

## The *Manga Shakespeare* Series Translated into Brazilian Portuguese

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Shakespeare's legacy is as alive as ever thanks to constant restagings of his plays, and countless new editions of his works in English and in foreign languages, which prompt creative adaptations in different media, ranging from the most traditional like film, opera and ballet, to comic books and video games. Of these new rewritings, which attract ever larger audiences, the adaptations into comics stand out. While they may be geared mainly to the youth audience, they also attract readers from other age groups. The English-language *Manga Shakespeare* series epitomises this recent trend, by adapting the plays to the Japanese-style comic book format. This article will ascertain how these adaptations have been made and analyse how they have been translated into other languages and cultures, focusing on the example of Brazilian Portuguese; it will examine to what extent the main features of the plays are retained, taking *Romeo and Juliet* as a case study in adaptation and translation, and ask what image of the source playwright and his work is conveyed to the manga readership.<sup>1</sup> The adaptation of Shakespeare's language into comic book language is understood here as a form of intersemiotic translation, preceding the interlingual translation from English into Brazilian Portuguese.

The concept of adaptation is not easy to define, since there are a whole host of very similar concepts, which often overlap and are hard to tell apart, such as appropriation, parody and pastiche. Sometimes the term is even used to refer to adjustments necessary to transpose a text from one language and culture to another, which would be translation proper. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this article *adaptation* means the following: (i) intersemiotic translation, in which verbal signs are interpreted “by means of signs of non-verbal sign systems” (Jakobson 114)—an example of this would be the intermedial transposition of graphic novels to films, or of plays to graphic novels; (ii) a rewriting for a different audience from that originally intended, which could be in a different culture, from a different age group, or with a different educational level; (iii) a rewriting that effects changes such as to the setting or the time. Adaptation as a “transpositional practice, casting a specific genre into a generic mode, [is] an act of re-vision in itself”, as Julie

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<sup>1</sup>This article is based on research carried out for a one-year research project (August 2013–July 2014) conducted with the assistance of an undergraduate student, Marcela Lanus, who received a grant from the Brazilian National Research Council (Conselho Nacional de Pesquisa—CNPq). For further results see also the Portuguese-language article focusing on *Hamlet* in manga version (Martins).

Sanders argues (18). As she points out, “it can parallel editorial practice in some respects, indulging in the exercise of trimming and pruning; yet it can also be an amplificatory procedure engaged in addition, expansion, accretion, and interpolation” (18). Sanders also adds that adaptation sometimes offers commentary on a source text, yet

can also constitute a simpler attempt to make texts “relevant” or easily comprehensible to new audiences and readerships via the processes of proximation and updating. This can be seen as an artistic drive in many adaptations of the so-called “classic” novels or drama for television and cinema. Shakespeare has been a particular focus, a beneficiary even, of these “proximations” or datings. (19)

The word *manga* is the transliteration of a Japanese term that means “comic book” and is used in the West to refer to Japanese-style comic books. Its origins lie in shadow theatre, originally from feudal China, in which performances of puppet plays would be taken from village to village. It was after the Meiji Restoration in 1868 that the seeds for manga were sown, paving the way for its future popularity. With the Restoration, Japan reopened its doors to Western trade after over two centuries of isolation; with the new tradesmen came many European journalists, who not only wrote for newspapers, but also drew political cartoons for the magazines of the day. These cartoons inspired Japan’s first manga illustrators. Initially however, manga were almost exclusively geared towards adult readers because of their predominantly political content. It was only in the early twentieth century that the first manga for children were published (Vasconcellos 23). To this day, manga is a very popular and vibrant genre in Japan, read by people of every age and socio-economic group.

Japanese manga are different from their Western counterparts not only in their origin and size (a single book can be more than 200 pages long), but also in their mode of graphic representation. A Japanese manga is read back-to-front compared with Western books: it begins where a European or US-American would expect the end to be, and the text runs from right to left. The drawings are stylised and focus on the characters’ expressions. The back-to-front format is now familiar in the West, and exists not only in translations but also in original editions, the *Manga Shakespeare* series being a case in point. However, this series breaks with one Japanese tradition: the story runs from left to right.

The British *Manga Shakespeare* series is published by SelfMadeHero, an independent publishing house “committed to producing ground-breaking work in the graphic novel medium” (SelfMadeHero, “About”), commissioning both original works and translations since 2007. Shakespeare’s plays are not the only popular classics that SelfMadeHero has transposed into graphic novels: its catalogue features series such as *Graphic Freud*, in which Sigmund Freud’s most famous case studies are documented in graphic novel form, and *Crime Classics*, with several Sherlock Holmes stories. The quality of the manga series editions is very high. They are produced in a 148 x 210 mm book format with black-and-white illustra-

tions. There are fourteen titles to date in the Shakespeare series: *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Twelfth Night*, *Richard III*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, *Henry VIII*, *The Tempest*, *As You Like It* and *Julius Caesar*—five of which have been brought out in Brazil in Portuguese. The idea behind this series is presented in the publisher's catalogue and on each back cover: "Manga Shakespeare is a series of graphic novel adaptations of William Shakespeare's plays. A fusion of classic Shakespeare with manga visuals, these are cutting-edge adaptations that will intrigue and grip readers." The essence of the plots and the original language are retained, but the text is abridged and the settings can change, resulting in two or more levels of adaptation: the transposition from theatre/drama to comic book; and the transposition to a different time period, culture or geographical location.

The most famous tragedies, for example, are rewritten thus: *Hamlet* is set in 2107, after global climate change has devastated the Earth, in a cyberworld in constant dread of war; *Othello's* Venice is inhabited by winged beings, blurring the lines between animals and humans; in *King Lear*, the old king is transformed into a venerable eighteenth-century Mohican chieftain who divides his kingdom among his three daughters during a crucial era of invasion and displacement along the American frontier; and in a futuristic *Macbeth*, Samurai warriors have managed to reclaim a post-nuclear world inhabited by mutants. *Romeo and Juliet*, the translation of which is to be analysed here, is described on the edition's back cover as being "set in modern-day Japan, [where] two young lovers are caught up in a bitter vendetta between their rival Yakuza families—the Montagues and the Capulets." Although the setting is relocated from Verona to Japan, the characters' names remain unchanged.

The *Manga Shakespeare* website highlights the credentials of the editors: "The Manga Shakespeare editorial team is led by a leading Shakespeare scholar and an educational editor. Advised by teachers and other educationalists, the team is expert in making serious works of literature more accessible" (SelfMadeHero, "Mangashakespeare"). It also stresses the potential of the series in the teaching of literature and English as a second language, emphasising that the plays "are abridged to allow teachers to focus on key scenes, while following Shakespeare's text." The website also contains a number of comments that emphasise the value of the manga language as an instruction medium in Japan, its popularity amongst young people of both sexes, and its wide "range of educational applications—both for students exploring complex ideas and for those challenged by conventional reading." The author of all the books in the series, presented as the adapter, is Richard Appignanesi, who is also the editor of the series. Every Shakespeare manga has a different illustrator, whose name is given greater visibility than that of the adapter on the front cover and spine.

*Romeo and Juliet* is one of the five manga published in Brazilian Portuguese in Galera Record's *Mangá Shakespeare* series, the other titles being *Hamlet*, *The Tempest*, *Richard III* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In the manga *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo is a rock star; he and Juliet are children of rival families from the Yakuza, the Japanese mafia; Tybalt is an angry tattooed youth; and the nurse is an

old lady who always appears wearing a kimono. Like the others in the series, this manga is published in book form. On its front cover is an illustration of the romantic couple, along with the illustrator's name, which also features on the spine. The objectives of the series as a whole and this book in particular are presented in brief in two paragraphs on the back cover, which also contains three panels showing well-known scenes and lines from the play, the endorsement of Shakespeare's Globe, and excerpts from reviews in the mainstream press. The final pages of the edition contain a plot summary, a brief biography of Shakespeare, and biodata on Richard Appignanesi, Sonia Leong, the illustrator, and Nick de Somogyi, the textual consultant; these paratexts are included in every volume of the series.

The paratextual plot summary begins with an illustration of the two rival gangs and a caption: "Present-day Tokyo. Two teenagers, Romeo and Juliet, fall in love. But their Yakuza families are at war." The following pages present the main characters with an illustration and a short well-known line. Romeo, presented as a "rock idol and son of Lord Montague", is associated with the line "Did my heart love till now?" from Act 1, Scene 5, which he utters when he sees Juliet at the Capulet ball and falls in love with her at first sight. Mercutio, a close friend of Romeo's and kinsman of Prince Escalus, is identified by the famous curse, "A plague on both your houses!" from Act 3, Scene 1, which he cries before he dies, stabbed by Tybalt, Juliet's cousin.

Now, turning to the main text of the comic, let us see what similarities and differences there are between this adaptation and the text of Shakespeare's play. The main differences are in the transposition to characters that have tattoos, wear everything from kimonos to the kinds of outfits favoured by Japanese youngsters, travel on motorbike, send e-mails, use mobile phones, and ride elevators in tall buildings; and in significant abridgement of the text through cuts and omissions. The best known fragments are reproduced unaltered and are easy to recognise. A case in point is this speech by Romeo in couplet form from Act 1, Scene 5. The sections in bold italics are reproduced in the manga version and represent this soliloquy metonymically.

ROMEO

***O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!***

It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night

As a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear—

Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear.

So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows

As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.

The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand,

And, touching hers, make blessèd my rude hand.

***Did my heart love till now?*** Forswear it, sight,

***For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.***

(*Rom.* 1.5.41–50)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>All quotations from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* are taken from the *Norton Shakespeare*.

Another example, from the same scene, is the dialogue full of religious metaphors between Romeo and Juliet upon their first meeting at the Capulet ball, in which he tries to convince her to kiss him. In the source text, the fourteen lines of the passage form a sonnet, with three ABAB-rhyming quatrains and a rhyming couplet at the end. The lines or words that are reproduced in the manga adaptation, here indicated in bold italics, function like the selections in blackout poetry:

ROMEO

If I profane with my unworhiest hand  
This holy shrine, the gentler sin is this:  
***My lips***, two blushing pilgrims, ***ready stand***  
To smooth that rough touch ***with a tender kiss***.

JULIET

***Good pilgrim***, you do wrong your hand too much,  
***Which mannerly devotion shows in this***.  
For ***saints have hands that*** pilgrims' hands do touch,  
And palm to palm is holy palmers' ***kiss***.

ROMEO

***Have not saints lips***, and holy palmers, too?

JULIET

Ay, pilgrim, ***lips that they must use in prayer***.

ROMEO

***O*** then, ***dear saint***, let lips do what hands do:  
***They pray***; grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

JULIET

***Saints do not move***, though grant for prayers' sake.

ROMEO

***Then move not*** while my prayer's effect I take.

(*Rom.* 1.5.90–103)

The similarities between Shakespeare's play and the manga adaptation are many: the plot is unchanged (even Romeo's exile in Mantua is kept); the most important dialogues are maintained, as well as the most iconic lines and expressions; features of the rich, metaphorical language, with many syntactical inversions and sophisticated vocabulary are preserved, despite it being abridged; concerning the metre and rhyme scheme, the same combination of blank and rhymed iambic pentameter is retained, together with passages in prose, as well as the rhyming couplets in the unabridged passages.

The translation into Portuguese of the manga *Romeo and Juliet* was published by the Brazilian Galera imprint, created in 2007 to cater for the youth market's appetite for novelty (Grupo Editorial Record). Other Galera titles in translation

include Meg Cabot's *The Princess Diaries*, Eoin Colfer's *Artemis Fowl*, Cecily von Ziegesar's *Gossip Girl* and Suzanne Collins's *Hunger Games*, all successful series for young and young adult readers. Contradicting a widespread belief that young people today—at least in Brazil—are not keen on books, this “young readers” market is going through a boom. According to Caio Barretto Briso, “O mercado literário brasileiro exhibe um grande vigor. Nunca se vendeu tanto livro no país, num impulso que vem da emergente classe C e, principalmente, dos jovens em geral” [“The Brazilian fiction market is vibrant. Never have so many books been sold in the country, thanks to the impetus provided by the emerging middle class and especially young people in general”] (32).<sup>3</sup> In 2012, for the first time, sales of books for the youth market exceeded sales for the adult market by almost 25 per cent: 47 million versus 38 million books sold. Confirming this trend, the sixteenth Biennial Book Fair that was held in 2013 in Rio de Janeiro recorded its largest youth visitor numbers ever. The percentage of visitors aged 14 to 29 rose from 44 per cent in 2011 to 51 per cent two years later.

In response to this growing appetite for literature in all its forms, different imprints and series are turning out a constant flow of new titles for the youth market, with a mixture of original texts, translations and adaptations, especially the transposition of classics into comic book form. Ricardo Rodrigues, shareholder of Comix, a São Paulo bookshop specialising in comic books, explains: “Quando fundamos a Comix [27 years ago], havia uns 25 títulos em quadrinhos mensais [. . .]. Hoje já são 125 por mês” [“When we founded Comix 27 years ago there were about 25 comic book titles every month [. . .]. Today there are 125 a month”] (Meireles 13). The popularity of comics amongst young people has enhanced their reception of adapted classics, which were previously restricted to condensed versions or prose novels.

The Brazilian *Mangá Shakespeare* translations have the same format as the British books, save for a few details. The front cover is the same, except that the name of the translator appears alongside the name of the illustrator, and the Brazilian publisher's logo is added. Although the name of the adapter does not appear on the front cover of the British edition, the name of the translator of its Brazilian counterpart does. The back covers of both editions are also similar, except for a few changes. They both feature two paragraphs of text, one providing a brief presentation of the series and another giving a short summary of the story, besides an endorsement from a respected source. As to the slight differences mentioned, on the back cover of the translated edition there is a short text about the illustrator and the translator, and the name of the adapter also appears, but in very small letters in the top left corner; the introductory text about the series comes first (it comes second in the English edition), and is headed by a title, “Shakespeare reinventado” [“Shakespeare reinvented”]; the text from the paragraph mentioned above is not a translation of its counterpart in the original edition, but a different text with a similar function. The introduction in Brazilian Portuguese explains:

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<sup>3</sup>All translations from Portuguese into English are mine.

A série Mangá Shakespeare é uma nova e divertida maneira de conhecer os textos clássicos do bardo. Com o texto original e ilustrações inspiradas nos mangás japoneses, uma das mais importantes obras da literatura inglesa ganha vida a cada volume.

[The *Mangá Shakespeare* series is a new, entertaining way to get to know the classic texts by the bard. With original text and illustrations inspired by Japanese manga, one of the most important works of English literature is brought to life in each volume.]

The introductory paragraph in the Brazilian edition makes no mention of the word “adaptation” as the British edition does, choosing rather to refer to a “new, entertaining way to get to know the classic texts by the bard”; and the citation from a mainstream newspaper review is from the *Financial Times* (in the original edition it is from the *Independent on Sunday*).

The translator Alexei Bueno lends the project considerable kudos. A well-known poet, editor and essayist, he is given great visibility in the Brazilian series. His name appears on the front cover, and an introduction is provided on the back cover—something that not even the adapter of the original edition earned. This is the opening of the text extolling his qualities: “Alexei Bueno é um dos mais premiados e cultuados poetas brasileiros. Além de livros de poesia, publicou vários textos críticos e antologias, assim como organizou obras completas e traduziu diversos autores” [“Alexei Bueno is one of Brazil’s most acclaimed and award-winning poets. As well as books of poetry, he has published various critical texts and anthologies, and has edited complete works and translated many authors”]. In addition, there is also a 21-line translator’s note after the title page occupying the position of a preface. In it, the translator says that the translation “mantém fidelidade formal absoluta aos originais, ou seja, o que é verso foi traduzido em verso, os trechos em prosa foram traduzidos em prosa, e quando havia rima esta sempre foi mantida” [“is absolutely faithful to the original’s form, in other words, what is verse has been translated into verse, the passages in prose have been translated into prose, and when there is rhyme, this is always maintained”] (Bueno 5). The translator’s note explains some of the formal aspects of the translation, presenting the overall translation strategy used for the passages in verse that were abridged:

Mesmo nos momentos em que o decassílabo branco inglês —verso de eleição da obra shakespeariana— foi alterado por cortes, preferimos traduzir todo o trecho em decassílabos brancos portugueses. Quando o verso é cortado no final de uma fala —e não se completando no primeiro verso da fala seguinte— ele é igualmente cortado em português, reduzido a um dos possíveis pés constitutivos do decassílabo, ou seja, destacadamente os quadrissílabos, hexassílabos ou octossílabos. Deste modo o leitor poderá apreciar o andamento poético da peça, guardadas as diferenças de índole das línguas.

[Even when the English blank decasyllabic verse—the standard verse in Shakespeare’s works—was abridged, we chose to translate the whole passage in Portuguese blank decasyllables. When the verse is cut at the end of a speech—and is not concluded in the first line of the next speech—it is

likewise cut in Portuguese, reduced to one of the possible components of the decasyllable, namely, verse lines of four, six or eight syllables. This allows the reader to appreciate the poetic flow of the play, respecting the different nature of the languages.] (Bueno 5)

Almost at the end of the translator's note, Bueno appraises the final result:

Apesar da forte tendência monossilábica da língua inglesa, e do tamanho médio dos vocábulos maior em nosso idioma, a notável liberdade de sintaxe e a índole sintética do português nos possibilitaram transposições que julgamos muito satisfatórias.

[Despite the strong monosyllabic tendency of the English language and the average word length being longer in our language, the notable syntactic freedom and synthetic nature of Portuguese gave us the opportunity for transpositions we judge to be very satisfactory.] (Bueno 5)

Concluding his text, Bueno focuses on some lexical and grammatical aspects: “Utilizamos, apenas quando necessário, um ou outro arcaísmo, e uma liberdade na topologia pronominal mais característica de outros períodos da sintaxe da nossa língua” [“Only when necessary did we use one or another archaism and some liberty in positioning the pronouns according to characteristics from other periods of the syntax of our language”] (5). It is thus a sophisticated note, highlighting Bueno's translation project and entering into details about translating the metre, which few readers will understand or be interested in; what matters is the fact that the translator has been granted space to present his project.

When analysing translations of books that are themselves adaptations, as Nilce Pereira notes with regard to the transposition of Charles Dickens's novels into comics, the analysis does not focus on how the text has been adapted—which was addressed earlier, in the section on how the Shakespeare plays have been rewritten in manga form—but how it has been translated from the adaptation (41). In this type of analysis, the way the physical and visual composition of the volume has been manipulated is considered. In translations of comic books, the panels are generally maintained and the original text is blanked out and replaced with translated text. However, as Pereira points out,

o volume pode sofrer diferentes tipos de modificações, que podem incluir mudanças no tamanho e formato do volume, adição ou subtração de cores, aumento ou diminuição de páginas e painéis, novos arranjos de páginas e painéis, por exemplo, como se dá na tradução de *mangá*, em que pode ocorrer a inversão da direção de leitura (passando da direita para a esquerda, da tradição japonesa, para a direção ocidental, da esquerda para a direita) e cortes de porções textuais e/ou imagens e/ou referências visuais (geralmente por questões de censura), embora essas últimas sejam mais incomuns.

[the volume may undergo different kinds of modifications, which could include changes to the size and format of the volume, the addition or removal of colours, larger or smaller page and panel sizes, new page and panel layouts, as happens in translations of manga, for instance, where the direction

in which the books are read may change (from right to left, in the Japanese tradition, to left to right, in the Western tradition), and cuts of portions of text and/or images and/or visual references (normally for censorship reasons), although this last type is more unusual.] (242)

The examples Pereira gives of the first type of cuts, citing Heike Jüngst, Brigitte Helbling and others, are the omission in the translation of references to bullying and other themes or elements considered inappropriate for children, while she illustrates the other types by recounting the case of the removal of the image of a swastika on the kimono of one of the characters from the manga *Blade of the Immortal* in the translation into German, since in Germany the use of the symbol is forbidden by law (42).

As for the linguistic elements that can be changed in comic book translations, there are four spaces to investigate: the speech balloons, the captions, the titles and the linguistic paratexts. The only changes seen in the Portuguese translation of the *Romeo and Juliet* manga are where the translator's note and information about the translator are added. There are no other cuts, omissions or additions to any other part of the edition: just the replacement of the text from the manga in English with the translated text.

In the translations used in the speech balloons, and also in the metre and rhyme, Bueno delivers on the claims made in the translator's note quoted above. In the love sonnet from Act 1, Scene 5, mentioned above, for example, he recreates in Portuguese the five short lines that were retained from the original sonnet in decasyllabic rhymed verse:

ROMEU  
Nos meus lábios um beijo se insinua.

JULIETA  
Peregrino, que devoção é a sua?  
Aos santos, há que beijá-los na mão.

ROMEU  
Não têm lábios?

JULIETA  
Têm-nos no coração.

Some of the other features of the Brazilian Portuguese translation of this manga are: the use of “tu” and “vós” (classical second-person pronouns) rather than “você” (contemporary third-person singular pronoun), and even mirroring the changing use of “thou” and “you” (respectively with “tu” and “vós”) in the Shakespearean text; the presence of very sophisticated lexical choices, such as “ígneo”, in “olhar ígneo” [“passionate look”] (Shakespeare, *Romeu e Julieta* 98), and “sacra”, in “sacra lua” [“sacred moon”] (64); recourse to numerous syntactical inversions, emulating the style of the original, as in “Para disso falar eu te chamei” [literally:

“For of this to speak I thee called”] (39) and “Algo nefasto sinto que há de iniciar-se nesta noite” [literally: “Something evil I feel that will begin this night”] (46). The result is a close, careful translation of an adaptation that represents metonymically what we might call a prototext, retaining the main characteristics of the plot, the language and the best-known lines.

We might say that in terms of image, the Shakespeare in these manga adaptations does not look very different from the Shakespeare of the plays: a writer who, among other things, is a master of the language of verse and stands out for his notable lexical repertoire; who seeks to say something “sobre o homem, seu comportamento e suas relações com os seus semelhantes e com o universo em que se vive, por intermédio de uma *ação*” [“about man, his behaviour and his relations with his peers and the universe in which he lives, through the mediation of *action*”] (Heliadora 11); indeed, a writer who still reaches out to an eclectic public whose different expectations he meets, in switching between the erudite, popular, philosophical, lyrical and rational. In his works, as Anthony Burgess notes, there is “action and blood for the unlettered, fine phrases and wit for the gallants, thought and debate and learning for the more scholarly, subtle humour for the refined, boisterous clowning for the unrefined, love-interest for the ladies, song and dance for everybody” (76). The adaptations of the British *Manga Shakespeare* series and their counterparts in Brazilian Portuguese are an appealing way of introducing Shakespeare’s plays to an ever wider audience, especially to youth, and of bringing them into the heart of contemporary life.

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