

**Graphic Shakespeare:
Understanding the Contact Zone of Shakespeare Adaptation
in Graphic Narrative**

by

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Abstract

This thesis investigates key features of Shakespearean graphic narratives from works produced by Classical Comics as well as Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman* comic series. These graphic narratives have enjoyed both commercial and critical success, yet there are too few scholarly investigations on how these adaptations function. This thesis will establish the contact zone of Shakespearean graphic narratives by investigating comic rhetoric, adaptation theory, and narratological reappropriation, which will illuminate the complexity of these works and how they can be better understood. The first section outlines the contact zone of Shakespearean graphic narrative by positioning the source texts with comic rhetoric. The second section outlines one prominent theory of adaptation to better understand what occurs when texts are adapted across genres and mediums. The third section outlines narratological reappropriation, relying on close readings of graphic narratives.

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Rhetoric of Comic Contact Zone: Linking Narratives Through, Space, Time, and Subject

Combining words and pictures is no new art form. From the illuminated manuscripts of Chaucer, to William Blake's engravings, to Stan Lee's *The Amazing Spiderman*, artists have played with the alchemical balance of image and word to create systems of meaning. While there are numerous histories of comic art (Scott McCloud devotes an entire chapter of his *Understanding Comics* to such an investigation), such discussions, while useful for background research, will not be the focus of this project. Instead, emphasis is placed on understanding the graphic adaptation—the move from a primarily verbal narrative medium to graphic narrative—as current audiences experience the genre. More to the point, this section will strive to outline how audiences read graphic narratives, explain the contact zone that one may use to better understand graphic narrative, and to position Shakespearean graphic narrative adaptations within the comic contact zone.

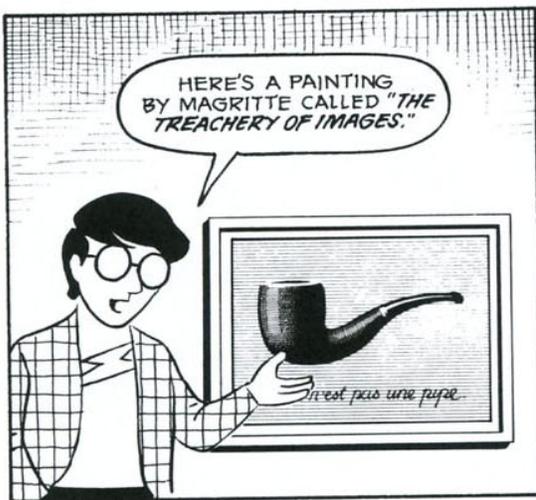
While the history of the comic book is not within the scope of this project, some background information is necessary in order to appropriately position the genre. What current readers know as comics began in the late 19th century and gained momentum through the 20th century (McCloud 18). Yet, as the medium approached the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the next, a shift occurred in the way readers approach the medium: “comic books” began to lengthen into “graphic novels,” cartoonists were becoming authors or artists (and the brand new title “graphic novelist” was realized), and suddenly a medium that had been vilified for an apparent rise in youth delinquency and decrease in literacy was becoming accepted as

valuable teaching aids and a literary genre. Not only was this “new” genre accepted, but valued by teachers and librarians as a valuable tool that engaged new readers with other texts (Versaci 182-183). This elicits the question: why? Why had attitudes toward comics shifted from one extreme to the other?

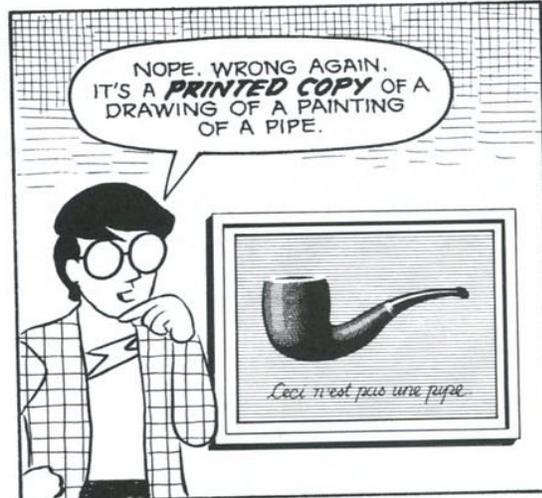
Assuredly, there is no single reason that one may place a finger on, for boiling down such controversy to a singular emphatic point would cheapen arguments that raged for decades. Perhaps it was a rise in other graphic, participatory media (such as video games, which received—and continues to receive—similar criticism from their moral opponents). Perhaps, this change arises from the critical merit authors like Art Spiegelman (author of the critically acclaimed, Pulitzer Prize winning Holocaust memoir *Maus*) and Neil Gaiman (author of the World Fantasy Award winning series *Sandman*) give their works. Certainly the comics that are being produced today have never, in the history of the medium, taken this form. Our contemporary comics are playful, reflexive, and invite both serious and whimsical readings. McCloud uses the comic medium to develop such effects. In Figure 1.1 we see McCloud explaining how audiences read and experience comic art and language:

CHAPTER TWO

THE VOCABULARY OF COMICS.



SEE PAGE 216 FOR MORE INFORMATION.



25
Figure 1.1 McCloud 24-25

According to McCloud's discussion of, "The Treachery of Images," comics allow the reader to flit between the suspension of disbelief and self-awareness of reading, culminating in his final joke "Do you hear what I'm saying?" Readers of course hear/read the message that McCloud is presenting. One can look at the same "painting" of a pipe and it is both a singular reproduction of a pipe and ten reproductions of the pipe, none of which are the original (one could say that McCloud has, himself, adapted Margitte's painting to fit his own purpose). Yet readers actively participate in this system of meaning creation—charging into the text with reckless abandon, suspending all disbelief—only to have the author reflect the medium back to the reader.

Perhaps the best question to pose is: how did the medium arrive at this reflective, playful point? In many ways, Mary Louise Pratt's notion of "contact zones" helps to contextualize such a phenomenon. In her classic article, "Arts of the Contact Zone," Pratt defines the term so as "to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power..." (501). When readers read graphic narratives, not only are they experiencing a literary genre, but they are also tapping into the contact zones that give context to those narratives. In her article, Pratt extensively refers to a letter addressed to King Phillip III of Spain, *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, written by a 17th century Incan man named Guaman Poma. What is interesting about Poma's letter is that it is a sprawling twelve hundred page document consisting of around eight hundred pages of text and another four hundred pages of line drawings with captions (500). Pratt further explains that:

In writing a 'new chronicle,' Guaman Poma took over the official Spanish genre for his own ends. Those ends were, roughly, to construct a new picture of the world, a picture of a Christian world with Andean...peoples at the center...Guaman Poma begins by

rewriting the Christian history of the world from Adam and Eve [...], incorporating the Amerindians into it as offspring of one of the sons of Noah. (501)

Pratt's example is important for this investigation for two reasons: Guaman Poma's chosen form for his letter was that of graphic narrative, and, in creating this narrative, Poma was adapting stories from different cultures to prove his point. Perhaps even more important is that the image Poma employs—most notably the adaptation of the Judeo-Christian Genesis story—still retain the visual rhetoric of Incan art. In one image,

Adam is depicted on the left-hand side below the sun, while Eve is on the right-hand side below the moon, and slightly lower than Adam. The two are divided by the diagonal of Adam's digging stick. In Andean spatial symbolism, the diagonal descending from the sun marks the basic line of power and authority dividing upper from lower, male from female, dominant from subordinate. (Pratt 505)

Here, readers see Poma's culture reflected through the visual rhetoric of his drawing. There is an obvious delineation of power being moved through traditional symbols (sun to moon, and the line created by the digging stick) to show that, in his culture, men are more closely related to the dominant group while women are depicted in a symbolically subordinate role. While this may be offputting to contemporary audiences, it greatly aids Pratt in establishing Poma's work as a place where social spaces and cultures clash; here one can argue that it is the Incan and Christian cultures meeting with Poma's own interpretations of culture, all of which add further friction to the contact zone.

While my next section will go into further detail on how adaptations work in graphic narrative, it is important to note that Poma engages in one of the most important moves of adaptation theory: adaptation involves effacement of a known narrative. It is important to note

that this process of effacement does not eliminate the “knowability” of a singular text. Instead, as Linda Hutcheon points out, “each adapted text is directly and openly connected to other works, and that connection is part of their formal identity, but also of what we might call their hermeneutic identity” (21). Here, we see that Poma is reworking the Christian story of Adam and Eve as well as other central Judeo-Christian figures (such as Noah), to give these stories Andean roots. While information on how Poma may have continued to efface those source texts is not readily available in Pratt’s article, it is expressly stated that Adam and Eve have at least received a geographical makeover, placing them in Poma’s culture rather than that of his European oppressors. Obviously, Poma’s letter does not eliminate the prior texts that he is using to create his argument; however, it is appropriate to attempt to interpret the work *through* the works that Poma is effacing in order to create his text. Because of audience’s prior knowledge of the Bible, we are able to understand his text within the context of the works that he is adapting. By effacing these biblical stories, Poma has created a space that allows for his interpretation of a Judeo-Christian Andean culture to take shape.

Turning to the graphic narrative adaptation of William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (provided by the publisher Classical Comics) as our contact zone, numerous points of contact—those places where Pratt’s social spaces and cultures touch—become apparent. The zones of adaptation studies, Shakespeare studies, comic rhetoric, and postmodern thought fit not-so-nicely together. While these various literary spaces coalesce to create a singular text, the interpretation of said text relies on the complexity of the context in which it is placed, the contact zone in which the text is embroiled. Turning to graphic novelization of *The Tempest*, the socio-cultural spaces that create the contact zone become more apparent in the way the text is drafted, how the action is portrayed, and the depictions of the characters.

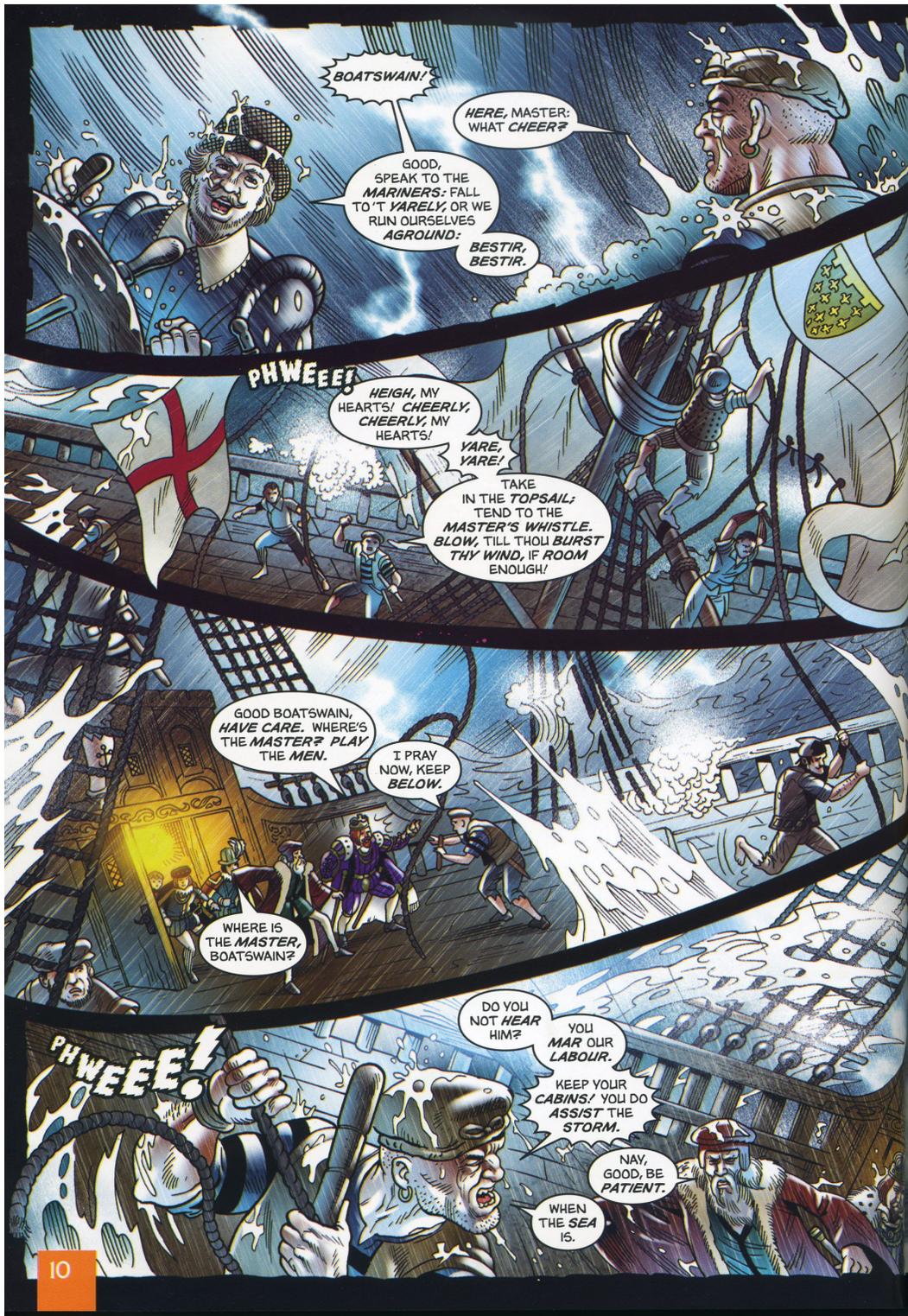




Figure 1.2 *The Tempest* 10-11

In Figure 1.2, readers are given the Classical Comics rendition of Act One, Scene One of the play. The first thing readers notice are the swooped, wave-like panels that are employed. Similarly, there are large gaps, or to borrow a term from McCloud, “gutter spaces,” between the frames (66). Why would the artist use such techniques, especially when one considers that these swooped, thickly guttered frames never appear again in the adapted work? To further complicate reading the narrative’s opening, the images and words bleed over one another, so that one frame is connected to another through an overly stretched word balloon or the Boatswain’s belaying pin. The text preserves Shakespeare’s language, layering Elizabethan phrasing on top of this 21st century publication. In these two pages the complexity of the text becomes more apparent, and, much as we saw in the Poma text that Pratt examined in her article, there is a rhetorical purpose for the construction of these images.

To meet these observations, one can readily imagine the swooped, wave-like panels are meant to echo the action of the scene. Prospero has conjured the storm to wreck the ship, and the panels mimic both the waves of the ocean and the ship’s sails. Such a device helps to lure the reader in and immediately distances this work from a more traditional graphic narrative, which would rely on the more traditional rectangular/square panels placed left-to-right. Since there are no panels moving from left to right, the reader navigates the page in a descending manner (reading from the top of the page to the bottom) echoing the ship’s descent into the ocean. Similarly, the flaring and tapering of these panels allows the artist to carry colors and action from frame to frame—or even page to page, like the bluish hues used to illustrate the sky and sea—which can create a strong sense of cohesiveness or can juxtapose differing images to create discontinuity. Finally, the bleeding over of images and word balloons helps to push the reader through the text, linking frames together in order to keep the action of the scene at a rapid pace.

It is in the composition of these frames that the astute reader is able to gain critical purchase. These gutter spaces between the panels create a gestalt—individual parts that make up a complete image—that, in other words, allows for what Scott McCloud terms as “closure.” Here, closure is the “phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole” (63). Referring back to Figure 1.2, readers experience closure by observing that the action takes place on a boat even though the entire vessel is not depicted in any of the panels. It would not really make sense if one imagined that the Boatswain only exists on the stern of the boat and that Alonso is only confined to the boat’s deck and cabin—with no freedom to exist in any other place until it is drafted on the page. Instead, readers subconsciously connect the panels, pages, and gestures together, creating a completed, cohesive space for the characters to inhabit. Similarly, in the first panel of Figure 1.2, we only get images of the Shipmaster and Boatswain from the waist or shoulders up. Readers have no idea whether the two individuals have legs, but we assume that these characters have legs, for they are capable of movement—changing position from one panel to the next, even though there is no actual movement on the page. Here the reader must suspend disbelief and allow for the rhetoric of the work to move the reader from panel to panel, instilling movement and action into the static images on the page. It is this call for reader participation and textual negotiation that allows for reflection; the reader must understand the moves of meaning creation in order to interpret the composition of the text in any meaningful way.

It is at this point the reader—consciously or not—confronts postmodernism. As previously mentioned, the genre of comic—placing words concurrently with images—is no new medium. That said, what most readers are familiar with as “comic book” or “graphic novel” is almost entirely a postmodern invention. The mutability of subject, time, and space—all common

features in the genre prior to and concurrent with the selection of graphic novels shown here—are key features of the graphic narrative genre. It is not out of place for the narrative of a graphic narrative to jump around through space and time. (Indeed, the point could be argued that super-hero comics stem from such flexible physics; who is more capable of traversing large spaces or stopping and speeding up time than Superman, after all?) McCloud points out that in comics time and space become, practically, the same thing (100). If a panel is longer, with more characters talking and participating in the portrayed action, then readers are more likely to think of time slowing down—allowing for all those depicted actions and conversations to take place. This, of course, differs from a series of short panels that depict a super-hero fighting a villain. In one panel the super-hero may punch the villain (most likely punctuated with the stereotypical onomatopoeic “Bam” or “Pow”) and perhaps over the sequential panels the two combatants return blows. Here, because the action gets broken up, readers are more likely to assume that each panel is only presenting a short, small space of time. It does not take nearly as long for readers to negotiate numerous small panels with few actions or words in them rather than a singular large panel with numerous actions or long dialogues. In many ways, it is the amount of time that it takes the reader to negotiate these panels that helps to create the effect of time speeding up or slowing down. While this can be simulated in text—longer or shorter sentence constructions can be effectively used to speed up or slow down action as the author sees fit—the closure that one creates moving between panels is unique to the graphic narrative.



Figure 1.3 McCloud 66

Figure 1.3 exemplifies this phenomenon that, as McCloud states, is at the heart of comics. Readers see the panel with the ax-wielding villain, and are then given the cityscape panel with the scream. These are two images that, seemingly, have nothing to do with each other—except

that they were presented sequentially. However, by perceiving them in sequence readers now construct a narrative of the scared man being brutally butchered by the ax-wielding villain, with the victim's scream echoing through the night-shrouded city. McCloud's point is plain: the narrative that the reader is crafting is not expressly depicted on the page. There is an insinuation of violence, but there is no definitively penned narrative to check our assumptions against. In fact, readers cannot even attribute the scream that pierces the night (and there is no real clue that it is a scream—just the jagged, crescendoed lettering) to the previously depicted characters. The supposed narrative is fairly subjective; it is not the artist who is entirely creating the story between these two panels, but the reader—endowed with active participation—that forms the story and attributes emotion and narrative to the images. McCloud purposefully provides very little information (the five words in panel one only help to set up the personae of aggressor and victim), but the information that is provided is enough to compel readers to “draft” a violent demise for the victim.

Act II
Scene II

A different part of the island...

ALL
THE INFECTIONS
THAT THE SUN SUCKS UP
FROM BOGS, FENS, FLATS,
ON PROSPER FALL, AND
MAKE HIM BY INCH-MEAL
A DISEASE!

HIS
SPIRITS HEAR ME,
AND YET I NEEDS MUST
CURSE; BUT THEY'LL NOR PINCH,
FRIGHT ME WITH URCHIN-SHOWS,
PITCH ME I' THE MIRE, NOR LEAD
ME, LIKE A FIREBRAND, IN THE
DARK OUT OF MY WAY,
UNLESS HE BID 'EM;

BUT FOR
EVERY TRIFLE
ARE THEY SET
UPON ME;

SOMETIME LIKE
APES, THAT MOW AND
CHATTER AT ME, AND AFTER,
BITE ME; THEN LIKE HEDGEHOGS,
WHICH LIE TUMBLING IN MY
BAREFOOT WAY, AND MOUNT
THEIR PRICKS AT MY
FOOTFALL;

SOMETIME AM I
ALL WOUND WITH
ADDERS, WHO WITH
CLOVEN TONGUES
DO HISS ME INTO
MADNESS.



LO,
NOW,
LO!

HERE COMES A
SPIRIT OF HIS, AND
TO TORMENT ME, FOR
BRINGING WOOD IN
SLOWLY.

I'LL
FALL FLAT;
PERCHANCE, HE
WILL NOT MIND
ME.

Figure 1.4, *The Tempest* p. 65

One can read the panels presented in Figure 1.4 in a similar rhetorical fashion in order to aid readers in creating meaning out of juxtaposed images. Figure 1.4 gives us the beginning of Act II, Scene II in which Caliban is lamenting his lot in life and his subordination to Prospero. In these few panels, a lot of information is given to readers to navigate. First, we see that Caliban is capable of having an inner dialogue with himself about his situation in life. While the language has not changed between Shakespeare's play and the graphic narrative adaption, what has changed is the way the information is presented. Caliban's thoughts are given shape in both text (occupying the thought bubble) and image (occupying Caliban's "thought metaphor," the image embedded in the first panel). Simply looking at the top panel, the reader must negotiate two images. The primary action of the panel is given to Caliban in contemplation, but the other image—that "thought metaphor"—directly corresponds to Caliban's thoughts. The mechanics of the thought-action that the panel presents, while seemingly obvious, is a feature readers must negotiate. More to the point, it is a feature that exemplifies the contact zone that is created when authors adapt.

Those features of the first panel in Figure 1.4 require two key, rhetorical moves from the reader: negotiating the language of Shakespeare's play, and negotiating the rhetoric of graphic narratives. It would be easy for readers unversed in both of these areas, to make faulty readings of the page—perhaps reading the panels sequentially, with the inset image "following" the first panel in order to create a narrative thread between the two. This would be an incorrect reading of the images. Instead, the artist has made a number of small moves to help readers negotiate the panels. First, Caliban is drawn as if he were deep in thought, his hand scratching his beard and his eyes up-turned looking at both the sky and, because of their placement, his thoughts. Coupled with the lack of any other actions besides his thoughts, readers can assume that

“Caliban is thinking” is the central action of the panel. As readers move to the embedded image—the “thought metaphor”—the artist, again, has helped readers; both the contours and the color of the image do not fit with the other panels on this page. The choice of sepia tones and the wavy, cloud like contours of the image suggest to readers that this is a thought instead of the next image in the story. However, this does nothing to help readers understand that this is a metaphor, for one must be able to negotiate the language of Shakespeare’s play and be able to correctly identify both the objects of Caliban’s thoughts (readers will understand that Prospero is the subject of Caliban’s thoughts even though he is graphically absent) as well as what those objects are doing. The apes, adders, and hedgehogs are all given representations in the metaphorical image, and, if one pays close attention to the text of Caliban’s thoughts, one sees that the key features of the image are given a boldface script. Again, the artist is making every effort to help readers establish the “correct” connection between these two images, but such connection is made much more easily if the audience has some degree of prior knowledge of both *The Tempest*, or at least some understanding of how to read Elizabethan English, and the rhetoric of graphic narrative. It is this place where the graphic narrative and the Shakespearian work meet, through adaptation, that the contact zone becomes apparent.

Having established contact zones and how they appear in graphic adaptations of narratives, one can focus on understanding how moving a narrative between texts and mediums function. The rhetoric of comics will prove to be an invaluable method of unpacking and understanding what changes in the process of adapting a work, even if the language of the source text is preserved.

Adaptive Changes: Adapting Narratives by Palimpsest

Virginia Woolf, explaining her views towards adapting works of literature to cinema, states her position plainly: “[s]o we lurch and lumber through the most famous novels of the world. So we spell them out in words of one syllable written, too, in the scrawl of an illiterate schoolboy” (Woolf, 309). Her attitude towards adaptations is one that is commonly shared by those who would be protective of the literary canon: adapting literature to a new form—especially a visual medium such as television, film, or comic—is at best unnecessary and at worst a reductive maneuver that denigrates the text. What Woolf and many others fail to realize is that adaptation is an integral part of the creation of narrative—regardless of medium. While she certainly would not have been imagining the works of Shakespeare being adapted to a comic, adaptation occurs whenever a work is reproduced. For instance, a number of years ago I saw a production of *Macbeth* in which the actor playing Banquo missed his cue and did not appear in the scene in which Macbeth first confronts Banquo’s ghost. Macbeth went on to give his lines as he should, just addressing them to an empty seat. As an audience member, I thought that this was an intriguing directorial move, playing up Macbeth’s possible insanity. After the play, in a question and answer session, the actor discussed that throughout the entire run of *Macbeth*, he had never missed that cue. It would be easy to dismiss this viewing of *Macbeth* as an accident, an unfortunate misstep by an otherwise distracted actor, but instead audience members (myself included) had already taken the bait and drawn the conclusion that, in this performance of the play, there had been a deliberate change to create a distinctly unique performance. Here it would

seem that an adaptation (perhaps in the most limited sense of the word) of the text had occurred between performances by the same group of actors. Recounting a missed cue in a Shakespeare play may prove to be a mildly humorous story, but what it shows is that even between performances, Shakespeare's plays could undergo some degree of adaptation (even if it is as minor as the "adaptation" that I witnessed.)

To explore and guide this investigation into adaptation theory, we must first understand how adaptation functions. Linda Hutcheon offers a well-rounded theory of adaptation, which will be the basis for this section. Hutcheon's work, *A Theory of Adaptation*, is well cited by Early Modern scholars such as Margaret Kidnie who states that, "Hutcheon's theoretical perspective resonates with priorities expressed in...recent studies of adaptation" (Kidnie, 4). While Kidnie's work only focuses on stage adaptations of Shakespeare plays, her endorsement of *Adaptation* establishes Hutcheon as an authority who is useful, at least in part, to Early Modern scholars interested in adaptations. The scope of *Adaptation* is quite broad, focusing on stage adaptations (most prominently, opera, which Hutcheon has written extensively on), video game adaptations, theme park rides, and, of course, television and film adaptations. While she uses Shakespeare for a number of examples, she does not expressly limit herself to the Bard, with numerous examples ranging from *The Godfather* (both novel and video game) to *Harry Potter* (both novels and upcoming theme park). I have chosen to stick closely to Hutcheon's understanding of adaptation because her work, while encompassing a diverse range of texts and media, never expressly discusses graphic narrative. In many ways, this section is meant to supplement her text, applying the observations she makes about adaptation in general to the media she neglects. This section will apply many of Hutcheon's ideas to graphic Shakespeare

adaptations and further establish how the process of adaptation functions within the context of the contact zone of graphic narrative adaptation.

To begin this investigation of adaptation, the basic principles for adaptation should be set forth. First, adaptation is a two-part concept, which implies both a product and a process (8). This doubling of meaning shapes how the artist (and the audience) frames the adapted work. Next, audiences must understand the variations between adaptations when works are adapted across different medium (8). As we have seen, the rhetoric of graphic narrative is drastically different from those rhetorics of stage or screen. Lastly, one must wonder—surely as Woolf herself must have—why such importance, and historical precedent, is placed on adaptation, or to put it more succinctly, why do we keep adapting (and readapting) works? Adaptations of literary works has had a very long, very well established discussion by theorists (such as Hutcheon), writers (such as Woolf), and consumers of adaptations (such as the audience for Tim Burton’s *Alice in Wonderland* movie).

As stated earlier, adaptation is both a process of creation and a final product delivered from that process. Hutcheon best describes adaptation in three easy to follow bullet points (emphasis Hutcheon’s):

- An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works
- A creative *and* an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging
- An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work (8).

Adaptation, then, seems like a fairly straight-forward process (and product): it must be a recognizable shift from one work to another retaining that doubled meaning of product and process, and that the adapted work, in some fashion, comments on the work it derives itself from. Again, this elicits the question of how adaptations of literature accomplish these descriptions.

Hutcheon quotes the Scottish poet Michael Alexander in her book, crediting him for the claim that adaptations are inherently “palimpsestuous” (6). What Alexander is encapsulating with his neologism is that any adaptation is going to have some degree of referential dialogue with the original work, meaning that the adaption and the source text are inextricably connected to one another, with the adaption commenting on the original work while the original informs the “new” adapted text. Adaptations efface the source text in order to create a space for variations from that text to flourish. As was mentioned in section one, adapting a text does not eliminate the source that the text is being adapted from. Instead, audiences are able to interpret these adapted texts by placing them in relation to the works that they are adapted from—those source texts. Hutcheon proposes a continuum model of adaptation, because “[a] continuum model has the advantage of offering a way to think about various responses to a prior story; it positions adaptations specifically as (re-) interpretations and (re-) creations” (172). If we can imagine that an original or source text is placed at one end, and then every adaptation of that source text is laid alongside it (with some adaptations overlapping one another, or even overlapping portions of that source text), we could create an image that best represents how adaptations works. Authors adapting texts are not laying new versions on top of earlier ones, obscuring previous sources that helped to create that adaptation. Instead, if they are laid out alongside one another, in this metaphorical continuum, then it becomes easier to see how they may fit in relation to one another, with each adaptation placed on this continuum being informed by those adaptations that came before it.

To provide examples of how this phenomenon works in the investigation at hand, one could turn to both the Classical Comics adaptation of *Tempest* and the Neil Gaiman *Sandman* comic “Tempest” to see such palimpsestuous occurrences. However, it is important to note that,

while both works efface and, to some degree or another, reimagine the original *Tempest*, they seem to accomplish very different divergent terminal goals. To begin, the Classical Comics adaptation appears to be what one could call a direct adaptation: the Shakespearian language is intact, the narrative never deviates from the original, and, by all appearances, the goal of the work is to reproduce the play in its entirety. The front cover of the text states as much: “THE ENTIRE SHAKESPEARE PLAY AS A GRAPHIC NOVEL!” appears opposite the publisher’s logo (and set off from the black cover in orange, so as to draw even more attention to the adaptation’s goal). (It is important to note, however, that this investigation is only using the “Original Text” version of *Tempest* rather than the “Plain Text” or “Quick Text” versions also published by Classical Comics, which modernize and simplify the language instead of preserving the Elizabethan English.) What is surprising is how closely this “Original Text” version sticks to the authoritative text. Upon crosschecking with widely circulated versions of the *The Tempest*—most notably the Arden edition as well as the version anthologized by Longman in their *Anthology of World Literature*, Classical Comics does not appear to remove, abridge, or, in any other way, disrupt the received narrative. Scenes, characters, and monologues are faithfully reproduced to preserve the text in its entirety.

This would appear to keep in line with what Hutcheon discusses in her chapter on “How” one adapts literature, especially when the ones adapting the literature are doing so with an eye towards an audience of students and teachers:

[a]daptations of [texts], however, are often considered educationally important for children...The new film adaptation of C.S. Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is accompanied by elaborate teaching aids, from lesson plans to Web-based packages to material for after-school clubs. Today hardly a book or a

movie aimed at school-aged children does not have its own Web site, complete with advice and materials for teachers. (Hutcheon, 118)

One quick look at the Classical Comics *Tempest* confirms Hutcheon's observation that adaptation can occur for educational purposes. It is easy to find their Web address blazoned onto the cover of the work and appearing numerous times in the first few pages. Fitting with Hutcheon's observation, the publisher's website is brimming with information for teachers and students, from helpful hints on understanding the plays, to black and white images from adaptations that the publisher is currently working on that students can color in (one would assume that this is to prime students for classical tales that they can understand better, while priming parents' pocketbooks for next great education aid). On the surface, it would seem that such a leaning towards adaptation as an educational tool—with prominence placed on reproduction of the "original text," just in a different form—would disrupt claims that adaptation is an act of effacement and reimagining. This, of course, could not be further from the truth, for an "educational" adaption still must revise the text for a purpose—even if that purpose is clarity or conciseness. Surely the goal of helping students better understand the play, while laudable, necessarily informs the process by which this adaptation is crafted: why else would there be extra attention to biographical information and even more attention to creating characters that are stylized and unique (certainly, one cannot confuse Caliban for any human character, just as Prospero—with his multicolor dream cloak—stands apart from the rest of the "human" characters)?

Reproduced here are the Boatswain's lines from Act 1, Scene 1 of the play as it appears in the Longman Anthology of World Literature. In this scene, Prospero's storm is about to

destroy the ship carrying his brother, and Gonzalo has reminded the Boatswain who, exactly, his passengers are. His response is:

None that I more love than myself. You are a councilor; if you can command these elements to silence and work the peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more. Use your authority. If you cannot give thanks you have lived so long and make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it so hap.—Cheerly, good hearts!—
Out of our way, I say. (1.1.17-22).



Figure 2.1 *Tempest* pg. 11

As we can see, in Figure 2.1, the Boatswain's lines do not change in content. They do, however, get "broken up" across the action of the page; they move between panels and allow for the

graphical representation of other characters “acting” through the Boatswain’s lines. The action of the scene is not lost, and, if anything, heightens. Audiences are able to perceive the tumult of the scene whereas just reading the play (adapted to an anthology, for instance) much of that action may be obscured. Again, one must ask the question of where this adaptation belongs on the continuum of *Tempest* adaptations and whether this adaptation is coming from a performance of the play or from a folio, “textual” version of the play. One could argue that the Classical Comics adaptation attempts to capture the play as it would be performed, allowing for a space where characters’ lines can be broken up by actors moving in space. The decision, on the part of the artist, writer, and publisher, to have the text portray characters in this way—while committing to an extremely close, precise preservation of the work—gives example of how, as an adaptive maneuver, palimpsest can be employed in graphic narrative; audiences are able to “see” the work graphically “performed” on the pages, but there is still an overarching goal towards educating the audience that is being deftly handled.

As one can imagine, the goal of Gaiman’s “*Tempest*” seems to not entirely coincide with education (perhaps there is a move towards educating audiences about the author William Shakespeare, but there is little effort made towards having students become better educated about the text). Hutcheon points out that “[t]hemes are perhaps the easiest story elements to see as adaptable across media and even genres or framing contexts,” (10) and that certainly seems to hold true for Gaiman’s adaptation of *Tempest*. Here, there are a number of narrative structures at work: the “biographical” story of Shakespeare writing *Tempest*, the “biographical” story of Shakespeare’s last few years before his death, the fantastical story of Shakespeare’s deal with Dream, Dream’s weariness of the world and his desire for an end, and, of course, the story of Prospero and his island.



Figure 2.2 Gaiman “The Tempest” pg. 1

As Figure 2.2 shows, the text of the play runs parallel to the other stories. While the opening lines and stage directions have accurately preserved the Elizabethan language,

Shakespeare's story (and language) flits in and out of Gaiman's narrative, with Shakespeare and his family becoming the primary focus of this issue and the Elizabethan language only being presented in the panels that deal directly with Shakespeare's *Tempest*. The reader is presented only with snippets of the source text, differentiating the work from that of the Classical Comics adaptation. However, Gaiman's handling of the source text preserves the themes of a man lost on his own island whose pursuits of the arcane arts lead him towards alienation, and he, eventually, must give up such powers. In the concluding pages of Gaiman's "Tempest," Dream echoes the themes of the source text, the *Sandman* series, and this issue in particular, when he explains that he wanted "a tale of graceful ends. [He] wanted a play about a King who drowns his books, and breaks his staff, and leaves his kingdom. About a magician who becomes a man. About a man who turns his back on magic" (Gaiman 35). These are the themes that get transferred between the two works; Dream, Shakespeare, and Prospero all want to be men who turn their backs on magic and shake off their lives of privilege and responsibility.

Further investigation into the nuances of what Gaiman accomplishes will continue in section three, but it is sufficient to note that these differences in how the source text is approached by two different groups of artists, for two very different ends, still functions with key similarities in the ways these adaptations happen. Both adapted texts take liberties with the source text allowing for other adaptations to occur through the effacement of the source text. This is palimpsest at work; the source text has to be redrafted so that Gaiman can discuss the interplay between Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, and his own character, Dream. Through palimpsest, the audience is able to place *Tempest* as well as the various adaptations of the work on that metaphorical continuum and see how each work is informed by previous adaptations and continues to inform future ones. The original work is still very much intact—those snippets that

run parallel to the “new” text Gaiman has created give form to what is informing his adaptation—but the “meat” of the story has been changed to fit Gaiman’s own narratological goals.

Adaptation is a narratological phenomenon that is not bound by any singular medium or source. Adaptations of novels to films, films to videogames, and videogames to novels all abound at any large-scale media merchant. Certainly there are any number of particulars that one could address when discussing adaptations between mediums and what has changed or remained the same. For the purposes of this investigation, we will look primarily at the characters both of Shakespeare’s play and the various adaptations within the scope of this project. By focusing on the characters, we observe that they, for the most part, remain static between the texts (Prospero is still very much like every other rendition of Prospero). Yet, what any adaptive artist must negotiate, specifically when crafting his characters, is the psychological wherewithal that the characters of these works possess, that spark of thought and inner-working that makes characters well-rounded and believable.

Certainly it is easier to empathize with and understand a character who appears in a novel narrated in first-person rather than a big-budget movie. Suffice to say that, in cinema, there are a very limited number of tools artists can use to encourage audience members to empathize with a specific character such as voice-over, music, and cinematography. Hutcheon makes the point that “[i]n the move from telling to showing, a performance adaptation must dramatize: description, narration and represented thoughts must be transcoded into speech, actions, sounds, and visual images” (40). Adapters must be able to portray the ideas central to the original work in ways that are most appropriate for the medium the adapter is moving the work to. Hutcheon goes to great lengths to establish how one may adapt a text to a performance space (such as

theatre or opera) and how, mainly through music, characters' inner emotions and thoughts are portrayed (41). Yet, throughout her observations on how adaptations rely on external features — such as music or the voice-over, which are not usually part of the immediate action—to enrich an adaptation, she continues to discuss numerous mediums while excluding graphic narrative.

While graphic narratives are not the focus of her work, one may wonder why she would neglect a medium that problematizes her observations. For, graphic narrative fits within a liminal space between traditional text and solely visual representation.

In portraying those inner thoughts and emotions of characters, graphic narrative, as a medium, presents a few key rhetorical moves, some of which were discussed in the previous section, that allow for readers to perceive the inner-worlds of the characters. As discussed in section one, the use of the thought bubble (and other, similar thought-bubble-like tools such as Caliban's "thought metaphor") allows for readers to "see" the thoughts of a character, which imbues said character with an interiority that is otherwise difficult to portray. In Figure 2.3, we have an excerpt from the Classical Comics *Tempest* that provides a good example of what, in other mediums, would have been classified as those external features; here, in the graphic adaptation, they are constructed into the narrative. After Ariel has taken the guise of the harpy, he and Prospero are portrayed as ethereal on-lookers watching the reactions of Gonzalo and Alonso. This page gives us two interesting examples of how graphic narrative facilitates the immersion of the reader into the story and allows the reader to understand the inner thoughts of the characters: the thought bubble and the graphic depiction of sound.



Figure 2.3 *Tempest* pg. 93

In Figure 2.3, readers gain insight to Prospero's thoughts—specifically those thoughts on his powers and charms. While this may seem like just another example of a common feature of graphic narrative, it is important to look more closely at the context in which this thought-bubbled speech arises. Indeed, when crosschecking Prospero's speech as presented in the graphic narrative versus that same speech in the Longman anthologized edition of the play, one notices that a shift in the portrayal of the language has occurred: from spoken line to internal thought. While the lines are preserved in their entirety—there has been no abridgment or other editorial reduction made to the text—this shift in how the lines are presented greatly changes the way readers connect to both the text and the character. Here, Prospero is presented as a subject, capable of inner thoughts and motives, which are not readily repeatable in other primarily visual mediums.

Unaided by external markers of an inner-self (no music, voice-over, or other such indicator), Prospero, much like Caliban as we saw in section one, has—on page—become a character with fully-formed thoughts and motivations, none of which were added to the text. Instead, the adapter blends together what would have been performed lines of speech with the conventions of comic writing. The lines, as they appear in the play, are in no way presented as an aside or other form of “private” speech; the adapter took what would have been audible to both the audience and the other characters and fashioned it, in this adaptation, as an internal musing. Certainly, when performed, his lines are probably not meant to be heard by the other characters on stage and are instead directed to the audience, but the adapter goes to great lengths to “privilege” Prospero's speech, making sure to differentiate what could be seen as dialogue or monologue, and instead recast the speech as inner thought. By using the thought-bubble and preserving the original language, the work straddles the difficult line of verbal and visual texts;

audiences are able to negotiate the text and its characters like a verbal, or other novelized, narrative—being able to understand and empathize with the characters—while also having a visual identity to affix to those characters.

Lastly, it is important to note that the external markers of internal thoughts—specifically sound and music—are not alien to the graphic narrative. Indeed, the medium is rich in auditory experiences; however, those auditory experiences are presented visually. The top panel of Figure 2.3 shows two imps carrying the table, that the feast was presented, away. The stage directions for this scene, the one depicted in Figure 2.3, are stated as follows: “[Ariel] vanishes in thunder; then, to soft music, enter the shapes again, and dance, with mocks and mows, and carrying out the table” (3:3). The musicality of the scene, as depicted in the Classical Comics version, becomes apparent with the inclusion of the musical notes that accompany the imps—those “shapes.” While, obviously, the reader does not “hear” any real music while reading these panels, the effect of the music is still implicitly established. It is arguable that the musicality of the scene, and subsequently the panel, could even be presented as more open to interpretation than a performed adaptation of the play. As was discussed in section one, graphic narrative is innately a participatory medium, relying heavily on the reader to provide closure to gaps presented in the text. When interpreting graphic narrative as opposed to a stage performance, the reader is able to substitute any number of “notes” or “tunes” for those faint blue notes that scuttle across the panel. Here, the reader is given a partial hand in the creative production of the work. There is no fixed tune being played, as would be the case with a performance of the same scene. Instead the reader may be drawn deeper into the narrative; he or she is now able to be an active participant in drafting this scene due to the “limitations” of the medium. Simply because the medium has no audible component does not preclude the use of auditory elements.



Figure 2.4 *Tempest* pg. 92

Figure 2.4 provides another excerpt from Act 3, Scene 3 and comes immediately before the action of Figure 2.3. Here, Ariel is disguised as the harpy (admittedly a more modern harpy

rather than an Early Modern one), and keeping with the stage directions of “he vanishes in thunder...” readers are given the text “KA-RAKK!” accompanied by the lightning bolt. The sound of the lightning strike takes on an onomatopoeic quality so that readers “hear” the sound of the lightning as it happens. This is a slight differentiation than the soft musical notes with no prescribed sound or rhythm. Instead, readers—again as active participants in the text—provide the sound, as directed by the adapter, to accompany the panel. While this sound is fixed in time and space (thus not being open to interpretation like the notes of music), it accomplishes allowing the audience to participate in the text. More to the point, it gives visual and auditory representation to the stage notes of the play. There is no need for some explanatory, narratological device. By depicting what would be in the stage notes—the sounds, the movements, and the described action— in a visual manner, similar effects are achieved; the necessary information is given to the reader to elaborate and enrich the action of the scene. It would be a logical assumption that the reader, in the case of these graphic narratives, is “acting” the part of the stage directions.

Truly, it is surprising that Hutcheon does not give more credence to graphic narrative in her theory of adaptation; instead, she only uses the medium to establish adaptations from comics to film, or to explain the commercialization of comic adaptations into other marketable goods. For instance, she discusses the commercialization of the Bob Kane character Batman, into a very merchandisable commodity, spawning roller-coaster rides, toys, movies, television shows (both live-action and cartoon), books, and, of course, numerous stories appearing in his DC Comic’s series (88). Surely investigation into how adaptation functions in graphic narrative is a worthy endeavor, and should be given more critical credence than being used to establish a mode of commercialization. The moves graphic artists make when adapting stories to the medium are

drastic, allowing for “palimpsestically” crafted narratives to move, change, and transport the source text into wildly imaginative new forms. This is a medium that clearly resides in a space between the lines of “traditional” text and visual art, which is what gives the medium its adaptive potency. There is a space for art and sound and established rhetorical flourishes that allow the reader to understand the characters of a story more intimately than in many other mediums that rely, to one extent or another, on visual rhetoric. While graphic narrative may not rely as much on external narratological maneuvers to present psychological underpinnings (such as the creation of identity or internal dialogue) than, say, film, which relies heavily on voice-over or musical selection to accomplish the same task, it certainly seems to weave those maneuvers into the text more organically. Readers are not given a disembodied voice commenting on the presented actions; instead they are given an easy-to-understand way of connecting thoughts to characters. Assuredly, a narrating voice is a feature used in graphic narratives, but it seems more closely connected to the text, appearing alongside the structures of the story, narrative instead of commenting on the narrative. One can imagine why a series like *Classics Illustrated*—or even its newer, more contemporary cousin *Classical Comics*—can sustain a long tradition of work solely based on adaptations; it is a medium that provides accessibility and has a historical lineage of being adaptation friendly, with numerous adaptations of literary works well within comic catalogues.

Perhaps it is because of this lineage that some authors are moving past the simple, close adaptations of literary works and are breaking new ground in the ways adaptation happens in graphic narrative. What artists like Neil Gaiman and Allen Moore are accomplishing with their adaptive works gives a nod to the medium’s lineage while going forward in new directions. For

their work not only adapts portions of classical literature to their stories, there is something much more interesting afoot: narratological reappropriation.

Narratological Reappropriation: Where Stories, Characters, Authors, and Style Collide

There has been a common trend in the production of graphic narratives to adapt works of literature to the genre, usually in the hope of reaching new audiences. With generations of contemporary graphic novelists (fans and artists alike) growing up with *Classics Illustrated* series, it seems fitting that the graphic narrative genre would begin to play with adaptation. Over the last few decades, graphic novelists have increasingly used themes, stories, characters, or even authors from the literary canon as important figures in their own work. From Allan Moore's *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, which imagines literary characters such as Dr. Jekyll and Mina Harker taking on the role of super-heroes, to Bill Willingham's series *Fables*, a series that uses notable characters such as Snow White, Cinderella, and Sinbad, there appears to be a willingness to co-opt these notable facets of literature for the author's own purposes. This raises a serious question: what do we call such a phenomenon? Character borrowing? Literary theft? Artistic plagiarism?

The term that fits best may be narratological reappropriation, for this phrase seems to encapsulate what these authors are achieving with their texts. If we break down the phrase "narratological reappropriation," it becomes less opaque; it means reusing parts of one author's narrative for a different purpose. I term the phrase "reappropriation" because it encapsulates the idea of incessant borrowing from established, canonical sources. Authors are free to readily engage with characters, themes, ideas, or other facets of literature, but by emphasizing "reappropriation" one can understand the repetitive nature of such continued borrowing. Going

back to Hutcheon's idea of a continuum of adaptation, readers can see where authors may have originally absconded with one another's work, and where subsequent authors and artists have continued to use and reuse narratological pieces and parts. Here, the author reappropriating the narratological fixture (whether that be theme, character, plot, or setting) has much to gain from such an endeavor, because most readers understand the basic elements of stories. When an author like Allan Moore decides to use the character Mina Harker, he is able to maneuver the audience's prior knowledge of her—namely her appearance in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*—to be either in-line with or juxtaposed to the purposes of Moore's narrative. Mina Harker can “act” like Stoker's representation of her, or Moore can place her within new contexts and new situations that would set her original representation against herself, allowing for more flexibility and openness to actions and interpretations. By having her come into contact with other literary characters, Moore extends his work and the source text.

Again, we see the effacement of the original work allowing for the adaptation. By removing the character from one context and placing it within another, the two works are in dialogue and a space for the adaptation is created: the source text informs the adaptation while the adaptation “opens up” the source text, allowing for new places for the text to move and be interpreted. Both the adapted text and the source text are on the same adaptive continuum, perhaps partially overlapping one another. While the case could be made that this is simply a heightened form of fan-fiction—displaying one author's adoration for another author's narratological fixtures and reimagining said fixtures in a new way—such a claim would be dismissive of the critical importance a maneuver such as narratological reappropriation entails, while devaluing a medium that regularly has multiple authors sharing characters, settings, or other story elements (Batman, for instance, has been written by many different authors and artists

over its seventy year run). Instead, one should think of texts as what some scholars describe as fluid (Hutcheon, 170). No text is necessarily fixed in space, and through the process of narratological reappropriation texts are shown to be *very* fluid. Here any part of an author's work is ready to be picked up and used by another author, while there are an unknowable number of other authors doing the same thing.

To guide this exploration into narratological reappropriation, a few texts will be looked at in closer detail: two issues from Neil Gaiman's critically acclaimed *Sandman* series (illustrated by Charles Vess), and a short work from Robert Sikoryak's *Masterpiece Comics*. Both authors reappropriate literary elements for their own ends, but they do so in divergent ways. Gaiman reappropriates characters and historical figures to extend his story, whereas Sikoryak takes notions of narratological reappropriation to a different level, mashing together styles and plots from multiple authors into a "new" text.

Gaiman's *Sandman* series received critical acclaim in the 1980s and 1990s, with issue number nineteen, "A Midsummer Night's Dream" winning the World Fantasy Award in 1991 (the first graphic narrative to ever capture a literary award). Versaci summarizes the series best:

Describing this marvelous and imaginative series in a few sentences is inevitably reductive, but in essence *Sandman* chronicles the lives of the Endless, seven siblings who preside over various facets of existence: Destiny, Death, Desire, Despair, Delirium, Destruction, and Dream. The ostensible focus of the series is this last character—known also as "Sandman"—and the intrigues that he and his siblings find themselves enmeshed in through various planes of existence, including our own world. As readers of *Sandman* would be quick to point out, however, the series is more accurately a celebration of stories and storytelling (200-202).

Gaiman presents his series with a fundamental warrant at its foundation: dreams and stories are closely related. Thus it is not surprising that the protagonist, Dream, encounters the young, struggling artist William Shakespeare early in the series. The two reach a mutually beneficial bargain: Dream will give Shakespeare unparalleled abilities with the pen (with the promise that he will be better remembered than his friend Kit Marlowe), if he will write two plays for Dream (Gaiman 32). Of course these two plays are *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. Yet it is in these two issues (both titled “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” and “The Tempest” respectively) that we see narratological reappropriation being bandied about for what appears to be two different purposes. While both issues concern the character of William Shakespeare, the way he appears and is used in those issues seems to be what is at stake.

“Midsummer” starts with Shakespeare and his travelling troupe of actors (named here as the Lord Strange’s Men) meeting Dream on the rolling plains of Sussex, where he has instructed Shakespeare to perform his play. When Richard Burbage asks what audience the troupe will be playing for, Dream opens a portal to Faerie and out walk Oberon, Titania, Robin Goodfellow, and the rest of the supernatural characters from the play, all taking their places on the green to watch Shakespeare’s story—commissioned by Dream—unfold (Gaiman 67). Figure 3.1 is an excerpt from Gaiman’s “Midsummer” in which the characters of the otherworldly audience meet their fantastic counterparts. Here reappropriated characters are given freedom to dwell in the same space; Titania and Oberon openly discuss the play (as well as the performance’s payment) with Shakespeare while Puck charms the young actor so that he can take his place.



Figure 3.1, Gaiman "Midsummer" 77

One has to wonder how many stories Gaiman is effacing in order to create his adaptation. He has reappropriated the "historical" Shakespeare, as well as his play—providing scenes that appear in the play and scenes that are entirely his own invention (like the one presented in Figure

3.1). Perhaps what is most interesting for this investigation is how seamlessly the appropriated work and characters fit into Gaiman's original narrative. It seems natural for a character such as Dream who, in many ways, is the embodiment of story telling to have friends and acquaintances ranging from Shakespeare and Kit Marlowe to Oberon and Robin Goodfellow. This is not adaptation for the sake of recasting the original work; instead, audiences are greeted with a fanciful, far-reaching narrative that skips across "historical" fiction into other territories. The blending of appropriated characters with entirely invented characters allows for a level of play between the two narratives. Again, while the Gaiman text effaces the Shakespeare play in order to create this space for his adaption, Gaiman is also recontextualizing the historical narrative that Shakespeare is a part of. If Shakespeare's play is a fluid construction and the history of Shakespeare, the man, can similarly be seen as fluid, then it is not that far of a stretch for Gaiman to be reappropriating pieces from both stories—Shakespeare's play and Shakespeare's history. In this instance, it is the blending together of his narrative and Shakespeare's play that provides this new context; Gaiman has created a fictional explanation that recasts the way in which Shakespeare's play and Shakespeare's history can be read. In not so few words, Gaiman is challenging the historicity of the narrative in which Shakespeare is drafted, and treats the "historical" Shakespeare no differently than he would one of *Midsummer's* characters. By using Dream as the underlying reason that gives cause for Shakespeare's plays, Gaiman is offering an effaced version of the historical events that prompted the source text.

If Gaiman's use of narratological reappropriation in "Midsummer" shows the mutability of characters and their place in a narrative structure (be that fictive or historical), he pointedly chooses a different approach for "Tempest," the last issue in the *Sandman* series. It is the themes of the texts that are transferred and reappropriated between the texts. While the narrative is

mostly concerned with Shakespeare's drafting of *The Tempest*, Gaiman uses Shakespeare's play as a way of connecting the themes of the work to both Shakespeare the man (or at least how Gaiman is using this "historical" imagining of William Shakespeare) and Dream.



Figure 3.2 Gaiman, "Tempest" 1

From the outset of the story, the reader is presented with two parallel narratives. In Figure 3.2, we see the opening of the play juxtaposed with Shakespeare writing the play. While the structure of this story may strike some resemblance to “Midsummer”—both stories are concerned with William Shakespeare, his family, and his friends—the major difference is that, in “Tempest,” the reader is never given portrayals of the play’s characters interacting with Shakespeare or Dream. Instead, the action of the play is always presented juxtaposed to the story of William Shakespeare and his dealings with Dream. Further, there is a marked difference between the way the panels referring to Gaiman’s story and the panels referring to Shakespeare’s play are drawn. The story’s panels are much the same as they have been throughout the series: fairly realistic characters, strong lines, and pronounced shadows. The panels from the play are drastically different, taking on a painterly quality with thin lines, cloudy, almost impressionistic landscapes, very little shading, and a noticeably softer color palette. Again, these visual changes are cues for readers that the two stories are juxtaposed, never actually meeting, even though the two are in dialogue. Figure 3.2 is a good example of this: the storm is raging around the small ship, just as Judith tells her father that a storm is coming. Here we have a “real” storm—the one that Shakespeare will walk through to go to the inn for a drink—and the “depicted” storm that sinks Antonio’s ship.

If it was unclear that Gaiman is using Prospero as a metaphorical stand-in for Shakespeare, he overtly confronts readers with this as his story continues. In Figure 3.3, Shakespeare is reading a speech to his wife, Anne. In the three panel sequence across the top of the page, he is reciting the famous “we are such stuff as dreams are made on” speech; however, over the course of those lines (and those panels) the speaker switches between Shakespeare and

Prospero. Here, the panels each retain their own distinct artistic styles guiding the reader through the parallel stories, making sure to keep the two narratives close but decidedly separate.



Figure 3.3 Gaiman, "Tempest" 27

Nearly halfway through the story, Dream appears to discuss the play he commissioned from Shakespeare, and audiences are confronted with the metaphorical nature of Gaiman's work. Much like the reader, Shakespeare has one simple question for Dream: "Why this play?" (Gaiman 22) This question goes on for the rest of the tale until Dream takes Shakespeare to his realm upon completion of the play. Here Shakespeare expands on his question (emphasis Gaiman's):

So why this play? It is a topical piece—I took the inspiration for it from the wreck of the sea-venture in the Bermudas last year. The story is merely the story **all** parents tell to amuse their children. There is some of **me** in it. Some of Judith. Things I saw, things I thought. I stole a speech from one of Montaigne's essays, and closed with an unequivocally cheap and happy ending. Why did you not want a **tragedy**? Something lofty, something dark, a tale of a noble hero with a tragic flaw? (Gaiman 35)

As stated earlier in the previous section, Dream's answer is very simple: "I wanted a tale of graceful ends. I wanted a play about a king who drowns his books, and breaks his staff, and leaves his kingdom. About a magician who becomes a man. About a man who turns his back on magic" (Gaiman 35). Here the metaphor of the play within a story comes full-circle; all three—Shakespeare, Prospero, and Dream—are desperately wanting a return to normality. The burden of their gifts, powers, and positions seems to have finally caught up with them, and the sheer world-weariness of each character is palpable. It is no coincidence that one of Shakespeare's last, non co-authored, plays concludes Gaiman's series (*The Two Noble Kinsman* probably coming after *Tempest* and believed to have been co-written with John Fletcher). Perhaps in a move to attempt to connect this issue with the "Midsummer" issue, the reader is given those similar informative captions in the final panel. Figure 3.4 shows the final page of the series

where the exhausted Shakespeare writes the final epilogue, the words from the play laid over the images of the author at work.

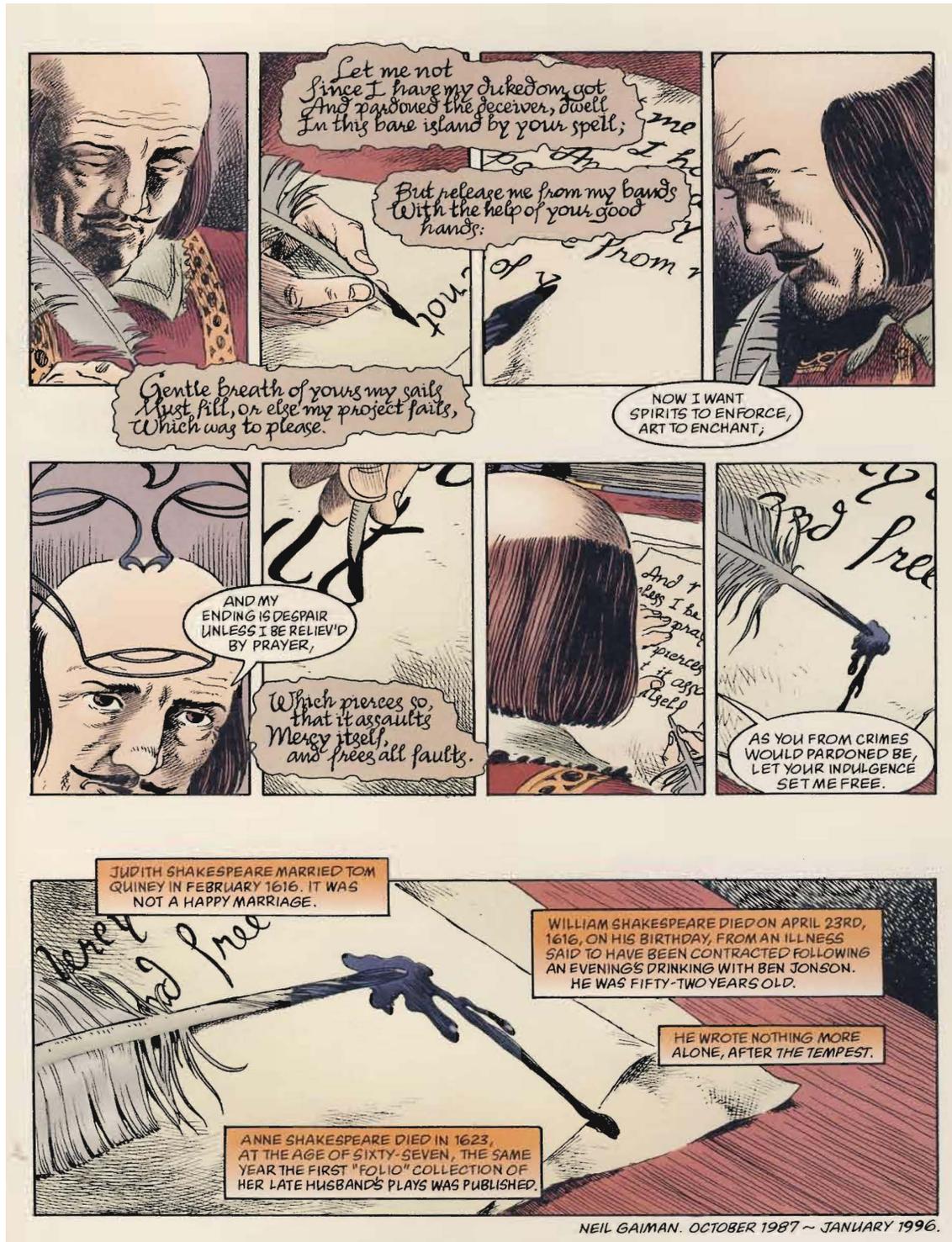


Figure 3.4 Gaiman, "Tempest" 38

To conclude this section, we turn to the work of Robert Sikoryak and his 2009 release *Masterpiece Comics*. This collection of short comics, which Sikoryak has written over a number of years, represents narratological reappropriation taken to its furthest extreme. The comics that Sikoryak has created do not fit with any of the other graphic narratives previously discussed. Instead, as seen in Figure 3.5, Sikoryak has co-opted both substance and style to create his work. What is particularly striking is the degree of reduction in Sikoryak's story.

One must first understand that Sikoryak has limited his story's form to the genre of Sunday comic. This explains two important features: his work is in color, and it is ten panels per page, laid out in a traditional left-to-right manner with little variation between panel size (except for the panel with the title, which is appropriately elongated to stretch across the entire page).

MAC WORTH

SIBERSAK SHAKESPEARE

12-91

MRS. M. HAS JUST READ TODAY'S HOROSCOPE, WHICH REVEALS THAT HER BELOVED MAC WILL SECURE A VERY PRESTIGIOUS PROMOTION...

MAC WOULD DO FINE!... BUT HE LACKS THE DRIVE NEEDED TO GET AHEAD QUICKLY!

SPIRITS, UNSEX ME! FILL ME WITH CRUELTY, AND STOP REMORSE! COME, THICK NIGHT, AND SHROUD ME IN THE DARKEST SMOKE OF HELL!

OH, GREAT MAC! YOUR NEWS HAS TRANSPORTED ME!

HELLO, DEAR! MY BOSS, MR. DUNCAN, IS COMING OVER FOR DINNER TONIGHT!

WELL, HE WON'T LIVE TO SEE TOMORROW! NOW, WELCOME HIM WITH OPEN ARMS, BUT BE A SNAKE AT HEART!

LEAVE TONIGHT'S BUSINESS IN MY HANDS, AND WE WILL ACHIEVE GREATNESS! ... JUST DON'T LOOK SO GUILTY!

AND SO, THAT NIGHT, AFTER PARTAKING IN A WONDERFUL HOME COOKED MEAL, MAC'S BOSS SLEEPS SOUNDLY IN THE GUEST ROOM WHILE MRS. M. WAITS DOWNSTAIRS...

I TRUST MAC WILL FIND THE STEAK KNIVES I PLACED OUTSIDE MR. DUNCAN'S DOOR...

AH! THERE YOU ARE!

I'VE DONE IT!

I THOUGHT I HEARD A VOICE CRY, "SLEEP NO MORE! MAC MURDERS SLEEP!" THE INNOCENT SLEEP... THE SLEEP OF PEACE...

WHY, MAC, YOU'LL WORRY YOURSELF SICK IMAGINING SUCH THINGS! NOW GO CLEAN YOURSELF UP!

WILL AN OCEAN WASH THIS BLOOD FROM MY HANDS!?

HONESTLY! A LITTLE WATER WILL DO!

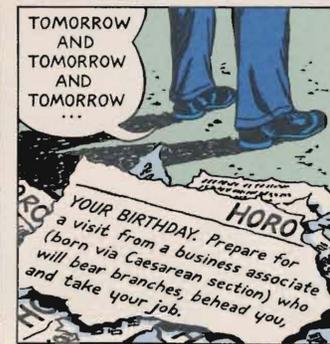


Figure 3.5 Sikoryak 10-11

Here Sikoryak has taken the story of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the style of Allen Saunders and Ken Ernst's syndicated comic "Mary Worth" and combined the two together. There are a couple of easy observations to make when first confronted with these two comic strips: this is a much abridged version of the play, and Sikoryak plays fast and loose with his Shakespearean language. While Gaiman gives great care to how he handles Shakespeare's characters and his language, no such care is taken on Sikoryak's part. Instead, the reader is given sections of Shakespearean language juxtaposed against more modern language. For example, the first panel preserves some of Lady Macbeth's call to "unsex" her, whereas the next panel has the humdrum "yes dear" style common to soap opera style comics like *Mary Worth*. Stylistically, this fits with the genre of comic that Sikoryak is engaged in; the comic's action is very minimal and has an abundance of word bubbles and narrator blocks. By staying close to his chosen genre of Sunday, drama-driven comics, Sikoryak has mimicked the genre in his reappropriation. The reader is left unsure about what was more important for the author to reappropriate: the style of the comic or the content of its story.

While Sikoryak's aptitude for comic art reproduction is quite obvious, what are the ramifications for narratological reappropriation when confronted with something like "Mac Worth?" Versaci makes the point that

it is impossible to read, say, Sikoryak's ["Mac Worth"] without being aware of the [*Mary Worth*] comics. Every panel of Sikoryak's work reminds readers of a piece of comic book history even as they move through the plot of a recognizable story from Western literature. As such, it becomes impossible to separate these two worlds (Versaci 206).

This is the true merit of Sikoryak's text and his negotiation of narratological reappropriation, for he has gone one step further than simply using the elements of another author's story. Instead he

has taken from both works, using them to create an interesting dialogue. One cannot read “Mac Worth” and not think of Shakespeare’s play of betrayal and murder, without having to confront the style used for a syndicated comic about a widow in her condominium. Sikoryak ties the two together in order to force the reader to negotiate these two, drastically different stories in order to create some sense of a cohesive meaning. We cannot place “Mac Worth” on a single adaptive continuum; readers will have to see this comic as both an adaptation of *Macbeth* and of *Mary Worth*.

Whether readers find critical merit or novelty in Sikoryak’s work, he negotiates narratological reappropriation uniquely, not quite reappropriating like Gaiman. The difference is that he does not fashion his own story out of the reappropriated parts. There is no “Dream” character to offer an explanation or an effacement of history and story. Sikoryak fashions a reappropriated style with a reappropriated plot and lets them stand alone as their own narrative. This, of course, could be problematic for readers who may be unfamiliar with either the story or the style that Sikoryak is borrowing from. While this would certainly lead to some rather confusing interpretations of the texts, Sikoryak has preempted such confusion. While, readers are given some freedom to read into the juxtapositions of style and story, Sikoryak reserves some room to expand and explain his stylistic decisions. In a section he tongue-in-cheekly pens as “Masterpiece Queries” (paying homage to the comics of yester-year that had sections for readers to write in questions to the author or artist) where Sikoryak writes in a question to “the Professor” (“the Professor,” of course, is Sikoryak). One such fictional question asks, “in MAC WORTH, why would Mac listen to Mrs. M’s terrible advice” (Sikoryak 30)? This question is written as if the reader is unaware of the two different narratives that Sikoryak is reappropriating.

The Professor's reply gives a lengthy explanation about how the combination of *Macbeth* and *Mary Worth* work:

Perhaps Mac was the wrong man for the job. He couldn't "screw [his] courage to the sticking-place," as the poet William Shakespeare expressed it in his Scottish play, circa 1607. The personality of Mrs. M. is reminiscent of the titular character of a 1940 dramatic comic strip, produced for many years by the team of writer Allen Sanders [sic] and artist Ken Ernst. That cartoon star is a kindly and perceptive busybody, whose advice is consistently and startlingly, very effective and generally embraced by her many friends and relations. In our story, Mac somewhat resembles a fictional medical doctor (who is also himself the eponymous star of another serialized strip, realized in 1948 by the team of Dal Curtis, Marvin Bradley, and Frank Edgington). That doctor was far more effective using knives to perform surgery than he ever would be to commit murder.

(Sikoryak 30)

Sikoryak's decision is made clearer. He has adequately explained the interplay between the two texts, while giving important information to readers who are unfamiliar with the texts he is effacing. Here, it is the juxtaposition of entirely divergent themes that gives the comic purpose—a tale of murder pitted against a traditional dramatic comic.

What is the future for narratological reappropriation? Which fork in the road will graphic novelists and cartoon artists decide to take? While the critical importance of what authors like Gaiman and Sikoryak are doing is still left to be determined, one can imagine that audiences will continue to see such moves made by future authors. With the ubiquitous prominence of the Internet, the rise in independent comic authors appears to be the future of the medium. What is encouraging is that narratological reappropriation appears to be present and popular in this new

medium, with authors like Brooke McEldowney whose webcomic “Pibgorn” has recently published a version of *Midsummer* (now in paperback) using only the characters from his comic series. It seems as if the medium of comics may be changing, the number of authors may be increasing, but some of the forms and fixtures of the genre will stay the same. It is the long tradition of graphic adaptations of texts that we have to thank for it.

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