

## A Shilling A Week

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 1965 a small boy's life changed. A new comic was published in the UK, entitled *Ranger – The National Boy's Magazine*. Named after the space probes, harnessing the connotations of new and exciting technology which was opening up space, *Ranger* aimed to be "... a first class paper for boys..."<sup>i</sup>. *Ranger* cost one shilling, making it an expensive comic for the time, although not quite as expensive as *Look and Learn*, priced at 1/3d, the weekly which middle class parents would buy for their children rather than the "trashy" *Beano* or *Dandy*<sup>ii</sup>, nor indeed quite so respectable. It was aimed at bridging the gap between the educationally-orientated publications like *Look and Learn*, *Knowledge* and *Treasure* and the popular boy's comics such as *Hotspur* and *Victor*, which were filled with exciting, action-filled picture stories. *Ranger* set out to provide a mixture of fact and fiction, featuring exciting picture stories, but also features on new technologies, true stories of courage and adventure, and adaptations of classic stories. In that first issue, which came complete with a free gift to entice boys to try the new comic, a story was featured which was not a standard boy's adventure, such as *Treasure Island* or *King Solomon's Mines*, although both of those stories appeared subsequently, but *The Adventures of Macbeth*.

The idea of showing classics of literature in comics was not new, having been seen in publications such as *Classic Comics* (later known as *Classics Illustrated*) for some time previously, but this strip was different. *Classic Comics* was a four-colour American publication, a whole story in a single issue, with colourfully painted covers, but *The Adventures of Macbeth* was a weekly serial, drawn in black and white by Italian artist Ruggero Giovannini. Children waited excitedly for each weekly episode to see the next instalment of the story. Each week a double page spread took the story forward, adhering faithfully to the plot, story and structure of Shakespeare's play, although not showing the same fidelity in relation to the language. The impetus behind *Ranger's* serial differed from *Classics Illustrated*, but behind both lay a similar overall intention, to introduce young readers to the great works of literature, and to use a medium of entertainment to educate and enlighten.

Comic books had been, throughout the 1930s in America, growing in popularity. Growing originally out of newspaper comic strips, the idea of printing strips together in a booklet form gradually developed, and with the arrival of *Detective Comics* in 1937 and perennial favourite Superman, in *Action Comics* in 1938, the period now referred to as "The Golden Age of Comics" was truly established. The arrival of comic books was not universally welcomed, however:

"Badly drawn, badly written, and badly printed - a strain on the young eyes and young nervous systems - the effects of these pulp-paper nightmares is that of a violent stimulant. Their crude blacks and reds spoils a child's natural sense of colour; their hypodermic injection of sex and murder make the child impatient with better, though quieter, stories. Unless we want a coming generation even more ferocious than the present one, parents and teachers throughout America must band together to break the 'comic' magazine."<sup>iii</sup>

The most influential of the attacks, *The Seduction of the Innocent*, came in a book by the eminent psychologist Dr Frederick Wertham, in 1954, and this caused an uproar, leading to an investigation by the U.S. Senate and the setting up of an industry regulatory body, the Comics Code Authority. This intense public scrutiny was similar to that undergone by the cinema earlier in the century. Under attack from moralists for very similar reasons the cinema had turned to classical and religious themes to demonstrate its respectability. Some within the comics industry did the same. But as with the movies the potential of the new medium for reaching a wide audience was something which attracted publishers from all points on the spectrum.

*Classics Illustrated* began in 1941, founded by a Russian-born former travelling salesman, Albert Lewis Kanter. The story of the origin of the series has become embellished over the intervening years, but Kanter, who began as a salesman for pots and pans, purportedly read widely during his time on the road. He had never finished high school, but was self-educated, "...a serious student of literature, biography and history..."<sup>iv</sup> His own sons were fans of comic books, but Kanter was concerned that they were reading these at the expense of the great works of literature which he had so enjoyed. Kanter was particularly fond of novelists of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. He conceived the idea of entering the relatively new and booming comics industry with something markedly different from the competition. He himself did not have the money to set up on his own, but with the help of a friend, Raymond Haas, and Haas' business partner, Meyer Levy, he was able eventually to publish the first issue, *The Three Musketeers* by Alexander Dumas, adapted by artist Malcolm Kildale. A quarter of a million copies of this comic book were produced, and Kanter's company was launched. Followed a couple of months later by Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, over the next 30 years a wide range of subjects were covered, sometimes monthly, at other times over a slightly more elastic timescale.

It is important to stress that at no time did Kanter envisage his comics as an alternative to reading the original books. If anything he saw them as an introduction to the real works. "...[H]e merely wanted to place the original books in a form more accessible to a generation that was beginning to recoil from the linearity of printed matter into more immediate less cerebral mediums..."<sup>v</sup> The formula was successful. While comic books in general continued to be periodically subjected to criticism from all quarters, as corrupting youth and leading to antisocial behaviour, comics based either upon Biblical or other religious stories or upon classical literature were harder to attack. In spite of this Dr Wertham did in fact target *Classics Illustrated*, as the market leader of this particular type of material. "...Wertham criticized *Classics Illustrated* heavily, first for illustrating the great novels and later for their violence..."<sup>vi</sup> Kanter and his colleague Meyer Kaplan vigorously defended the series. Kaplan argued that "...the taste for good literature... must be cultivated in a child slowly. He [sic] must be made to understand it before he can like it....a pictorial rendering of the great stories of the world which can be easily understood and therefore more readily liked would tend to cultivate that interest. Then, when he grows older ... he will want to know more fully those bookish treasures merely suggested in this, his first acquaintance with them..."<sup>vii</sup> Kantor himself was firm in his conviction that he was offering a high quality cultural product. In 1951 he had begun distributing the comics across the whole country, upgrading the actual physical products themselves by printing on higher grade paper and adding the painted covers which gave the series such a distinctive look on the newsstands.

*Classic Comics*, which in 1947 metamorphosed into *Classics Illustrated*, contained the whole story, edited down. It was a colour production, and averaged a 48 page booklet. As well as the story they contained author profiles, suggested discussion questions and other educational elements. At first the series concentrated on Kanter's particular interest, 19<sup>th</sup> Century literature, but eventually, in 1950, issue Number 68 was Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Kanter had developed the adaptation with New York University, and felt that it was a demonstration of the fact that the great works of literature could now all be legitimately illustrated. He told the *New York Times* that he hoped to "...loosen the hold of video and Superman on countless youthful minds..."<sup>viii</sup>

After *Julius Caesar* other Shakespeare comics appeared in the series. No. 87 was a version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, followed by *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*. As well as Shakespeare there were versions of other classic dramas, such as Schiller's *William Tell* and Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

Before comics young people's reading choices had been largely determined by parents, teachers or librarians, who generally made the purchases. Comics were bought by young people themselves, out of their pocket money, and swapped amongst their peer group. The popularity of particular titles genuinely reflected the makeup of the readership. The fact that enough young people bought Shakespeare titles from *Classics Illustrated* to make a number of future titles desirable speaks clearly of a success in engaging the target demographic with the plays. Shakespeare was surpassed in the number of titles illustrated by James Fenimore Cooper, Jules Verne, HG Wells, Robert Louis Stevenson and Alexander Dumas, but he was still one of the more prolific sources for the comics. This was despite the fact that *Classics Illustrated* used the original language, albeit with explanatory footnotes for difficult words and a heavily cut text. Young readers in an international marketplace were reading Shakespeare's plays in his own language in comics which they were buying for themselves. While there were inevitably some who thought the comics were dumbed-down versions, every *Classics Illustrated* comic from April 1950 onwards ended with the banner "Now that you have read the *Classics Illustrated* edition, don't miss the added enjoyment of reading the original, obtainable at your school or public library".

The *Classics Illustrated* titles eventually appeared in 19 languages. The original printing ended in 1971, but there have been several reprints, and the comics, in new and re-coloured editions (more vivid than the original tetrachromous artwork) although with the original drawings, are still available today. A competitor, Pendulum Press, which began in the early 1970s, produced twice as many Shakespeare editions as *Classics Illustrated*, but then unlike the latter they were actually funded under Title One of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* by the U.S. government to publish educational comics. *Classics Illustrated* operated purely in the marketplace. The comics Pendulum produced were in black and white, with less stringent production values than *Classics Illustrated*<sup>ix</sup>.

The comics industry continues to maintain a strong connection with Shakespeare. If the Manga versions produced in Japan and elsewhere are taken into account there are now many hundreds of Shakespeare-based titles, whether comparatively "straight" adaptations, such as *Classical Comics* versions, where *Macbeth: The Graphic Novel*, *Henry V* and others are offered in separate versions with three different levels of textual complexity, via the British-produced *Manga Shakespeare* series to Shakespeare-derived titles such as the *Kill Shakespeare* series by Connor McCreery et al or Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*, which features three Shakespeare-derived stories. The *Manga Shakespeare* titles are in black and white, published in book form, with a limit of 200 pages including prefaces, making them four times the size of *Classics Illustrated*, and the *Classical Comics* versions are also published in book form, averaging out at around 140 larger format pages. The prolific scene in Japan really requires separate treatment, but to give just one example, Harumo Sanazaki has published a number of Shakespeare's stories in the voices of neglected female characters, such as *Romeo and Juliet* from the perspective of Lady Capulet. These different approaches, aimed at different markets, fall broadly into a number of categories.

In the first instance, there are comics which show the plays in as comprehensive a manner as possible, maybe cutting some of the original script down, primarily for length, but telling the story as straightforwardly as possible. These versions use Shakespeare's language, sometimes shown as verse, but not always. Most trim down the words, although the Original Text *Graphic Novels* do not. The stories are usually depicted in costumes which approximate the period in which the plays are set. The *Manga Shakespeare* series is an exception to this, where the stories are told in all manner of different settings, such as contemporary, Steampunk or futuristic costumes, or worlds where human and winged persons co-exist, together with anthropomorphic characters. Their version of *Macbeth* is set in a post-apocalyptic world, where Duncan is a warlord, the witches are reptilian mutants and

Macduff has four arms, but the text is Shakespeare's own. In this category *Classics Illustrated*, *Shakespeare: The Manga Edition*, *Pendulum Press* and the Original Text versions of the stories in *Classical Comics* all retain different variants on a medieval setting. Then come versions which simplify the Shakespearean language, rendering the story in more modern English, and also those which cut the language to the bare minimum necessary to tell the story. The Plain Text and Quick Text versions of *Classical Comics'* Graphic Novel versions do this, but retain exactly the same artwork as the Full Text versions. The version in *Ranger* also follows the story closely, setting it in a medieval world as well. The next group includes the adaptations. These would include, for example Harumo Sanazaki's versions of *Romeo and Juliet* or *Macbeth*, where the well-known story is shown from the viewpoint of a hitherto silenced or only partially articulated character. These differ from the next group, the derivations, in that they continue to tell the same story as the original, running in parallel to it, whereas in *Kill Shakespeare* Conor McCreery uses Shakespeare's clearly identifiable characters in different combinations and in new storylines, where for example *Hamlet*, *Juliet* and *Othello* battle an alliance of *Richard III* and *Lady Macbeth*.

The clearest way to illustrate the differences is to compare the versions of one story used by several of these companies. Taking *Macbeth* as an exemplar, *Classics Illustrated* is a 48 page booklet, of which 44 pages are the strips. The remaining four pages offer a synopsis of the play, an article on the historical Macbeth including a diagram of his family tree, articles on Shakespeare and discussion questions. There are 134 frames, and the adaptation is by Lorenz Graham. The cover, which shows Macbeth visualising the dagger, is unattributed, but the Thane is painted in a winged helmet of the type used in some of the early silent film versions of the story. The interior art is by Alex. A. Blum. The dialogue is trimmed, and unfamiliar words are asterisked and translated in footnotes. The style is uncluttered and uncomplicated. The characters stand clearly in the foreground, there is another layer behind them in which locating detail and important objects are shown clearly, and then there is a more conventionalised background. Macbeth is shown as a mature figure, and although his face becomes more lined with care as the story progresses, he does not evolve. Where the violence is shown at all it is shown carefully, without gore. The witches are old women, not wizened hags. The story is followed in all of its essentials, but the artistic style avoids sensationalism, and while the outline is all there it is interesting rather than riveting. Originally coloured tetrachromously, the modern reprint has many more colours, having been redone by Ali Morbi, but it is still coloured in blocks, with detail being provided by black ink rather than gradations of colour.

*Macbeth: The Graphic Novel*, is longer, and much more vividly drawn. Out of the book's 144 pages in a large imperial octavo format, 120 of them are pictorial. There are seldom as many as four frames to a page, giving considerable scope for detail. The full-colour artwork, by Jon Haward, with colouring and lettering by Nigel Dobbyn, is much more within the styles and conventions of modern comics and graphic novels. The battle scenes are covered with a red wash, and the depiction of the fighting owes a debt to Japanese illustration styles and to manga. There are green-faced, wart-covered witches, and while, with the publication aimed at schools the violence is not excessive, there are still frames in which people are seen to be stabbed, including Macduff's young son. The whole style is vivid and exciting, the adaptation by John MacDonald is faithful, and in this Original Text version, complete. There are ten pages of educational materials at the back of the book, as well as information about the series, and examples of the three different textual variants offered. The length and scale of the graphic novel allows for a full treatment of the story. There is a great deal of drama, the characterisations are vivid and the whole publication is designed to appeal to readers in exactly the same way that other comic books are. The text is the difference.

Looking at the Plain Text and Quick Text versions alongside it, the three share the artwork, but the whole movement of the story in the Quick Text version is much faster and less nuanced. While the Original Text version is a graphic novel version of Shakespeare's play, the Quick Text version is a comic book which happens to be based upon *Macbeth*. The plain text version occupies, as might be expected, a middle ground. To give an example, the speech where in the original text Macbeth ruminates:

*Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown  
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,  
Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,  
No son of mine succeeding. If't be so,  
For Banquo's issue have I fil'd my mind (III,i)<sup>x</sup>*

is given, in the Plain Text version as:

*So...they've put a useless crown on my head and an empty sceptre in my hand. It will all be taken away by another family if no son of mine succeeds me. If that's the case I've corrupted my soul for Banquo's descendants<sup>xi</sup>*

and in the Quick Text as:

*If so, then it's all been for nothing. His family will take everything away from me....<sup>xii</sup>*

The intention behind the first of these is to render the entire play in an accessible version which can be relied upon for textual accuracy and can be used as an aid by a student studying for an essay or examination. The purpose of the second is to make the meaning of the story clear for a student who finds the language confusing or difficult, but to remain as faithful as possible without the verse. The purpose of the third is to show an exciting story in a vivid format, for students who may have no need to study the text in detail, but for whom the broad thrust of the story is sufficient. A pupil or student who has read the third version might, as encouraged to do by the banner in *Classics Illustrated* referred to above, read the original. The student who has read the Original Text version has already read Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

The *Manga Shakespeare* series, produced by Emma Healey's Selfmade Hero company in London, uses European, American and Asian artists for different titles. *Shakespeare: The Manga Edition* is based in New York, published by Jonathan Wiley, the publishers of the popular – *for Dummies* series of books, and also the *Cliff Notes* study guides, used by generations of school pupils. The series *Shakespeare: The Manga Editions* was developed by Adam Sexton, who has taught at both New York University and Yale, although at the time of the creation of the series he taught at Parsons School of Design, where, together with artists from the cartooning programme at the School of Visual Arts in New York he adapted *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar* and *Macbeth*. Sexton adapted the plays, keeping faithfully to Shakespeare's text, but cutting it down to fit into the format, with *Macbeth*, for example, having 180 pages of graphics, without the sort of explanatory description which some others use. The pages are densely packed, with black and white images, often with four, five or even six frames on each page, in a comparatively small crown octavo format, which feels very compact. The *Manga Shakespeare* series are approximately an inch longer and an inch wider, in roughly an octavo format, and have fewer frames to the page.

*Macbeth: the Manga Edition* is set in a non-specific but medieval-looking world. The characters wear an eclectic mixture of clothing, but the overall visual styling works. Sexton has described his greatest

challenge as the cutting down of the story, but *Macbeth*, as one of Shakespeare's shortest plays, required considerably less editing than *Hamlet*. The artwork is by Eve Grandt, in her first published work, and Candice Chow. The violence is more explicit than in most of the graphic versions, including vivid sound effects. When Macbeth "unseamed him [Macdonwald] from the nave to the chops" it is shown in a welter of gore and accompanied by the word "SHLick"<sup>xiii</sup>, which would never happen in *Classics Illustrated*. Sexton included art direction in his scripts, and according to Yali Lin, the artist who worked on *Romeo and Juliet*, actively encouraged them to view film versions of the play.<sup>xiv</sup> Sexton himself had done this in preparing the scripts in order to see how others had condensed the plays into a shorter format.<sup>xv</sup> Given that the stated intention is for students to eventually read the original play, it is legitimate to question the need for a comic book when a film or a theatre production might serve, but Sexton answers this. "With the manga approach, you move through the visuals at your own pace. It's a little more interactive than seeing a [theatrical] production,"<sup>xvi</sup>. He believes that "... a manga is potentially more visual than a stage production of one of the plays of Shakespeare. Unbounded by the physical realities of the theatre the graphic novel can depict any situation, no matter how fantastical or violent, that its creators are able to pencil, ink and shade..."<sup>xvii</sup>

The *Manga Shakespeare* edition is significantly different in its approach. Whereas the others all foreground the educational validity of their publications, and include teaching materials within their page count, *Manga Shakespeare* do neither. The educational materials, the testimonials from educators and the support materials for teachers are all available on their website<sup>xviii</sup>, but within the book these materials are fairly minimal. The *Manga Shakespeare* books sell themselves as Manga. They are formatted in the Western style, read from the front to the back rather than the back to the front as Japanese Manga is. Rather than educational materials or a preface the *Manga Shakespeare* series introduces the characters and the context in a series of colour illustrations before beginning the story in black and white. Where *Macbeth: The Manga Edition* is also in black and white the whole feel of the *Manga Shakespeare* pages gives a very different reading experience. The pages have fewer frames, the artwork is lighter and more graduated, there are many more shades of light and dark, of black white and grey, than in the American publication. The setting is a post-apocalyptic dystopia, where mutants abound and where warriors fight with samurai swords, but the text, although trimmed, is faithfully followed, and the language uncompromised.

As described above, the characters are located very much within Manga conventions. The reptilian witches and Macduff with his four arms, each bearing a sword, have already been referred to. Macbeth himself, while having western features, is dressed in the sort of clothing which protagonists in Japanese manga and Hong Kong action movies often wear, bare chested with a headband and a *katana*.

In contrast with all of these stands Ruggero Giovannini's weekly strip in *Ranger*. It was perhaps less brave a gesture by *Ranger* to include *The Adventures of Macbeth* in the first issue as it might appear today. Other weekly young people's magazines had already led the way. *Ranger* had been set up by the same person who founded *Look and Learn*, Leonard Mathews. With extensive experience at every level within the publishers, Fleetway Publications, Mathews had been promoted to the board as director of Juvenile Publications. Fleetway had been founded in 1959, but was a new management for the old Amalgamated Press company. Based at Fleetway House, in Farringdon Street in London, they had been producing comics since 1890, when they entered the arena with *Comic Cuts*. They had subsequently published many of the most famous names in British comics. In the 1950s a large number of mergers and takeovers began, as television started to compete with the very diverse comics market. Mathews intended to replace some of the waning titles with new

offerings, and in doing so he was inspired, on a visit to Italy, by two publications he encountered there, *Conoscere* and *La Vita Meravigliosa*<sup>xix</sup>. Mathews came back to England and proposed a British version.

Although this was initially rejected by his employers, eventually Mathews was given the go-ahead to develop his magazine. *Look and Learn* was influenced by the Italian magazines, although an English language version of *Conoscere*, entitled *Knowledge*, was actually produced, and was one of *Look and Learn*'s main competitors. Mathews created a large, colourful periodical, with a wide range of content, both factual and fictional. He assembled a team of highly accomplished writers, and many of the best artists in the UK were attracted to work on the new magazine. So too were a number of Italian artists, including some who were to profoundly influence the style of the periodical. Larger than most of its competitors, half of the pages were in colour, leaving the black and white *Children's Newspaper* far behind. The first, and at the time most famous, of the Italian artists was Fortunino Matania, the only one ever to have a credit printed alongside his work, but Matania was soon followed by a number of others, many of them from the highly-regarded D'Ami agency in Milan, which was home to a highly talented collection of artists who drew and painted for publications in many countries. Fleetway undertook a large scale advertising campaign in advance of the launch, including TV advertising and extensive newspaper and magazine coverage. *Look and Learn*'s mixture of text and image was instantly successful, selling 700,000 copies of the first issue. By the third they sold an unparalleled one million copies, but this settled eventually down to a regular circulation of around 300,000. *Look and Learn* was always considered a "parent buy", its high price, one shilling when most of its competitors were five pence making it expensive at a time when that tended to be the total of an average child's pocket money for a week.

Weekly comic strips based on Shakespeare's plays were not new. The *Children's Newspaper*, a very respectable publication with a long pedigree, ran these too. Thus in the mid-1960s *Look and Learn*, *Children's Newspaper* and *Ranger* were all running Shakespeare stories as serials at around about the same time. Within *Children's Newspaper* a black and white weekly strip of a single page, usually with six frames, with no dialogue but explanatory captions and an explicatory introduction would run, usually over nine weeks. The stories, some of which were drawn by Dino Battaglia, another artist from the D'Ami studio in Milan, ran one after another over a period of several years. When the stories chosen were those from plays listed as comedies in the First Folio, they were depicted in a cartoon-like fashion. The comedies shown included *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *The Tempest* and *The Merchant of Venice*. The paper also published *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth*, in a style more in keeping with the more serious nature of those plays. These were not particularly vivid or exciting, and were little more than an illustrated plot synopsis, although some of the artwork was very good. The plays were described as "Picture serials", and each one was headed with the caption "...Presenting another of the most famous plays of Shakespeare in a special way..."<sup>xx</sup> But *Children's Newspaper*, rather old fashioned by comparison with its competitors, and always a "parent buy", was one of the casualties of the changing world of young people's weeklies in the 1960s, and by May 1965 had been absorbed by the growing empire of *Look and Learn*.

When *Children's Newspaper* and *Look and Learn* merged Dino Battaglia continued to create versions of Shakespeare's plays. In the first merged issue he began a serial of *Henry V*, and subsequently covered a number of others, including *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and even *Pericles*. *Look and Learn*'s production values being higher than those of *Children's Newspaper* the artwork was shown to better effect but the format was similar, with six story frames per week, and a title frame which contained

a synopsis of events not depicted. But good as these *Look and Learn* versions were, they could not match the excitement of Giovannini's *Adventures of Macbeth*.

In late 1965 Mathews was preparing to launch a new weekly magazine. Named after the current exploratory space probe, *Ranger* was a comic. It had a host of comic strips and cartoons, as well as some text stories with vivid illustrations, and photo features of the kind that had been popular in *Look and Learn*. By now the senior publication had raised its price to a shilling and three pence for 28 pages, one third in colour, so when *Ranger* launched at the price of a shilling, for forty pages, half of which were in colour, it was an attractive offering. But it was also expensive to produce. In fact Mathews, who had been so shrewd in his anticipation of the market for *Look and Learn* had somewhat miscalculated in launching *Ranger*. John Saunders, brought in by Mathews to run the new comic, felt that Mathews' ideas for *Ranger* were out of touch with the changing times. "...[Mathews]...wanted to turn the clock back 30 years to the Wild West, highwaymen, all the things of his boyhood. In the 1960s *Ranger* was out of date before it started- it was doomed from the start..."<sup>xxi</sup> *Ranger* lasted for 40 issues before being absorbed into *Look and Learn*, but it influenced that periodical profoundly when it did, bringing with it some of its most successful strips and features, which rejuvenated the older magazine. These included some of the classical adaptations, and also the most successful strip ever produced by the Fleetway stable, *The Rise and Fall of the Trigan Empire*. Among the picture stories reprinted subsequently by *Look and Learn* was Giovannini's *Adventures of Macbeth*, just as successful the second time round. It was printed for a third time in the *Look and Learn Book of 1985*, twenty years after its initial appearance.

Although exhibiting some of the hallmarks of Mathews' previous periodical *Ranger* was clearly focused on entertainment rather than education. The style of the illustrations of the Shakespeare adaptations in *Children's Newspaper* and *Look and Learn* had tended towards tableaux. In the first edition of *Ranger* Ruggero Giovannini, yet another D'Ami artist, had more than twice the space, with an average of fifteen frames each week over a double page spread. He had speech bubbles for dialogue. He had eleven weeks where Battaglia had nine<sup>xxii</sup>. Giovannini therefore had 161 frames to Battaglia's 54. He could deal with the story much more comprehensively, and had time and space for atmosphere and character development. The *Ranger* version used language similarly to the Plain Text versions of the *Graphic Novels*. But what was most exciting was the art style. *Macbeth* is an action packed story, and the excitement was fully captured by the artist, as too was the psychological tension. *Macbeth* changes visibly in the course of the story, and Giovannini's detailed, exciting drawings conveyed the essence of Shakespeare's play with a vividness which adeptly captured the imagination of the target demographic. Although Giovannini's strip did not use Shakespeare's language, it was faithful in almost every other way. Given that, in defence against accusations that comic adaptations are guilty of "dumbing down" the *Children's Newspaper*, *Look and Learn* and also *Classics illustrated* all stated an intention that their versions would encourage children to read the original, Giovannini sought to convey the excitement of *Macbeth* rather than to replace a reading of Shakespeare's play. An eleven year old boy would badger his father for the money to buy the comic each week, desperate to find out what the next episode would bring.

The veracity of this contention can be illustrated by the fact that the eleven year old boy in question was your humble correspondent, who first encountered Shakespeare in the pages of *Ranger*, immediately went off to find more, and has subsequently enjoyed a fifty year career with the plays, as an actor, director and academic, all of it owed to the storytelling power of Ruggero Giovannini's treatment of *The Adventures of Macbeth*.

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<sup>i</sup> Leonard Mathews, the founder, in a letter from the Editor in the first issue.

<sup>ii</sup> Quoting the author's father, who refused to allow such "low" comics into the house

<sup>iii</sup> North, Sterling, *Chicago Daily News*, 8th May 1940

<sup>iv</sup> Sawyer, 1987 p1, quoting *Current Biography*, 1954, p33,

<sup>v</sup> Kaye, p6.

<sup>vi</sup> Sawyer, p8

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid, p8

<sup>viii</sup> *New York Times*, March 9th, 1950, p24

<sup>ix</sup> These were subsequently reissued in India as *Paico Classics*.

<sup>x</sup> Bryant, Clive (ed) *Macbeth: The Graphic Novel, Original Text version*, (2008) Classical Comics, Towcester

<sup>xi</sup> Ibid, *Plain Text version*

<sup>xii</sup> Ibid, *Quick Text version*

<sup>xiii</sup> Sexton, A, Grandt, E and Chow, C *Shakespeare's Macbeth: The Manga Edition*, (2008), Wiley Publishing Inc, Hoboken, New Jersey, p11.

<sup>xiv</sup> Cha, Kai-Ming, (Jan 14, 2008)

<sup>xv</sup> Adam Sexton Profile, *Pop the artist*, (2012), <http://poptheartist.com/post/16380905374/profile-adam-sexton-piece-shakespeare-the>

<sup>xvi</sup> ibid

<sup>xvii</sup> Sexton, A, "Suiting the Action to the Word: Shakespeare and Manga", *Shakespeare's Macbeth: The Manga Edition*, (2008) Wiley Publishing Inc, Hoboken, New Jersey, p2

<sup>xviii</sup> <http://www.mangashakespeare.com/books.html>

<sup>xix</sup> Holland

<sup>xx</sup> The first one presented, in 1963, was *Taming of the Shrew*, where the caption read "CN's own presentation of one of Shakespeare's most amusing plays".

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<sup>xxi</sup> Quoted in Holland, S and Slinn, D, p18

<sup>xxii</sup> In fact some, like *Othello*, had ten, but nine was more usual