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### **Permission to Invade: *Doom 2099*'s Muses of Fire**

This paper blasts Shakespeare onto the splash panel. I discuss the borders and boundaries of Shakespearean adaptation, while investigating *Doom 2099*, a 1993 Marvel Comics series that ends each of its first five issues with a quote from William Shakespeare's *Henry V*. The comic's protagonist—the tyrannical but traditional villain Dr. Doom—is modelled on Shakespeare's eloquent and ruthless English King. Quoting *Henry V*'s prologue, as well as Henry's rousing battle speeches, *Doom 2099* invokes what I have elsewhere referred to as Henry's "underdog rhetoric." Doom adapts Henry's rhetoric of national identity as he "rescues" Latveria from a technocratic regime that threatens to dissolve boundaries of nation and culture. Doom states:

I have returned to a world teetering on the brink of destruction—a house of cards destined to collapse under the weight of political and corporate factionalism. If that anarchic tomorrow is to be avoided, this world must be rebuilt and restructured. And I am the architect of that future.  
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This encounter between open-source Shakespeare and Marvel's strictly copyrighted franchises leads to questions about permission and intellectual property, as well as the imaginary borders that constitute national and artistic identity. Henry consolidates his followers into an English identity in exchange for their participation in his invasion of France—an invasion ostensibly justified by the parodic, euphuistic prose of the Salic law. Marvel Comics, on the other hand, adapts Henry's ethos of camaraderie and tradition as it rigidly defends its own borders from appropriation. This essay thus considers how appeals to transformation function within myths of national identity and intellectual property.

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### **"We are spirits of another sort": Vestiges of the Medieval Faerie in Comic Book Adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream***

"Sometimes, if a story is very special, it can quite take people over," says Thoth-Hermes to an incarnation of Alan Moore's questing faerie super-heroine, Promethea. Surely Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* qualifies, as does his innovative literary incarnation of its fairies. Folklorist Katherine Briggs attributes to Shakespeare and this play the emergence of faeries as small, ethereal, generally benevolent (if mischievous) denizens of forest and hearth. Historically by contrast, faeries were ghoulish pale-people—Boggarts, Banshees, Nuckelavees, and Pookas—adult or child-sized inhabitants of a timeless realm who might well entrap unwary humans therein. Shakespearean faeries, however, have held the stage of popular imagination since they debuted in the 1590s. Scholars such as Marjorie Swann and Farah Karim-Cooper have analyzed them variously as markers of cultural shifts toward urban consumerist values and as literary paean to Queen Elizabeth I. But recent decades have

seen imaginative artists and writers, especially in visual media such as comic books, exploring in old and in new directions faerie lore as it has descended from Shakespeare. This essay will examine modern comic book versions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (mostly faithful to Shakespeare's version of faeries) and two visual texts/graphic novels—Neil Gaiman's retelling of the play in his series *The Sandman* and Moore's acclaimed series *Promethea*. The unleashing of the anarchic energy of the historical demonic, uncanny faeries, this shift from faeries as what they have become—fluttery purveyors of wish fulfilment, mostly relegated to the lesser status of childish entertainment, or alternately, as sentimental souvenir shop tchotchkes—calls to mind Johan Huizinga's observations concerning the gradual cultural exhaustion of visual symbolism and iconography as it becomes deeply entrenched in the social fabric and public mind. Eventually, such symbolic representations become, Huizinga asserts, "a mere mental game" and at that point, "the meaningful has become meaningless," trivialized and empty (247). I will examine how creators such as Gaiman and Moore have sought to revitalize the energy of the more dangerous faerie folk while still paying homage to Shakespeare's faerie legacy—his Titania and Oberon, his Puck and the rest. These new faerie stories attempt to follow Shakespeare's example in speaking to what has come before, to our current cultural moments, and to human imagination, to "feel [as] full of meaning" as *Promethea* discovering her history and her future.

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### **Shakespeare as EC Comics Horror: "What Screams May Come!"**

When I leafed through my torn pages of *The Greatest Joker Stories Ever Told* in the late 1980s, one of the villain's schemes confused me. This story—a reprint from a 1951 issue—began at the theater, where Bruce Wayne witnesses a round, drunken Shakespearean character go off script, stealing jewelry and gloating to his victims. As this strange man in tights flees, the mask falls to reveal the Joker's grin. At the time, I didn't know Falstaff, but I do now: Falstaff is the supervillain in disguise, a character with horror film roots and a violent impulse to tear polite society apart.

This essay takes up the horror appropriations of Shakespeare in a form even more notorious than the Batman's archenemy—the EC comics line. These books delighted in grotesque imagery and violently sexual plotlines; famously, they also spurred Fredric Wertham's 1953 screed *Seduction of the Innocent*, which led to the industry's self-imposed Comics Code Authority. I show that EC's controversial elements merge with Shakespearean allusion, as in the story "Seep No More!" that imagines a murder victim's blood pooling on a ceiling. "Top Billing" tells of three actors who wander into a production of *Hamlet*, where the prop skulls seem a touch too real. I examine such grim appropriations through the framework of Bradford Wright, who argues that the horror comics of the 50s provoked censorship precisely because they "put forth a remarkably perverse and horrifying image of the affluent society turned upside down" and "affronted the triumphalism of postwar America" (84). That is, these horror comics delighted in visions not simply of dismembered bodies, but the underside of American culture, with corrupt police, murderous husbands, cheating wives, and blood-soaked capitalists. Shakespeare partakes in it all. In the EC world, Shakespeare is no longer the marker of high culture, but the grotesque villain of misogyny, greed, and hypocrisy. He represents the stifling, horrific cultural powers against which the crypt-keeper warns us.

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### **Delineating Comics: *Shakespeare Illustrated* and the Question of Narrative Production**

What counts as “comics”? And how do early comic artists’ engagements with Shakespeare align with and vary from later ones? My interest in this subject developed from studying *Shakespeare Illustrated: Life’s But a Walking Shadow* (1824-5), a set of stick and line drawings of scenes from Shakespeare’s plays. These three anonymous lithographic prints appear to be very like comic strips in format, although their arrangement of images is non-sequential. Given their distinct stylistic traits, they are most similar to the line and dot drawing style initiated by George Woodward, who otherwise drew caricatures and was part of an active group of fellow British caricature artists from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Engaging the work of David Kunzle and Barbara Postema, this paper positions these prints within popular artistic genres of their period and unpacks to what extent these particular quotes and scenes depicted from Shakespeare form a cohesive visual narrative. These “proto-comics” perform several functions through their multimodal textuality. On one level they operate pedagogically, as both an extended drawing exercise and quiz on how well the reader knows their Shakespeare. On another, they present promotionally, celebrating a well-known British author’s work and participating in the bardolatry that later grew to a fever pitch in the Victorian period. Finally, they may serve critically, as a pointed social commentary on the Anglo-Burmese wars being waged during the years of their printing.

Returning to the initial question posed, *Shakespeare Illustrated* provides an opportunity to think about the historical lineage of comics and the ways in which Shakespeare was appropriated in them. While we may trace functional continuities between this format and those that followed (comic strips, graphic novels, manga), differences in the way narrative coherence is produced still obtain. Due to its position at the crossroads of caricature and comic strips, *Shakespeare Illustrated* should be considered a foundational text in the history of Shakespeare and comics.

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### **The Drama of Resolution: Scale and Mediation in Manga Shakespeare, *The Tempest***

Shakespeare’s *Tempest* has long been understood to articulate a complex intersection of political and theatrical power. Whether one reads the play’s power struggles within a “New World” or a Mediterranean context (or both), Prospero’s behind-the-scenes knowledge of theatrical convention and his ability to stage-manage the various events of the play—beginning with the shipwreck itself—allows him to win back his dukedom and to facilitate an advantageous dynastic match for Miranda. In

this paper, I ask how the manga Shakespeare translates these metacritical reflections on theatrical and political power from stage to page. As illustrated by Paul Duffield, with text adapted by Richard Appignanesi, the manga *Tempest* (2008) presents Prospero's power partly as a function of his privileged perspective on the medium itself—a perspective the reader shares. In translating the cultural authority of Shakespearean metatheatre to manga, Duffield exploits the aesthetic and epistemic resources of scale to differentiate Prospero's larger perspective on the action from the narrower views of the island's other inhabitants or visitors. It is not merely that characters such as Antonio are at the mercy of Prospero's superior powers. It's also that they occupy an entirely different sphere of existence "inside" the fiction, while Prospero has the capacity to create and act on the world of the fiction as if from its outside. This capacity to move from the inside of a fictional space to its outside (and back again) represents a form of scalar and media literacy, one that can apply both to Prospero and to his audiences, whether in the theater or on the pages of this manga.

