Seeing Shakespeare for the First Time All Over Again in the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery

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On Thursday April 21, 2005, international news broke that one of the best known and previously believed to be contemporaneous portraits of William Shakespeare was, in the words of the London Associated Press's subhead, a "fraud."[1] Named for its longtime owner Sir Desmond Flower, who originally bequeathed it to the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Flower Portrait depicts the Bard wearing a broad white collar and traditional Elizabethan dress. Widely reproduced on many covers of the plays, the painting has long been regarded as one of the most accurate representations of what Shakespeare might have looked like.

What explains the sudden reversal of fortune regarding the date of composition for the piece? There have been rumors dating back to the turn of the twentieth century surrounding its authenticity. However, such claims had never been taken seriously by connoisseurs until a recent routine analysis uncovered chrome yellow paint from around 1814 on the painting's surface. According to Tarnya Cooper, the sixteenth-century curator at England's National Portrait Gallery, the correct composition date for the piece most probably belongs to the nineteenth century: "We now think that the portrait dates to around 1818 to1840, exactly the time when there was a resurgence of interest in Shakespeare's plays."[2] Of course, the actual attribution of the Flower Portrait to the nineteenth century rather than the sixteenth still does not change the fact that the image depicted in the painting does resemble the Droeshout engraving—the image that art historians regard as the most accurate likeness of the Bard (as well as the image that appeared on the cover of the First Folio in 1623). Yet the recent burst of publicity surrounding the piece's actual composition date reminds us, however subtly, of the unique persistence of a still image in the public's mind.

While the Flower Portrait's recent nineteenth-century attribution strikes a chord among the Associated Press's general readership about the pitfalls associated with too readily accepting *any* conventionalized image of Shakespeare, given all that still remains unknown about him, it also reminds the director, the actor, and the scholar of a similar set of popular preconceptions that have long surrounded the production of his plays in terms of how his characters might have dressed, looked, moved, and spoken on the stage. No doubt, these beliefs can be as persistent and as erroneous as the longstanding belief in the Flower Portrait's sixteenth-century authenticity. As a result, it is often the case that when an audience is asked to see a Shakespeare production that employs new staging or directing innovations, they, much like the curators of the nineteenth-century Flower Portrait, are put in the unique position of seeing it for the "first time" again.

A fine example of this phenomenon is the production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at this year's Utah Shakespeare Festival. Here Lysander and Hermia and Demetrius and Helena appear to be clothed in late Victorian, or possibly Edwardian, garb rather than Elizabethan dress. This choice of costuming was also the case in the most recent movie version of the play starring Kevin Kline and Michelle Pfeiffer, wherein a Victorian setting is made explicitly deliberate to the audience.[3] The fact that both productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* lend themselves to a Victorian context, or to a period production at all, obviously speaks to the rich imaginative elements of the play. Yet the malleability associated with Shakespeare's work does not stop there. To return again to the productions this year at the Utah Shakespeare Festival, it is also interesting to consider the production history of *Love's Labour's Lost.* Ironically, *Love's Labour's Lost,* which was the least performed Shakespeare play after the Restoration (the closest it ever came to being staged was a musical version that David Garrick wrote but could never raise sufficient funds for), is actually the most oft produced play today using an eighteenth-century setting.[4] (Perhaps this period choice is due to the Enlightenment's Neoclassical emphasis on learning and scholasticism?).[5] H.R. Woudhysen, the editor of the Arden edition, even describes the play's genre as a "Restoration or Enlightenment comedy avant la lettre—as was done with the BBC version" in his most recent introduction. [6] So whether one is speaking of the misdating of the Flower Portrait or the preferred Enlightenment and Victorian setting and costuming for plays like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *Love's Labour's Lost,* Shakespeare not only transcends his time but actually seems to

capture the essence of other centuries better than many artists who actually post-date him.

However, the longstanding associations of certain Shakespeare plays like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *Love's Labour's Lost* and certain Shakespeare images like the Flower Portrait with centuries to which they do not belong, raise a number of issues affecting a general audience's interpretation and conception of the Bard that are not frequently considered in scholarship (probably because they are much too difficult to tease out in their entirety). Thus, when an audience attends a festival, such as this one, they usually come with a certain set of expectations about what they will see, due in large part to the mass-produced images of the plays that they have already had contact with—exemplified by the Flower Portrait or the two film versions mentioned above. Inevitably, some of their expectations are met, while others are hopefully challenged and then possibly revised. And according to many critics, including Michael Dobson, the process wherein a general audience comes to know Shakespeare through a set of popular images available to a mass market audience might be said to have initiated in the course of the eighteenth century.[7] Indeed, one of the best examples of the ever increasing popularity of the Bard among the masses of Londoners during this time is the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery.[8]

The Boydell Shakespeare Gallery (which opened in 1789) commissioned over thirty-seven of the most famous artists in the eighteenth century, including Joshua Reynolds, James Barry, Benjamin West, Joseph Wright, Angelica Kaufmann, James Northcote, John Opie, and Henry Fuseli, to produce a total of one hundred and sixty-seven paintings that were all said to capture the most famous scenes from the plays in a unique collection of still images.[9] The efforts of the gallery's founders, John and Josiah Boydell, are noteworthy for two reasons: first, they were the first Englishmen to employ Shakespeare as the inspiration to initiate an English School of Historical Painting and, second, they were the most successful businessmen in the eighteenth century to market images of Shakespeare's plays through a gallery and domestic subscription service that came at a fairly modest price.[10]

Additionally, the Boydell Gallery is worthy of our observation at this particular historical moment for another reason, too. Artistically speaking, the gallery has long been disparaged by art and literary critics alike, precisely as a result of its immense appeal and untimely democratic scope. In his massive pictorial history of the plays entitled *Shakespeare and the Artist,* W. Moelwyn Merchant describes the Boydell venture thus: "It is an unhappy irony that

the most ambitious attempt to illustrate Shakespeare should give the general impression of a massive irrelevance, an important by-way in this history. For the Boydell undertaking, generous, even visionary in its scope, and attempting to include the work of every significant artist of the day, shows no creative link with the theatre and very little organic continuity with illustration and painting in the last half-century."[11] Merchant then describes the collection's specific limitations: "too few of the Shakespeare Gallery pictures are gathered in any one place to give an adequate impression of the whole body of work, but, in spite of the monotony in the engravings, the first impression given by an examination of the total of 170 illustrations is a failure of style, an absence of any unity of vision and of interpretation of Shakespeare."[12]

In my opinion, Merchant's dismissal of the gallery's significance, based on what he sees as a lack of "unity," is unfair given the aims that the founders established for the collection. Furthermore, despite the fact that many critics have dismissed the significance of the gallery's largess on aesthetic and artistic grounds, I believe the exhibition does have something to offer, not only in terms of the sheer beauty of many of its most innovative images, but also in terms of how post-eighteenth-century audiences have come to associate Shakespeare with what Frederick Burwick calls the so-called "stage features" of the plays.[13] So, in this essay, I would like to revisit the Boydell Gallery in order to discern what, if any, are its contributions to the construction of a popular image of Shakespeare in the public's imagination and to consider how, if at all, the gallery might have influenced what the public expected to see when they did visit the theatre to see a Shakespeare play.

Today, the idea for the Boydell Gallery is part and parcel of Britain's more famous literary lore. On an evening in November of 1786 at a dinner party of eight gentlemen at the Hampstead home of Josiah Boydell, a spirited debate arose over the veritable absence of an English School of Historical Painting and the necessity of soon founding one in order to compete with commercial artistic markets on the Continent and abroad.[14] After the dinner was over, Alderman John Boydell, Josiah Boydell (his nephew), and the bookseller George Nichol arranged for a prospectus to be written outlining the details of an impending business arrangement. According to Merchant, the aims of their original scheme were as follows:

1. To commission two series of Shakespearean oil-paintings, one large, and the other small, from the principal artists of the day.
2. To build a Gallery for their permanent exhibition.

3. To publish without text, an Imperial Folio collection of engravings from the large pictures.
4. To publish a Folio edition of Shakespeare's dramatic works with the utmost typographical magnificence, and to embellish it with engravings of the smaller pictures.[15]

The plan, although explicitly ambitious, seemed at first as though it would be famously successful, and for a time it was.

In June of 1789, the Shakespeare Gallery opened its doors to much anticipation at a specially built exhibition space in the Pall Mall and, for the first few years, it was quite literally the "talk of the town."[16] It commenced operation with a mere thirty-four paintings, and at the Academy Dinner that year, "the Prince of Wales…at the instigation of Joshua Reynolds and Edmund Burke, proposed a toast to 'an English tradesman who patronizes art better than the Grand Monarque, Alderman Boydell.'"[17] (It is also worth noting that after this event, John Boydell was frequently referred to in the press as "the Commercial Maecenas" of England.[18]) The initial reviews of the gallery were all positive, and the preliminary subscription list included clients numbering over six hundred (even during the very first year of the gallery's operation).[19] By the next year, thirty-three more paintings were added to the gallery's collection as well as the beginning of the production of the engravings. By 1791, the unbound texts of the plays were well underway, and soon the subscription list topped nearly fourteen hundred.[20]

From the start, the gallery employed Shakespeare as its starting point to inspire an English Grand Style of painting that might compete with older continental traditions.[21] In "The Shakespeare Galleries of John Boydell and James Woodmason," Robin Hamlyn describes the optimism that surrounded the early years of the gallery's artistic production: "For artists generally there was all the air of a historic moment in British art having at last arrived, together with all the promise of future glory."[22] If the excitement surrounding the gallery's altruism seems to be characterized, at least to the modern reader, by a certain naiveté, it is all the more surprising to learn that much of the enthusiasm surrounding the aim of establishing an English School of Historical Painting actually originated as much from the project's financiers as it did its artists.

In the original catalogue that accompanied the premier exhibition, John Boydell famously describes his intentions for the collection: "I hope the subscribers will be satisfied with the exertions that have been made…especially when they consider the difficulties that a great undertaking like the present has to encounter

in a country where historical painting is still in its infancy. To advance that art towards maturity, and establish an English School of Historical Painting, was the great object of this present design."[23] However, there was one crux in all of this early, earnest design. Since, as Boydell admits, the success of the venture "depended on the subscription and other sales of the prints," it soon became clear that trouble was brewing when both of the Boydells repeatedly fashioned themselves more as founders of a national school of painting than as patrons of their artists or commercial distributors of their prints.[24] Thus from the beginning, the gallery was explicitly associated with the installation of Shakespeare as the national poet and the best object of England's so-called new School of Historical Painting. However, the execution of its actual business plan was not always as clearly intentioned. Winifred Friedman, the foremost expert on the often murky and certainly complex financial details of the Boydell venture, asserts that as the actual administration of the Gallery evolved, some neglect did occur in the overseeing of the subscription service—its actual bread and butter.[25] Soon, many customers became disenchanted with the casualness of both the firm's records as well as the ever-changing nature of their business relationship to the artists, engravers, and printers. At its height, there were some 1,384 subscribers listed on the firm's invoice, but the vagueness associated with the financial details of the print service, coupled with the apparently poor quality of the engravings ultimately contributed to the enterprise's slow but certain demise.[26]

When the French Revolution cut off the gallery's access to more lucrative commercial markets on the Continent, the venture met its final challenge. After years of struggle, coupled with too many highs and lows, the Shakespeare Gallery folded in 1804. In order to reinstate some of the losses, a new plan was drawn up to liquidate what remained of the firm's assets. Unfortunately, on December 10, 1804, John Boydell passed away, leaving Josiah with the burden of overseeing the firm's last days. By then, an idea was already well underway for a massive lottery that would both raise money to pay off the firm's debts and liquidate its holdings. Over twenty-two thousand tickets were sold for what was to be the Boydells' swan song. Winifred Friedman describes the lottery thus:

> On January 28, 1805, the drawing took place at Cooper's Hall, Basinghall Street. The grand prize went to the holder of the sixty second ticket drawn which was number 8004. The Gallery premises, all of the Shakespeare pictures, large and small, and the Banks sculpture were won by Mr. Tassie, the successor to his father's medallion business. He had

> brought the winning ticket from Mr. Caldwell, the engraver, who had been keeping this particular one for himself—and was afterwards much chagrined that he had ultimately parted with it.[27]

However, in many ways, everyone who participated in the contest was a winner; after all, even "the holders of the 21,938 undrawn tickets were entitled to prints valued at one guinea each."[28] (Additionally, the first sixty-one tickets drawn each received a modest prize.) But in the end, it was Mr. Tassie who walked away with both the bulk of the gallery's collection and, to some extent, the now defunct dream of having an English School of Historical Painting based on Shakespeare in the first place.

When Josiah Boydell finally had his day in court in order to confront the subscribers who defaulted on the print service, he was unsuccessful in his attempt to recoup any promised funds. Yet despite the problems that the gallery met in its seventeen-year run, the firm ultimately emerged with its reputation intact, even though it lost its final suit. When the court ruled that, ultimately, it was the Boydells who had failed to fulfill their obligations, Josiah is reputed to have later replied that "the testimony had shown the memorable manner in which the House, had carried on the Shakespeare work… [In the end, I] fee[l] that the firm [is] now on higher ground in respect of reputation than ever."[29] So while the firm floundered financially, it did produce some of the most compelling and influential images of Shakespeare in the eighteenth century, and it is to a few of these that I would now like to turn.

Upon arriving at the Boydell Gallery, a guest would first see the Banks sculpture of Shakespeare. Here Shakespeare is portrayed as seated between the Dramatic Muse on his left and the Genius of Painting on his right (figure 1). The painting muse on his right is pointing him out to the gallery's visitors rather than facing him and making it known to all who enter that Shakespeare is the proper subject for her brush. Interestingly, the facial likeness on the sculpture does not resemble the Droeshout engraving, and Shakespeare is depicted as rather aloof from the muses who are celebrating him. The frontispiece beneath his feet reads, "He was a man take him for all in all; I shall not look upon his like again." This epitaph makes explicit note of Shakespeare's honored role in English literary culture and distinguishes him as unparalleled to other artists who come either before or after him. Simultaneously, though, it also points out the "natural" aspects of Shakespeare's poetry in terms of its twin genius and humanity by referring to him as "a *man* take him for all in all" (i.e., what Samuel Johnson

Figure 1: *The Alto Relievo*

Figure 2: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, act 4, scene 1.

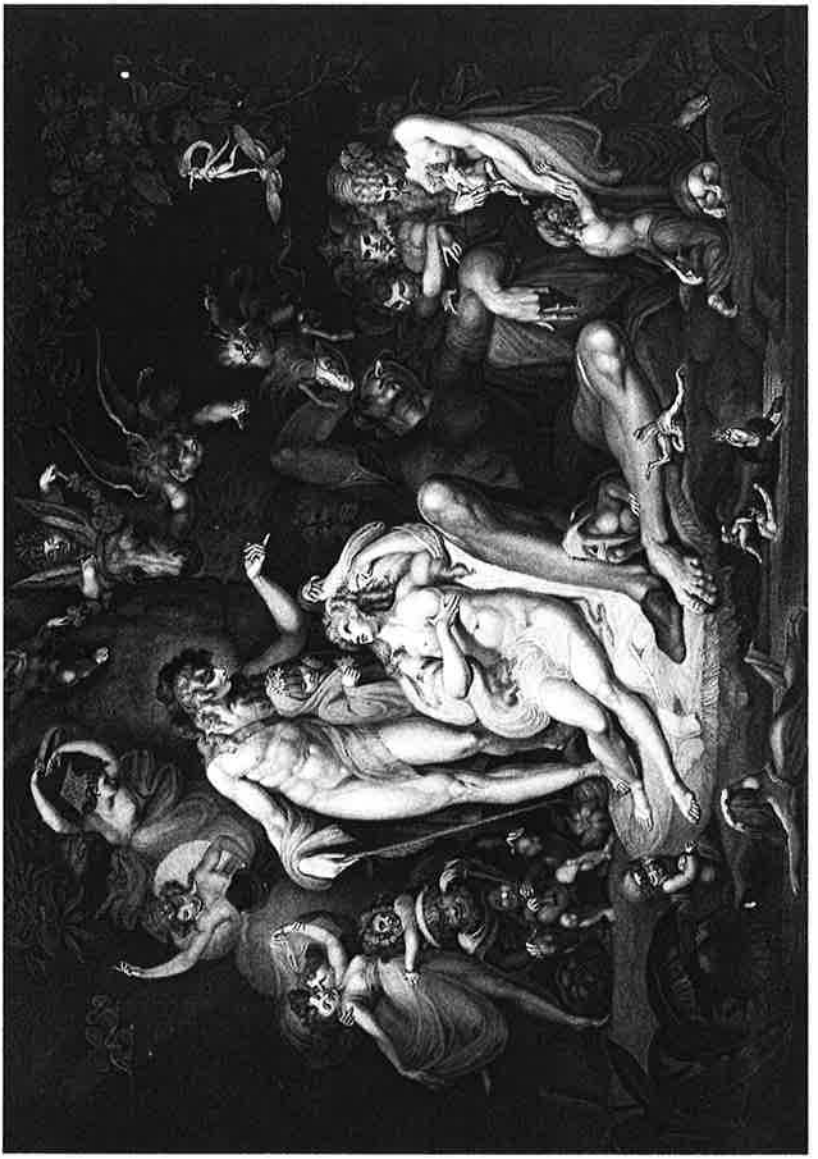

Figure 3: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, act 4, scene 1.

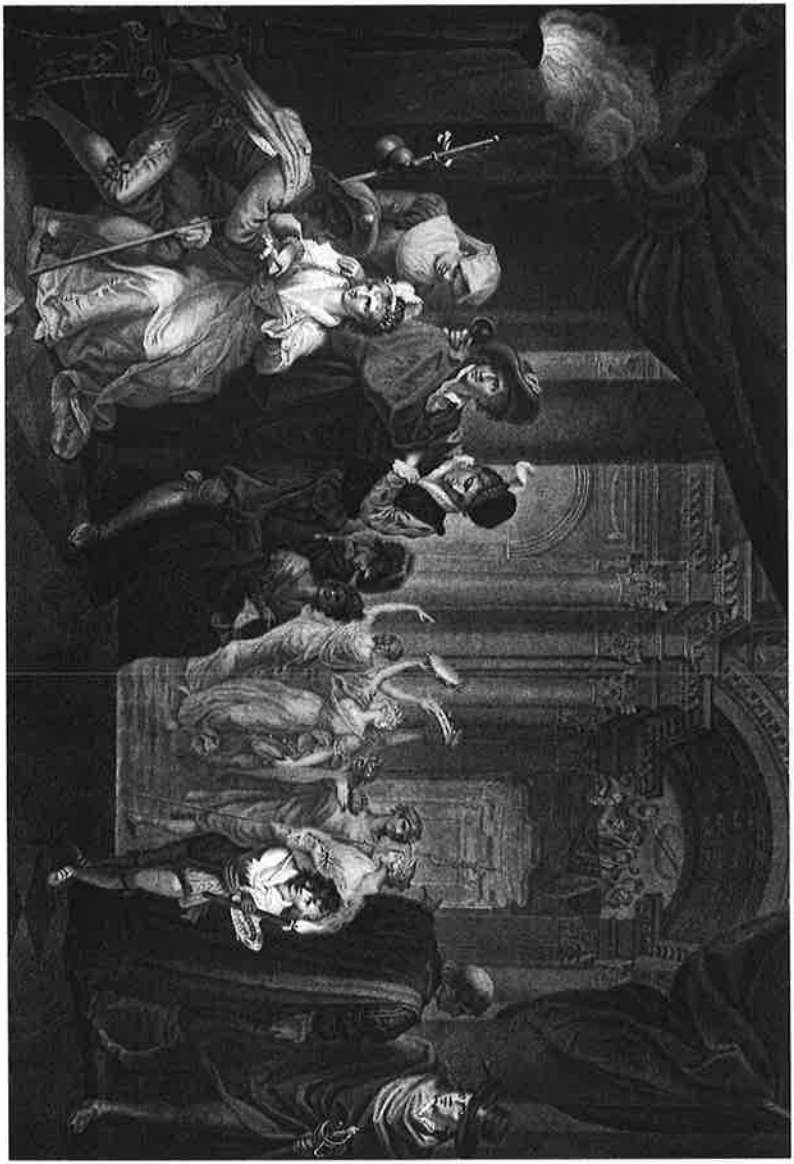

Figure 4: *Romeo & Juliet*, act 1, scene 5.

Figure 5: *Romeo & Juliet*, act 4, scene 5.

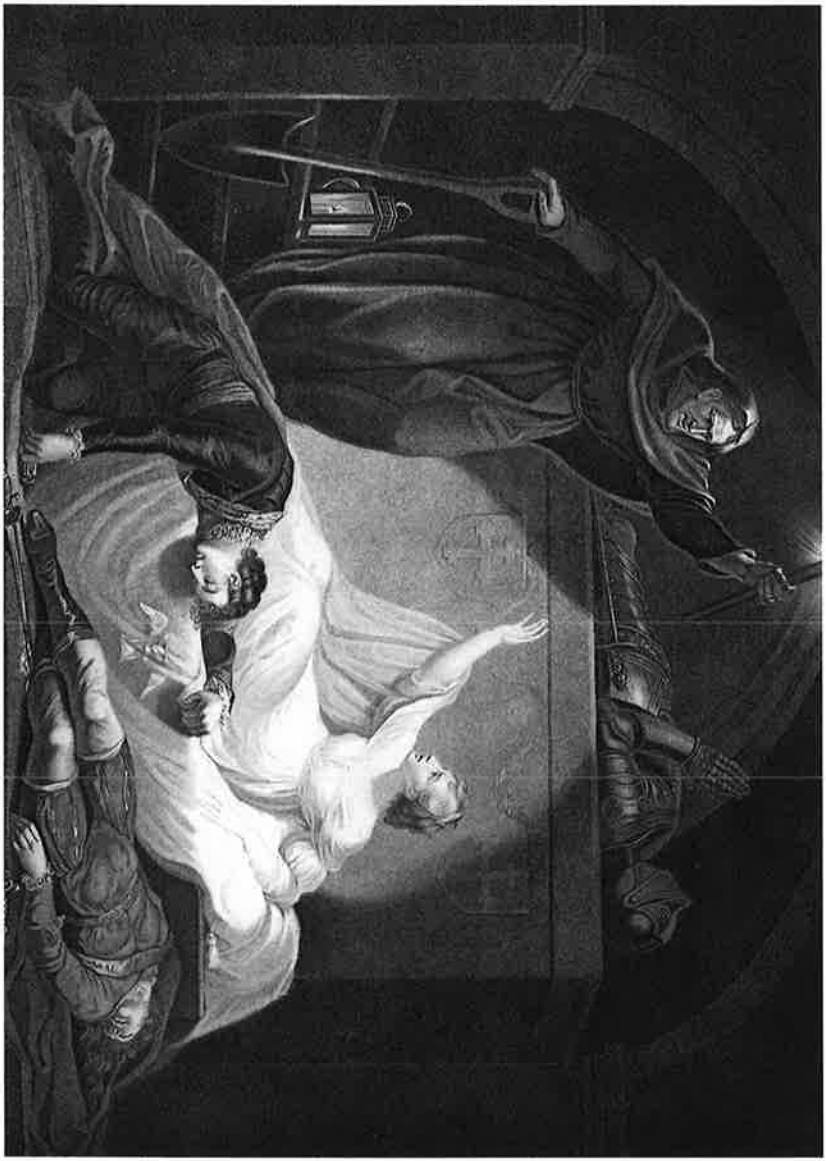

Figure 6: *Romeo & Juliet*, act 5, scene 3.

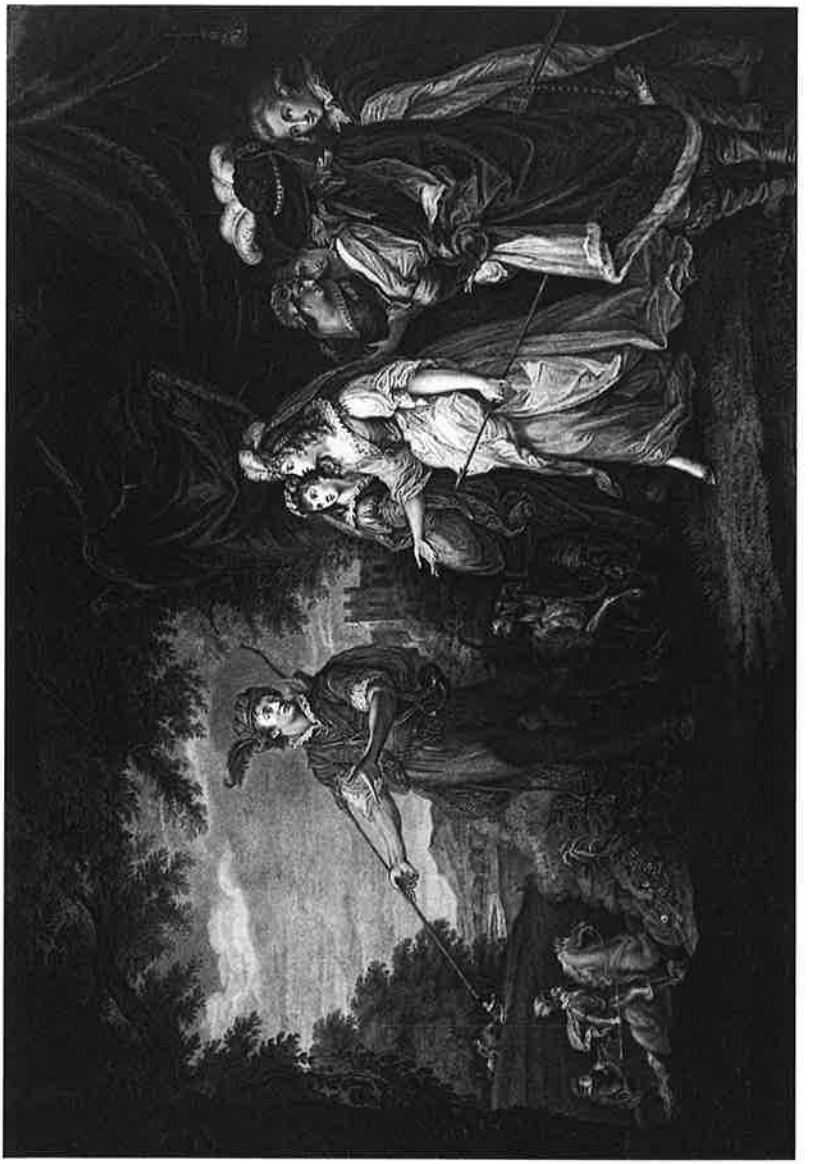

Figure 7: *Love's Labour's Lost*, act 4, scene 1.

poetry in terms of its twin genius and humanity by referring to him as "a *man* take him for all in all" (i.e., what Samuel Johnson meant when he praised the Bard as "the poet of nature, the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life").[30] It is important to remember that, as John Boydell explained in the original catalogue, the intention of the gallery was to establish an English School of Historical Painting; thus, the blatant physical and intellectual force exuded from the poet's actual physical stature in the Banks piece, as well as the adoration of the muses who surround him, all suggest that English painting is a new artistic force to be reckoned with.

Inside the gallery, the paintings were arranged in no particular order. Boydell did not place any constrictions on the artists to paint particular scenes from the plays, and often artists would duplicate the same scene twice by reinterpreting it in a new or different manner. It is interesting to note that not all of the plays are represented, and of the ones that are, they are not all represented equally (i.e., an equal number of scenes from each play). Even more surprising, some of the artists chose to render scenes that never appear on the stage. One example is James Northcote's imagining of the murder of the princes (as described by Tyrrel) in act 4, scene 3 of *Richard III*. Since it was up to the artist's discretion to paint what he or she wanted, it is important to remember that the gallery did not initially represent popular taste so much as artistic preference. However, it wasn't long before the actual dissemination of the Boydell Shakespeare images did affect how people thought the plays should look.

Probably the most famous commissioned artist in the group was Henry Fuseli. In all, he produced seven drawings for the Boydell exhibition, including two of the most famous scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Fuseli was a Romantic painter who is reputed to have drawn his first Shakespeare sketch at fifteen.[31] In 1770, while still in his twenties, he left for Rome and studied painting there for nine years. Upon his return, he won his first commissions with Boydell, and by 1786 he was an artistic force in his own right (in 1799 he was made Professor at the Royal Academy). Today, his so-called "Rome notebook" is considered by many art historians to be the richest source of sketches from the plays in the eighteenth century. Generally speaking, "[Fuseli's] Shakespearian drawings fall into two classes, the studies of single scenes in line or line with wash, and those generally called the 'Sistine fantasies,'" which are more imaginative in scope and vision and include the images inspired by *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.[32]

The painting in figure 2 of act 4, scene 1 depicts a wood, Titania (in center) arching her hand over Bottom (seated center) with Puck on his shoulder. The Puck figure is rendered as a devilish fellow while the fairies all exude a complacent serenity in their shy smiles. Bottom is portrayed as holding a tiny man in his left palm, so as to suggest that humanity in its most traditional sense is apart or separate from this beastly creature; thus, amidst the forest communion of goblins, fairies, wood nymphs, and demons, mankind is something to be marveled at in a miniaturized form, rather than studied in any empirical fashion. In this print, man is the exception to the supernatural dream world that the play inspires, and the dwarfing of the human body only makes this point more evident by its contrast to the overwhelming images of phantasmagoria that surround it.

In the second painting (figure 3), Fuseli depicts act 4, scene 1 a bit differently. Instead of illustrating the psycho-dramatic development of the play symbolically by miniaturizing a tiny man, he actually renders the transformation explicit by portraying Bottom as a man in labor who is wearing a painful expression of anguish and exhaustion. By moving the viewer's eye counter clockwise over Bottom's shoulders, Fuseli elaborates on the literal transformation that is occurring here by depicting the various stages of man. Here there is also a darkened Puck, again holding his hands over his mouth, and a somewhat forlorn, perhaps anxious, Titania—this time seated center—looking away from the birthing event. On all sides of the print, the sinister aspects of the forest creatures are highlighted in a myriad of fanciful faces that all suggest a mix of pleasure and pain, glee and sorrow, attention and carelessness. In both of the paintings, the psychological elements of the play's dream motif are emphasized over the literalness of the play's events. In both cases, a dream-like state is induced for the viewer by the details of the prints. Thus, it only takes one shy, quick glance to experience the disorienting imaginative journey that the audience is taken on in the course of the play. Once again, since the mental components of the play are being embraced in both of these Romantic portrayals, it comes as no surprise that a period setting would later be rendered irrelevant to the play's actual staging, when the interior drama of the man to beast transformation is emphasized instead.

If Fuseli is a good example of the Romantic influence on the gallery's collection and the subsequent stage interpretations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that followed the eighteenth century (most of which also emphasized the play's fantastic staging, costuming,

and set design in their productions), it is also important to remember that the Boydell prints also included more deliberate portrayals of famous Shakespeare scenes. In William Miller's *Romeo and Juliet* (figure 4), he renders the Capulet home for the Boydell audience. In the left corner of the picture, Romeo is seen grasping Juliet's reluctant hand while his friends look on for protection. The hall is decidedly neoclassical with its grand marble columns, stone tile floors, and mural ceilings. While Romeo and Juliet are clothed in Elizabethan garb, the dancers in the background are costumed in Greco-Roman togas complete with laurel wreaths on their heads and tambourines in their hands. The festivities of the gathering are emphasized in the center of the piece, but the scene is actually being played out to its left. Here Juliet's expression is rendered somewhat ambivalent, and her body is positioned a bit stiffly in comparison to Romeo's more engaging posture. It is also interesting to note the billowing velvet curtains that appear in the upper right and left corners the painting; their presence openly invokes a stage-like feel and frames the theatricality of the Capulet's opulent masquerade with an explicit allusion to future productions of the play.

The eighteenth century's citizens were no strangers to the notion of grand, wealthy gatherings, and the masquerade-like atmosphere of the Capulet hall suggests both the excesses associated with such events in the eighteenth century and the potentially tragic outcome of the unsuitable romantic pairings that did often occur there.[33] In the eighteenth century, the masquerade carried a specific cultural currency and was usually thought of as something to be approached with great apprehension. Thus it comes as no surprise that both Miller and the gallery's guests might be drawn to considering this scene in particular from the play, given all of the controversy and debate that surrounded such events in the periodical and fiction writing of the day.

The technique of imparting a still image with either an allusion to its present context (i.e., the masquerade) or future staging (i.e., as evidenced in the billowing stage curtains found in the Miller print) is not limited solely to the Miller print, though. Indeed, the tactic is invoked again in John Opie's imagining of act 4, scene 5 of *Romeo and Juliet* (figure 5). Here the stage curtains at the top of the piece, as well as the center staging of the bed on a raised platform, are emphasized by the light shining on Paris, who is leaning over a sleeping Juliet. And while the lighting in the print initially focuses on Friar Laurence center stage, the eye is soon drawn to a sleeping Juliet on the far right, thanks to the lines of

the billowing curtains. Again and again in the Boydell gallery, scenes are framed by parted curtains that seem to suggest the actual staging of the plays by meta-dramatically encasing the image. However, I am certainly not the first to note this innovation.

In "John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery and the Stage," Frederick Burwick finds much evidence that many of these still images translated to, if not actually initiated, many staging and directing practices in the eighteenth century that are now traditionally associated with a Shakespeare production. For Burwick, some of these features include "stage settings, costuming, acting, gesture, and expression"[34] Taking all of these components into consideration, Burwick asserts that the Boydell images might have actually suggested to their guests how a play might look, or how it should look, if they were to see it.[35] Coincidence or not, many of the "stage features" that Burwick observes in many of the Boydell prints (for example, the use of a raised platform to construct a "stage upon a stage" in a bed prop—as is used in both the Opie [figure 5] and Northcote prints [figure 6]) were also soon documented in post-Romantic London productions.[36] Thus, it was not long before life began imitating art in the eighteenth century—at least in terms of how some elements of the Boydell prints soon intersected with the actual productions of the plays.

While it is impossible to tell which came first (i.e., did the gallery affect the eighteenth-century "stage features" of setting and costuming that are now associated with most Shakespeare productions, or did it merely reflect their ever increasing popularity?), it is important to understand that for many of the visitors who toured the gallery, their stage expectations were, in a sense, concretized by the power of the image before them. For many citizens of the eighteenth century, this was the closest they would ever come to seeing many of these Shakespeare plays "performed." And, as noted above, many of the most prominent artists who participated in the gallery only encouraged this association with elements (i.e., the billowing velvet curtains or the "stage upon a stage") that only reinforced the relationship between the still images and the theatre in the public's mind.

In the final image from the collection of prints illustrating *Romeo and Juliet* that I would like to look at, James Northcote depicts what he ironically calls a "monument" belonging to the Capulets (figure 6). Here Juliet is portrayed as reaching out to the friar, framed by a light and dark contrast that, again, resembles stage curtains on either side of the piece; furthermore, Juliet's awakening occurs in front of what appears to be a mausoleum of sorts that is

placed center stage and that is reminiscent of the "stage upon a stage" seen earlier in the Opie print. Again, as in most of the prints in the Boydell collection, all of the characters are robed in Elizabethan garb, and while this is common practice for a Shakespeare production today, it is significant to note that this was not always the case. In fact, Burwick argues that it was not until the mid-eighteenth century that costuming began to depart from contemporary dress (this was true even for the Roman plays).[37]

Thus, as repertory theatres slowly expanded their holdings in order to include more historically accurate pieces (a movement that was not realized in full force until after the 1790's), it is no small coincidence that the Boydell Gallery simultaneously exemplified

> the first full scale attempt to illustrate scenes from Shakespeare's plays in historically accurate costuming. For some of the Boydell artists—we might name Fuseli, Peters, among others—'period' costuming was an ambiguous, if not totally irrelevant matter. Other Boydell artists, however, were more closely allied with [such] interests. For John Opie [the painter of the *Othello* print we just saw] as well as Gavin Hamilton, historical costuming was the subject of conscientious research and preparatory sketches."[38]

But the connections between the "stage features" of the Boydell prints and post-romantic productions are not merely limited to the setting, staging, and costuming that Burwick speaks of in his article and that I have noted here. Many of the Boydell prints also reflected unique eighteenth-century aesthetic preferences in such categories as beauty and landscape design.

In the last Boydell print (figure 7), William Hamilton captures the famous eighteenth-century stage actress Sarah Siddons as the Princess in *Love's Labour's Lost*.[39] This is ironic, since as I noted at the beginning of this essay, this play was actually the least performed in the course of the eighteenth century. However, Siddon's appearance in the picture does suggest Hamilton's admiration for the actress's talent and beauty as well as his obvious desire to see her perform the role. Yet there are other features of the print, namely the inclusion of the majestic oak tree on the far left (a recurrent symbol of gentry wealth in the landscape design of the late eighteenth century) and the rendering of the famous Brownian park in the background, that all suggest the play's unique Enlightenment association even then, despite its veritable absence in the London theatres. (Additionally, it is also important to note, again, the billowing stage curtains that are realized at the top right

plays that had not been popular for many years by lending them new visual contexts that made them seem more relevant to contemporary preference than they might have before.

All in all, then, the Boydell Gallery reminds us of the persistence of a still image in terms of what an eighteenth-century audience has already seen as well as what they might expect to see when they do go to the theatre. The Boydells' massive aim not only to establish a English Scbool of Historical Painting, but also to convey some of the most famous Shakespeare scenes to the masses of Londoners who might not ever be afforded with the opportunity to see all of the plays in their full scale production, was thus ultimately successful, at least in the sense of generating a popular interest in the Bard and thus affecting what the public wanted to see. Of course, the exact relationship between the gallery's images and the London stage is hardly a simple one. What is clear, though, is that the Shakespeare Gallery, despite much of the recent critical disdain associated with it, was a monumental moment in terms of its celebration of Shakespeare as England's national poet. Thus, as Frederick Burwick asserts, there should be no doubt that whatever its exact correspondence is to the productions that followed it, the Boydell Gallery certainly did affect the later staging and directing of the plays in its way—not to mention the sheer popularity of Shakespeare.[40] And it accomplished this feat through the persistence of the visual imagery that the gallery installed in the public's consciousness which allowed a spectator either to see a still version of a Shakespeare play for the first time or to marvel at the Bard's transcendence—all over again.

Notes

1. "Fair is Foul: Shakespeare Portrait Is a Fake," *The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland, OH), April 21, 2005.

2. Quoted in *The Plain Dealer,* April 21, 2005.

3. *William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream,* VHS directed by Michael Hoffmann (1998; Beverly Hills, CA: Fox Searchlight Pictures and Regency Entertainment, 1999).

4. H.R. Woudhysen, introduction to *Love's Labour's Lost*, by William Shakespeare, The Arden Shakespeare Series, ed. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kasten, (Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, UK: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd, 1998), 1-106.

5. Ibid., 94.

6. Ibid. In the introduction to the play, Woudhysen cites this film version—*Love's Labour's Lost,* VHS, directed by Elijah Moshinsky (1984; Paramus, NJ: Time Life Video, 1984).

7. Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Authorship* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1992), 3.

8. All of the images used in this paper have been digitally scanned (with permission by Ayer Company Publishers) from *The Boydell Shakespeare Prints: With an Introduction by A.E. Santaniello* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968). In deciding which of the prints to talk about in my essay, as well as to reproduce here, I settled upon all of the large plates from the collection that correspond to this year's productions. These include, in order of their discussion in the essay, plate I, *The Alto-Relievo: In the Front of the Shakespeare Gallery, Pall Mall,* executed by J. Banks, R.A., engraved by B. Smith; plate XX, *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Act IV, Scene I: A Wood* (Titania, Queen of the Fairies, Bottom, Fairies attending & co.), painted by H. Fuseli, R.A., engraved by P. Simon; plate XXI, *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Act IV, Scene I* (Oberon, Queen of the Fairies, Puck, Bottom, Fairies attending & co.), painted by H. Fuseli, R.A., engraved by T. Ryder; plate XLI, *Romeo and Juliet, Act I. Scene V: A Hall in the Capulet's Home* (Romeo, Juliet, Nurse & co. with the Guests and Maskers), painted by W. Miller, engraved by G.S. and J.G. Facius; plate XLII, *Romeo and Juliet, Act IV, Scene V: Juliet on Her Bed* (Friar Lawrence, Capulet, Lady Capulet, Paris, Friar, Nurse, Musicians, & co.), painted by J. Opie, R.A., engraved by G.S. and J.G. Facius; plate XLIII, *Romeo and Juliet, Act V, Scene III: A Monument Belonging to the Capulets* (Romeo and Paris dead; Juliet and Friar Lawrence), painted by J. Northcote, R.A., engraved by P. Simon; plate XIX, *Love's Labor Lost, Act IV, Scene I: A Pavilion in the Park, near the Palace* (Princess, Rosaline, Maria, Katherine, Lords, Attendants, and a Forester), painted by W. Hamilton, R.A., engraved by T. Ryder.

9. Robin Hamlyn, "The Shakespeare Galleries of John Boydell and James Woodmason," in *Shakespeare in Art,* ed. Jane Martineau et al (London: Merrell, 2003), 97-115.

10. Winifred Friedman, *Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery: Outstanding Dissertations in the Fine Arts* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1976). This text is actually a reprint of her 1974 Harvard dissertation, the first full-scale attempt to address the Boydell Gallery's historical, artistic, and literary significance. Furthermore, Friedman remains the foremost expert on the topic still today.

11. W. Moelwyn Merchant, *Shakespeare and the Artist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 66.

12. Ibid.

13. Frederick Burwick, "John Boydell's *Shakespeare Gallery* and the Stage," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 133 (1997): 54-76.

14. This story is widely reproduced in virtually all of the articles on the Boydell Gallery that I consulted. For two versions, please see Hamlyn, 97, and Merchant, 68.

15. Merchant, *Shakespeare and the Artist,* 69.

16. Winifred Friedman, "Some Commercial Aspects of the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 36 (1973): 396-401, 397.

17. Merchant, *Shakespeare and the Artist,* 69.

18. Hamlyn, "The Shakespeare Galleries," 99.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.; see also Merchant, *Shakespeare and the Artist,* 69.

21. Hamlyn, "The Shakespeare Galleries," 99.

22. Ibid.
23. Quoted in Merchant, *Shakespeare and the Artist*, 68.
24. Friedman, "Some Commercial Aspects," 398.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., 400.
28. Ibid.
29. Quoted in Friedman, "Some Commercial Aspects," 401.
30. Samuel Johnson, "The Preface to Shakespeare," in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, The Restoration and Eighteenth Century*, ed. Lawrence Lipking, 7th ed., (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2000), 2727.
31. Merchant, *Shakespeare and the Artist*, 78.
32. Ibid., 79.
33. The masquerade was a constant source of anxiety and awe in eighteenth-century culture, so it should come as no great surprise that Miller would choose to illustrate this event from the play. For more information on the symbolism associated with the masquerade, see Terry Castle's *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986).
34. Burwick, "John Boydell's *Shakeskpeare Gallery*," 55.
35. Ibid., 59.
36. Ibid. Burwick writes of this innovation in relation to eighteenth-century productions of *Othello* specifically, but it is also evidenced in both of the prints from *Romeo and Juliet* collection that I am addressing here. If I remember correctly, I believe that the 2003 Utah Shakespeare Festival also employed this type of prop in its production of *Othello*.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., 60.
39. Ibid., 64.
40. Ibid., 55.