WHEN POWER SEDUCES WOMEN:
SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGIC (MOTHER) QUEENS IN MANGA

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Abstract: Power is seductive, and fantasies of power affect both men and women, who are sometimes willing to do anything in order to achieve or retain it. The paper looks at how such a modern transmediation as manga renders powerful femininity in two of Shakespeare's great tragedies, namely Hamlet *and* Macbeth. *The paper aims to discuss the ways in which the emotive behaviour of both female protagonists eventually makes them inappropriate for the power roles they assume as wives, queens and mothers.*
Keywords: emotive behaviour, manga, mother(hood), power, queen(ship), Shakespeare

1. Introduction

In an interesting study on the presence of graphic novels in academic libraries, O'English et al. (2006:173-175) note that graphic novels were developed out of the comic book movement of the 1960s, and came to be used by authors who wanted to exploit the comic book format while addressing more mainstream topics. The same authors further point out that today graphic novels have entire conferences dedicated to them, with their own emerging canon. The ever-growing interest in this form of literature has thus caused a turning-point in the appreciation of graphic novels, whose scholarly and cultural value is being reassessed, the focus now lying on a happy combination of reading for scholarly enhancement *and* for personal enjoyment.

"Born" in 2007, the "Manga Shakespeare" series is also a form of graphic novel, relying on the peculiarities of a Japanese comic book (*manga*) and of Shakespeare's original language. At the crossroads of two cultures – European and Asian, English and Japanese – and of two time periods (early modern England and the 21st century), "Manga Shakespeare" seems to promote the ideal kind of reading: for pleasure and education at the same time. Although scholars and academics may regard this as a form of "dumbing down" one of the greatest writers of all times, the fact that the "Manga Shakespeare" series can actually encourage students to read the Bard's work – and feel comfortable doing it – is, in my personal opinion, an indisputable advantage for this genre.

What this paper aims to explore is how two such *manga* adaptations of the original Shakespearean plays – *Hamlet* (2007) and *Macbeth* (2008) – render the famous female protagonists and the multiple roles they take on throughout the plays: wives, mothers, and queens. What makes these women alluring? or, quite on the contrary, what makes them despicable? The reason behind the choice of these two particular plays lies in the multiple similarities the two female characters share, as well as in the ways in which they subvert the age's definitions of womanhood, all of which will be presented in the following sections.

2. The Rise of Graphic Novels. Communicating Emotions

Graphic novels in general, and comics and *manga* in particular, have developed a special language which relies on human gestures and facial expressions. Aiming to analyze the visual representations of emotions from a social semiotic viewpoint, Feng and O'Halloran (2012:2067-2068) explain how emotion in visual art forms is not only transmitted through "conventionalized signals such as pictorial runes, pictograms and balloons" but also through "stylized versions of bodily behaviours such as facial expression, body posture, and touch." To establish image-viewer relationships, social semioticians focus therefore on interpersonal resources, among which camera-angle and gaze are essential. According to these authors, emotive behaviours are semiotic resources used to create meaning in a social context. The authors further distinguish between metaphorical symbolic and literal iconic representations of emotion, where the former could be exemplified by the presence of fire or smoke above a character's head to suggest anger, while the latter may consist in a broad smile for happiness, or a drooping posture for sadness (Feng and O'Halloran 2012:2068).

In their attempt to provide a descriptive toolkit for visual analysis, Feng and O'Halloran (2012:2070-2073) focus on three main ways of conveying basic emotive behaviour: facial expression, touch and body orientation, all of which encode the valence, activation and intensity of the emotion. Facial expression takes into consideration the facial muscles involved in the expression of the emotion, and it is important through its action (e.g. up vs. down, open vs. closed) and value (positive vs. negative). Similarly, touch is another effective way of communicating emotions, by considering five aspects: intensity, duration, touched body part, touching body part, and frequency of contact. Finally, body orientation – horizontal (backward vs. forward) or vertical (up vs. down) – represents an important source for the emotion conveyed, as well as for the character's attitude and social identity.

As argued elsewhere (Şerban 2012:337), I would like to underscore the fact that *manga* may be read as a (post)modern popular form of reversed *ekphrasis*, or a partial intersemiotic translation, which transforms words into emotive behaviours. Given that it heavily relies on visual input and cinematographic angles – including (extreme) close-ups and views from above or below, which challenge the lateral view privileged by theatrical performances (Rommens 2000) –, *manga* offers the viewer/reader a sense of immediacy and drama similar to watching a film rather than performance on stage; the most notable difference lies in the fact that the reader can move through the plot – backwards and/or forwards – at his/her own pace. At the same time, the *manga* artist plays a very visible role as "translator", since s/he is the one that selects, describes and interprets the characters' verbal exchanges, turning them into images which complete the written text (Şerban 2012:337).

Although there are many variations depending on the subgenre and target readership, a brief overview of *manga* characteristics would include: drawings in black and white; very expressive, personality-revealing eyes (sometimes incredibly large), picture-perfect hair, long limbs and pointy chins; feminized male characters; a focus on emotions (Johnson-Woods 2010:5-12, Cohn 2010:192-194). The *manga* page is usually made up of several frames, which vary in size, shape and number; the frames often contain numerous and minute details, and cinematic angles (as mentioned above), which are impossible to achieve in a theatrical performance. Nevertheless, the "Manga Shakespeare" series stands out twice from traditional *manga*: firstly, through the European way of reading it, from left to right; and secondly, through its use of eight to nine colour pages, whose purpose is to introduce the characters, thus functioning like an equivalent of the "dramatis personae" section in drama.

As shown above, the main advantage of *manga* is that it provides a simultaneous reading and watching experience, more complex than a mere reading of the play and which is

more appealing to the younger – and more visually prone – generations. Moreover, *manga* recontextualizes Shakespeare's plays, adapting the cultural capital of the 16th century to the 21st, while still using Shakespeare's original – albeit abridged – written text (Şerban 2012:339).

The two transmediations proposed for discussion here – *Hamlet* (2007) and *Macbeth* (2008) – were chosen because of the similarities between the two female protagonists: both are wives, non-English queens and (potential) mothers. Yet all these roles seem mere masks they choose or have to wear in order to fulfill their personal desires. The following sections will therefore discuss in turn each of these roles and look at how the emotive behaviour of these characters, drawn according to *manga* conventions, visually conveys important, linguistically encoded, information with regard to these two women-wives-queens-mothers in a few key scenes of both plays.

3. *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*: Masks of Femininity

When, in the final scene of *Measure for Measure* (Shakespeare 1999), Mariana states that she has had intercourse with her husband although he does not know it and they are not yet married, the Duke concludes that "Why, you are nothing then: neither maid, widow, nor wife?" (V, i, 176). Women seem thus divided into three categories, all of which are connected to men: maids (who are to be married), wives (who are married), and widows (who used to be married). A fourth category is supplied by Lucio: the "punk" (i.e. prostitute), who is again defined in relation to men, namely through her abilities to allure them. This hierarchy of womanhood reflects the early modern, masculine view of the world, according to which femininity is first linked to domesticity and housewifery, and later to maternity. In Shakespeare's age, women were thus "restricted to the private sphere", and especially valued for their "natural" vocation as wives and mothers (Rackin 2005:123). However, I would like to add that besides these four categories, there would be yet another – the queens, who are also presented in relation to their husbands, as mere consorts, who often do their royal husbands' bidding, acting as spies or as adjacent spokespersons.

As Kemp (2010:66) also remarks, "nearly all the major female characters are presented in terms of their connections to men" and, when compared to male characters, they speak relatively few lines. According to Kemp, this could be the result of Shakespeare's writing for an exclusively male cast of actors, as well as for a male-centered stance on human experience. Thus, femininity becomes a mask, worn by young men on the early modern English stage and crafted especially through performative acts (Moncrief and McPherson 2007:6), or, in other words, through emotive behaviour (cf. Feng and O'Halloran 2012) that is especially visible in body orientation, gestures (e.g. touch) and facial expressions accompanying the "female" characters' speech. Consequently, gender ambiguity – represented by the young man playing a female part – becomes erotically alluring since – as Rackin (2005:76-77) explains – in early modern England, real life prostitutes would wear male clothing to make themselves more desirable and attract customers, whereas the feminized man onstage would appeal to the women in the audience.

Women's power – although exercised through their husbands – consisted primarily in the various social roles they could play, such as wives, mothers, or – if they were fortunate enough – queens consort. Of the three roles, maternity confers more worth on women, offering them a position of empowerment and making them "socially worthy", as well as casting them as "contributors in terms of spirituality" (Moncrief and McPherson 2007:5) through the bearing and birthing of children. Comparatively, queenship also emphasizes a woman's social worth, singling her out and turning her into a role model for the entire

community/ society, whereas wifehood is meant to emphasize all women's submissiveness and helplessness, as they exchanged the father's authority for the husband's.

These three hypostases of femininity dominate Shakespeare's plays and they also appear in the two plays under analysis, embodied in the two female protagonists who combine and/or take on in turn one of these masks: Queen Gertrude and Lady Macbeth.

3.1. The Women

In her book dedicated to women in Shakespeare's age, Theresa Kemp (2010:31) notes that early modern women were generally regarded as figures "that needed to be contained", that were "inherently inferior, uncontrollable, and prone to a wide range of vices and disabilities." Reflecting this view of women, Shakespearean female characters rarely voice internal monologues or express their own passions. In *Hamlet* for example, neither are we are allowed to enter Gertrude or Ophelia's minds, nor do we find out about their strong emotions and desires from themselves (Kemp 2010:92). However, they both primarily react to and obey the(ir) men who struggle for power. For instance, we first see Gertrude in a delicate situation when she fails in her attempt to juggle her three roles as wife, queen and mother: having remarried none other but her own brother-in-law, Gertrude shows maternal concern for her son's melancholy but she does not seem preoccupied that her hasty marriage prevented her son from rightfully inheriting the throne of Denmark.

In a much similar way, when we first meet Lady Macbeth, she is also negotiating her roles as wife, (potential) mother and would-be queen, a title she seems to desire at all costs. Yet, unlike for Gertrude, we are allowed to see her mind at work, as a negative example of a power-thirsty individual. Even if we do not know for sure whether Lady Macbeth has given birth or not, her internal monologue after receiving her husband's letter shows her willing to give up her femininity symbolized by maternity ("my milk") in exchange for the masculine traits of cruelty and aggression. For her, queenship is more problematic than for Gertrude, as it implies decision-making and agency.

Another feature common to these plays is that both Gertrude and Lady Macbeth are contrasted to other women, who – although not on the highest social level – stand for the age's "norm": the good obedient maid Ophelia, and the good loyal wife and mother Lady Macduff, both of whom are showcased through (an almost blind) submissiveness and helplessness respectively.

But how are these female characters introduced to us in the *manga* versions of the plays? As mentioned in the second section of this paper, the only colourful pages in *manga* portray the characters in a position typical for their status(es) in the story. Thus, Gertrude looks rather old and bitter; her overall facial expression suggests sadness and disappointment; her eyebrows indicate a slight frown; she is looking sideways, towards Claudius (who almost completely covers her), as if ashamed to make eye-contact with the viewer/reader, while the corners of her mouth are slightly drooping. Drawn behind Claudius, a symbolic position for all noble early modern women who needed male protection, Gertrude does not touch her second husband (nor he her for that matter), which would suggest a resigned disappointment or even indifference rather than the uncontrollable sexual appetite Hamlet so contemptuously mentions in his first soliloquy. Moreover, the dress Gertrude is wearing oversexualizes her, showcasing her sensuality; her long fair hair, which usually bears angelic connotations, is here meant to emphasize her gullibility and naiveté, which, together with her body orientation (semi-profile), casts her as a victim: the typical, aristocratic early modern woman in need of male protection.

Lady Macbeth too first appears to us from behind her husband, and her sensuality is also emphasized through the revealing red and grey dress she is wearing. But these are the

only things she shares with Gertrude. Otherwise, Lady Macbeth is drawn as a typically mean woman, this being evident particularly in the full but tightly closed lips and in the elongated serpent-like shape of her eyes and V-forming eyebrows, which together convey despisal and scheming. Her body is oriented towards the viewer/reader and she looks directly at him/her as if in a challenge. Unlike Gertrude, whose body is more than half hidden behind King Claudius, Lady Macbeth is much closer to her husband; more than half her body can be seen even if she appears to be a step behind. Yet her left hand possessively covers Macbeth's heart and is in turn covered by Macbeth's right hand, suggesting the close relationship and emotional intimacy the spouses share. Her grip on Macbeth shows her as the ambitious woman she turns out to be, as well as the fact that she transfers agency over to him since her position as a woman prevents her from obtaining the desired royal status by herself. Overall, her body orientation and facial expression highlight her as the driving force behind Macbeth.

3.2. The Wives

Bridging the public and private spheres of a woman's life, the notion of wife is closely connected to the definition of womanhood. Whereas wifehood is defined especially through female sexuality and desire in the private domain of life, it is usually associated with loyalty and good housewifery in the more public area.

When discussing the relationship between Gertrude and Claudius, Rackin (2005:136) underlines the fact that, "in modern terms", their marriage seems the best one of all "because even in middle age they seem to enjoy the shared sexual passion which" [despite being condemned by Hamlet] "is now regarded as a healthy achievement and the hallmark of a successful marriage". The only drawback is that we only see Gertrude as a wife through the biased, young Hamlet's eyes: she represented an ideal wife and mother while married to King Hamlet, but she fell very low from that pedestal once she married Claudius the usurper. Thus, Gertrude the wife is referred to only in relation to the marital bed and the sexual duties of the wife, appearing as (over)sensual and sexually uncontrollable. Nevertheless, she is also submissive and loyal, silently supporting her royal husband's decisions and defending him even in her own son's eyes until the shocking revelation in the closet scene.

Comparatively, the Macbeths often appear on stage together and we are shown the inner workings of their marriage, as they convey "a remarkable mutuality of purpose and emotional intimacy when they conspire to murder Duncan", while "the virtuous Macduffs never even appeared together on stage" (Rackin 2005:136). Kemp (2010:94) reads Lady Macbeth as an extreme version of the shrew, who, because of her own ambition, keeps nagging Macbeth to commit the murder and repeatedly challenges his masculinity. Yet soon after Lady Macbeth's show of power over her husband, Shakespeare lets us see her fainting at the news of King Duncan's death, a gesture that would have feminized her and made her less threatening and deviant to the early modern male spectators.

The Macbeths' special relationship, where at first the wife seems to have the upper hand, turns Lady Macbeth into a perverted notion of womanhood (Kemp 2010:94). Much like the witches – further argues Kemp –, who stand for a perverted form of domesticity and good housewifery through their evil brewing, Lady Macbeth tries to take on a psychological masculinity and breaks the wifely duties of hospitality, first planning the murder of Duncan and later the ambiguous "dispatching" (sending away or killing?) of the thanes in the banquet scene. Nonetheless, she is and remains loyal to her husband, whom she urges and supports to achieve kingship, even though she suddenly disappears into the background afterwards.

3.3. The Queens

An exclusively public function, queenship is closely linked to the notions of hospitality and role-model wifehood. As concerns Queen Gertrude, Rosenberg (1992:70-73) remarks that she "makes herself alluring through supple weakness and flirtation", as she stealthily or openly exchanges endearments with Claudius in public, yet she must be at least in part aware and ashamed of her hasty, indecorous remarriage. Gertrude retains her queenly status and power through her husband, but she remains decorative, as she is a mere puppet, a loving and submissive consort for a cunning king. Her regal superiority is manifest only when she briefly plays the role of hostess to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, or in relation to such younger men as accusing Hamlet or rebellious Laertes; yet even here, Hamlet seems successful in shocking her into familial, courtly and political awareness.

Lady Macbeth, on the other hand, is presented in the role of hostess on two occasions, but each time with a murderous intention: the killing of Duncan and the "dispatching" of the thanes. Unlike Gertrude, she seems very concerned with decorum and making a good impression both on Duncan (act I, vi) and on the nobles gathered at the banquet (act III, iv). She appears cool, calm and collected, level-headed and diplomatic when entreating the guests to stay longer, while Macbeth is terrified by the ghostly apparition of Banquo. Nevertheless, by the end of the play, she regresses, transferring her initial power onto her husband.

3.4. The Mothers

Pertaining to the private area of life, motherhood is little represented in Shakespeare's plays and the few mothers who do appear are, according to Rackin (2005:134), rather unsatisfactory, or – in the words of Moncrief and McPherson (2007) – they combine compliant and disruptive instances of maternal behaviour.

As mentioned before, the first time we see Gertrude, she appears as a care-filled mother, whose main concern centers on her son's melancholy. By contrast, Hamlet, who seems overwhelmed with female sexuality, sees his mother and her remarriage through the lens of misogyny, thus failing to understand the early modern woman's need of male protection. Also, her quick remarriage has caused, in young Hamlet's eyes, her downfall from the privileged position as ideal, nurturing mother to the promiscuous role of his uncle's wife. At the same time, Gertrude appears rather selfish since, instead of supporting her son's claim to the throne, she ruins his chances. As Rackin (2005:134) also observes, whenever Gertrude and Hamlet appear on stage together, she is either pleading or scolding him for his behaviour; each time, however, she does this to no avail since Hamlet never complies. She thus seems to alternate between maternal nagging and helplessness.

By contrast, Lady Macbeth has nothing maternal about her. Although the text does not offer clear evidence to her being a mother or not, she makes reference to maternity in order to argue for her ambition and her determination to achieve it. Her lines (in act I, v), which oppose the imagery of maternity and milk to the imagery of murder and blood, cast her as a cruel potential mother, capable even of infanticide if her deepest desires are at stake. In the absence of the baby, whom she only claims to have given suck to, Lady Macbeth scolds her husband, almost as if he were a child: the first time, just before the murder of Duncan, more aggressively because they are in private, while the second time in a more diplomatic fashion because they are in public, at the banquet.

Unlike Gertrude, who is contrasted to a maid (Ophelia), Lady Macbeth is contrasted to the age's model of maternity embodied by Lady Macduff, who stands for early modern feminine helplessness. A modern, domestic version of a noble lady – shown beside the hearth in the castle and engaged in banter with her young son – Lady Macduff has insufficient power

as a mother to protect her child. She does however prove to be a loyal wife by defending her husband's honour against the murderers' accusations of treason, although – as Rackin (2005:134-135) contends – she is far from the medieval model of the lady who would have led the castle's defence in the absence of her husband.

If so far we have explored the masks these two women wear, let us now look at two scenes from the *manga* adaptation of each play, focusing in turn on a couple of key scenes of the private and public lives of each female character.

4. Public Life vs. (Witnessed) Private Life

As queens, both Gertrude and Lady Macbeth are never completely alone and even their privacy is witnessed and/or reported on. The scenes chosen to illustrate this idea are part of the climax and the denouement in both plots, taking place in the third and fifth acts of each play; thus for *Hamlet* we shall discuss the so-called "closet scene" (act III, iv) and the "duel scene" (act V, ii), whereas for *Macbeth* we shall deal with the "banquet scene" (act III, iv) and the "sleepwalking scene" (act V, i). (For a selection of *manga* frames representing these scenes, please see the table in the Appendix.)

As mentioned above, Gertrude seems a genuine representation of an early modern woman, always defined through men – as wife and queen consort to first King Hamlet and then Claudius, or as mother to Hamlet. Her power is therefore indirect, the result of her association with powerful men. She is usually surrounded by men, almost always in the company of her royal husband (with the exception of the "closet scene" in act III), but marginalized either physically, through her location, or conversationally, through the political topics of the men's conversation.

Comparatively, Lady Macbeth does not need male protection even though she often appears in the company of her husband. What she needs is a male agent who would bestow on her the position she desires: queenship. She too is usually in the presence of men, yet unlike Gertrude, she commands the attention not only of her husband through what she tells him, but also of other men through their preoccupations for her womanly sensibilities (her fainting at the news of Duncan's murder – act II, iii) or their gratitude for her hospitality (the welcoming of Duncan (I, vi) and the thanes (III, iv)). In the *manga* transmediation, she, unlike Gertrude, often looks directly at the viewer/reader as if to be able to monitor everyone's actions, or to convince them of her motives and draw them on her side.

Let us now examine the *manga Hamlet* "closet scene". In the privacy of her chamber, but under the watchful eye and keen eavesdropping of hidden Polonius, Queen Gertrude acts on behalf of Claudius, having summoned Hamlet in order to scold him for the displeasure he has inflicted on "his father". However, this initial superiority as queen and mother, who expects to be obeyed because she represents royal and paternal authority, suddenly changes once she hears Hamlet's shocking accusation of murder. The *manga* transmediation covers this scene in only two pages, alternating large frames or "macros" (Cohn 2010:197) with close-ups and even extreme close-ups of Gertrude's and Hamlet's faces.

It is interesting to note that throughout these highly emotional frames (just as throughout the whole plot) Gertrude never looks directly at the viewer/reader, as if she were averting her eyes and retaining her aloofness. We are not shown her face when she tells Hamlet of his offence against Claudius, when her posture is very upright and imposing, patronizing even, since the focus is primarily on her role as queen. Yet, as the queen gives way to the mother, Gertrude's held-up head begins to droop and her eyes seem tear-filled (although she does not cry) when she asks Hamlet to show her the respect she is entitled to. She fails in the attempt to touch her son, being literally "shoved" away, and the two extreme close-ups on her and Hamlet's confronting profiles show her increasingly large eyes under the

shock of the accusations. Five close-up frames later, Gertrude tries to prevent the murder of Polonius but, although her mouth is wide open as if in a scream and her hand is raised in a stopping gesture, she seems a mere doll whose words or actions are not even acknowledged. (Moreover, the bloodstains in the background symbolically link the actual murder of Polonius to the evoked murder of King Hamlet, further increasing the tension of the moment.) To emphasize Gertrude's lack of agency and authority, the only full frame of the sequence shows her by herself, rather as a victim of domestic violence, as she leans against the wall, her face turned towards the viewer/reader but with squeezing closed eyes as if trying to shut the whole world out. Similarly, when she tries to berate her son for the murder, her body is thrust forward like a scolding mother's, she is frowning and glaring at Hamlet who ignores her by looking away, her mouth is open as if to shout, yet no words are actually spoken. Gertrude's emotive behaviour strongly suggests her inner turmoil, as the shock of the accusations of murder and hasty remarriage turn into horror at Hamlet's murder of Polonius. Yet all of her intense emotions, together with the fear of what might happen to her son when the truth is discovered, are easily brushed aside by Hamlet, and Gertrude is again marginalized and muted even in her motherly concern for her son's welfare.

On the other hand, the duel scene, which takes place in public, highlights Gertrude's role as queen, whose duty is to watch the duel, together with her royal husband, and reward the winner. It is now that she acts on impulse, deciding to drink the cup of wine meant for Hamlet, and consequently dying poisoned. In other words, the first time that Gertrude assumes agency, the consequences are disastrous. Of the thirteen frames which make up this scene, four focus on Gertrude's dying, while the other nine are equally divided between the angry Hamlet, the confessing Laertes, and the found-out Claudius. This division shows Gertrude's death as equally important to the three men's situations, yet her marginalization is again visually suggested by the peripheral positions of her frames on the page. Here too, Gertrude avoids eye-contact with the viewer/reader. In the first frame, a facial close-up, we see Claudius apparently trying to prevent Gertrude from swooning. While Claudius half-laughingly thinks she may be fainting because of the blood, as it would be normal for a woman, Gertrude's only visible eye looks backwards suspiciously at her husband, whose physical proximity she immediately and strongly rejects: her body is oriented backwards, her left arm is completely stretched out in a pushing away gesture, and she is frowning as if she cannot stand his presence next to her. The next frame is a larger one, showing Gertrude on her knees, barely supporting the upper part of her body, her head fully bent down, while a concerned Hamlet and a repenting Claudius stand on her sides albeit without touching her. Her position on the floor may be read as the epitome of her marginalization, downfall and ensuing death since the next frame, an extreme close-up, showing her drooping face in profile, with wide-open eyes and slightly open mouth, suggest her surprise at realizing she has been poisoned.

By comparison, the first scene chosen for *manga Macbeth* is a public one, which takes place on the occasion of the banquet thrown in honour of the new king. Here Lady Macbeth too acts on behalf of her husband, though out of her own volition, trying to make the guests feel more at ease despite Macbeth's irrational behaviour and hallucinations. She plays the role of hostess – a social function as both wife and queen – to perfection, remaining calm and taking charge of the situation. She is the only woman present; hence she is surrounded by brawny, warrior men, whose strength and power she borrows from. There is only one macro frame, which shows Lady Macbeth as hostess. The male guests, several warlords sitting at a table, are thus "domesticated", while she is doing her best to appease their fears and reassure them. Lady Macbeth commands both our and the guests' attention, as she appears in the centre of the frame's background, her body upright and regal, her arms outstretched sideways in a reassuring gesture, while the frightened figure of Macbeth is cowering close to the door

behind her. Her facial expression is not very clear but her presence as hostess (right behind the glass-laden table) is impressive. This particular large frame is followed by a series of close-ups in which she has a few private moments with her husband, whom she whisperingly scolds to keep his calm and behave like a man. Her facial features show her again as very determined and ready to push her husband's self-imposed limits.

On the other hand, in the sleepwalking scene, once guilt has taken over, we see that Lady Macbeth's strong personality and determination have disappeared, and she seems lost, a mere shadow of her former self. The six frames depicting this scene focus more on the doctor and the maid rather than on Lady Macbeth, who appears now marginalized by everybody and no longer seeks eye-contact with the viewer/reader. She is here associated with another woman, the maid, who reports on her state. There are only two frames which focus on Lady Macbeth: one where we see a close-up of her upper-body and the figures of the doctor and the maid in the background, and another focusing, in extreme close-up, on Lady Macbeth's allegedly bloody hand. The close-up on her face suggests intrusion into her personal space, where the viewer/reader now has access. We see her in profile, her eyes looking blankly ahead, her eyebrows raised and her mouth slightly open, with drooping corners. Her overall appearance suggests confusion and disbelief, and that aura of energy she seemed to have about her is no longer there. In contrast to her previous associations with masculinity and men's company, the other woman's presence clearly points out to Lady Macbeth's degradation to a "dummy", or – to recall the Duke's words in *Measure for Measure*, "nothing, then". The other frame centers on Lady Macbeth's right hand, palm up, which she is rubbing with the left thumb, in a nervous, guilty gesture.

It would perhaps be interesting to mention that the *manga* version shows Macbeth actually finding his wife's body after she has jumped from the battlements. The two frames show Macbeth running towards and standing over Lady Macbeth's fallen body, with blood leaking out of her eyes and mouth, and a pool of blood surrounding her head, as if to emphasize her murderous mind.

What both plays and their *manga* adaptations seem to underscore is that both Gertrude and Lady Macbeth die in the end because they did not comply with the traditional early modern roles of femininity, having proved themselves to be quite the opposite of good women, submissive wives, proper hostesses, role-model queens, or nurturing mothers.
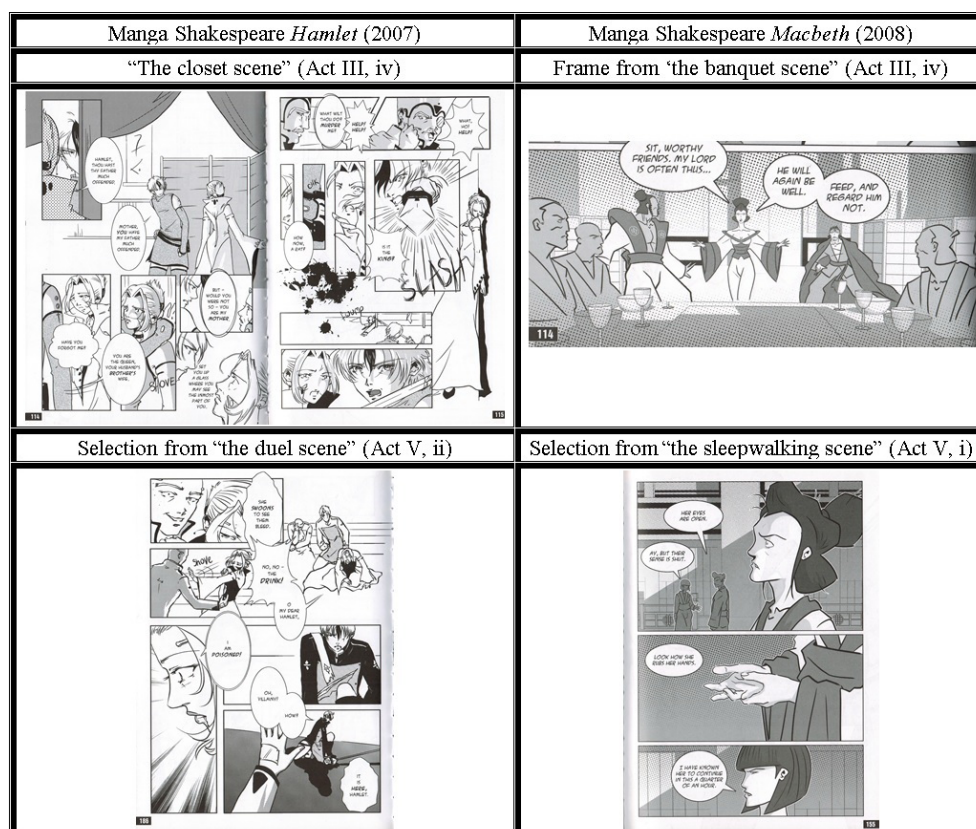
5. Conclusions

As we have seen, both women allow themselves to be seduced by power: whereas Gertrude chooses to remarry in order to remain queen, Lady Macbeth plans murder in order to become queen; yet, while Gertrude disguises desire for power under erotic love, Lady Macbeth labels it with ambition. As wives, they are both loyal, but eventually they become marginalized by their husbands. Although Lady Macbeth plays the hostess role more than Gertrude, and Gertrude is more obviously a mother, both women are excluded by the men whose company initially gives them power and/or agency.

This is rendered in the *manga* adaptations very visibly in the arrangement of the frames on the page as well as in the social interaction of the characters. Although they may seem the focus of attention in the scenes selected, both women's emotive behaviour (facial expression, touch and body orientation) shows their inadequacy and inappropriateness regarding the power roles of queen and (potential) mother they have assumed.

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Appendix

Manga Shakespeare *Hamlet* (2007)	Manga Shakespeare *Macbeth* (2008)
"The closet scene" (Act III, iv)	Frame from 'the banquet scene' (Act III, iv)
Selection from "the duel scene" (Act V, ii)	Selection from "the sleepwalking scene" (Act V, i)

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