

SHAKESPEARE AND THE VISUAL ARTS IN BRITAIN, 1588–1908

How the visual arts reflect changing attitudes and priorities
in Shakespeare studies and production

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Abstract: William Shakespeare evokes different reactions in every succeeding age and culture which studies and performs him. In this paper we shall examine some British artworks and with their aid consider how British artists at different points in history have regarded Shakespeare as a man and as a dramatist, how they have explored his plays and felt they should be acted, and how they have used his stories to reflect their own times. The chief artists under discussion are the maker of the bust on Shakespeare's tomb, the painters of early portraits of Shakespeare, and various artistic interpreters of incidents and characters, and their actors, in the plays, including Zoffany, Fuseli, Blake, Maclise, the pre-Raphaelites, the Victorian fairy-painters, and the post-Victorian illustrator Arthur Rackham. There will also be a brief discussion of the reasons for the apparent decline in artworks concerned with Shakespeare since the early twentieth century.

Introduction

Shakespeare is a chameleon. He presents a different character and appearance to each succeeding age of history and to each culture which seeks — and invariably finds — a reflection of itself and its times in his works. When we try to analyse the ways in which Shakespeare has been regarded at different times, an important window for our understanding is the arts. Every kind of art and craft in every culture and at every time is a barometer of the thoughts and priorities of the age. Here we shall look at a number of artworks, all produced in Britain, to see what they show us about changing attitudes to Shakespeare, and how people felt they could see their own times and preoccupations reflected in him.

1. Early Images of Shakespeare

The first certain attempt to give the world a likeness of Shakespeare was the polychrome bust in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford, by Gheerart Janssen the Younger, often

known by the English version of his name, Gerard Johnson, son of a Dutch sculptor of the same name who had settled in England in the 1560s. Janssen also made a funerary monument for the family of the Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare's patron, and may have met the dramatist himself. The bust was probably made at the sculptor's workshop in Southwark and brought to Stratford, where it would have been painted in situ. It is first recorded in the lines written by Leonard Digges in his prefatory memorial lines in the First Folio. The polychrome décor deteriorated with time, and in the eighteenth century the monument was whitewashed, the original colours being restored in 1861.

This early image of Shakespeare is believed to have been commissioned by the poet's son-in-law Dr John Hall¹, and it must have been approved by his family and friends and may therefore be taken as an acceptable likeness, though the sculptor was not very skilful. It shows a middle-aged man of rather portly build, not unlike Shakespeare's own delineation of the Fifth Age of Man in *As You Like It*: "In fair round belly with good capon lin'd, With eyes severe and beard of formal cut". The bald head

with its remarkably high, domed forehead is in accord with the Droeshout engraving (see below). The costume is simple: a plain reddish-brown robe such as would have been worn by a man of comfortable middle-class, and a simple sleeveless black jerkin or waistcoat. He holds a quill pen in his right hand, and a sheet of paper in the other. It has often been noted that the mouth is open: does this indicate that the bust was modelled on a death-mask, or simply intended to represent the poet in the act of declaiming something he has just written? We can never be sure. Plainly the purpose of the bust was to give viewers an idea of a writer, a respectable citizen, and to give them some idea of his appearance as an individual.

The only other artwork which can with any certainty be described as an attempt to reproduce the likeness of Shakespeare in a form approved by those who knew him is the Droeshout engraving, in the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays, printed and published in 1623. Martin Droeshout, a Fleming like so many artists in London in Shakespeare's time, was only fifteen years old when Shakespeare died in 1616, so it is believed (among others, by M. H. Spielmann (1858–1948), the literary and art critic²¹) that when he came to make his engraving for the First Folio he must have copied an earlier picture, now lost. The Droeshout engraving is by any standard a crude piece of work. The costume details are vestigial and all that can be said of it as a portrait is that it must have satisfied John Heminges and Henry Condell, the editors, as a reasonable guide to what the dramatist looked like. Certainly the most characteristic feature of the Holy Trinity bust is present: the very high, domed forehead. There are nevertheless some curious points about this odd image, which is still the most commonly reproduced of the portraits which today help us to recognize a man who died four hundred years ago. One point is the slight swelling above the subject's left eye, which appears more strongly in the Chandos and Flower portraits (but not the bust), and which, it is claimed²², shows that Shakespeare suffered from Mikulicz syndrome, a disease of the tear glands. Another is the curious line which runs down the angle of the jaw, claimed by Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence²³ to show that the face in the portrait is in fact a mask, and one of many supposed proofs that Shakespeare's works were actually composed by Francis Bacon. The curious shape of the collar has also given rise to

comment. It has no similarity to any collar or ruff used at the time of Shakespeare, and one suggestion²⁴ is that it represents a shield in honour of the noble family of the Pembrokes, the dedicatees of the First Folio, who were connected with the Rosicrucian movement, again providing a connection with Bacon. Human imagination will never cease to find "proofs" of mysterious beliefs, and it is useless to speculate on their probability in the absence of more cogent evidence.

A number of portraits once thought to be close likenesses of Shakespeare have turned out to be copies, or copies of copies, of the Droeshout engraving. They repeat the motifs of high, domed forehead and cupid's-bow mouth. Such are the Flower portrait, clearly copied from it, and the Marshall engraving, which is simply a modified mirror-image. The Ely Palace and Felton portraits have little convincing documentary evidence to support them, and the Ashbourne portrait has been shown²⁵ to be a much altered portrait of someone else, probably the Earl of Oxford. The Janssen portrait, said to have been made in about 1610 by the sculptor of the funerary monument, is a fine painting, but apart from its having no very close resemblance to other more certain Shakespeare portraits, there is nothing to substantiate its history, especially the claim that it once belonged to Prince Rupert²⁶. There are, however, three paintings today which may have a claim to be true likenesses of Shakespeare made during his lifetime, although the circumstantial evidence is far from clear. These are the Chandos, Grafton and Sanders portraits.

The Chandos portrait (see Fig. 1) has been the subject of the most contradictory assertions. It has been ascribed to an English painter called John Taylor by some sources and by others said to have been painted by Richard Burbage, and passed to one of Shakespeare's fellow-actors, confusingly named Joseph Taylor²⁷. However, it is generally agreed that it came into the possession of the playwright Sir William Davenant, who was Shakespeare's godson (and, according to John Aubrey²⁸, claimed to be his illegitimate son) when he died in 1668. It later came to be owned by the Dukes of Chandos, and was the first acquisition of the National Portrait Gallery when it opened in 1856. Although it has the same forehead as other versions, and also a characteristically long upper lip, the lips are fuller, the hair and complexion are darker and



Fig. 1 The 'Chandos' Portrait (National Portrait Gallery)

this is altogether a more romantic, almost gypsy-style, Shakespeare. The general outline, bone structure and expression do not, however, contradict the features of the Droeshout engraving; it is true that the engraving gives Shakespeare a rather more bulbous forehead, but this could simply be due to lack of skill on the part of the engraver. Moreover, the Chandos portrait shows very clearly the slight deformity of the left eyelid already mentioned above in connection with Droeshout. There seems little doubt that the portrait as it now stands has been consider-

ably re-touched, names mentioned in connection with this being Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792) and Ozias Humphry (1742–1810)¹⁰, and the swarthinness and some other features could be ascribed to these alterations. In particular, the ear-ring which is so conspicuous in this painting may be a later addition¹¹. Whatever the truth about the history of this portrait, certain points are reasonably certain: (1) that it was painted during Shakespeare's lifetime, probably about 1610; (2) that it was produced by or for someone closely connected with Shakespeare's acting company; (3) it used to belong to Sir William Davenant, whose parents were close friends of William Shakespeare, who may just possibly have been Sir William's natural father; (4) it has for a very long time been regarded as a true painting of the dramatist. Further evidence may be forthcoming as a result of new tests being undertaken by the National Portrait Gallery (see below).

The Grafton and Sanders portraits are in a quite different class from the other works so far mentioned. They are both accompanied by uncertain legends but accepted as contemporary with the years of Shakespeare's youth, which they are claimed to portray. The Grafton portrait was found in Yorkshire in 1906 and is now in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester. It is known to have belonged at an earlier time to a family called Smith¹², who lived in the village of Grafton in Northamptonshire, close to Abington, where Shakespeare's granddaughter Elizabeth, who had inherited many of the drama-

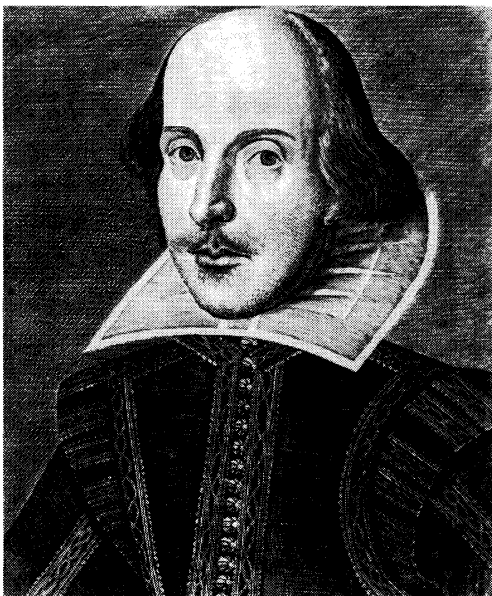


Fig. 2 The 'Droeshout' Portrait (First Folio) and the 'Grafton' Portrait (John Rylands Library, Univ. of Manchester)

tist's possessions, died¹³). It is in poor condition, but has been confirmed to be of the late sixteenth century. It shows a young man whose face and pose have a remarkable resemblance, allowing for age differences, to the Droeshout portrait (see the two side by side in Fig. 2), and bears the inscriptions "SUAE (i.e. "aetatis suae", "year of his age") 24" and "1588". On the back are the letters "W + S". Michael Wood gives some persuasive (and highly imaginative) reasons why we might accept this as a portrait of Shakespeare at twenty-four, just after he had joined Lord Strange's players:

"Having a portrait painted was the sort of thing you might do when you got the livery of a lord or were awarded a degree. For Shakespeare, entering the service of his first patron, Lord Strange, might have been such a moment. If the Grafton picture is indeed of him, it does no harm to suppose that, like any successful young Elizabethan man, he bought himself a nice doublet and had his picture painted to send back to the family. . . .the portrait does help us to imagine him at this point in his life and to get rid of the received image of Shakespeare as a balding middle-aged man in a ruff — an establishment figure."¹³

Perhaps Michael Wood's final comment is the best one to apply to the Grafton portrait in the present state of our knowledge: we cannot be sure of its authenticity, but it gives us an opportunity to think about what Shakespeare might have looked like as a young man. The Grafton and Chandos portraits are now under further investigation, using the latest scientific methods, in conjunction with a National Portrait Gallery Exhibition called *Searching for Shakespeare*, opening in March 2006, at which time the latest findings will be announced.

The Sanders portrait is, like the others described so far, on wooden panel, and shows a young man in a simple Elizabethan costume and with a lively, smiling face. It first came to the attention of Shakespeare scholars in 1908, when it was brought from Canada and shown to M. H. Spielmann, the critic mentioned above in connection with the Droeshout portrait. He dismissed it as heavily restored and claimed that the label describing the subject as Shakespeare at age 39 was almost certainly a fake¹⁴). Then

in May, 2001, a Canadian reporter, Stephanie Nolen, visited Lloyd Sullivan, the owner of the painting, who claims to be a descendant of John Sanders, the supposed painter, who was listed as a member of Shakespeare's company, the King's Men. The result of this meeting was a persuasively-written book by Nolen, *Shakespeare's Face*, which argued that this could be, as described on the label still attached to it, a portrait of Shakespeare in 1603, when he was 39. Research was subsequently done by the Canadian Conservation Institute, which was able to confirm that the painting appeared, by paint analysis and dendrochronology, to have been made at this period, but that there was no proof that it was really of Shakespeare¹⁵). At least five authorities have declared against the Shakespeare attribution, and much has been made of questions concerning the conveniently detailed label (the paper of which, however, could be of about 1600) and also of signs that at some time two inches have been cut from the edge of the painting, where the name of the subject or of the artist might have been written¹⁶). Others have claimed that the picture could be of Shakespeare's associate and sometime collaborator John Fletcher, who would have been 25 in 1603, and certainly the face in the Sanders portrait looks far more like 25 than 39. Comparison of the Sanders portrait with X-rays of an engraving of Fletcher make this new hypothesis look much more likely than the Shakespeare one. Perhaps one of the most telling arguments against the Sanders portrait being of Shakespeare is that the face does not resemble any of the other supposed images of the dramatist, all of which to various degrees bear some relation to the Janssen bust or the Droeshout engraving. In short, this claimant is a very interesting and attractive work, but cannot on the present evidence be said with any degree of certainty to have a connection with Shakespeare.

The original purpose of these early images of Shakespeare — as far as we can at present judge them to be genuine — must now be considered. The Janssen bust and the Droeshout engraving portray Shakespeare as his family and friends wanted him to be seen. The engraving, crudely enough, gives a bare likeness, and not a very clear one at that. The bust makes more of an effort to project his moral worth as a comfortable, middle-aged citizen who had made a success of his life by wielding pen on paper. If the Grafton and Sanders portraits should

turn out to be genuine — and given the differences between them it is perhaps unlikely that they are both genuine — then we can see them as likenesses of the dramatist as a young man, eager to celebrate his new career as player for a great lord (Grafton) or as a record of a theatre man in early middle age with a number of successes behind him and, one would say from the self-confident grin, expecting more successes in the future (Sanders). The real mystery is the Chandos portrait. If it was painted by Burbage or (more likely) by John Taylor, perhaps for Joseph Taylor, the actor who succeeded Richard Burbage in leading roles, then it may have been intended to portray Shakespeare as his fellow-actors would have wished to remember him. As Jane Martineau has said “To a present-day eye it is the most arresting and credible portrait, but the chance of finding positive proof of its identity is remote.”¹⁷ The many other versions, from adapted copies like the Flower portrait (mainly nineteenth century, but based on Droeshout) through the Janssen portrait (fine, contemporary, but with little resemblance or sufficient record of provenance to be seen as a candidate) to the palpably false (like the Ashbourne portrait, contemporary but faked up from a likeness of another man) — all these images represent romantic wish-fulfilment for a likeness of our foremost dramatist coupled, very largely in some cases, with a desire for financial gain from selling it to the gullible.

A final comment on the Droeshout version is furnished by William Blake’s *Imaginary Portrait of Shakespeare* (see Fig. 3), done in 1800–3 in tempera over ink on canvas as part of a series of pictures of famous writers by various artists to be hung in the library of his patron, William Hayley. It is now in the Manchester City Art Gallery. It is clearly a very close copy indeed of Droeshout, but the bust is gently wreathed in convolvulus and has the



Fig. 3 William Blake, *Imaginary Portrait of Shakespeare* (Manchester City Galleries)

addition of a slight, quite magical and enigmatic smile, almost a male equivalent of Leonardo’s smile for *La Gioconda*. It transforms the wooden Droeshout and makes it utterly human and completely believable; if only Droeshout had been as skilful in his “strife with Nature, to out-doo the Life”! For this present writer, the Blake version (and it comes from a man of quite unusual gifts of psychic penetration) is the one that may best convey both the character and the appearance of the real Shakespeare, even though this portrait is one of the least well known.

If we could finally establish the genuine images of Shakespeare, it would be very satisfying, but only an incurable romantic could imagine that such images would help us to understand anything more clearly about his work. Shakespeare himself said it: “There’s no art to find the mind’s construction in the face” (*Macbeth*, I. iv). To which Ben Jonson adds the final word; neither Droeshout nor any other artist can help us to understand Shakespeare himself, the man and playwright, as successfully as our reading of what the man wrote, and so:

“Reader, looke

Not on his Picture, but his Booke.”

2. Statues of Shakespeare

Statues have in general a rather different purpose from painted portraits. Whereas the latter are by their size and nature indoor objects, intended for the fairly intimate contemplation of individuals or small groups of individuals, statues are commonly in the open air or in large buildings like cathedrals, can be seen by many people at the same time, and have an altogether more ceremonial character. The Holy Trinity bust of Shakespeare can be seen as occupying a mid-position between the intimacy of a painting and the public and celebratory nature of a statue.

Almost a hundred and thirty years had elapsed from Shakespeare’s death before a full-sized statue of him appeared. A monument to the dramatist was commissioned by a group of public figures including Lord Burlington, the poet Alexander Pope, and the architect William Kent, who designed the monument. The statue itself was sculpted by the Flemish artist Peter Scheemakers (1691–1781) and unveiled in 1741. This was probably the first sculpture to be copied from the Chandos portrait, which

was coming to be known and widely accepted as authentic. Shakespeare is portrayed standing beside a short column topped with books, against which the dramatist rests his elbow. With his other hand he points to a scroll on which are quoted the famous “cloud-capp’d towers” lines from *The Tempest*. He is shown wearing an eighteenth-century idea of seventeenth-century costume. The monument was described as “preposterous” by Horace Walpole, chiefly on account of the decoration of the column, which was not done by Scheemakers, and portrays three heads, said to be of Queen Elizabeth I, Henry V and Richard III. As with some of the portraits, this statue has been used as a support for the Baconian Theory, much being made of the fact that the figure’s finger points to the word “Temples”, a supposed reference to Bacon’s association with Freemasonry, and that the number of letters on the scroll adds up to a number with significance for the Rosicrucians¹⁾. The making of this statue may be seen as a high point in a campaign for the apotheosis of Shakespeare led by the actor David Garrick, who in 1758 had a similar life-size statue made by the celebrated French sculptor Louis-François Roubiliac (1702–1762), and installed in a “Shakespeare Temple” designed by Robert Adam in the garden of his villa by the river at Hampton-on-Thames. Jane Martineau describes how “visitors were provided with chairs to contemplate the temple while tea was served.”²⁾ A painting of this temple, with Mr and Mrs Garrick standing in front of it, was made by Zoffany in 1762. The statue was later moved to The British Library in London, but in 1998 a replica was made and placed in the temple, which had been restored and is now open to the public. Roubiliac made other statues and busts of Shakespeare, including a gilt bronze bust, now in the Garrick Club in London, known as the Davenant bust after the old name of the Chandos portrait, on which it is modelled.

After the mid-eighteenth century statues of Shakespeare multiplied rapidly. One of the most spectacular is that by the amateur sculptor Lord Ronald Gower (1845–1916) who in 1888 presented the town of Stratford-upon-Avon with a large bronze statue of Shakespeare seated, flanked by figures representing Prince Hal, Hamlet, Falstaff and Lady Macbeth, symbolizing History, Philosophy, Comedy and Tragedy. Other versions of this statue, with the other figures integrated into the main monument, exist in

maquette form. Other Shakespeare statues of importance include that by Hamo Thornycroft (1850–1925) on the Royal Albert Memorial in Hyde Park, London. This, like a number of other statues in London and elsewhere, uses the Chandos portrait as its model.

As stated at the beginning of this section, the Shakespeare statues, which are very numerous, are celebratory artworks. Their purpose is chiefly to commemorate Shakespeare the man, although such items as the group by Gower also glorify his works. It is interesting how many of them are based on the Chandos portrait, and this may have helped to establish that painting in the public mind as an authentic image of the dramatist.

3. Paintings of Shakespeare Plays on Stage

The drama of Shakespeare’s day used, for the first time in English history, substantial, permanent, purpose-built theatres and troops of professional actors, performing plays on a wide range of themes from history, legend and simple domestic situations familiar to the audience, all conceived primarily as entertainment, without the moralistic element which had prevailed in the attenuated dramatic activities of the Middle Ages. The stages, settings, devices such as trapdoors and fireworks to enhance dramatic effects, the costumes and the style of acting, had all evolved, often without anything to provide a precedent, in a few short years. We can have little idea of what these plays must have looked like in performance beyond what we know of the theatres (happily revived for us in such reconstructions as Shakespeare’s Globe on the South Bank of the Thames in London), and occasional comments in contemporary writings such as Simon Forman’s notes on the performances he watched of *Macbeth*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s Tale* and *Richard II*¹⁾. To which we must add, of course, such universally-known items as Hamlet’s advice to the actors at Elsinore. Otherwise there is very little evidence.

However, a vestigial item from the visual arts has come to light. It is the sketch by Henry Peacham of a scene, or perhaps simply of characters, from *Titus Andronicus*, of uncertain date, but possibly 1605²⁾. This shows a variety of costumes, some apparently attempts to reproduce Roman garb, such as the toga worn by Titus, while Tamora, shown pleading for her sons, and the figures representing

soldiers, wear Elizabethan costume. This suggests that there may have been some attempt to create a suitable atmosphere for the suspension of the viewer's disbelief, but that it may also have been rather perfunctory.

Theatre did not completely disappear from England with the triumph of the Puritan Parliament over the Royalists; private performances seem to have continued at great houses. When the theatres reopened officially after the Restoration of King Charles II, there were many changes from the time of Shakespeare. There was a more modern general shape and disposition of theatre buildings, with a large stage at one end, separated physically and psychologically from the audience (though nobles were still allowed to sit on the stage, as in Elizabethan times). There were elaborate provisions for scenery, using backdrops and flats, and sometimes it was possible to make spectacular effects, including ships apparently at sea firing guns at each other, such as those prepared for Elkanah Settle's *Empress of Morocco* in 1673, at the theatre in Dorset Gardens in London, shown in a woodcut illustration reproduced on the Wikipedia website for the "Restoration Spectacular"³¹. We know that by degrees women came to take over the playing of women's parts on the stage. But we know little about how Shakespeare was performed, as far as he was performed at all. Samuel Pepys perhaps reflected the change in taste when he described *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* as "the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life" (*Diary* for September 29, 1662). A few paintings were made of famous actors, including one from the school of Sir Godfrey Kneller of Thomas Betterton in the 1690s, now in the National Portrait Gallery. Betterton was a great performer, known especially for his skill in the part of Hamlet, recorded in a reminiscence by Colley Cibber (1671–1757), which is one of the earliest extant pieces of serious theatrical criticism⁴. An engraving showing Betterton as Hamlet appears as the frontispiece of Nicholas Rowe's edition of Shakespeare of 1709. It has been claimed by Christopher Baugh⁵ that the overturned chair in this picture represents a piece of stage business which had been passed down to Betterton from actors earlier in the seventeenth century who had watched the play performed by Burbage. Baugh also describes how other engravings in the Rowe edition show details of the rather rudimentary scene-shifting abilities of the late post-Restoration stage.

With the advent of the eighteenth century, three things combined to restore and increase the prominence of Shakespeare. One was a process of revival of his plays, often in greatly adapted versions, by Colley Cibber and others. Some of these versions were virtual rewrites of the plays: Nahum Tate completely changed the end of *King Lear* to preserve Lear and Cordelia in a happy ending, while even the greatest and perhaps most talented actor-devotee of Shakespeare, David Garrick, acted *Macbeth* in a version which included a dying speech by Macbeth, written by Garrick himself⁶. But even these garbled versions helped to foster an interest in and admiration for the dramatist and in due course something more like the original versions reasserted themselves. Another important matter was the development of the cult of the actor. Garrick, Kemble, Macklin, Mrs Cibber and others became household names and drew huge audiences from all classes of society to their performances. The third, and from our point of view most important thing was the appearance of paintings and prints of these famous actors and actresses, in many cases showing them on stage and designed to preserve for all time some idea of their peculiar abilities.

One of the earliest full-scale paintings of a Shakespeare play being performed is by William Hogarth (1697–1764), *Falstaff Examining His Troops, 2 Henry IV, III. ii*, now in a private collection. It shows an actor named John Harper in the role of Falstaff, seated at a table in Justice Shallow's house, interviewing potential recruits for the army he is forming to fight the rebels. However, he is accepting bribes and admitting some very weak-looking men instead of the slightly stronger ones standing behind him. As usual with Hogarth, the picture contains many hints and symbols attacking the contemporary prevalence of bribery, and Elizabeth Einberg has suggested that this painting is specifically an attack on Robert Walpole, the Prime Minister⁷. This makes the painting of additional interest as an early example of a scene from Shakespeare being used for satirical purposes. In Part 4 of this paper we shall consider another celebrated example from the eighteenth century, an engraving by James Gillray.

David Garrick (1717–1779) has already been mentioned in connection with the shrine to Shakespeare which he had built in the garden of his villa at Hampton. He was perhaps responsible more than anyone else for the re-

vival and enhancement of Shakespeare as the pre-eminent English dramatist. He was Samuel Johnson's first pupil at his little school near Lichfield, and accompanied him to London, intending to work in the wine trade, but was soon involved in literary circles as a result of his association with Johnson and became by degrees the greatest actor England had seen since Richard Burbage. His likeness, both on and offstage, was painted by most of the famous painters in England during his time. One of the earliest of these, by Benjamin Wilson (1721–1788) is by no means the best but of great interest for what it depicts of the way Shakespeare was performed at this time. It shows Garrick as Romeo and George Anne Bellamy⁸⁾ (1728–1788) as Juliet in the 1748 adaptation of the play by Garrick, in which Rosaline, Romeo's first love, is dropped completely and the last scene in the tomb is extended by a brief passage (by Garrick) in which Juliet recovers consciousness before Romeo dies, but after he has taken the poison, leading to a poignant exchange between the lovers before the collapse of Romeo and subsequent suicide of Juliet. This version was greatly admired at the time, though it was Garrick himself who later campaigned so strongly for more faithful renderings of Shakespeare's texts. This picture (now in the Victoria and Albert Museum) shows a performance in 1757 at the Drury Lane theatre; at that time a rival version with Spranger Barry and Mrs Cibber was being shown at Covent Garden (see below). We see the moment when Juliet wakes up and Romeo, filled with joy, momentarily forgets that he has just taken a fatal draught. The painting also shows some of the scenery and how it was arranged on the stage. Desmond Shawe-Taylor has explained how the wings at the sides have been slid together across the middle of the stage, terminating in a pair of doors which have been opened to show the inner stage and backdrop representing Juliet's tomb⁹⁾.

Another useful guide to the stage practices of the early Garrick era is a painting by Johann Zoffany (1733–1810). Zoffany, whose real name was Johannes Zauffaly, came to England from Germany and spent most of his life painting for English patrons, including the Royal Family. He is a lively and appealing artist, with a keen sense of the taste of society; his conversation pieces and family groups reflect the eighteenth century "quality" as they wished to see themselves. He saw that Garrick, although



Fig. 4 Zoffany, *David Garrick as Macbeth and Hannah Pritchard as Lady Macbeth* (Garrick Club, London)

small in stature, had tremendous stage presence and was able to give of his best when with certain other cast members. This is why his *David Garrick as Macbeth and Hannah Pritchard as Lady Macbeth* (*Macbeth*, II. ii) (Garrick Club) is such an important work. It conveys both Garrick's small size (he was shorter than the lady) and the power and presence of the agitated intensity of his acting, matched by the calm and concentration of Mrs Pritchard. Fortunately, a description of this very scene as witnessed by a member of the audience has come down to us and can be read as we consider Zoffany's painting (see Fig. 4):

"The representation of this terrible part of the play, by Garrick and Mrs Pritchard, can no more be described than I believe it can be equalled. I will not separate these performers, for the merits of both were transcendent. His distraction of mind and agonizing horrors were finely contrasted by her seeming apathy, tranquillity and confidence. . . . You heard what they spoke, but you learned more from the agitation of mind displayed in their action and deportment. . . . The wonderful expression of heartfelt horror, which Garrick felt when he shewed his bloody hands, can only be conceived and described by those who saw him!"¹⁰⁾

This painting shows the staging used at the time (probably 1768, when Mrs Pritchard retired and Garrick terminated his performances in the role of Macbeth). The costumes are those of the eighteenth century; Garrick wears

the kind of short wig and embroidered waistcoat that any fashionable gentleman would have worn in the streets of London, and Mrs Pritchard has a long gown and fashionable contemporary décolleté. This may not have been a matter of carelessness or for reasons of economy; old plays which were nonetheless considered “modern” in tone and relevance (and *Macbeth* is surely always relevant) were commonly performed without any concessions to historical accuracy. Desmond Shawe-Taylor has pointed out that “the scenery would probably not have been specially painted for the production”¹¹¹, and that the carving of a king resembling Duncan on the lower panel of the door on the left may have been added by Zoffany for effect. Only a few years after this painting was done, Garrick was to begin his long and important association with the Alsatian painter and designer, Philippe-Jacques de Louthembourg, which would revolutionize stage scenery.

Garrick’s fame was celebrated by many other artists. William Hogarth painted him (1745) in the role of his first great success, Richard III, showing him leaning back against a day-bed making a characteristically dramatic gesture. The painting is now in the Walker Gallery, Liverpool. A much older and stouter Garrick appears in the same role, and indeed in the same costume, in a painting of 1771, by Nathaniel Dance (Stratford Town Hall). Here, however, the pose is quite different; Richard has a sword in his hand at the Battle of Bosworth, in a heroic pose derived, as has been shown, from a sketch by Leonardo in his *Trattato della Pittura*. Dance’s exercise in the Sublime became famous through a mezzotint of it by Dixon, and Garrick used to give copies of this to admirers¹².

Sir Joshua Reynolds made many portraits of Garrick, but they are mainly plain portraits, not portraits “in character”; perhaps the most famous, though it does not strictly concern us here, is the ambitious work of 1760–1 of *Garrick Between Tragedy and Comedy* (private collection), in which the actor stands with a playful female figure representing Comedy on his right while he turns with a humorously self-deprecating expression to a solemn woman pointing upward, who represents Tragedy.

Other actors of the eighteenth century may not have had quite the fame or attracted the attention of so many artists as Garrick, but pictures of them do give us important hints as to how the plays were performed and what

styles of acting appealed to the public taste. In Garrick’s early career, the only actor to be his serious rival in the great tragic roles like Hamlet and Romeo was Spranger Barry (1719–1777), who now seems almost completely forgotten. He was a very handsome man and had the advantage of great height, while Garrick was shorter and had to work harder at developing stage presence, especially for romantic parts. At one time, as described above, both actors were playing in *Romeo and Juliet* at different theatres in London, and Barry’s performance was preferred by many critics to Garrick’s¹³. However, in their impersonations of King Lear, it was said that Barry was “every inch a king” while Garrick was “every inch King Lear”¹⁴. Garrick’s earlier jealousy of Barry seems to have mellowed as his own pre-eminence emerged, and later Barry acted under Garrick’s management, achieving immense success as Othello in 1767. A painting by Francis Hayman (1708–1776) (Garrick Club) shows Barry as Hamlet, playing opposite Mrs Mary Elmy as Gertrude in Act III. iv. Hayman has caught his handsome features and his height, and it is interesting to note that as late as 1755 – 60, when this painting was made, a young man’s part like this could still be played in a full-bottomed wig with a double queue. A very different style of actor and part is shown by Zoffany in a famous portrait of Charles Macklin (1699–1797) (Maugham Collection) in the role of Shylock in about 1768. This was the part he had made famous at Drury Lane in 1741, the year of Garrick’s debut as Richard III. He wears his Jewish gaberdine — an early attempt to clothe an actor in something like a faithful imitation of the costume of the character instead of contemporary garb — with the collar awry as a result of his shock at discovering the elopement of Jessica. The sorrow-twisted face and angrily clenched fists, the pose of outstretched arms as if to invite the whole world to pity his situation, this ability to successfully project several conflicting passions at the same time was one of Macklin’s great gifts, and has been with equal success captured by Zoffany. Macklin’s performance of this scene (*The Merchant of Venice* Act III. ii) has been described by the enthusiastic and perceptive German spectator Georg Christian Lichtenberg in his *Briefe*¹⁵.

Macklin and Garrick were the two greatest figures in the development of what came to be called “naturalistic acting” in the mid-eighteenth century. In reality this de-

pended on careful and exact preparation of mime and gesture to produce an illusion of naturalness. Today, used as we are to ever-more realistic types of acting (not necessarily suited to Shakespeare), from Stanislavsky in the Moscow Art Theatre of the 1900s to the American “method acting” of James Dean for the cinema, we would probably not find Garrick’s style particularly “natural”. However, it was a welcome replacement for the more static and declamatory, formal style of diction and stage deportment which had been the rule in the time of Betterton. This no doubt impressive but openly artificial style, concentrating on the text, in which an actor strove to “preserve this medium, between mouthing and meaning too little, to keep the Attention more pleasingly awake by a temper’d Spirit than by mere Vehemence of Voice”¹⁶⁾ gave way to a style in which much more was made of actions, completely attuned to the words, as witness Lichtenberg’s account of Garrick in *Hamlet* in 1774:

“In the excellent soliloquy: ‘O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt,’ &c., . . . the last of the words ‘So excellent a King’, is utterly lost; one catches it only from the movement of the mouth, which quivers and then shuts tightly afterwards, so as to restrain the all too distinct expression of grief on the lips, which could easily tremble with unmanly emotion. . . . At the end of the soliloquy, his grief is mingled with righteous anger, and on one occasion, when he brings his arm down sharply in a single movement, so as to lend emphasis to one word of invective, his voice is choked with emotion, when the audience is not expecting it, and he can only bring out this word after some moments amidst his tears. At this point I and my neighbour, to whom I had as yet not uttered a word, looked at each other and spoke. It was quite irresistible.”¹⁷⁾

The intense emotion displayed in the naturalistic style of acting can also be seen in paintings of another great tragic actor of the later eighteenth century, said to have rivalled Garrick in *Hamlet* and to have been unsurpassed in *Coriolanus*: John Philip Kemble (1757–1823). Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769–1830) made two excellent paintings of Kemble in these parts, one of *Coriolanus* in 1798, the other of *Hamlet* three years later. Both these portraits

have a decidedly Gothick feel about them, The former (Guildhall) shows *Coriolanus* standing with the fires of war burning behind him, the other (Tate) has *Hamlet* holding Yorick’s skull while the towers and spires of *Elsinore* in the background are lit up by a lurid light from behind. Both the heroes are clothed in deepest black, *Coriolanus* in a toga and *Hamlet* in court mourning. Their expressions, both spotlighted as if in an actual stage performance, show contrasting emotions, that of *Coriolanus* being energetically fierce, and that of *Hamlet* with eyes looking up and an air of solemn resignation. These pictures, like those by Fuseli which we shall discuss later, show a new aspect of Shakespeare-related art being developed, in which a Romantic attachment to strong emotions and situations ranging from violent or sinister at one extreme to quaint and picturesque at the other, is beginning to use the stories of Shakespeare as a *point de départ*. Lawrence, however, is still firmly in the camp of those who wish to paint with the emphasis on a famous actor rather than on Shakespeare. This is still really an eighteenth-century preoccupation, in which the author is seen as a vehicle for the actor rather than the other way round. The *Coriolanus* painting was turned into a highly successful print, which sold as briskly as photographs of pop idols do today.

The Kemble family was numerous and provided many notable actors and actresses who dominated the London stage between 1776 (when Garrick died) and 1814 (when Edmund Kean appeared). They were famous for their stately and haughty style of acting which is well shown in the painting of 1817 by Henry Harlow (1787–1819) which has four members playing key roles in the scene from *King Henry VIII*, II. iv (Royal Shakespeare) of the trial of Queen Katherine before Wolsey. The ageing John Philip Kemble himself plays the cardinal, while his younger brothers impersonate the King and Thomas Cromwell and his sister, the redoubtable Sarah Siddons (1775–1831), the Queen. It seems that the painting does not represent an actual performance, as Mrs Siddons gave her last performance on the London stage in 1812. Harlow was not a particularly brilliant artist, but his painting, besides showing the continuing cult of great actors and actresses, especially Shakespearean ones, probably depicts faithfully the kind of elaborate and as far as possible historically accurate sets and costumes now demanded by increasingly sophisticated audiences.

The advent of Edmund Kean (1787–1833) saw Shakespearean acting take a further step towards the use of gesture and voice to extract the emotional content from the text and situations of the play. It has been said that Kean had a narrow range but that “no one except David Garrick was so successful in so many great roles . . . (Kean) had no true talent for comedy, but in the expression of biting and saturnine wit, of grim and ghostly gaiety, he was unsurpassed.”¹⁸ Kean was one of the first subjects of a series of prints which developed into a new kind of popular art — the toy theatre. It had its origin in small prints of theatrical figures, including representations of famous actors, originated by Martin Skelt and John Kilby Green in the early years of the nineteenth century¹⁹. These were intended for children as a pleasurable introduction to theatre entertainment, and some of the earliest of these prints, by Skelt, show Edmund Kean in the roles of Richard III, Othello and Brutus in *Julius Caesar*. These prints were issued in two versions, one in black-and-white and one hand-coloured: “penny plain and twopence coloured”. In due course they were supplemented by simple playscripts and scenery and children could use these for showing plays, cutting out the figures from the paper with scissors (after colouring them if desired) and moving them on- and off-stage on metal slides. In a third stage of development, small wooden theatres were made to go with the prints of the characters. The toy theatre had its heyday in Victorian times; it still exists in the form of Pollock’s Toy Theatres, one of the earliest toy theatre firms, which still has a shop and museum in London²⁰. The present writer recalls having played with one of these toy theatres with modern reproductions of some of the earliest prints and scripts, for plays such as “Green’s Juvenile Drama *The Silver Palace, or The Golden Poppy*” along with more recent material, including a set of photographed figures and sets showing Sir Laurence Olivier in a drastically abridged version of the film *Hamlet*. The texts and figures of some of the early toy theatre plays (including Shakespeare) are still available from Pollock’s (see Fig. 5).

Kean and his contemporary actor William Charles Macready (1793–1873) greatly advanced the trend to have Shakespeare presented in the original text, pruned of additions by Colley Cibber, Nahum Tate and even Garrick. Macready also insisted on the importance of adequate re-



Fig. 5 “Green’s Characters and Scenes in *Richard III*” (Pollock’s Toy Theatres)

hearsals, though whether his advocacy of strategic pauses in delivery, sometimes known as “Macready pauses” was really intended as a way of concealing lapses of memory, is uncertain. It is unfortunate that there are few portraits of Macready; but an interesting proof of his readiness to experiment is to be seen in a portrait (1838–39) (NPG), by Daniel Maclise (1806–1870) of Priscilla Horton in the role of Ariel in Macready’s *The Tempest*, in which she played with Macready himself as Prospero. She had in the previous season played the Fool in *King Lear*, also directed by Macready. It had not been common for women to act male Shakespearean roles, though a hundred years earlier Charlotte Charke (1713–1760) had acted as Rodrigo in *Othello*²¹. In 1840, Madame Vestris appeared as Oberon in her own production of *A Midsummer-Night’s Dream*, but there seem to be no paintings of this remarkable lady in costume, though a watercolour portrait by Samuel Lover is at the National Portrait Gallery.

The day of the theatrical painting was coming to a close. After the early Victorian period, artists seem to have lost interest in this subject, and it was replaced, where Shakespeare was concerned, by paintings of scenes from the plays set in natural, non-theatrical surroundings and intended to bring out the character of the play rather than that of the actors. The only notable paintings of actors of the late nineteenth century are the famous one of Ellen Terry by John Singer Sargent (1856–1823) (Tate), playing Lady Macbeth and bizarrely setting a crown on her own head (1889), and by James Archer (1823–1904) (private collection) of Sir Henry Irving playing Macbeth, standing behind a curtain clutching a dagger, in 1875.

Theatrical painting is of great value in showing us what people at different times thought about Shakespeare and changing styles of staging and acting his works. The developments in stage scenery, the role of costume, and the fact that till late in the eighteenth century Shakespeare plays were still mainly being performed in contemporary dress are all apparent from the evidence supplied by these paintings. It is also clear that in the eighteenth century the actors themselves were a major focus of interest for the audience, who until the time of Garrick were content to see versions of Shakespeare's plays which had been substantially altered — and usually sentimentalized — by Cibber, Tate and others, both to suit public taste and to give the actors a wider scope for showing their diverse skills. This cult of personality even extended to the appearance of prints for children and toy theatres where they could show short plays “acted” by cut-out figures of famous actors. Garrick, and later Kean and Macready, brought more discipline to the Shakespearean stage, reverting to the original texts and demanding more rigorous training for actors so as to raise the general standard of performance. Some of their innovations, especially in the wedding of action to word, went hand-in-hand with the emerging Romantic movement and its belief in the primacy of emotion, and it is this which may in the end have been responsible for the swing away from paintings of actors to paintings of episodes. As we shall see, scenes of mystery, violence, or the imaginary world of the fairies were easier to represent without reference to the stage, which has constraints imposed by space and the limited capacity of stage effects.

4. Imaginative Artworks Inspired by Shakespeare

The paintings we have looked at so far are all directly based on the idea of stage performances of Shakespeare plays. Their purpose was usually to show a particular actor or actress in a characteristic pose and thus to enhance and perpetuate his or her reputation. They can be said to be actor-inspired rather than Shakespeare-inspired. However, throughout the period since Shakespeare's death, there have been other paintings inspired by Shakespeare, intended either to glorify the poet himself or to exercise the imagination over scenes from his plays. Many of them treat scenes with fairies, or grotesque elements (such as

Bottom wearing the ass's head) which lend themselves to imaginative treatment but, for obvious reasons, do not appear so often in theatrical paintings. The field is vast; following is a selection of works and artists within our period that use Shakespearean themes to appeal to the imagination.

Garrick and the Shakespeare Revival: Garrick's efforts towards the revival and enhancement of appreciation of Shakespeare in England gave rise to a number of pictures, from high art to scurrilous broadsides, illustrating the ceremonies and other aspects of this phenomenon. In September 1769 Garrick presided over a great celebratory apotheosis of Shakespeare at Stratford; this has been fancifully recorded in a stipple engraving after a lost painting by the American painter Robert Edge Pine (1710–1788), who made a number of portraits of Garrick, who was his friend. The engraving shows Garrick surrounded by Shakespearean characters and in front of what appears to be the Westminster Abbey statue transferred to a vast Roman temple (this was probably the temporary structure erected at Stratford for the occasion, as described by James Boswell in a letter to the London Magazine in September, 1769). In the event, appalling weather marred the proceedings at Stratford, but the following year Garrick conducted a ceremony and read an ode at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, at which Shakespeare was reverently described as “The Bard” and “the patron saint” of the theatre¹⁾.

Further celebrations of a semi-deified Shakespeare were held in succeeding years, not ending with Garrick's death in 1779, and culminating when Boydell's Gallery was opened in London in 1789²⁾, exhibiting a number of paintings in the highest and sublime style by Reynolds, Benjamin West, Fuseli, Joseph Wright and others, which had been commissioned by John Boydell (1719–1804), a print-publisher. The idea was to finance the project by sales of prints of the paintings to subscribers, an original scheme, but it failed because the conditions of the time (especially the war with France) reduced public interest. In the end, after many years of fame but not financial success, the Gallery was closed in 1805, just after Boydell's death, and the paintings were dispersed. The Gallery's chief claim to fame, or notoriety, is the satirical etching made by James Gillray (1757–1815) in 1789 portraying Boydell as a greedy opportunist. This etching,

which was finished in watercolours, was called *Shakespeare Sacrificed — or the Offering to Avarice*, and depicts a leering Boydell standing in an attitude of devotion in front of a grotesque dwarf representing Greed, who sits with his moneybags on the top edge of a huge book containing a “List of Subscribers”, behind a bonfire of Shakespeare’s plays and surrounded by ingenious caricatures of some of the paintings exhibited in the Gallery. This is often considered one of Gillray’s greatest works, though his characterization of Boydell as a money-grubber was almost certainly unfair³.

Among the works connected with Boydell’s Gallery, three worth special mention are by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), Joseph Wright of Derby (1734–1797), and Henry Fuseli (1741–1825). The Reynolds, *Puck, or Robin Goodfellow*, is one of the few paintings by this artist based on a subject from Shakespeare. Robin Hamlyn has pointed out⁴ that Reynolds was not at his best in narrative material, being essentially a portraitist, and the comparative success of *Puck* is that it is essentially a portrait of a baby, whose sylvan setting, pointed ears, and right hand clutching a bunch of the flowers known as “love-idleness”, are the only signs of his identity. *Puck* was not very well received; one critic described it as “the portrait of a foetus”. The Wright painting is *The Tomb Scene: Juliet with the dead Romeo*; this is one of his celebrated “candlelight paintings”, in which a predominantly dark canvas is lit up at crucial points by light from an unseen source, in this case perhaps coming through the open door of the tomb and belonging to the torches carried by the watch, alarmed by Friar Lawrence. This provides the impetus for Juliet’s hasty suicide, and in the painting her right hand can be dimly seen gripping Romeo’s dagger. Boydell was apparently not satisfied with this picture, which was in the end not exhibited at his Gallery, but at the Royal Academy, in 1790. It is now in the Derby Museum. The Fuseli painting, *Titania Embracing Bottom*, will be discussed later, when we examine fairy-painting.

The Idea of the Sublime: From the middle of the eighteenth century, a number of fresh ideas in art and literature began to appear. They became important elements in the Romantic movement, and included a growing interest in the “Sublime”, objects, places or events endowed with a grandeur which would fill the individual with awe and fear. This idea was not entirely new — the Sublime had

appeared in Greek criticism in the first century — but its application to the visual arts, especially through the depiction of fantastic and grotesque subjects, was an innovation, possibly fuelled by the Industrial Revolution, with its extreme energy and sense of limitless power.

One of the earliest and most successful explorers of this theme in art was the Swiss painter Johann Heinrich Füssli (1741–1825), who changed his name to Henry Fuseli. He settled in England in 1764, met Reynolds, and on his advice went to study the arts in Italy before returning to England, where he became an important member of the Royal Academy. His paintings, often executed with a small range of colours, predominantly highly contrasted shades of black, white and yellow, often had sinister and mysterious themes; one of the most famous, *The Nightmare*, shows a young woman experiencing a troubling erotic dream. He has recently attracted attention as a precursor of Surrealism. He is of interest to us here because many of his paintings are on Shakespearean themes, often tragic or horrific, and concerned with *Macbeth*. Of his paintings about this play, the most famous is that of *The Weird Sisters*, now in the possession of the Kunsthhaus, Zürich. Maria Grazia Messina describes it in her contribution to *Shakespeare in Art*:

“With a touch of genius, Fuseli isolates the heads of the witches, each seen in profile and each repeating the same gesture and expression — a device -derived ultimately from the Sublime — that conveys a terrifying solemnity, at the same time as it embodies Shakespeare’s line ‘each at once her choppy finger laying upon her skinny lips.’”⁵

In *Lady Macbeth Seizing the Daggers, Macbeth, II. i* (1812) (Tate), Fuseli takes precisely the subject of the Zoffany painting described in Part 3. This may be a remake by Fuseli of his own watercolour of Garrick and Mrs Pritchard done long earlier, in 1766. His approach, with its emphasis on terror, could hardly be different from Zoffany’s, which was described by a critic as “a cook and a butler quarrelling over a kitchen knife.”⁶ Hardly inferior to the “daggers” painting is Fuseli’s pen-and-gouache study, also in the Kunsthhaus, Zürich, *The Witches Show Macbeth Banquo’s Descendants*, (c. 1773–79), in which the chief figure is an almost nude Macbeth depicted as a

powerful and muscular young man in a heroic pose. This picture also shows the essence of the Sublime. The unconventional presentation of Shakespeare's characters is repeated in Fuseli's painting *Lady Macbeth* of 1784 (Louvre), where the Lady is shown as an attractive young woman in a yellow shift with a ghastly expression and a lighted candle, walking along a dark corridor with one hand pointing menacingly upward, watched with fascination by the Doctor and Gentlewoman from a dim background.

Fuseli was one of the few close and trusted friends of William Blake (1757–1827), who describes him in his *Foes and Friends* as “the only man that e'er I knew, Who did not make me almost spew.” His influence on Blake was considerable: apart from general considerations of style and meticulous line-drawing, there are such points in common as the drastic foreshortening of some of the figures (for example, that of Hotspur in Fuseli's *The Dispute Between Hotspur, Glendower, Mortimer and Worcester, I Henry IV, III. i* (Birmingham Museums) and of the angel in Blake's *Pity* (Tate), a watercolour intended to illustrate *Macbeth* Act I. vii: “And pity, like a naked new-born babe, Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim hors'd Upon the sightless couriers of the air” . . .), and the tendency to portray villains as handsome and muscular men as in Blake's *Richard III and the Ghosts, Richard III, V. iii*, (1806) (British Museum), which has a certain resemblance in layout and figuration to Fuseli's *The Witches Showing Macbeth Banquo's Descendants*, already men-

tioned (the finest example is, of course, Blake's *Satan Arousing the Rebel Angels*, from his illustrations to *Paradise Lost*, 1808. This also has some of the extreme foreshortening referred to above).

Blake did a number of pictures with a view to submitting some to Boydell's Shakespeare Museum but in the end nothing came of the project. Others were done as extra illustrations for a volume of Shakespeare plays owned by Rev. Joseph Thomas. All are quite small, but conceived on the largest scale, as so often with Blake and in keeping with his dedication to the Sublime.

John Martin (1789–1854) was perhaps the most important of the later painters of the Sublime in the Romantic tradition. His scenes of great catastrophes and apocalyptic events such as the Fall of Babylon and the End of the World, as in *Great Day of His Wrath* (1852), are now becoming better known after an oblivion of more than a century. His *Macbeth, Banquo and the Three Witches* (1820), now in the National Gallery of Scotland, is a small version of a very large picture, now lost. It is in the same tradition of paintings by him showing diminutive human beings lost in vast, tormented landscapes of which the best known is *Sadak in Search of the Waters of Oblivion* (c. 1812), now in the Southampton City Art Gallery. In the *Macbeth* picture (see Fig. 6), a tiny Thane of Glamis and Banquo, wearing anachronistic Highland garb, stand in a huge, barren, mountainous landscape wreathed in swirling clouds, resembling a science-fiction idea of the planet Mercury, while the three witches can be indis-



Fig. 6 John Martin, *Macbeth, Banquo and the Three Witches* (National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh)

tinctly seen performing an aerial dance on the left, and the victorious Scots army disappears on the right. This must be one of the most compelling Shakespearean landscapes ever painted, and for sheer space and wide perspective it is unrivalled until John Brett's high-viewpoint landscapes like *The Norman Archipelago* (1885).

History, Comedy, Romance and Tragedy: Paintings showing historical, amusing, romantic or tragic scenes treated by Shakespeare have naturally appeared frequently since his time, and sometimes it is difficult to decide whether Shakespeare is in fact involved at all, especially in historical painting. Henry A. Payne's famous depiction of *The Plucking of the Red and White Roses in the Temple Gardens* (now in the Birmingham City Art Galleries) has from the beginning been associated with Shakespeare's *I Henry VI*, II. iv. However, Sir John Millais' *The Princes in the Tower* (Royal Holloway) is unlikely to refer to Shakespeare's *Richard III*, because although the two princes (little King Edward V and his brother the Duke of York) appear in the play, there is no scene of them alone in the Tower as depicted in the painting. Both these painters are Victorians, but Shakespearean history plays had been a source of imaginative paintings in England from much earlier. One of the most striking is by Francis Wheatley (1747–1801) and is of *The Death of Richard II*. This painting, now at Rochester University, New York, was executed in 1792–3 as part of a series by sixty painters intended for conversion into prints to be used in an edition of David Hume's *History of England* — an undertaking inspired by Boydell's Gallery⁷, like which this undertaking eventually failed because of the economic situation. However, some paintings intended for the project have survived, including this one. Wheatley departs from Hume's text, which ascribes Richard's death to starvation, and shows him as depicted in Shakespeare's play, just as he has struck down two of the assassins brought by Sir Piers of Exton, who is about to attack him from behind. The precise moment seems to be the one where Richard says "Go thou, and fill another room in Hell!" (Act V. v). The composition, with the yellow-clad Richard in the middle energetically wielding an axe while the murderers in armour emerge from the darkness around him, is highly dramatic and romantic; although not well known, this must be one of Wheatley's best paintings. He also did several theatrical paintings of Shakespeare plays,

including a droll but memorable one of the duel between Viola and Sir Andrew in *Twelfth Night*.

Of the other painters of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the most prolific illustrator of Shakespeare histories was James Northcote (1746–1831), whose most famous work (now destroyed) was *The Murder of the Princes in the Tower*, showing the scene described in *King Richard III*, Act IV. iii, with Dighton and Forrest, the murderers, leaning over the bed in which the young princes are asleep in each another's arms. This painting was engraved by Francis Legat in 1790, and soon became one of the most famous pictures from Shakespeare. Indeed, during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, engraving was the chief means by which such pictures became known⁸.

Although it is not altogether true to say that Shakespeare was less popular as a subject for paintings in the later nineteenth century, it is probably true that during this period the number of artists who had recourse to Shakespeare decreased, and prints of their work also became less numerous. Also, fewer artists took matter from the histories; it was the comedies and tragedies on which they concentrated their attention. However, some Shakespeare history paintings are among the most famous of all Victorian images. One of these, *Prince Arthur and Hubert*, was not only the most successful Shakespearean history painting of its time, but came from the artist of the most celebrated of all Victorian paintings, *And When Did You Last See Your Father?* He was William Frederick Yeames (1835–1918), a member of the St John's Wood Clique, a group of painters who nearly all lived in the then-fashionable St John's Wood area of North London, and specialized in historical paintings, mainly of an episodic character (this was a source of irritation to the young men who later founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, who created their group as a protest against what they saw as the sentimental triviality of the St John's Wood painters and others like them⁹). The *Prince Arthur* painting, done in 1882 and now in the Manchester City Art Gallery, depicts Act IV. i of Shakespeare's *King John*, in which Hubert de Burgh, the King's confidant, is preparing, very unwillingly, to burn out the eyes of little Prince Arthur and then strangle him, on orders from the King, who wants the boy, a potential claimant to the crown of England, put out of the way. In the picture, the morose and

unhappy Hubert, shrouded in a dark, hooded mediaeval garment, sits on a stool, shrinking away from the boy, who is the picture of innocence with his blond hair and white clothes, clinging to Hubert and pleading with him to spare him his sight: "Will you put out mine eyes? These eyes that never did, nor never shall. So much as frown on you?" (in the play, Hubert finally spares Arthur, but the boy later dies when he falls from a castle wall while trying to escape). We can see at once why this painting appealed to the sentimental side of the Victorians — even the most talented of whom often strayed in that direction, as witness the death scene of Little Nell in Dickens' *Old Curiosity Shop* — and also why the Pre-Raphaelites would have disliked it.

Comic material from Shakespeare was from the beginning a source for painters. Francis Hayman made in 1760 a painting of *Falstaff Raising Recruits* on the same subject as Hogarth's described earlier. Hayman's painting is amusing, but lacks the ingenious satire of Hogarth; like the earlier painting, it suggests a stage set, but there is nothing more than the suggestion and no precise reference to any actual players of the time. This scene was a popular one; other versions are known by James Durno (1745–95), Sir John Gilbert (1817–97) and the American Washington Allston (1779–1843). Durno also made a splendid if somewhat stilted picture of *Falstaff Disguised as Mrs Prat from The Merry Wives of Windsor IV. ii*, which now only appears to exist as a line and stipple engraving with hand colouring (this was one of the Boydell prints). Robert Smirke (1752–1845) was a prolific artist who contributed twenty-six paintings to Boydell's Gallery. One of these was from 1 Henry IV, II. iv, *Falstaff Examining Prince Hal*. This is one of the scenes where Shakespeare's comedy changes to seriousness: Falstaff and Prince Hal have exchanged roles, with Falstaff becoming "King" and Hal, "Falstaff", in order to express their real feelings about each other. The moment shown is that where Falstaff, as "King", says "Old Jack Falstaff, banish not him thy Harry's company banish plump Jack, and banish all the world." Hal, realizing that he has for too long followed Falstaff in his loose and self-indulgent life, says chillingly "I do, I will." In 2 Henry IV, he does indeed banish Falstaff and abjure his old, frivolous ways.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, the chief exponent of light-hearted scenes from Shakespeare was the

versatile Daniel Maclise, already mentioned as the portrait-trayer of the actress Priscilla Horton. Maclise was an Irishman who became famous for his sketches of famous people, including Sir Walter Scott and Edmund Kean. He subsequently became an historical painter, and also illustrated some books, including *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. His *Scene from Twelfth Night* (III. iv, now in the Tate), is a great visual treat: a formal garden, seen in acute perspective, with Olivia and a giggling Maria on the right and Malvolio on the left, with his yellow stockings and cross-garters, posturing to his lady in an access of deluded love. In 1855, Maclise painted the *Wrestling Scene from "As You Like It"* (I. iii) (Harris Museum, Preston), which became enormously successful as an engraving by C. W. Sharpe. Another notable scene from comedy is *Launce's Substitute for Proteus' Dog* (1849; Leicestershire Museum) by Augustus Leopold Egg (1816–83), from *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (IV. iv), showing the scene described by Launce; having lost the little dog entrusted to him by Proteus to bring to Silvia, he has substituted his mangy cur Crab, who has then disgraced himself by stealing some food from Silvia's table and urinating on the floor. In Egg's picture, Launce is berating the wretched dog while Silvia looks on with a disapproving expression. A minor artist who made some good character studies of Shakespeare's more ridiculous characters, is Henry Stacy Marks (1829–98), a member, like Yeames, of the St John's Wood Clique. His *Dog-berry Examining Conrade and Borachio (Much Ado About Nothing, IV. ii)* is a fine comic rendering of one of Shakespeare's most endearing bumbler. It was painted in 1852 and is now in a private collection.

The serious comedies and "problem" plays have perhaps attracted artists in England more than the regular comedies. Hogarth made in 1735 a "straight" painting of *The Tempest* (I. ii), showing Prospero with Miranda at the point where Ferdinand first meets them. On one side stands the evil Caliban, while Ariel, in the guise of an angel, flutters overhead. Brian Allen points out that Miranda wears blue, the traditional colour associated with the Virgin Mary, and is feeding a lamb, a symbol of innocence, and this may refer to Ferdinand's enquiry as to her virginity¹⁰⁾. As always with Hogarth, there is plenty more going on in the picture than at first reaches the eye. This painting is now in the Winn Collection at Nostell Priory,

Yorkshire.

The Pre-Raphaelites liked to paint narrative pictures on historical or literary subjects which would give them an opportunity to emphasize the high moral tone and didactic role of their art. Among the serious scenes from comedies is *Valentine Rescuing Silvia from Proteus* from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, (V. iv), by Holman Hunt (1827–1910). This picture, now in the Birmingham City Art Gallery, caused a furor when first exhibited in 1851, at the height of the controversy over the ideas of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, who were savagely attacked by most of the critics. Elizabeth Prettejohn, in *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites*, suggests that Hunt made some concessions to the critics in this painting, emphasizing private morality and robust-looking figures rather than the religious or historical themes of earlier PRB works, with a tendency to show thin or willowy figures, both of which characteristics had been regarded as undesirable by some critics, the former because too controversial, the latter because it was “unpleasant”. It is well known that the Victorians held very conservative views on the social and sexual roles of men and women, and a double standard prevailed. Women were supposed to be docile, obedient to men, and current medical opinion was that women were generally indifferent to sexual interests¹¹. Feminine autonomy was totally denied. The members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in some ways follow, in others question, the sexual politics of their time. Hunt’s painting of Valentine and Proteus shows a deliberate contrast between the androgynous Julia, masquerading as a man, and the voluptuous Silvia, the latter according with the traditional view of women as pure, beautiful angels but also dangerous enticements to men like Proteus (the men’s names, one suggesting a virtuous, Christian gentleman, the other a man of violently changeable, indeed protean, urges, would not have escaped Hunt; Valentine closely resembles the traditional image of St George or Sir Galahad rescuing a maiden in distress). It is also significant that in this play Valentine and Proteus regard women as chattels in a way that would be entirely in keeping with the received ideas of most Victorians. On the other hand, a painting with a far more ambiguous message, also based (if distantly) on Shakespeare is *Mariana* (1850–1, Tate), by Sir John Everett Millais (1829–1896), which is probably inspired as much by Tennyson’s poem *Mariana in*

the Moated Grange as by the character who appears in *Measure for Measure*. Elizabeth Prettejohn devotes much space to discussion of the sexually provocative pose of Mariana, which emphasizes the swell of her bosom and full hips, in a manner which was daring in Victorian art. She also suggests that the picture holds “a critique of avarice with obvious relevance to Victorian bourgeois society; the woman is denied sexual or social fulfillment because she lacks wealth, the essential prerequisite for middle-class respectability.”¹²

Hunt made other paintings on Shakespearean themes; *Claudio and Isabella* (1850–3, Tate), also from *Measure for Measure*, is remarkable for the exquisite portrayal of fabrics and also for its plenteous symbolism; symbolism (a very important component of Hunt’s art) also appears in *The Hireling Shepherd* (1851–2, Manchester City Art Galleries). This painting, with its typically Pre-Raphaelite insistence on equally detailed treatment of every part of the canvas, is often thought of as being inspired by the Bible, but in fact has a tenuous Shakespearean connection: in *King Lear*, III. vi, Edgar, feigning madness, sings “Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd? Thy sheep be in the corn; And for one blast of thy minikin mouth Thy sheep shall take no harm”, lines used by Hunt as an epigraph when he exhibited the painting at the Royal Academy in 1852. George P. Landow points out that several researchers have made a convincing case for Hunt having been additionally influenced by St John’s Gospel, Milton’s *Lycidas*, and, possibly, a religious tract entitled *Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds* which was a subject of discussion at the time, and which urged the Church of England to action at a time when the Roman Catholic Church was restoring its hierarchy in England¹³. There can be no doubt as to the message Hunt intended to convey in this painting, which shows a careless shepherd dallying with a country girl while the sheep stray into a neighbouring cornfield and the girl feeds a lamb on her knee with green apples (which could have fatal consequences for the baby animal).

The Victorian painters did full justice to the tragedies of Shakespeare, the lesser as well as the greater. *Romeo and Juliet* was of course a great favourite. Probably the most admired paintings of this play in their time were by Frederic, Lord Leighton (1830–96) and Frank Dicksee (1853–1928). The Leighton picture is *The Reconciliation*

of the *Montagues and the Capulets over the Dead Bodies of Romeo and Juliet* (1853–55, private collection), and it shows the scene (V. iii) where the heads of the two houses shake hands in front of the Prince, while Friar Lawrence and others kneel or stand. The dead body of Paris can also be seen. The sombre background and rather stage-like quality provide a foil for the exquisite form of the dead bride, whose white-clad arm, shoulder and back form a beautiful curve which somehow stamps Leighton's unique quality as a supreme aesthete on the picture. Leighton made some greater paintings than this one, but few which summarize so well his qualities in handling shapes and textures. As Julian Treuherz observes, "his idealized and high-minded art was the perfect expression of a cultivated and disciplined personality."¹⁴ Dicksee's painting, simply called *Romeo and Juliet* (1884, Southampton Art Galleries) shows the farewell scene in Act III. v; it is a low-key study apart from the pure whiteness of Juliet's nightgown, which glows over her bosom in the light of the dawn. Romeo, with one leg over the edge of the balcony, exchanges a passionate kiss with his wife before descending and going into exile. It is a nice touch that Dicksee makes us feel that neither he nor she has taken sole initiative over the kiss; they are true lovers and equal partners, just as they will soon be equal in death.

King Lear was another play which had been used from early times as a source of paintings. In the eighteenth century it was regarded as one of the best vehicles for portraying the Sublime. Benjamin West's scene *King Lear in the Storm* showing the King in the hovel on the heath (III. iv), making a dramatic gesture while Kent clings protectively to him, the Fool crouches in thought, Edgar, in his mad disguise, mops and mows, and Gloucester approaches with a torch. This picture (1788), which became famous in the form of an excellent engraving by William Sharp, is now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Lear's mad scenes were shown by Victorian artists, but sometimes with a more reflective slant, as in William Dyce's *Lear and the Fool in the Storm* (1851, National Gallery of Scotland); the scene is III. ii, where Lear makes his thunderous speech "Blow winds, and crack your cheeks!" — but Dyce fails to make enough of it, and the result is bathos. Far more successful and with real depth of feeling is a painting by Ford Madox Brown (1821–93), *Lear and Cordelia* (1848–9, Tate), which shows the poor King ly-

ing asleep (IV. vii), unaware that his once-dearest daughter has returned to look after him. Ford seems to have made a special effort to match the pathos of the scene as presented by Shakespeare. Although the Victorians could be appallingly sentimental (like the Dyce, with its joky Fool), at their best, as here, they could bring out very successfully the feeling of a scene.

Hunt used a landscape at Ewell, in then-rural Surrey, as the background for his painting of the shepherd; the same village provided, at the same time, the location for Millais' *Ophelia*, (Tate), with the crazed young woman floating along in a stream between banks covered in flowers and vegetation which show an astonishing degree of detail, in keeping with the Pre-Raphaelite insistence on faithfulness to nature. The model was Elizabeth Siddal, and it is well known that she nearly died of pneumonia as a result of staying in a bath of water (heated spasmodically by burners underneath) while Millais painted the picture. Millais was only one of a number of Pre-Raphaelites who chose Ophelia as a subject; the idea of innocence and fidelity betrayed and led to destruction was irresistible to the Victorians. Arthur Hughes (1813–1915), best known for *Home from Sea*, *April Love*, and *The Long Engagement*, visited the theme twice. The pictures are very different in style. The 1852 version (Manchester City Art Gallery) shows a thin, anaemic-looking Ophelia sitting by the side of the brook, and round the curved top of the painting are written the lines about her death from *Hamlet*, IV. vii. The painting is not fully Pre-Raphaelite in style; Hughes was only just beginning to take a deep interest in the movement, so does not provide quite the obsessive detail which was by then the hallmark of Hunt and Millais (who, by coincidence, exhibited his own version of Ophelia at the same time at the Royal Academy). The other painting (1863–4, Toledo Art Gallery, Ohio) is entitled *Ophelia, And He Will Not Come Again*, and shows much more Pre-Raphaelite influence. The woman in the picture, though plainly sad, is not so anorexic in appearance as the earlier Ophelia. She holds the bunch of herbs and flowers mentioned in III. v, and the title misquotes the words of her last song, "He never will come again".

Richard Redgrave (1804–88) exhibited a rather staid *Ophelia Weaving Her Garlands* in 1842 (V & A). Yet another Pre-Raphaelite painter of Ophelia is John William

Waterhouse (1849–1917), who made three paintings of the subject. The first (1889, private collection) is in some ways the most modern and disturbing — both of these, because it shows a very young Ophelia, in a white dress, lying on her back in a meadow full of cow-parsley, looking intently at the viewer in a patently seductive way, reminiscent, indeed, of Nabokov rather than Shakespeare. In its original form the image was still more provocative and Waterhouse had to modify it by making the gaze slightly less piercing; a photograph exists of the original state¹⁵. The second Ophelia (1894, private collection) shows her in a pale blue dress, seated beside a pond covered with water-lilies — in some ways, this picture looks forward to Waterhouse’s masterpiece *Hylas and the Water Nymphs* (1896). The third (1910, Lloyd-Webber Collection) shows Ophelia in a dark blue dress hastening along beside the brook, clutching flowers and with a wild, hysterical look which is, in its way, as disturbing as the pose in the 1889 version. Although the last painting is really outside our period, the three taken together show the variety, and also the degree, of change, in the Pre-Raphaelite movement over the years; Waterhouse makes us feel that English ideas and above all the ideas of propriety, were undergoing change and unease as the Victorian Age passed into the Edwardian.

As for Hamlet himself, at least twenty British artists alone put him into their pictures, one of the earliest being the ubiquitous Fuseli, with *Hamlet, Gertrude and the Ghost of Hamlet’s Father* from III. iv. This is a Gothick study done in 1793, for Boydell’s Gallery (now in the Magnani Collection, Parma), but as in the case of Ophelia, it was in the Victorian period that some of the most

remarkable paintings of Hamlet were done. The prize for a *tour de force* must surely go to Maclise, whose large painting of *The Play Scene in Hamlet III. ii* (1842, Tate) was in 1863 the subject of one of the last popular engravings of Shakespeare (again by C. W. Sharpe) before the British public took to photography (see Fig. 7). This picture excited immense interest, and Thackeray described it as one of the “most startling, wonderful pictures that the English school has ever produced¹⁶.” The detail and number of people rival Frith; the background is full of symbolic material (tapestries showing the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden and the murder of Abel; statues of Prayer and Justice; Ophelia’s white robe, Claudius’ dark one) and there is a general air of foreboding which adds to the effect of the brooding expression on Hamlet’s face. Not all the critics praised the picture; there were complaints about the perspective, and Ruskin condemned the figure of Hamlet as “an Irish ruffian”, and the sad expression of Ophelia as better suited to “an empty gin bottle on her lap¹⁷.” However, it was for a time the most successful Shakespeare painting in England — then sinking into almost total oblivion. Why? Perhaps public taste was coming to prefer lighter fare, or at least was tired of crowded canvases *à la* Frith. This might account for the appearance in 1901 of as different a portrayal of Hamlet as could possibly be imagined, *Hamlet and the Ghost* (Manchester City Art Gallery), by Frederic James Shields (1833–1911). This is a weird, atmospheric painting, composed mainly of a dark sky, with a low moon, over a curving shore, with the small figures of Hamlet and his father in the middle distance, walking on the sand some way apart from each other. This is nearer the Impression-



Fig. 7 C. W. Sharpe, after Daniel Maclise, *The Play Scene in Hamlet* (private collection)

ists than the Pre-Raphaelites, and shows how far Victorian art had come in style by the start of the new century.

Some years after Sharpe had made his successful engraving, another painting with the same title as Maclise's appeared (1868, Yale Center for British Art) The artist, Charles Hunt (1803–77) gives a charming portrayal of a group of children performing *Hamlet* with makeshift costumes and props. The little boy playing Hamlet peeps out from behind a fan, while Horatio stands behind Ophelia's chair with a look of delight on his face. Ophelia looks serious, and Claudius rises with a hand to his forehead. Gertrude wears a cardboard crown. Some children on the left play musical instruments, and on the right some adults watch the play. People who had seen the engraving would have been delighted with this comfortable pastiche, with its overtones of peaceful middle-class English family life. As explained by Christopher Wood¹⁸⁾, this period was one of great nostalgia for the supposed virtues of "Merrie England" and family values in the turmoil of the Industrial Revolution and Empire. Hunt did a number of pictures of children playing, including some with them acting Shakespeare plays.

Philip Hermogenes Calderon (1833–98), of Franco-Spanish extraction, was the head of the "St John's Wood Clique" referred to earlier. One of his more unusual paintings is *The Young Lord Hamlet* (1868, private collection). This imagines Hamlet as a child, playing with Yorick the jester, as Hamlet himself describes in V. i. Sitting nearby is Gertrude, and near her another young woman holding a baby girl, while a maidservant sits in the background. It has been suggested that the woman with the baby may be intended for Polonius' wife, holding Ophelia.

Fairy painting: This is one of the most curious phenomena in British art. John Christian observes, "Its origins went back to Henry Fuseli and Sir Joshua Reynolds, but it was the Victorians who made it their own, revelling in the opportunities it offered to touch on such transgressive themes as malice, cruelty, sexual titillation and lust."¹⁹⁾ This is only half the story; many fairy paintings portray the little sprites as harmless and benevolent — and, after all, fairies are part of the safe world of childhood lore, and are seen as being, in the main, "good". Still, Julian Treuherz reminds us that they have connections with the stories of the Brothers Grimm, hardly light or optimistic, which were illustrated in England by

George Cruikshank, and also by the Nazarenes, German predecessors of the Pre-Raphaelites²⁰⁾. They are also allied to the grotesque school of illustration which one sees in some of the works of Lewis Carroll, such as Sir John Tenniell's *Jabberwocky* for *Through the Looking Glass* and Arthur B. Frost's ghost pictures for *Phantasmagoria*, or indeed W. S. Gilbert's quaint adornments to *The Bab Ballads*. It seems reasonable to see in some of the slighter of these works — such as Arthur Huskisson's *Come Unto These Yellow Sands (The Tempest, I. ii, 1847, private collection)* the same kind of escapism that produced huge numbers of pictures of happy country people in pretty cottages by the likes of Myles Birket Foster, harking back to an imagined "paradisal" epoch of "Merrie England".

It is no surprise that where Shakespeare is concerned, virtually all fairy paintings are, or can be plausibly connected with, two plays: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. One of the earliest, and best, is Fuseli's *Titania Embracing Bottom (A Midsummer Night's Dream, IV. i)*, 1792, (Kunsthau, Zürich). This, like so many of Fuseli's paintings, is predominantly in creamy-yellow shades contrasted with black; in the centre is Bottom, sitting facing us with his hands clasped round his knees while, to his right, the besotted Fairy Queen lies with her arms round him. She wears a helmet with the crescent moon symbol of Diana. Behind, more or less life-size, are the fairies Moth, Peaseblossom and Mustardseed, all represented as women in spite of the text, which refers to "Cavalieri Peaseblossom" and "Mounseer Mustardseed". The other fairies and elves in the picture are all much smaller; the most diminutive is a semi-transparent elf bringing a dish of dried peas through the air below a female fairy with a lute. Other tiny, rather sinister-looking fairies inhabit the corners and bottom of the picture, some of them with musical instruments. Puck hovers in the air top right. The atmosphere is strangely claustrophobic, but Fuseli has taken much care to mention all the items (musk-roses, nuts, etc.) mentioned in the text. He has also, perhaps only incidentally, set the convention for a great many fairy paintings; main subject(s) in the middle, surrounded by diminutive fairies who vanish into the darkness at the corners of the picture. This can be seen in Maclise's *The Disenchantment of Bottom (A Midsummer Night's Dream IV. i)*, 1832, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford CN) showing the end of the scene,

where a very proletarian, yawning Bottom awakens to find that his comrades have all gone and to the dim memory of a “dream” of ass’s ears, which are cleverly hinted at by the shape of the two fairies buzzing over his head. Further evidence that Maclise was consciously or otherwise modelling himself on Fuseli is the strikingly effective foreshortening of the main figure, and the grotesque, sometimes overtly sexual, postures and faces of the fairies who fly around Bottom.

Sir Joseph Noël Paton (1821–1901) produced a number of fairy paintings, of which the most famous were *The Quarrel* and *The Reconciliation of Oberon and Titania*, both now in the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh. These are both crowded canvases, with the usual situation of main characters in the centre (Oberon and Titania, also a sleeping Bottom in the second), and large numbers of small fairies flying around; the second picture is especially crowded. The first of these to be shown to the public was *The Reconciliation* in 1847; the other (slightly smaller) painting followed two years later as a result of the success of the larger one. It is interesting that apart from Bottom, all the characters are shown naked or nearly so; Titania’s costume in particular leaves nothing to the imagination. How did this escape censure? There are several reasons; the main one is that this kind of painting, being about a work by Shakespeare, could be assimilated to Classical Nude art, and the small, sometimes tiny, fairies could be seen as analogous to the cupids and *putti* of Classical art. It could also be thought that as the beings represented were fairies, they were not humans. In fact, close examination shows that some of the little groups of fairies are very erotic, others are plainly malicious (like the horned Puck above the sleeping Bottom). However, few critics made serious attacks on either of the pictures, apart from Ruskin, who was very suspicious of fairy painting altogether²¹). On the whole, it does seem that fairy painting was one of the conventions by which the Victorians allowed themselves to enjoy erotic or cruel pictures without breaking the social rules of propriety.

Interestingly, far more criticism was levelled against Millais for *Ferdinand lured by Ariel* (*The Tempest*, I. ii, 1849–50, Makins Collection, Washington DC). The reason was the unconventional nature of Puck (called “a hideous green gnome” by one critic) and the curiously other-worldly, bat-like creatures accompanying him.

These comments were probably a result of prejudice against the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood rather than anything else; luckily the picture had been sold before the exhibition. Today, this painting can be seen as having great power with the bright red-and-white costume of Ferdinand, the intent look on his face, and the usual PRB detail throughout the canvas. Writing to Hunt, Millais said he was still not satisfied: “To paint it as it ought to be would take me a month for each weed. As it is I have done every blade of grass and leaf distinct.”²²).

For us today, the most fascinating fairy paintings are those of Richard Dadd (1817–1886). As a young man, he was member of a group of painters which included Augustus Egg; in 1842 he exhibited *Come Unto These Yellow Sands* (*The Tempest*, I. ii, John Rickett Collection), showing an amazing chain of fairies flying through the sky and landing on the seashore near a natural rock arch, through which the dawn can be seen breaking. It was a great success, and followed two earlier successes in the genre, both drawn from *A Midsummer-Night’s Dream*. However, in 1843, after a journey to the Middle East in which his companions had noticed him acting strangely, he suddenly murdered his father and was sent for life to Bethlem Hospital (“Bedlam”), being later transferred to Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum. Fortunately his doctors at both places recognised his talent and encouraged him to paint; one result of this was a pair of the most extraordinary fairy paintings ever produced, *Contradiction: Oberon and Titania* (1854–58, Lloyd-Webber Collection) and *The Fairy Feller’s Master Stroke* (1855–64, Tate), now generally regarded as his finest painting. It is a phantasmagoria loosely based, according to Dadd, on the chariot of Queen Mab described by Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*, I. iv. This can be seen as a tiny detail going round the brim of the hat of a figure in the painting. The earlier picture (though he was working on both simultaneously) is sufficiently unusual, with its amazing detail, which almost puts the Pre-Raphaelites to shame; *The Fairy Feller* (I cannot give a reproduction, since none can possibly do this painting justice) is even more finely detailed, with crowds of fairies, goblins, strange symbolic beings and, centrally placed, the fairy woodcutter (“feller”) with his axe poised to cleave a hazel nut. One has the impression that this deed is awaited with fearful anticipation (why? Is the nut to become Queen Mab’s

new coach?), and the claustrophobic atmosphere is reinforced by the thin stalks of dry grass which spread over the painting and through which one has to glimpse the drama in progress. This is now seen as one of the most remarkable of all Victorian paintings and Dadd's genius — as also, alas, his madness — is beyond question.

It is worth noting that Dadd, Maclise, Paton and a number of other fairy painters were all involved in the grandiose scheme developed in the 1840s to provide frescos — not necessarily of fairy painting — to decorate the walls of the new Houses of Parliament. A number of Shakespearean topics were suggested, but in the end the whole project failed because of the instability of the fresco technique which was used. Today the gigantic pictures of *The Death of Nelson* and *The Meeting of Wellington and Blücher* by Maclise alone remain. Also, Maclise, Edwin Landseer, and others were invited in the late 1840s to do paintings to decorate a "Shakespeare Room" in the house of the great railway and steamship engineer, Isambard Kingdom Brunel. The most famous surviving painting of this project is Landseer's fairy painting *Titania and Bottom* (1851, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia).

Arthur Rackham's "Midsummer-Night's Dream": Arthur Rackham (1867–1939) was born in London and became a clerk at the age of 18. He spent his spare time studying at the Lambeth School of Art, and in 1892 gave up his job to become a full-time illustrator. By 1900, when he brought out *Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, he was beginning to develop his entirely original style of fantasy art, combining the quaint and grotesque with the whimsical, but with sufficient artistic rigour and intellectual content to avoid mere cuteness. Often imitated, he has never been equalled, still less excelled. Rackham's version of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* (1908) was published by William Heinemann and has been frequently reprinted. It contains forty full-page colour and innumerable black-and-white illustrations. Many of these are fairy paintings, while others are straight illustrations of characters and scenes in the play, but always with Rackham's balance between the charming, the grotesque, and the beautiful. Such is the detail in these pictures that it is hard to find one suitable for a small reproduction: Fig. 8 *and her fairy sent / To bear him to my bower in fairy land* is a fair example of the atmosphere and impeccable



Fig. 8 Arthur Rackham, . . . and her fairy sent To bear him to my bower in fairy land from *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* (Heinemann)

technique of Rackham's art.

Conclusion

With Rackham, comes a virtual end to fairy painting, and also to most conventional artwork drawn from Shakespeare of the types we have been studying. Almost the only well-known later example is *Titania Sleeps* (1928, Fukujudo, Japan) by "the last Pre-Raphaelite", Frank Cadogan Cowper, an astonishing blend of Pre-Raphaelite sensibility, Art Deco (Titania's dress) and kitsch (the Disney-like rabbits, owl, and elves)²³. The twentieth century apparently witnessed an almost complete drying-up of artistic inspiration regarding our greatest dramatist. Or did it?

The fact is that artistic attention to Shakespeare shifted its *métier* from conventional arts to the new ones. Theatre photography, films, television all provided new images of Shakespeare. Sir Laurence Olivier (1907–1989) made six films of Shakespeare plays, with himself in the title roles (*Henry V*, *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice* (for TV; Olivier in Shylock), *King Lear* (also for TV). The first was a notable colour production made with minimal financing during the Second World War, the sec-

ond (in black-and-white, which Olivier regarded as more suitable for this sombre subject) awoke the public interest in Shakespearean tragedy in a way which had not been so general for a century. Many schoolchildren (including the present writer) found the magic of Shakespeare's tragedy more vividly from this film than from any textbooks or still pictures. *Richard III* daringly reintroduced some of the embellishments of Colley Cibber, two centuries before (including the splendid asides "Off with his head! So much for Buckingham!" and "Richard is himself again"). The advent of television and also of computer graphics are, in particular, two developments which have expanded the artistic possibilities of performance.

Perhaps the most significant "new art" in Britain to have made Shakespeare its own is the art of historical reconstruction, as exemplified by the New Globe Theatre, under the inspiration of Sam Wanamaker. This was officially opened in 1997, four years after reconstruction had started. The building, as exact a copy as possible, using authentic materials within the limits of historical information and making allowance for the needs of modern safety and comfort, provides the spectator with a new vision of how Shakespeare expected his plays to be seen. Actors and producers, supported by more and more research materials on the life and times of Shakespeare, are finding out more and more, and with growing enthusiasm, about how to present Shakespeare to the public. Far from constraining or constricting the performers and directors, the Elizabethan stage opens up new ways and new psychological backgrounds for productions of Shakespeare and his contemporary playwrights. One of the latest and most successful developments has been performance using reconstructed Elizabethan pronunciation, under the guidance of David Crystal²⁴.

The modern world is a busy place, with access to fresh artistic tools — computer graphics, synthesizers, all kinds of new art forms such as performance arts and installation art — and inevitably, with a bustling and brave new world of science and technology around us, it can be no surprise that Shakespeare and the traditional arts surrounding his name should now have many competitors for our dwindling free time. But with the New Globe Theatre and other such reconstructions, an undiminished interest in Shakespeare in the educational circles in many countries, and more knowledge about him than ever before, we can

be confident that, not only in Britain, the matter of Shakespeare and the Arts is in no danger of becoming a story of the past.

Notes and References

1. Early Images of Shakespeare

- 1) The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Website, www.shakespeare.org.uk/homepage, "What Did Shakespeare Look Like?"
- 2) M. H. Spielmann's article on "The Portraits of Shakespeare" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Eleventh Edition, Cambridge U. P. 1911
- 3) Hildegard Hammerschmidt-Hummel: "What Did Shakespeare Look Like?" in *Symbolism* I, 1999: 41–79. The conclusions on the Flower Portrait now seem dubious, but there seem grounds for supporting the eyelid theory.
- 4) Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence, *Bacon Is Shake-Speare*, 1910.
- 5) On the Collar Theory, Bacon and the Rosicrucians see, for example, the Website SirBacon.org.
- 6) Homepage of the Shakespeare Oxford Society → "The Ashbourne Portrait". The Janssen Portrait is much entangled with the proposal to disinter Shakespeare's body, opposed by C. M. Ingleby in *Shakespeare's Bones*, 1883.
- 7) Ingleby found no evidence of the Janssen Portrait belonging to Prince Rupert.
- 8) This story appears in the Stowe Catalogue on the occasion of the sale of the Chandos Portrait in 1848.
- 9) Aubrey's *Brief Lives*, ed. Oliver Lawson Dick, Penguin, 1949: 177
- 10) This is according to E. T. Craig, *Portraits, Bust and Monument of Shakespeare*, 1869, but Spielmann (*Britannica* 11th Edition) does not mention it.
- 11) So stated by Michael Wood, *Shakespeare*, Basic Books, N. Y. 2003: 257.
- 12) Victoria History of the Counties of England, *A History of the County of Northamptonshire, Volume 5, The Hundred of Cleley*, (2002)
- 13) Wood 2003: 131–2
- 14) S. Nolen, "It's Time to Reveal Shakespeare to the World" (*Globe and Mail*, Saturday, May 12, 2001. Ms Nolen gives M. H. Spielmann's name incorrectly as A. M. Spielmann
- 15) Marie-Claude Corbeil, "The Scientific Examination of the Sanders Portrait of William Shakespeare" Canadian Conservation Institute, 2002.
- 16) Paul H. Altrocchi, "What's in a Face? A Review of *Shakespeare's Face*", The Shakespeare Fellowship, 2003. (Online, www.shakespearefellowship.org)
- 17) See Martineau *et al.*, *Shakespeare in Art*, Merrell, London and N. Y. 2003: 201

2. Statues of Shakespeare

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- in Westminster Abbey” by Kurt Hollenbach at www.sirbacon.org/gallery/west.htm
- 2) Martineau *et al.*, 2003: 202
3. Paintings of Shakespeare Plays on Stage
- 1) In 1610 and 1611, at The Globe. The text of Simon Forman’s Diary is at <http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa062200b.htm?terms=The+Winter’s+Tale+William+Shakespeare>
- 2) Wood 2003: 137
- 3) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration_spectacular
- 4) Stanley Wells ed. *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, Oxford U. P., 2000: 18
- 5) Martineau *et al.*, 2003: 30
- 6) Robert Caruthers and Adolphus William Ward, article on “Garrick” in *En. Brit.* Eleventh Edition, 1911
- 7) Martineau *et al.*, 2003: 52
- 8) George Anne Bellamy received her name by a mistake for “Georgiana”.
- 9) Martineau *et al.*, 2003: 124
- 10) Thomas Davies in S. Wells ed. 2000: 21
- 11) Martineau *et al.* 2003: 128
- 12) National Portrait Gallery: www.npg.org.uk/live/index.asp and go to “Garrick”
- 13) Anonymous article on “Barry” in *Britannica* 11th Edition, 1911
- 14) S. Wells ed. 2000: 73
- 15) Quoted in Martineau *et al.* 2003: 126
- 16) Colley Cibber in A. C. Ward ed. *Specimens of English Dramatic Criticism, XVII – XX Centuries*, Oxford U. P. 1945: 47
- 17) S. Wells ed. 2000: 26
- 18) Anonymous article on “Kean” in *Britannica* 11th Edition, 1911
- 19) See the Website *PeoplePlay UK – Skel’s Miniature Portraits: Edmund Kean* (the web address is too long to write here).
- 20) Pollock’s Toy Theatre Museum at: <http://pollocks.trishy-mouse.net/theatres1.htm>
- 21) For a biography of Charlotte Charke, and other useful biographies, see <http://www.gwu.edu/~klarsen/actors.html>
4. Imaginative Artworks Inspired by Shakespeare
- 1) James Boswell’s letter to *The London Magazine* for September 1769: 451–454 can be read at <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Texts/jubilee.html>
- 2) Francis Wheatley’s watercolour of the Opening of Boydell’s Gallery is at the Victoria and Albert Museum. For a reproduction, go to their Website at www.vam.ac.uk → Collections → Access to Images → francis wheatley.
- 3) A descriptive and interactive Website reproduction of this fascinating print can be found at the Tate Website at www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/gillray/shakespr.htm
- 4) Martineau *et al.* 2003: 104
- 5) Martineau *et al.* 2003: 78
- 6) Quoted by Tim Adams in his article on the Dulwich Picture Gallery exhibition. *Shakespeare in Art* July 2003; see Observer newspaper for July 20, 2003 at <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/print/0,3858,4716029-102280,00.html>
- 7) See the Emory University (Atlanta) English Education Website at www.english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare_II-Illustrated/Wheatley.Richard.html
- 8) See David Alexander’s important monograph on *Shakespeare and the English Print Market* in Martineau *et al.* 2003: 21–27.
- 9) See Yeames’ obituary notice in *The Times*, May 8, 1918.
- 10) Brian Allen in Martineau *et al.* 2003: 54
- 11) E.g. Dr Sylvanus Stall, author of *Purity and Truth: What a Young Husband Ought to Know*, (1897) quoted in Gerard Macdonald ed., *Once a Week is Ample*, Hutchinson, 1981.
- 12) E. Prettejohn, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites*, Tate Publishing, 2000: 12
- 13) George P. Landow, *Replete with Meaning: William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism*, A Victorian Web Book at www.victorianweb.org/painting/whh/replete/contents.html
- 14) J. Treuherz, *Victorian Painting*, Thames & Hudson, 1993: 176
- 15) Peter Trippi, *J. W. Waterhouse*, Phaidon 2002: 94 (photo), 93 (commentary)
- 16) William Makepeace Thackeray writing as “Michael Angelo Titmarsh” in *Ainsworth’s Magazine*, 1842.
- 17) John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, 1st edition, 1843. These comments were dropped from the 3rd edition.
- 18) C. Wood, *Paradise Lost, Paintings of English Country Life and Landscape, 1850–1914*, Barrie & Jenkins, London, 1988.
- 19) Martineau *et al.* 2003: 220.
- 20) Treuherz, 1993: 51.
- 21) Richard A. Schindler, “Pre-Raphaelite Fairy Painting” on the Victorian Web at www.victorianweb.org/painting/fairy/ras5.html
- 22) Celia Fisher, “Retrospective: a Look at Plants in Pre-Raphaelite Paintings”. *Hortus* no. 60, Winter 2001 at www.flowersinart.net/preraphaelite.html
- 23) Christopher Newall’s commentary on this painting in the catalogue for the Pre-Raphaelite Exhibition from Manchester City Art Galleries (Japan, 2000) mentions the “strange hybrid of styles” suggestive of the “wildest excesses of the Jazz age.” Perhaps Victorian fairy painters were hinting at what they feared *might* happen to their women-folk, while Cowper was suggesting what *had* happened to them.
- 24) See David Crystal, *Pronouncing Shakespeare*, Cambridge U. P., 2005. The most interesting material relates to the reactions — mainly positive — of both performers and audience to this encounter with Early Modern English.