depicts sound and speed lines around characters and objects are used to convey movement in the static images. The graphic novels can also multitrack time, that is, display different time periods simultaneously or action which is spatially separate in a single illustration using the conventions of the medium.<sup>3</sup> The adapter of Shakespeare's plays into graphic novels uses these conventions to create a coherent narrative and present their interpretation of the play.

Adapters of Shakespeare's plays into graphic novels and comic books draw on the visual legacy of theatre, film and art in depicting the plays. The early comic books of the 1950s reference theatrical representations from the Victorian era as well as films produced at the time of their publication. Graphic novels of the 1980s consciously abandoned the traditional style of presenting the plays and instead were highly stylised and impressionistic. In the twenty-first century both the traditional and stylised modes of illustrating the plays are available. The CC examples used draw on the visual legacy of the films of the mid-twentieth century while CWP editions and independent artists such as Gareth Hinds and Nicki Greenberg use a more painterly and impressionistic style. Manga editions draw on contemporary film versions as well as popular culture to illustrate the plays. The graphic novels and comic books also use film techniques such as close ups and establishing shots,

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<sup>3</sup> Pascal Lefèvre, 'Some Medium-Specific Qualities of Graphic Sequences', *SubStance*, 40.1 (2011), 14-33 (p. 14).



shifting point of view, flashback and voice over techniques to illustrate narratives within the plays.

The publications examined in this thesis have been selected as examples of key developments in the adaptation of the plays into the medium and used to examine the evolution of the form over time. The first Shakespeare comic books of the 1950s presented the plays in heavily abridged forms, either as edited texts of the plays or in paraphrased language. All of these comic books conformed to the house style of the publishers and illustrated the plays in a realistic and conservative mode setting the play in the era and location in which the action takes place. These comic books were designed for a juvenile audience and promoted as a way of introducing Shakespeare to children. However, they were published at a time when the medium itself was drawing widespread criticism as detailed in David Hajdu's *The Ten-Cent Plague* which examines the anti-comics campaign which constructed them as being of little literary and artistic worth and in fact detrimental to those who read them.<sup>4</sup> Comic books were linked to juvenile delinquency and anti-social behaviour and in the mid-1950s censorship was introduced to control the content. This led to significant changes in the industry with a reduction in the number of comic books published and decreasing circulation figures.

The censorship of the medium also led to the development of 'Underground Comix' in the 1960s which were targeted at an adult audience with longer and more complex storylines and with sophisticated artwork. The term graphic novel began to be used to describe these longer publications and it was in 1982 that the first graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays were published by Oval Projects. These graphic novels included the full text of the plays and used highly stylised illustrations rather than the realistic period settings of the early comic books. The promotional tag of 'the page becomes the stage' highlighted their link to theatrical

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<sup>4</sup> David Hajdu, *The Ten-Cent Plague* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2008).

adaptations of the plays. By promoting them as both books and theatrical presentations the graphic novels disrupted the hierarchy of value placed on various forms of Shakespeare.

In the twenty-first century there has been a wide variety of Shakespeare graphic novels published. Classical Comics (CC) produce three different textual editions of graphic novels which are original, plain or quick text to target readers of different abilities. These graphic novels present the plays in a realistic and conservative mode using traditional settings of the plays. SelfMadeHero (SMH) and Wiley Press (WP) adapt the plays to manga editions which have heavily reduced text and the SMH editions use futuristic or imagined settings to present the plays to a modern audience. From the low cultural position they occupied in the mid-twentieth century the graphic novel medium has been re-evaluated to a large extent by the legitimising practices which began in the late twentieth century. The review of these practices has shown that graphic novels have now been incorporated as mainstream commercial products and in academic establishments as objects now worthy of serious enquiry.

However, one of the reasons that the Shakespeare graphic novels continue to be criticised is that they present a simplification of the play-texts. The illustrations in graphic novels can simplify the text by providing a visual guide to actions and so present a fixed reading of the play rather than requiring the reader to interpret it. By decreasing the difficulty of the work Fiske argued that the perceived value of the work was decreased.<sup>5</sup> High art is difficult, low art is easy. The simplification of the play-text has also been promoted by publishers as a way to increase accessibility to the works and so they can be viewed as merely functional items used to teach Shakespeare rather than valued as an innovative way to present the plays. It is because of this view of graphic novels as simplifications and pedagogical tools that the publishers promote their editions in terms of their authenticity.

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<sup>5</sup> John Fiske, 'Popular Discrimination', in *Modernity and Mass Culture*, ed. by James Naremore and Patrick Bratlinger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 103-16.

All publishers of the Shakespeare comic books and graphic novel examined in this thesis promote their editions in terms of authenticity to an original play-text. It is because of the prevalence of this promotion of authenticity that this thesis has included comparative analysis between the claims made by publishers and creators and the editions themselves. Authenticity is claimed through the textual content of the graphic novels but claims of 'original', 'full text' and 'unabridged' are problematic in bibliographical terms as these are comparative terms and all Shakespeare's texts have been mediated. The claim in the SMH and WP abridged editions that they contain the author's own words are also problematic as no authorial manuscripts of Shakespeare's plays exist. In full text graphic novels it is the presentation of the text that is criticised in terms of authenticity. By placing the text as dialogue in speech balloons the graphic novels do not follow the standard contemporary lineation of the play-text found in modern critical editions. It is argued that the plays are more difficult in poetry than in prose and by not adhering to the verse lines there is no signal to the reader on how the texts should be approached. Here again the criticism is based on the difference between the perceived degree of difficulty of the two forms. However, it is the presentation of the text as dialogue that signals and promotes the graphic novel's link to performance of the plays rather than simply a literary reproduction.

The commercial imperative for the importance of the claims of authenticity was demonstrated in the analysis of the sales of Shakespeare graphic novels. The sales data shows that the highest selling books of Shakespeare's plays are study guides and the highest selling plays are those which are included in school curricula. In comparison to sales of other graphic novels which are used for entertainment rather than education the Shakespeare editions sell few copies. The primary market for the graphic novels is the education sector and it is difficult to conceive graphic novels becoming a commercially viable product without sales to schools and students studying Shakespeare. Indeed it has been demonstrated that it is this

sector which also dictates which titles are produced as graphic novels. In order to gain acceptance by educators the producers of graphic novels not only promote their editions in terms of authenticity but also augment their products by producing teaching aids to support the objectives of the schools. The development of cost effective digital editions and the current interest in the use of graphic novels as a pedagogical tool could enable a more significant role for graphic novels of Shakespeare's plays in schools in the future.

The recent production of three different adaptations of *The Tempest* has offered the unusual opportunity to perform a comparative analysis to demonstrate how the conventions of the medium can be exploited by different adapters to create different readings of the play. The manipulation of the content of the illustrations and the editing of the text impacts the interpretation of the play by emphasising specific moments, actions or emotions. *The Tempest* is generally interpreted in two broad categories that either highlight the romantic aspect of the play or present a postcolonial reading. The CC and CWP editions emphasise the postcolonial reading through their illustrations of the relationship between Prospero and Caliban. In contrast the SMH edition of *The Tempest* shows how by reduction of the dialogue between Caliban and Prospero and primarily focusing on the Miranda and Ferdinand in the illustrations the romantic aspect of the play is highlighted.

The analysis presented in this thesis does of course have its limitations. This investigation of Shakespeare's plays in graphic novels has by necessity been restricted to focusing on a limited number of editions which demonstrate changes in the form over time. There are of course many more editions produced in many geographical locations around the world which have not been included. This thesis has also limited the types of adaptations examined to those that can be described as transpositions which seek to present the play and

explicitly declare themselves to be reproductions of the original work.<sup>6</sup> There are however a wide range of adaptation types available which rework Shakespeare's plays and characters using different strategies. One notable series is *Kill Shakespeare* which uses Shakespeare's characters to create a new plot in which they attempt to kill their author. This series is currently being transposed into a theatrical performance of the text as well as a film script and would provide an example of transmedial adaptation from the text to graphic novel, to theatre, to film and subsequent franchising. However, the most significant recent development in the adaptation of Shakespeare into graphic novels is the advent of digital technology and the proliferation of personal electronic devices. Digital technology offers a significant area of future enquiry for Shakespeare adaptations in both the new affordances of the medium and the way in which the electronic graphic novels are read and used.

Lanier observes that 'Shakespeare's relationship with specific media or arenas of culture tends to be invested with energy at certain moments and social contexts, and that energy shifts from medium to medium, context to context, over time'.<sup>7</sup> The beginning of the twenty-first century has seen this energy manifested in the number and range of adaptations of Shakespeare's plays as graphic novels and at this stage the future direction is unclear. Though, neither SMH or WP have any new Shakespeare editions in progress, CC continue to add new editions to their range and single editions continue to be released by independent artists. Technology developments producing changes in the affordances of the medium will allow new ways for new audiences to experience the plays. Undoubtedly Shakespeare will continue to be adapted into the graphic novel medium with artists not only using circulating images and readings of the plays but also creating a visual legacy of their own.

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<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (N.J; London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; Tantivy Press, 1975), p. 222-3.

<sup>7</sup> Douglas Lanier, 'Recent Shakespeare Adaptation and Mutations of Cultural Capital', *Shakespeare Studies*, 38 (2010), 104-13 (p. 105).

## APPENDIX 1

### Graphic Novels of Shakespeare's plays - Selected Chronology

This chronology includes publications of Shakespearean plays as comic books and graphic novels which represent key moments in the history of the publication. Also included are editions which are referenced within the thesis.

<b>Date of publication</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Comment</b>
February 1950	Julius Caesar	Classics Illustrated	Abridged, colour.	First comic book of a Shakespearean play, No.68.
August 1950	Macbeth	Seaboard	Paraphrased, colour.	
October 1950	Hamlet	Seaboard	Paraphrased, colour.	
1951	A Midsummer Night's Dream	Classics Illustrated	Abridged, colour.	
1951	Romeo and Juliet	Seaboard	Paraphrased, colour.	
1952	Hamlet	Classics Illustrated	Abridged, colour.	
1955	Macbeth	Classics Illustrated	Abridged, colour.	
1956	Romeo and Juliet	Classics Illustrated	Abridged, colour.	
1982	Macbeth	Oval Projects	Full text, colour.	First Full text edition of a Shakespearean play as a graphic novel
1983	Othello	Oval Projects	Full text, colour.	
1983	Romeo and Juliet	Michael Joseph	Full text, colour.	
1984	King Lear	Oval Projects	Full text, colour.	
1984	Twelfth Night	Oval Projects	Full text, colour.	
1985	A Midsummer Night's Dream	Michael Joseph	Full text, colour.	
1990	Hamlet	Classics Illustrated	Abridged, colour.	New edition with updated illustrations and text.
March 2007	Hamlet	SMH Manga Shakespeare	Abridged, black and white	First title in SMH Manga Shakespeare series

March 2007	Romeo and Juliet	SMH Manga Shakespeare	Abridged, black and white illustrations.	
September 2007	Richard III	SMH Manga Shakespeare	Abridged, black and white illustrations.	
September 2007	The Tempest	SMH Manga Shakespeare	Abridged, black and white illustrations.	
November 2007	Henry V	Classical Comics	Full text, colour.	First full text of <i>Henry V</i> and first produced in three different textual versions: Original, Plain and Quick text.
2007	King Lear	Gareth Hinds	Abridged, colour.	
February 2008	Hamlet	Wiley Press	Abridged, black and white illustrations.	
February 2008	Julius Caesar	Wiley Press	Abridged, black and white illustrations.	
February 2008	Macbeth	Wiley Press	Abridged, black and white illustrations.	
February 2008	Romeo and Juliet	Wiley Press	Abridged, black and white illustrations.	
February 2008	A Midsummer Night's Dream	SMH Manga Shakespeare	Abridged, black and white illustrations.	
February 2008	Macbeth	Classical Comics	Full text, colour.	Published in three text versions.
June 2008	Macbeth	SMH Manga Shakespeare	Abridged, black and white illustrations.	

June 2008	Julius Caesar	SMH Manga Shakespeare	Abridged, black and white illustrations.	
2008	The Merchant of Venice	Gareth Hinds	Abridged colour.	
November 2008	As You Like It	SMH Manga Shakespeare	Abridged, black and white illustrations.	
November 2008	Othello	SMH Manga Shakespeare	Abridged, black and white illustrations.	
2009	Romeo and Juliet	Classical Comics	Full text, colour	Published in three different text versions.
2009	King Lear	SMH Manga Shakespeare	Abridged, black and white illustrations.	
April 2009	Henry VIII	SMH Manga Shakespeare	Abridged, black and white illustrations.	
2009	The Tempest	Can of Worms Press	Full text, Colour	First new edition in the Graphic Shakespeare series, formally published by Oval Projects, since 1984.
2009	The Tempest	Classical Comics	Full text, colour.	Published in three different text versions.
2009	Hamlet	Dan Carroll	Full text, Black and white.	Published and On-line edition.
2010	Hamlet	Nicki Greenberg	Full Text, colour.	Folio size Hard back edition of 415 pages
2011	A Midsummer Night's Dream	Classical Comics	Full text, colour.	Published in three different text versions.



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