THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE

ABIGAIL ROKISON

SHAKESPEARE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

PRODUCTIONS, VERSIONS and ADAPTATIONS

BLOOMSBURY

Shakespeare for Young People

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Productions, Versions and Adaptations

ABIGAIL ROKISON

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Introduction

Writing in the *Independent* in 2009 Caitlin Davies asks the questions 'Should children be introduced to Shakespeare at the tender age of four? Or should we wait until they are eight, or even better, the teenage years, when they are able to understand some of the seventeenth-century language better?' These are questions over which critical opinion continues to be divided. Some argue that primary school children are perfectly capable of grasping elements of Shakespeare's work, gain pride and pleasure from an understanding of his language and enjoyment from his stories. Such advocates of the early introduction of Shakespeare to children argue that if they become familiar with his work before its study in school becomes compulsory, they are less likely to feel intimidated by it. Other critics, however, assert that many of the themes and plot elements of the plays are unsuitable for children, the language too difficult, and that introducing Shakespeare to children too young may make his work all the more intimidating.

Shakespeare is the only writer whose work is a compulsory part of the curriculum in British schools, and policymakers, teachers, theatre practitioners, writers, illustrators and film makers, irrespective of whether they agree about the centrality of the bard in prescribed education, continue to try to find ways of engaging young people, who are often perceived as struggling with his work. Jennifer Hulbert, Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr, and Robert York suggest that similar concerns and efforts are at play in America where all too often, 'the usual first encounter with Shakespeare by youth is in secondary education, in which the classroom becomes a site of resistance' and where 'an entire industry has sprung up for the purpose of marketing Shakespeare to youth' including 'books, videos, graphic novels, software, CD-ROMs, "translations" of the plays and other activity-based products' (2006, pp. 1–2).

This book is concerned less with the teaching of Shakespeare in the classroom, and more with the various means – theatrical, filmic and textual – through which young people encounter his plays. It examines a range of work aimed at children from as young as 7 to those studying the plays for GCSE and A Level, considering the debates outlined above concerning the most appropriate time for the introduction of Shakespeare to young people,

and the means by which such an introduction might be made. Focusing exclusively on texts in the English vernacular, it explores full-scale theatre productions and feature films of the plays aimed at young audiences; picture books, graphic novels, cut-down theatrical and animated versions of the plays and adaptations of Shakespeare for children and young adults in the form of novels, original plays, teen movies and animated features that take the plots, themes and characters of Shakespeare's plays and rework them to create original pieces of work. Each chapter is necessarily selective – focusing either on particular productions or on a particular play – *Macbeth* in the case of graphic novels, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the case of cut-down theatrical versions and film adaptations and *Hamlet* in the case of young adult fiction. These texts are selected because they are the most frequently adapted plays for young people alongside *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest*.

The terminology surrounding the area of adaptation is fraught with difficulty. Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier in their book *Adaptations of Shakespeare: A Critical Anthology* (2000) acknowledge this problem, conceding that 'adaptation is not the right word' for the theatrical works inspired by Shakespeare that they collate, but asserting that this is because 'there is no right name' (p. 2). They survey the variety of terms that have been applied to pieces and that rework Shakespeare's themes, plots and characters, including 'spinoff', 'offshoot', 'transformation' and 'appropriation' (pp. 2–3). The last term forms the title of Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer's book *Shakespeare and Appropriation* (1999), which deals with works from Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* to Disney's *The Lion King*. However, Fischlin and Fortier find this term aggressive, suggesting 'a hostile takeover' and not doing 'justice to other, more respectful, aspects of the practice' (p. 3).

This book follows Michael D. Friedman's proposed categorizations of 'version' and 'adaptation', which Friedman uses in relation to film, but which can be equally applied to the genres of drama and prose narrative. In Friedman's words, 'versions' are works that 'primarily use Shakespeare's original language for a particular play, although the dialogue may be heavily cut, redistributed, and occasionally summarized or modernized' (2008, p. 3). Friedman cites 'Zeffirelli's and Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet* films, as well as *The Animated Tales*' as belonging in this category (p. 3). I also apply this term to storybook narratives, which retell the plays, in a similar manner to *The Animated Tales*, summarizing the plot, but adhering closely to its structure, characters and occasionally language; graphic novels that employ Shakespeare's dialogue in either edited or modernized form; and heavily edited theatre productions.

The term 'adaptation', according to Friedman, may be used to refer to a film that 'borrows the basic plotline, characters, and thematic issues from a particular play, but employs the contemporary vernacular almost exclusively in its dialogue' (p. 3). Friedman cites *West Side Story* (1961), *10 Things I*

Hate About You (1999), *Never Been Kissed* (1999), *Get Over It!* (2001) and '*O*' (2001) as instances of adaptations. I extend the category to include plays and novels, as well as films, that rework Shakespeare plots, themes and characters, some adhering to the plays more closely than others, but all being recognizable, like the films cited by Friedman, as modernizations, sequels, prequels or as offering a different perspective on a Shakespeare play.

There are, of course, a number of other ways in which Shakespeare's work has been adapted and reworked for young people, in particular in the field of popular culture. The Hip Hop Shakespeare Company is a perfect example of the sort of work that is being done, not only to engage young people with Shakespeare, but also to use his work as a means of inspiring creativity and a more adventurous use of language. The company was established in 2008 by hip hop artist Akala, with the backing of Sir Ian McKellen. Initially established at the Limehouse Youth Centre in East London, and predominantly working with young people in the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Newham, Hackney and Enfield, the company now runs workshops and mounts productions around the United Kingdom and abroad. Its main objective, as expressed by Akala, is to challenge 'perceptions of both hip hop and the Bard' (Arts Council, 2009) showing young people that there are a fewer differences than they might imagine between the rap lyrics of hip hop and Shakespeare's verse. In doing so the company seeks to 'create social cohesion between young people from varying social/economic backgrounds and enable all young people to be creative through the use of all art forms' (Hip Hop Shakespeare Company, 2008). As Akala explains, for many young people, Shakespeare is 'the most unattainable things they can think of'. Once they realize that 'Shakespeare is attainable to them then how can a job not be attainable, how can anything not be?' (Guest, 2009). While Akala's statement may seem like wishful thinking given current rates of youth unemployment, the results of the project have been extremely impressive, with young people creating imaginative and expressive hip hop lyrics based on Shakespeare's plays that combine contemporary language, hip hop slang and Shakespearean imagery. Indeed, Guest reports that one young person who took part in early workshop 'has been commissioned to write a play for the Young Vic' (2009), seemingly confirming Akala's assertions about the potential role of the project in job attainment.

Another project that encouraged young people to engage with Shakespeare through their own contemporary mediums of communication was the Royal Shakespeare Company's (RSC) *Such Tweet Sorrow* (2010), which used Twitter, alongside the other digital media of Twitpic, YouTube and Facebook, to create a 'production' based loosely on *Romeo and Juliet*. The project, which emerged in real time over 5 weeks, revolved around a script by Bethan Marlowe and Tim Wright, set in the present day and featuring six characters based on Shakespeare's – Romeo (aged 19); Juliet,

a 15-year-old schoolgirl; Laurence Friar, 'the 38-year old owner of the local internet café & alternative bookshop' (Mudlark and the RSC); Mercutio, a gap-year student; Tybalt, Juliet's disturbed older brother and Jess, Juliet's older sister, otherwise known as 'Nurse'; as well as the additional character of Jago Klepto, who functioned as a choric figure. The story gradually unfolded through the characters' tweets (posts of 140 characters or less improvised by the actors) between 12 April and 13 May 2010, with viewers able to respond to the posts and take part in certain sections. The reviews of the project were mixed, Michael Billington writing in Twitter-style: 'Isn't the real WS more about poetry than plot? Give me Baz Luhrmann's movie any day' (quoted by Kennedy, 2010), while Charlotte Higgins declared: 'A plague on the Twitter Romeo and Juliet' expressing incredulity as the use of the medium; 'Twitter's public right? So it somewhat stretches credibility to think that Romeo and Juliet would use it to conduct their secret love affair' (2010). However, research carried out after the production showed that it attracted over 30,000 followers from all over the world (Figaro Digital, 2011), fulfilling the RSC's aim of attracting 'a much younger, more ethnically diverse and less upmarket audience' (Leapfrog Research and Planning, 2011).

In addition to such active and interactive projects, Shakespeare has been consistently present in popular culture through the medium of cult television series including *Star Trek*, *The Simpsons* and *Doctor Who*. In *Star Trek*, visual and verbal references to the playwright and his work abound, most notably in season one, in the episode entitled 'The Conscience of the King' (1966) in which a travelling troupe of Shakespearean actors, the Karidian Company, mount a performance of *Hamlet* on the Starship Enterprise. Shakespeare references similarly appear throughout the long history of *Doctor Who*, with the Bard himself appearing in two episodes – in season 2 in which the Doctor briefly sees Shakespeare in conversation with Elizabeth I and in series 3 of the revived *Doctor Who*, which featured an entire episode, 'The Shakespeare Code' (2007), based on Shakespeare's lost play – *Love's Labour's Won*. These references are significant in confirming the pervasive presence of Shakespeare in a range of popular media. However, they fall outside the remit of this book, since none involves the adaptation of plays in the Shakespeare canon.

The Simpsons, however, in addition to containing numerous references to Shakespeare and his work, and an appearance by Shakespeare as a zombie in the episode 'Treehouse of Horror III' (1992), also features satirical adaptations of two of Shakespeare's plays, albeit only as parts of larger episodes. 'Tales from the Public Domain' (2002) and 'Four Great Women and a Manicure' (2009) contain reworkings of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* respectively. The former sees the Simpson family and their friends transformed into characters from *Hamlet* as Homer reads to them from the inaptly titled 'Classics for Children', while the second portrays Homer and Marge as an ambitious couple whose lives partly mirror those

of Shakespeare's Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Both episodes present humorous parodies of the plays, which, although they begin by following Shakespeare's tragic stories, albeit loosely and extremely speedily, soon descend into farce. Much of the humour of 'Tales from the Public Domain' derives from the absurd ways in which the characters die in comparison with their deaths in *Hamlet* – Rosencarl and Guildenlenny (the equivalents of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern) by high-fiving one another while covered in poison, Laertes by stabbing himself accidentally, Hamlet by slipping on some blood and Gertrude by knocking herself on the head with a mace because she doesn't want to clean up the mess. Similarly in 'Four Great Women' Homer, unlike Macbeth, does not die on the field of battle, but kills himself when Marge suggests the many Shakespeare plays for which he could audition, stating – 'Me having to read all those plays would be the real tragedy' – a comment that undermines not only the tragedy of *Macbeth*, but also the notion of Shakespeare's greatness. The simultaneous undermining of Shakespeare as something difficult while presenting his stories and characters in an accessible and entertaining manner is similarly evident at the end of 'Tales from the Public Domain', when Bart asserts that he 'can't believe that a play in which every character is murdered can be so boring' only to be countered by Homer who informs him that *Hamlet* is 'not only a great play, but also became a great movie called *Ghostbusters*' at which point the family leap up and dance to the theme tune of the film. This strategy of both venerating and undercutting Shakespeare is one which is found in a number of the teen film adaptations discussed in Chapter 9, in which characters often assert the incomprehensibility of a Shakespeare play while mirroring the actions of its characters. Presumably the aim is to challenge similar preconceptions in the viewer through the evident irony of the characters' assertions.

While, as the Museum of Broadcast Communications reports, the 'key viewing group for *The Simpsons*' is 'the "tween" demographic, those between 12 and 17' (The Museum of Broadcast Communications, 2011) many of the series' parodies of social and cultural institutions appear aimed more at adult viewers. The Shakespeare parodies discussed above, for example, are dependent for their humour on a fairly solid knowledge of the original text and a reasonably sophisticated understanding of the concept of satire. This is a phenomenon also evident in the animated movies discussed in Chapter 9, which, though ostensibly aimed at children, contain Shakespearean references that are only likely to be recognized by viewers readily familiar with Shakespeare's work. These references presumably function not only to invite the approval of parents who perceive cultural value in the animation, but also to encourage family viewing by providing parents with something that they can find entertaining even if their children do not recognize the allusions.

While this book cannot pretend to be exhaustive, it aims to cover many of the ways in which young people encounter Shakespeare's plays. Part 1

examines productions and feature-length film versions of Shakespeare that are aimed particularly at a young audience. The first chapter is concerned with the Globe's 'Playing Shakespeare' project, which, since 2007, has produced yearly full-scale Shakespeare productions for a Key Stage 3 audience. 'Playing Shakespeare' productions differ from those more typically mounted for schools in that they are more than an hour in length, performed in a main house theatre space – Shakespeare's Globe Theatre – with a cast of around 10–12 actors and production values, in terms of technical support, music, set, props and costumes, which one might expect to find in the theatre's main repertoire. Chapter 1 examines the 'Playing Shakespeare' productions of *Much Ado About Nothing* (2007 and 2008), *Romeo and Juliet* (2009) and *Macbeth* (2010 and 2011), looking, in particular, at the features of the productions designed to appeal to young people and the range of supporting materials intended to support study of the plays at Key Stage 3. Actor and director Bill Buckhurst has been involved with all of the 'Playing Shakespeare' productions, initially as an actor (in *Much Ado About Nothing*) and subsequently as the director of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth*. The chapter concludes with an interview with Buckhurst, in which he discusses the aims behind the project, the different productions and their design concepts, the challenges and benefits of working in the Globe Theatre and the nature of the audiences' engagement with the productions.

Chapter 2 moves to a discussion of three feature films of Shakespeare's plays, all of which seem designed to have a particular appeal to young people. Baz Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) is described by Emma French as marking the beginning of the 'teen filmed Shakespeare phenomenon' (2006, p. 101), and though not made for an exclusively teenage audience, is, according to French, 'the first filmed Shakespeare adaptation that positions itself towards the teen market in such an exclusive manner in its marketing campaign' (p. 107). French identifies a similar marketing strategy for Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet* (2000), also discussed in this chapter. Although, again, Almereyda's film was not aimed solely at young people, his extensive cutting of the text, casting of adolescent protagonists and incorporation of modern media combine to form a movie with an evident appeal to the teenage market.

The target audience of Christine Edzard's *The Children's Midsummer Night's Dream* (2001) is made explicit in its title, which refers both to the film's prospective viewers and to its cast of 8–12-year-old children. Edzard's film is unique in having all of the play's roles performed by young people, and while there are obvious disadvantages in having a cast who are unfamiliar with Shakespeare's language and inexperienced in the art of film acting, the experiment encourages a sense of ownership of the play among children for whom Shakespeare may otherwise seem intimidating. The results may be uneven, but, as Douglas Lanier comments 'as an interpretative essay on the virtues of children's productions of

Shakespeare, Edzard's film has enormous value and cumulative power' (2006, p. 170).

While Edzard leaves most of the text of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* intact, there is an overriding tendency when producing Shakespeare for children to cut the plays severely in a way that privileges the story over the language. Part 2 of this book deals with versions of Shakespeare for young people in the form of prose narratives, graphic novels, theatrical productions and animated films, many of which are severely edited, reflecting both the perceived attention span of young people and the notion of what is accessible and suitable for them. Two major questions emerge from these four chapters – the suitability of many of Shakespeare's plays for children, and the extent to which the stories of the plays can be said to be representative of the works as a whole. The question of suitability arises both in terms of what adaptors choose to cut or alter, and what they leave in. While some adaptations of *Pericles*, for example, including Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807) avoid mentioning Marina's sale into prostitution, something that significantly alters the journey of the character in the play, when Carl Heap chose to retain this moment in his National Theatre (NT) adaptation of the play, some concerns were raised about its appropriateness for an audience of primary school children. One might question, as I do, whether *Pericles* is simply an inappropriate choice of play for an audience of under 12 years.

In Chapter 3, I explore storybook versions of the plays from those of Charles and Mary Lamb in 1807 to a wide range of twenty-first-century editions. I examine what I perceive to be a move from an emphasis on the morally didactic potential of Shakespeare's work to a focus on the entertainment value and theatricality of the plays. However, I also note that despite a less overtly expressed desire to employ Shakespeare's plays as moral exempla, editions of the past 10 years continue to remove morally complex and sexually explicit elements from the stories in order to make them more 'suitable' for young readers.

The overriding assumption inherent in the continuing production of short narrative versions of Shakespeare's plays is that children are best introduced to Shakespeare's work through his stories. I question this assumption, arguing that while storybook adaptations of Shakespeare may serve a useful introductory function prior to seeing or reading a play, much of the meaning and indeed appeal of the plays is lost when their language is reduced to modern prose narrative. Reading narrative adaptations of the plays is also a passive activity, which cannot compare with the active and interactive experience of viewing or performing the plays.

Although the major focus of Chapter 3 is on the texts of the storybook Shakespeares, I also examine the potential impact of the accompanying illustrations on young people's perception of the plays' characters. I focus particularly on the depiction of Caliban in *The Tempest* as an example of the tendency of these illustrated prose narratives to provide overly simplistic

impressions of inherently complex characters. A similar inclination is evident in the increasingly popular graphic novel editions of Shakespeare discussed in Chapter 4. With their use of dialogue emanating from the mouths of characters, rather than narrative, graphic novels might be said to create a reading experience closer to viewing the plays in performance. However, while viewing the plays in performance is often an adjunct to studying them in the classroom, graphic novels are often used in place of more conventional texts. Although this may serve to bring the play alive for readers, the often quite extreme interpretations of characters provided by the illustrators of these texts may, I argue, close down other potential interpretations of the text.

I focus on five different graphic novel editions of *Macbeth* examining in particular those that feature either a cut-down version of the Shakespearean text, or an edited 'translation' of the plays in the modern prose vernacular. I consider the arguments behind each and the potential gains and losses for young readers, exploring the nature of the cutting and translation and its effect on the transmission of meaning. I also comment on the potentially misleading layout of the dialogue of the graphic novels as prose, a layout which, I argue, obscures the vital distinction between verse and prose in Shakespeare's work. Finally, I examine the wide range of resources that accompany the graphic novels, looking at inherent assumptions about what young people need to know and what they find attractive in a learning environment.

Chapter 5 looks at the recent profusion of cut-down stage versions of Shakespeare aimed particularly at primary-aged children which have emerged over the past few years from some of the country's leading Shakespeare-producing companies, including Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, the NT, the RSC and Propeller. It also explores the work of the Young Shakespeare Company (YSC) and Shakespeare 4 Kidz, both of which have a long history of mounting Shakespearean productions exclusively for young people. I explore the work of these companies, focusing on Pocket Propeller and YSC's productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I examine the style of the productions, the companies' approaches to the text, their relationship with their young audiences and the accompanying educational materials provided. I consider what these companies elect to cut from the texts and what they retain and the apparent rationale behind such decisions. The chapter includes an interview with Tam Williams, Babou Ceesay and Vince Leigh, members of the cast of Pocket Propeller's *Pocket Dream*, in which they discuss their interpretative decisions, the reactions of their audiences and the challenges and benefits of performing Shakespeare for young people with an all-male cast.

The final chapter of Part 2 is devoted to a discussion of *Shakespeare: The Animated Tales*. The chapter examines the most frequent criticisms levelled at the *Tales* – their focus on the stories of the plays rather than on character and language, and their oversimplification of the complexities

of the plots and characterization. However, it also takes up Gregory M. Colon Semenza's call for the *Tales* to be considered as films rather than 'adapted literature' (2008, p. 37), exploring the varying styles of animation used in the films, and examining the often sophisticated relationship between style and thematic content; verbal and visual imagery. I also consider, as with the storybook and graphic novel Shakespeares discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, how the interpretative choices of the animators may impact on young viewers' perceptions of the plays, particularly when the *Tales* serve an introductory function as is suggested in their advertising materials and the rhetoric surrounding their release.

The final section of the book – Part 3 – is concerned with adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, and the role that these play in mediating children and young people's encounters with Shakespeare. I examine the extent to which original works, drawing on the themes, characters and plots of Shakespeare's plays, can stand alone or rely on an awareness of the original for a full-appreciation of elements of their intertextuality and humour or pathos. I argue that, at their best, these prose, theatrical and filmic reworkings of the plays can encourage a more in-depth interrogation of the plays' themes, help young people to see connections between their own lives and those of the characters and encourage debate surrounding the ambiguities inherent in Shakespearean drama. At their worst, they use the figure of 'Shakespeare the cultural icon' to provide artistic validity to something that has little creative merit.

Both Megan Lynn Isaac in *Heirs to Shakespeare* (2000) and Sarah K. Herz and Donald R. Gallo in *From Hinton to Hamlet* (1996) argue that Young Adult (YA) novels provide one of the most fruitful means of engaging teenagers with Shakespeare's work. Herz and Gallo look at a myriad of YA literature, citing books that share thematic links with Shakespeare's plays, and asserting that 'by linking YAL with the classics . . . students become developing readers, connecting, comparing, and drawing parallels' (p. 25), while Isaac explores books that have a more direct connection to Shakespeare's work, arguing that such novels, when 'read in tandem' with Shakespeare's plays 'reveal multiple layers of meaning' (2000, p.xi).

In recent years, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has provided the inspiration for a number of YA novels. Chapter 7 explores these recent adaptations, looking first at Matt Haig's *The Dead Fathers Club* (2006), Alan M. Gratz's *Something Rotten* (2007) and John Marsden's *Hamlet* (2009) all of which update the story of *Hamlet* to the twentieth or twenty-first centuries, making the characters, situations and settings more familiar to young readers. I examine the novels' treatment of the themes and characters of *Hamlet*, considering ways in which the authors make these relevant and accessible to their young readers. While Marsden's novel follows quite closely the plot of *Hamlet*, both Gratz and Haig depart significantly from Shakespeare's play – both in terms of setting and plot. I argue that Gratz and Haig have created novels that can be enjoyed independently of *Hamlet*

while also exploring the function of dramatic irony in these texts for readers familiar with Shakespeare's play. The second part of the chapter interrogates novels that place Ophelia at their centre, often in the role of the narrator – Lisa Fiedler's *Dating Hamlet* (2003), Rebecca Reisert's *Ophelia's Revenge* (2003) and Lisa M. Klein's *Ophelia* (2006). I explore the ways in which these writers subvert certain episodes in *Hamlet* in order to give Ophelia a more assertive voice and, most significantly, a life beyond Shakespeare's play, arguing that such a strategy encourages the interrogation of the role of Renaissance society in the fate of Ophelia and encourages readers to think about the similarities and differences in societal expectations regarding the behaviour of young women in Renaissance and the twenty-first century.

Chapter 8 looks at original plays that take their inspiration from Shakespeare's work, in this case in the form of prequels and sequels to his plays. I look at three plays that have emerged out of the NT's Education department – Sharman MacDonald's *After Juliet*, written in 1999 for the NT Connections programme, and Lucinda Coxon's *The Eternal Not* (2009) and Michael Lesslie's *Prince of Denmark* (2010) both commissioned by the NT Discover programme. Both *After Juliet* and *The Eternal Not* (2009) are prequels to Shakespeare's plays – *Romeo and Juliet* and *All's Well That Ends Well* respectively, while Michael Lesslie's *Prince of Denmark* (2010) is a prequel to *Hamlet*, a strategy that has been seen in adult literature – in John Updike's *Gertrude and Claudius* (2000) and Myrlin Abrosia Hermes' *The Lunatic, the Lover and the Poet* (2010) both of which novels narrate the events at Elsinore prior to the start of Shakespeare's play – but not in literature for young people.

Importantly for this study, in addition to being predominantly aimed at young audiences, each of these plays focuses almost exclusively on the younger generations of Shakespeare's plays, allowing them a voice independent from that of the older generations who frequently play a controlling role in their respective source plays. In doing so, I argue, they have a particular appeal to young audiences, not only in presenting characters like Ophelia and Helena as more assertive and capable figures, but also in voicing some common concerns of adolescence and early adulthood and encouraging young viewers to explore the themes of Shakespeare's plays in relation to their own experiences. I examine the relationship between these new plays and their source texts – their themes, characters, gaps and ambiguities – exploring their potential to encourage discussion on and interrogation of Shakespeare's work and to see his themes and characters in a new light. I also consider the extent to which the plays can be understood and appreciated independent of the Shakespearean plays on which they draw. Chapter 8 includes an interview with Michael Lesslie, author of *Prince of Denmark*, in which he discusses the relationship of the play to *Hamlet*, his exploitation of dramatic irony and his deliberate focus on the younger generation of Shakespeare's play.

As this book goes to press, some of the most entertaining and sophisticated Shakespeare-based pieces for children – Tim Crouch's *I* plays – are coming to prominence, and certainly merit mention. The series consists of four plays – *I, Caliban*; *I, Banquo*; *I, Peaseblossom* and *I, Malvolio* – in each of which the title character tells the story of their respective Shakespearean play – *The Tempest*, *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night* – from their own perspective. Although Crouch's writing of the series began in 2003 with *I, Caliban*, commissioned by the Brighton Festival, the plays had, until 2011, mainly been performed at Arts and Shakespeare Festivals. As I write, however, the Bristol Old Vic Theatre and Company of Angels are mounting a production of the first three plays, under the title *FairyMonsterGhost*; *I, Peaseblossom* and *I, Malvolio* are set for inclusion in the RSC's 2011 Autumn/Winter season; and the four plays have just been published under the title *I, Shakespeare* (2011).

The RSC's Autumn season also includes performances of Michael Rosen's new play – commissioned by Little Angel Theatre Company in association with the RSC – *The Magician's Daughter* (2011) – a sequel to *The Tempest* aimed at children as young as 3 years old. Using puppetry and song, the play tells the story of Miranda's daughter and her return to the magical island of Shakespeare's play and will tour the country before taking up residency at the Albany Theatre in London for Christmas 2011. These instances of new writing for young people as part of the RSC's repertoire are, perhaps, indicative of a growing interest in finding new ways of encouraging young people to engage with Shakespeare's work.

One of the main ways in which children and young people have engaged with Shakespeare's plays through original pieces of drama is in the genre of film. Chapter 9 explores two types of film that make use of Shakespeare's stories, themes and characters – the Shakespeare teen film, which has become a familiar staple in Hollywood mainstream cinema and the Shakespeare-based animated feature. The first section of the chapter explores adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* aimed predominantly at a teenage audience – *Get Over It!* (2001) and *Were the World Mine* (2008). I explore the ways in which the two films use the story of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in particular the love plot and magically induced transfers of affection, to explore issues of adolescent identity, in the case of *Were the World Mine*, more particularly the issue of teenage homosexuality. The motivation behind such adaptations is also examined – the extent to which the films seem designed to mediate teenagers' experience of Shakespeare's plays or appropriate Shakespeare 'as a vehicle for accruing capital, power, and cultural prestige' (Desmet and Sawyer, 1999, p. 2).

The second section explores the animated feature films *The Lion King 2* (1998), *Romeo and Juliet: Sealed with a Kiss* (2006) and *Gnomeo and Juliet* (2011), all of which rework *Romeo and Juliet* with the young protagonists transformed into non-human figures – lion cubs, sea lion cubs and garden gnomes respectively. I look at the various ways in which these animations

both adhere to and depart from Shakespeare's story, in particular in the inclusion of a more assertive female heroine, in line with recent developments in Disney's princesses, and in a subversion of the genre of tragedy with the inclusion of a happy ending, presumably deemed necessary for an audience predominantly comprised of children. In addition to examining these and other elements apparently designed to appeal to a young audience, I also argue that these animations, in particular *Sealed with a Kiss* and *Gnomeo and Juliet*, include elements intended to appeal to adults – in particular in their use of parody. The dual appeal of the animations to children and adults encourages family viewing by combining some adult humour with appealing characters, while the Shakespeare connection serves to encourage the perception of the films as having some educational potential. Indeed, as I explore, *Gnomeo and Juliet* has been used on the primary curriculum in order to encourage an early engagement with Shakespeare's work, as well as to stimulate a range of literacy, numeracy, history and DT activities.

There are, of course, numerous books, plays, films and, as discussed above, television programmes that allude to Shakespeare's work, but are not devoted exclusively to the reworking of his plays, and thus fall outside the remit of this book – what Friedman calls 'citations' (2008, p. 3). There are also a number of pieces, including the *Doctor Who* episode mentioned above, that use the performance, study or reading of a Shakespeare play as the focal point of their story, notably Jan Mark's highly praised *Heathrow Nights* (2000), Suzanne Harper's *The Juliet Club* (2008), Kate Gilmore's *Enter Three Witches* (1990) and Nancy Charles Linehan's play *A Midsummer Night's Dream or The Night They Missed the Forest for the Trees* (2001). However, the distinction between these works and the films discussed in Chapter 9, which also revolve around a performance, is that the lives of their protagonists do not mirror those of Shakespeare's play and thus, there is no obvious reworking of the themes or plot elements.

Gary Blackwood's *The Shakespeare Stealer* trilogy (1998–2003) and Susan Cooper's *King of Shadows* (1999) are similarly not discussed in this book, focusing as they do around the writing and performance of plays by Shakespeare and the Lord Chamberlain's Men at the original Globe Theatre. However, all four books merit mention as superb stories which provide the reader with insight into the world of the Elizabethan playhouse, Cooper's book through the eyes of a young American boy, Nat Field, who, while working on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Shakespeare's Globe, is whisked back in time to act in the play with Shakespeare and his company and Blackwood's books through the eyes of orphan Widge, who becomes a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men having tried to 'steal' the play of *Hamlet* during a performance.

Blackwood and Cooper's books are just some of the many novels, comic books, plays and films for children and young people in which Shakespeare himself appears as a character, as he does in the episodes of *Doctor Who* and *The Simpsons* discussed above. Like the texts that revolve around

productions of the play, those that are mainly concerned with the figure of Shakespeare rather than his plays are also excluded from discussion in this book, since they cannot reasonably be said to fall into the categories of performance, version or adaptation. However, it is worth noting the trend for young adult novels centring around the women in Shakespeare's life – Grace Tiffany's *My Father Had a Daughter: Judith Shakespeare's Tale* (2003) told from the point of view of Judith Shakespeare, Peter W. Hassinger's *Shakespeare's Daughter* (2004) in which the protagonist is Susanna Shakespeare, Carolyn Meyer's *Loving Will Shakespeare* (2006), narrated by a young Anne Hathaway, later to become Shakespeare's wife and *Mistress Shakespeare* (2009) by Karen Harper in which Shakespeare's childhood friend and later mistress Anne Whately tells her story. These novels can be compared to the adaptations discussed in Chapter 7 that give a fuller voice to the often marginalized female characters in Shakespeare's plays, allowing them to tell the events of the plays from their own perspectives.

This book is merely a snapshot in time of the work that is being done to engage young people with Shakespeare and to extend their enjoyment and understanding of the plays. As this introduction has made evident, as it goes to print, new productions, versions and adaptations of the plays are emerging, confirming Shakespeare's ongoing centrality both in education and popular culture. With the advent of the Cultural Olympiad in 2012, the programme for the World Shakespeare Festival is being announced, featuring workshops, online education programmes, recital competitions, productions and adaptations for and by young people, as well as the 'World Together Conference' in association with the RSC, British Museum, British Council and Tate Modern, which seeks to 'explore the place of Shakespeare and the arts in young people's lives across the world' (World Shakespeare Festival), a place which will continue to be explored and debated for many years to come.

PART ONE

Shakespeare Productions for Young People

CHAPTER ONE

Full-Scale Stage Productions for Young People

Shakespeare's Globe: 'Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank' – *Romeo and Juliet, Much Ado About Nothing* and *Macbeth*

In 2008 the Royal Shakespeare Company launched 'Stand Up for Shakespeare', a manifesto for the teaching of Shakespeare in schools, which calls for children to 'do it on their feet', 'see it live' and 'start it earlier' (RSC, 2008, p. 3). Shakespeare's Globe and the National Theatre (NT) have also lent their voices and support to this project, and although I would question the motivation behind the exhortation to study Shakespeare 'earlier' (the themes being not always appropriate for children of 7 or 8 years old) there can be little doubt that seeing Shakespeare's plays performed live, and engaging with his work in practical workshops are the most desirable forms of early encounter with Shakespeare.

The main producing houses around the country all regularly include Shakespearean productions in their main repertoires, and most provide online educational resources to accompany their productions. A number of these theatres also have education departments that produce heavily abridged and adapted Shakespeare, predominantly for primary-aged pupils. It is, however, rare to find full-scale Shakespeare productions created specifically for young audiences. Presumably this is partly because such productions are seen as having a limited appeal, insufficient to fill a theatre for a run. It is also the case that, for many schools, attending full-scale professional productions is too great an expense and, for those not based in towns or cities with theatres, a practical difficulty. Most productions for

young people are therefore designed to tour to schools with a limited cast, often necessitating the cutting of a number of characters and by extension a substantial amount of the text. However, despite the fact that Shakespeare is performed in theatres around the country and by a number of small-scale touring companies, a survey carried out by Shakespeare's Globe of over 1,200 Year 9 students found that 'four out of five (82.5%) have never seen a Shakespeare play' (Shakespeare's Globe, 2010).

In 2007, inspired by issues of accessibility and an acknowledgment of the valuable impact of seeing live performance on young people's perception of Shakespeare, the Globe Theatre launched 'Playing Shakespeare', a project dedicated to creating full-scale Shakespeare productions on the Globe stage specifically for young people. The project was launched with a production of *Much Ado About Nothing (Ado),* which was restaged in 2008, followed by productions of *Romeo and Juliet* (2009) and *Macbeth* (2010 and 2011). As Fiona Banks, Globe Education's Head of Learning and Teaching Practice, explained when launching the project, the productions have two key features – first, 'all aspects of the production' are designed to 'consider the young people we hope to engage' and second, the 'production values mirror those in the Globe's theatre season, even though the run of this play is considerably shorter' (2008a, p. 16). Each of the productions was created for Key Stage 3 students from London schools, and supported by a range of online resources and in-school workshops. Although the productions ran for only one week, each had a cast of around 10–12 actors (slightly fewer than in the Globe summer season productions that habitually have around 15) and a full production team, many of whom work regularly on the theatre's main repertoire.

The Playing Shakespeare project coincided, as Banks notes, with a shift in emphasis in education policy in the United Kingdom, with the National Curriculum recognizing both the importance of 'creative learning' in the classroom, and the value of 'watching plays in performance' as part of their study (2008a, p. 15). The government's 'National Strategies' publication of 2008 – 'Shakespeare for all Ages and Stages' – recommended that pupils studying a Shakespeare play at Key Stage 3 should 'see, if possible, a professional production of a Shakespeare play', while at Key Stage 4 they should ideally 'see, if possible, alternative productions of the same play' (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008, p. 8).

In March 2010 the Qualification and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) launched a new teaching initiative entitled 'Active Shakespeare: Capturing Evidence of Learning'. Working alongside the RSC and Globe Education, the government has developed materials for Key Stages 3 and 4, designed to encourage 'lively and active approaches to teaching and learning that see the text as something to be performed' (QCDA, 2010). The Globe's Playing Shakespeare project, and in particular its online resources, adhere closely to these aims, and in 2010 the Department for Education National Strategies created 'Macbeth: From the Globe to the Classroom', a

resource comprising ten lesson plans, with supporting materials, based on the Playing Shakespeare production.

The three plays were selected with young audiences in mind. The choice of *Ado* (2007 and 2008) was mainly due to its presence, at that time, on the National Curriculum. As Banks explained in 2007, ‘approximately 70% of 14 year-old students’ were studying the play ‘for their National Tests at Key Stage 3’ (2008a, p. 16). Although *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth* were not prescribed texts, given the abolition of compulsory Key Stage 3 tests, both have a widely recognized appeal to young audiences. In 1993 ‘before the recent specifications of Shakespeare texts’ for particular year-groups (Wade and Sheppard, 1993, p. 268), John Sheppard carried out a questionnaire, designed to investigate what texts English teachers were selecting for study at different stages of the curriculum. At Year 9 *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet* were the second and fifth choices respectively, and at Year 10 these two plays had become by far the two most popular (pp. 270–71). With its teenage protagonists and central themes of generational conflict, violence, rebellion and first love *Romeo and Juliet* seems an appropriate choice for a contemporary teenage audience. As Buckhurst elucidates, ‘Shakespeare touches on subjects that still spark debate in 2009, from arranged marriages, to family warring, parent/ child relationships to teenage suicide’ (Globe Education, 2011j). *Macbeth* has the appeal of the witches, and a clear, quick-moving storyline that is relatively short and easy to follow and is described by Buckhurst as ‘written like a fast-paced thriller’ (Lambert, 2010).

Although substantially longer than most versions for young people, the productions were cut to around an hour and 45 minutes in length, partly, as director Jo Howarth explains, because ‘three hours is a long time for an audience to stand in the cold’ (Globe Education, 2011g) and partly in order to make the productions ‘short and punchy’ getting ‘to the core of the story’ (2011l). In cutting the text, Howarth states that she ‘identified moments that didn’t drive the story forward and cut jokes and phrases that a modern audience might find obscure or difficult to understand’ (2011g). These principles of cutting do not differ significantly from those employed by most directors, the plays rarely being performed in their entirety in the professional theatre. For Buckhurst, it is very important that Playing Shakespeare is ‘about giving young people a full-scale production’ rather than trying ‘to tell the story in as few words as possible’ (2010a). Like Howarth, he removed mostly elements of the text that seemed particularly obscure, and those necessitated by having only 10–12 actors available. This approach seems to acknowledge young people’s capacity to appreciate largely unexpurgated productions of Shakespeare’s plays even if, like many of their adult counterparts, they do not understand every word.

What was immediately noticeable about the productions of all three plays was their simplicity of style and embracement of the Globe Theatre space. As Buckhurst explains, being aware that the young audience members might