HENRY FUSELI'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BOYDELL SHAKESPEARE GALLERY: THEIR PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF SHAKESPEARE ILLUSTRATION

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ABSTRACT

HENRY FUSELI'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BOYDELL SHAKESPEARE GALLERY: THEIR PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF SHAKESPEARE ILLUSTRATION

By

D. Brooke Jolliff

This study is an attempt to place the Fuseli paintings for the Boydell Gallery both in the context of their time and in the history of Shakespeare illustration. Very little has been written in this area and there is no systematic study of Shakespeare illustration before the Boydell Gallery save for T.S. Boase's excellent but brief article. This seems to be symptomatic of an approach which tends to divorce any illustration studied from an art historical point of view from the text involved. My own research on Shakespeare illustration has depended largely upon the resources of the Florence Rathbun Private Collection and has approached the works as they have reflected the textual changes in Shakespeare editions. This approach seems particularly necessary when dealing with the Fuseli illustrations, as he was a literary scholar in his own right as well as an accomplished artist. Only in this way can one do justice to these paintings in an iconographical study. By examining the contemporary texts and critical

climate, it has been possible to suggest that Fuseli was in large part inspired by and dependent on the literary rather than the artistic establishment of his day.

Scholarly research concerning these paintings is far from nearing its conclusion. I hope that this study has underscored the need for an organic approach to these and like works with the kind of vigorous iconographical scholarship that one finds in Medieval and Renaissance studies.

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D. Brooke Jolliff

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DEDICATION

TO

FLORENCE MANN RATHBUN

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THE BOYDELL GALLERY

The Boydell Shakespeare Gallery was one of the most lavish enterprises in the history of English painting: an entire building was dedicated to the exhibition of new paintings based on Shakespeare's works which was opened to the public "on the site of Mr. Dodsley's House" in Pall Mall in 1789.[1] In addition to the Gallery and the especially commissioned paintings, the Boydell venture was responsible for two landmarks in the history of English publishing: the nine-volume folio "National" edition of the complete dramatic works, edited by George Stevens and published in 1802 in a magnificent format designed and executed by the great typographer, William Bulmer, and a huge atlas folio volume consisting of one hundred engraved prints after paintings in the gallery, published in 1803 as "A Collection of Prints from Pictures painted for the purpose of illustrating the dramatic works of Shakespeare by the Artists of Great Britain."[2]

All one hundred plates remain in the Collection of Prints, taken from the larger paintings in the Gallery, as well as the one hundred separate engraved prints in the

nine-volume edition of the plays, all of which were based on smaller paintings. The original Gallery of paintings is now dispersed and of the approximately two hundred drawings and paintings in the collection, no more than forty can be positively identified today and many of these are in poor condition.[3] The surviving engraved prints are the only adequate record of the Gallery and, because of the unique importance of the Gallery, a record of the achievements and limitations of much of English art at the end of the eighteenth century. They give one an invaluable insight into the tastes and attitudes of the art-conscious public and, within the limitations of the engraving medium, they reveal the aesthetic techniques of almost every recognized artist of the day. The Boydell prints are an indication of the impact of Shakespeare on the imagination of English artists and consititute a chapter in the long history of efforts to create a pictorial counterpart to the familiar characters and scenes in the plays.

The Boydell Shakespeare Gallery and the two publications that came from it were an extraordinary combination; at once a business venture, an assertion of national pride, and an artistic declaration of independence. It was John Boydell's heartfelt wish that his Gallery would inspire a great national school of painting, a uniquely English school, on inspiration drawn from that inexhaustible source

of sublime moral ideas, the great national poet, Shakespeare; and not only to have this school inspired by his English genius, but to have its very thematic material based directly on his immortal text.[4] This, it was hoped, would be the perfect union of two arts and evidence that England's painters were worthy of the international renown already accorded the poet. The project unfolded with a display of energy and fanfare that captivated attention and that still leaves one with questions about the complex motivation of its originators. Sponsored by John Boydell, the most successful and honored and generous publisher and patron of English engravers, fed by the talents of the acknowledged master artists (and many of the minor ones) of the time, the entire venture had a largeness of imagination that intrigued the public and aroused the greatest of expectations.

It was readily made known that Boydell would command (and pay well for the privilege) the services of Sir Joshua Reynolds and Romney and Benjamin West and a host of others, most prominent among them Northcote, Opie, Matthew Peters, Francis Wheatly, and Fuseli.[5] And if Boydell could capture painters by the dozens, he certainly could do the same for engravers. From the opening exhibition in 1789 to the end of the venture in 1805, the paintings and the engraved prints were looked at, were argued over in gossip column and Academy discussion, were praised

and condemned, and even caricatured with an interest that kept surprisingly alive for almost two decades.[6] The number of years during which the Gallery was in existence meant, of course, that it would live inevitably through a change in artistic tastes. Those who viewed the paintings at the end of the period and in the next generation would look upon the praise of the past decades as unfathomable and find the paintings decidedly not to their taste.[7] The honorable and altruistic motives of the Gallery's founders would be questioned and the merciless James Gillray would design an apocalyptic vision showing a greedy Boydell presiding over the sacrifice of Shakespeare's works, a sacrifice to the god Money-Bags, with several of the Gallery's most popular paintings readily identifiable in the smoke.[8] And, of course, there would be the resistance of those romantics, Charles Lamb at their head, who thought any effort to grasp the ineffable genius of Shakespeare in paint sheer effrontery.[9] To these, of course, the Gallery was a failure from its conception.

But most of this criticism took shape late in the Gallery's career. In the beginning, the venture met with wide approval. The paintings were commissioned and displayed, engravings made and sold, the vast undertaking of the National edition of the plays carried on, and the monumental atlas edition of engraved plates created: all with an assured and stately pace in keeping with the grand

ideals and lofty ambition that had inspired the Gallery's creators. The audacity of the whole undertaking is inescapable; the attempt to create at one blow a tradition that had taken decades to mature on the Continent, and to guarantee success by providing liberal commissions and commodious exhibition space.[10] Full exposure could thus be given to a school created by the great collection of engravings and by the National edition, itself well illustrated. Seen purely as advertising, the name of Shakespeare could hardly be improved upon. It was expected that after the great success of the Gallery English artists would rise to the occasion and soon prove themselves capable of the final test of genius-painting composed according to the rules of the great art capitals. Boydell and his fellows were certain, as were most contemporary connoisseurs, that historical painting was the challenge that had to be met. Only here would those awful and sublime emotions, made fruitful through a wholesome didactic purpose and well ordered by the most rational rules of composition, create in the percipient the response proper to great art. The moral intentions of historical painting were in no way impaired when it was found that the word "historical" could be rather loosely interpreted. Since Benjamin West's successful application of the canon of historical painting rules to a relatively contemporary event (in his painting of the death of General Wolfe,

exhibited in 1771), the artist began to look closer to home for his subject matter. West had been historical, he had, of course, been "correct" in his composition, but more important, he had put modern dress on his figures and even included an Indian or two for authenticity. He showed that nationalism, or at least national interests, could live harmoniously (and without disguise) with the ideals of classical composition. To the serious and Academy-trained artist, the Boydell Gallery provided an excellent chance for experimentation. With West's great triumph in mind, suddenly the artist was offered Shakespeare. The connection was not as remote as it at first might seem. Shakespeare was primarily a national poet, a treasure of historical scenes, patriotic sentiment, an authentic national character. He was a convenient bridge between the artist and a national school of historical painting. Philosophically, of course, Shakespeare, along with Milton, Homer, and Ossian, was already on those Kantian heights toward which historical painting struggled. In certain of the comedies, where the moral might not be too much in evidence, there was still a wealth of narrative detail that was extremely useful, since narrative was a valued part of the desired good painting.

There were other reasons why Shakespeare was the inevitable choice for those looking for the cornerstone of a national school. Throughout the eighteenth century, the growing adulation accorded the poet had taken many

forms, the most commendable of which was the labor spent in creating a reliable, accurate, and clear text--although it did not seem contradictory to their aims to include contemporary revisions of the plays commensurate with contemporary taste. From the first commentary of Nicholas Rowe in 1709, through the progressively more scholarly and critical editions of Pope, Theobald, Hanmer, Warburton, Steevans, Copell, and Malone, the poet absorbed the attention of the best English scholars.[11] Accompanying this effort to establish a text was the task of finding visual counterparts of the great scenes and characters. The public appetite for an "illustrated" Shakespeare had been fed by publisher after publisher: Tonson's 1714 edition, the 1744 edition of Sir John Hanmer, Bell's low-priced 1773 and 1785 editions, and the Picturesque Beauties of Shakespeare with 40 plates by Smirke and Stothard, published in 1783.[12] The Englishman's preferred version of Shakespeare was an edition with pictures, pictures that kept pace with the changing trends in drama and stage design as well as in aesthetic ideas and artistic techniques. The Boydell paintings, a novel enterprise for the time, thus had roots in the tradition of Shakespeare illustration throughout the century. The total project, Gallery, text edition, and prints, epitomized several streams of thought in the century: the glorification of Shakespeare the great national poet, the concern for a sound text presented

appropriately illustrated, the search for an English tradition in painting, and the attitude toward historical painting.

Although the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery failed to unite the different forces at work in English art into one school which would follow the recognized tradition of historical painting, the Gallery had several immediate benefits for the artist. Gallery-going was an essential feature of London cultural life in the 1780's and the galleries provided the artist with the opportunity to confront his public and to be confronted by it. The kind of commission the Boydell Gallery gave allowed the artist a wider field of experimentation than he usually had. This was still the era of the portrait, and for many English artists the average commission was for a likeness. With the Boydell commissions came a chance to draw upon a myriad of characters and a range of dramatic events of every degree of emotional intensity. The possibilities for composition, for expressive gesture and mood were endless. The paintings in the Gallery could be faulted on many points, but few critics have ever denied their variety. For more than fifteen years the Gallery displayed a series of canvases that showed what the English artist would attempt if he had freedom from the economic necessity of portrait painting. The importance of this aspect of the Gallery can be appreciated when it is realized that the main body

of recognized English artists of the period worked under its commission at one time or another.

Boydell matched this chance for experimentation with a wide range of thematic material with generous stipends. His liberality to the engravers who had made his print publishing firm the foremost supplier of English engravings gave him an unrivaled reputation as a patron of the arts. He was, in the words of Edmund Burke, "England's Commercial Maecenas."[13] No historian of the Boydell enterprise has failed to note how unusual for the time were these generous stipends. Benjamin West and Sir Joshua Reynolds were given 1000 guineas for each of their contributions and in the lower brackets, artists were paid 600 guineas per painting in most cases. Boydell said that the entire operation--Gallery, text edition, paintings, drawings, and the copperplates--had cost 300,000 pounds of which 42,666 were spent on paintings alone.[14] It was an unprecedented amount of money to be expended on one artistic venture by a private group and certainly an extraordinary sum to be spent with such little restriction on the artist's freedom. Northcote summed up the attitude of many of the Gallery's painters when he wrote: "Boydell did more for the advancement of the arts in England than the whole mass of the nobility put together."[15]

The origin of the idea of the Shakespeare Gallery has been disputed. Romney and the printer and bookseller,

George Nicall, both claimed the idea as their own.[16] Henry Fuseli insisted that he had first thought of the plan and Northcote claimed that he had provided the impulse to set the venture going by his own successful career as an historical painter. What is certain amid these claims and conjectures is that the ideas for a grand series of Shakespeare paintings in the historical manner was the topic of conversation at a dinner given in November of 1786 by John Boydell's nephew and partner, Josiah.[17] When one of the guests congratulated Boydell on his successful efforts to give English engravings an international reputation, he is said to have replied that "Old as he was he would like to wipe away the stigma which all foreign countries threw on this nation, that we have no genius for historical painting."[18]

Boydell saw the low repute of English painting as the kind of challenge he had met when he first began to publish engravings in the middle of the century. Then the art of the engraver was at its lowest ebb and England was importing thousands of pounds worth of French prints annually while exporting none of her own. By 1786, mainly as a result of Boydell's enterprise, exports of English engraved prints had climbed to 200,000 pounds annually while imports had sunk to 100 pounds.[19] Boydell had proved "to the French nation that an Englishman could produce a print of equal merit."[20] The Shakespeare Gallery idea

offered an opportunity to crown with the title of founder of English historical painting his secure reputation as the first and greatest of fine arts publishers in England. When the scheme was broadened to include plans for a folio edition of the plays, there came another opportunity; to show the nation and the world a superb example of English typography and book design.[21] The Shakespeare Gallery and the two published memeorials to it--the folio edition of the plays and the volume of one hundred prints--were to be the summation of a lifetime spent in fostering English art at home and abroad.

But the Gallery failed to create a national school of painting and, of more immediate consequence, failed to become economically viable. The lavish spending that went into the various projects and the length of time it took to produce the text and plates left Boydell poorly provided for the unexpected. When the prolonged conflict with France closed that market for the Gallery engravings, he was placed in straitened circumstances. Close to bankruptcy, Boydell petitioned Parliament for a National Lottery to raise money on the Gallery and its paintings. About 45,000 pounds were realized through the sale of two guinea tickets and when the lottery was held, it was won by a Mr. Tassie, a famous maker of cameos and medallions in wax. Tassie, in turn, sold the paintings at auction in 1805. A mere 6,181 pounds were all the paintings could

fetch, a depressing end to such noble expectations.[22] This sad conclusion has perhaps cast its shadow over the entire history of the Boydell enterprise. The dispersal of the paintings and damage done by time to the few that can be positively identified today have joined with the hostility to "historical" painting in general to prejudice the case against the Gallery and have made it somewhat difficult to gauge its real position in the development of English painting.

An evaluation of the Gallery is, of course, hampered by the loss of so many of its paintings. It is, therefore, to the engraved prints that one must turn, for here the Gallery exists almost in its entirety. From 1789 to almost the end of the venture, large folio proofs and prints were being published in a uniform size of 20 by 27 inches.[23] The original plan for publication had called for seventy-nine smaller prints to illustrate the text volumes, a number later increased to one hundred.[24] The separate folio volume of prints after the larger paintings was a connoisseur's book, elaborately designed and priced at sixty guineas. In creating the prints, Boydell ran into unexpected delay and difficulties. Many of the best engravers were already engaged and he could not draw upon their services.[25] As a result the engravings contain few examples by such acknowledged masters as Bartolozzi and Schiavonetti. The bulk of the work fell to less prominent but generally competent craftsmen, among them Robert Thew,

J. Peter Simon, James Parker, and Thomas Ryder.[26] The choice of engraving technique, the stipple method, has been criticized frequently on several counts. The engraver, John Landseer, whom Boydell had not employed on the Shakespeare prints, insisted that the art of engraving had suffered as a result of the popularity of stipple, a popularity that came out of its use in the Shakespeare prints.[27] The stipple engravings have also been criticized for the dullish blurred results evident in a number of prints.[28] But when varied with line engraving as frequently happened, stipple proved highly effective.

In spite of the weakness of a number of the prints, many, particularly those after paintings by Northcote, Fuseli, Benjamin West, Peters, and Smirke, are excellent. Often the engraving seems to be more successful than the original painting or at least more successful than the age-ravaged examples of the originals. This is particularly true of Fuseli where faulty coloring or poor choice of pigments has darkened the original and obscured the dynamic relationship of line and overall pattern that is so telling a quality of Fuseli's work.

The entire collection of prints, for all the defects of execution and limitations of technique, offers a panorama of billiant scenes and fully realized characters. They are to twentieth century taste a bit "dramatic" in the worst sense of the word and when they err it is on

the side of the overblown and one feels, inane. But the best of them are illuminating comments on the plays and on the contemporary state of Shakespeare criticism. Even if the paintings as a group failed to create a unique style in the visual interpretation of Shakespeare, their importance in the history of Shakespeare illustrations cannot be denied.

NOTES - CHAPTER I

[1]Lawrence Thompson, "The Boydell Shakespeare; An English Movement to Graphic Arts," Princeton University Library Chronicle, 1, 1940, 9.

[2]The Boydell Shakespeare Prints, New York, 1968, 1.

[3]T.S.R. Boase, "Illustrations of Shakespeare's Plays in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," Journal of the Warburg Institute, 10, 1947, 105.

[4]Thomas Bolston, "John Boydell, Publisher: The Commercial Maecenas," Signature, 8, 1948, 118.

[5]Boase, 190.

[6]M.C. Salaman, Shakespeare in Pictorial Art, London, 1916, 19.

[7]J.N. Tolfourd, Final Memorials of Charles Lamb, London, II, 1848, 108.

[8]Sadakichi Hartman, Shakespeare in Art, Boston, 1907, 56.

[9]Tolfourd, 108.

[10]Thompson, 12.

[11]Boase, 81.

[12]W. Moelwyn Merchants, Shakespeare and the Artist, London, 1928, 85.

[13]Bolson, 116.

[14]Thompson, 14.

[15]J. Northcote, Memoirs of Sir Joshua Reynolds, London, 1813, 330.

[16]Thompson, 17.

[17]Ibid., 17.

[18]Bolston, 117.

[19]Algernon Graves, "Boydell and His Engravers," The Queen, July-December, 1904, 251.

[20]Ibid., 251.

[21]Ibid., 253.

[22]Hartman, 77.

[23]Thompson, 18.

[24]Ibid., 18.

[25]Graves, 253.

[26]Ibid., 253.

[27]Ibid., 254.

[28]Ibid., 254.

CHAPTER II

A SHORT HISTORY OF SHAKESPEARE ILLUSTRATION UP TO AND INCLUDING THE BOYDELL GALLERY

The Elizabethan religious settlement, for all its carefully-steered middle course, had no half measures in its condemnation of religious paintings. Ecclesiastical patronage of the visual arts ceased abruptly with the English Reformation and with its demise there was no sufficient demand to stimulate the production of historical paintings drawn from other fields. More and more, native English painting limited itself to portraiture or landscape and was content to leave the grand manner to the continent. The first folio of Shakespeare came from the press in 1623 unillustrated as did the next two folios of 1633-4 and 1685.[1] From 1700 onward the number of editions increased geometrically as the interest in and critical acclaim for Shakespeare increased. Most of them, however, were not illustrated and were even without a portrait of Shakespeare--the common accompaniment to the earlier texts. A vignette, a head or tail piece, was all the share the illustrator had in most of these editions. There were, however, notable exceptions which reflected the great effort of

emendation and commentary of the Shakespearian text to which the eighteenth century devoted so much pain and ingenuity. The attempt to find appropriate visual images followed on a much smaller scale the immense skill that was being given to the establishment of a sound and intelligible text.

The Tonson edition of 1709 had a frontispiece engraved by Michael van der Gucht showing a portrait of Shakespeare in a roundel, supported by Tragedy and Comedy, while above Fame blows her trumpet. Van der Gucht signed the plate but it was not an original design. It was, in fact, lifted bodily from a 1660 edition of Corneille's plays and was originally meant to be a portrait of that author.[2] The first plate illustrating a scene from The Tempest is a scene of thunder and hobgoblins which owes nothing to continental models and must go back to some simple, popular work. Certainly it can represent no stage effect of the time. Most of the others, however, are largely renderings of the scenes as played in the contemporary theatre. Troilus and Cressida are frankly taking a curtain call and Isabella kneels as an eighteenth century dame before a periwigged Angelo (and singularly fails to convey any of the passionate intensity of the scene). In the same costumes Hamlet and his mother play the closet scene, Hamlet having overthrown his chair as he leaps up at his father's apparition--a piece of traditional staging, possibly invented by the great actor,

Betterton, who helped with the Tonson edition and toured Warwickshire seeking information about Shakespeare.[3] In some of the later plays, Pericles and those following, a somewhat different and rather more sophisticated treatment prevailed and suggests another hand. Tonson was clearly not satisfied by the standard of the whole production, for in 1914 the edition was reissued with extensive modification of the plates which were considerably modernized.[4] Louis du Guernier was the artist called in to supervise the revision. He repeated the frontispiece, altering the portrait head, and many of the plates were completely changed. Du Guernier designed sixteen new ones which he signed himself, sometimes illustrating the same scene as in the previous editions, sometimes choosing a different episode with altered backgrounds and more modish costumes. Five plates are substantially unaltered. King John and Antony and Cleopatra are signed E. Kirkall and resemble the more elaborate plates of the first edition of the later plays. Kirkall was an experimenter in engraving techniques and was the first pirater of Hogarth's Harlot's Progress. Louis du Guernier had a conventional French style, on the whole somewhat unimaginative in execution and invention. For the primitive goblins of the first edition Tempest, Guernier substituted a stately Prospero pointing out Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess to an elegantly posed and immaculate group of courtiers with a classical pediment

rising above the trees in the background. In Richard II, a lively murder scene in the prison is replaced by the more dignified incident of the surrender of the crown. The overturned chair disappears from the closet scene and Hamlet and his mother assume more stylish and up-to-date clothes.

Tonson's editions were the first great attempt to fully illustrate an edition of Shakespeare. They did not, however, produce any final solution to any of the problems. No character was visualized so aptly as to become a permanent and recognized figure. Falstaff, so well recognized by sight today or in the nineteenth century, was haltingly treated. The first edition has a vaguely Elizabethan figure, paunchy and characterless. Du Guernier drew a bewigged and clean-shaven Falstaff climbing into the buck-basket. There is no agreed convention, no awareness of a character so very nearly real and alive by virtue of so many idiosyncrasies. T.S.R. Boase puts this failure to the exclusive use of foreign artists. I think it might better be put to a corollary cause; there is no reason to suspect that any of Tonson's artists had read through the plays and understood them. Each of the plates depict scenes isolated from their significance as a whole. Without the written titles it is often impossible to identify plays from the visual evidence, much less the act, scene, and specific characters as is often possible with the Boydell paintings, particularly Fuseli's.

In 1740, the edition of Theobald's Shakespeare appeared with a new set of plates, new but not very novel.[5] They were designed by Hubert Francois Gravelot and engraved by himself or by Gerard van der Gucht, Michael's son.[6] Gravelot had come to England in 1732 to help Claude du Bosc on the English edition of Picart's Ceremonies Religieuses. His Shakespeare scenes make no departure from the accepted French manner and might be transferred without much difficulty to many other subjects. They are curiously similar to the illustrations designed by the same artist some thirty years later for a French edition of Corneille.[7] The French style with its soft lines, somewhat blurred hatching and slight elegant figures can be pretty enough in As You Like It or in the garden scene from Richard II with its version of Windsor Tower, but it is too trivial a manner to cope with the banqueting scene from Macbeth.

Another important edition was the illustrated version of Shakespeare for the Sir John Hanmer folio published by Oxford University Press in 1744.[8]

> "Since therefore," says the preface, "other nations have taken care to dignify the works of their most celebrated poets with the fairest impressions beautified with ornaments of sculpture, well may our Shakespeare be thought to deserve no less consideration: and as a fresh acknowledgement hath lately been paid to his merit, by erecting his statue at a public expense; so it is desired that this new edition of his works which hath cost some attention and care, may be looked upon as another small monument designed and dedicated to his honour."[9]

The statue lately erected was William Kent's memorial figure in Westminster Abbey, and an engraving of it by Gravelot is the frontispiece to Hanmer's Shakespeare. Kent's long career, with its various occupations of history painting, architecture, sculpture, laying out of gardens, designing of dresses and furniture, was now drawing to a close. Much mocked by Hogarth and others, he had struggled to popularize history painting in early eighteenth-century England. At Kensington Palace are two scenes from the life of Henry V which might give him some claim to consideration as a Shakespearian painter, but they follow in detail the history of the reign rather than the scenes of the play.[10] Henry V's bust, however, figures prominently on the pedestal of the statue in Westminster Abbey and is placed immediately below the poet's feet.[11]

Hanmer's six volumes were described as "adorned with sculptures by the best hands."[12] In fact, with the exception of five or six plates by Gravelot, they were all designed by one artist, Francis Hayman.[13] In 1744, Hayman was aged thirty-six and had been trained as a scene painter. His main paintings, decorations for Vauxball Gardens, were carried out in the forties and fifties. They included four Shakespearian subjects, among them Lear in the storm and the play scene from Hamlet. The best of his work went into the ephemeral Vauxhall decorations where it had hard treatment and frequent restoration. Some of

the paintings, scattered after the sale of 1841, when they were nailed to boards and went for about one pound apiece, still survive but the Shakespearian pieces have disappeared. Much of his output was for the engraving of the Hanmer edition and it is here that his style can be most characteristically seen. He accepted the elegant conventions of the French style; his interiors are the graceful rooms of the period where some comedy or tragedy of manners is enacted. In a charming Georgian interior, Mistress Page and Mistress Ford put a clean-shaven Falstaff into the basket. The same type of setting serves for Desdemona's terrible scene with Othello. But the figures are more substantial inventions than anything that Gravelot and du Guernier produced. Expression is restrained and limited, but the groupings, the visual interrelationships of the characters are often portrayed with some real sense of narrative. His Katherine and Petruchio starting off on their ride to Padua is a very pretty farmhouse idyll. Constantly in his figures and fields and woodlands there is a feeling of naturalness, a sense of pose which is found in the early groups of Gainsborough. There is a strong English feeling in his use of French mannerisms, and it is in his art, widely known and popular as it was, that English painting and draughtsmanship absorbed and transformed to its own purpose the continental style. Shakespeare illustration had moved from a pallid imitation

of Corneille to a style befitting not yet Shakespeare but perhaps Fielding or Jane Austen.

Hayman remained much in demand for Shakespeare illustration.[14] In 1770-74, he was again providing frontispieces for single volume editions of the plays, but now there is a greater period sense and some attempt to provide appropriate historical costume. It is a mode less suited to his genius. His earlier Shakespearian scenes, his lively illustrations to Smollett, and some small engravings, almost pure landscape, that he made in 1744 for Edward Moore's Fables for the Female Sex remain his happiest inventions.[15]

Hayman marks the meeting place of two schools, the continental and the English. His achievement required not only the French example but also that of Hogarth, with his direct approach to the play itself, his paintings of the actual theatre, with the gestures and facial expressions of the acting of the time exactly rendered, not conventionalized by any formulas of elegance. As Hogarth himself stated in his moral tales, his Marriage à la Mode, Harlot's Progress, and Two Apprentices, he sought the technique of the theatre to make his narrative points.[16] They are painted novels, and now the novel itself in a sudden maturity of power was opening new fields to English illustrators. Pamela appeared in 1740 and within four years Highmore, basing his art on Hogarth's examples, was

producing paintings in illustration of it.[17] Clarissa followed in 1748 and Tom Jones in 1749. "My general bill of fare," wrote Fielding, "is human nature," though he will in places "hash and ragoo it with all the high French and Italian seasoning of affectation."[18] No words could more aptly describe the English position in the arts at this half-way point of the eighteenth century, and it was a position held with a new confidence. The sudden and immense continental reputation of Richardson, with all civilized Europe sentimentalizing over Pamela, the translation into every language, brought a prestige to English culture only equalled in the days of Scott and Byron. And at the same time the continent was discovering Shakespeare while England continued its great work on his textual criticism. Richardson and Shakespeare, probably in that order, were the cultural exports of the day. With a new self-reliance English painters sought to conquer for themselves something of the international position the authors had achieved--even if it meant riding their coat-tails.

Meanwhile the stage itself was not inactive or irresponsive to changing taste. In 1741, at the outlying theatre at Goodman's Field, David Garrick had made a reputation in a night with his rendering of Richard III.[19] From then till his death in 1779 he was the commanding figure of the English stage and probably the single most

dynamic force in all of English theatrical history. It is impossible here, except in a most summary fashion, to analyze the far-reaching effects of his career. His acting broke down the old conventions largely surviving from the Restoration stage and endowed visual imagination with a whole repertory of new gestures, half borrowed from the grand manner of continental style, half a spontaneous naturalistic invention. In his later years, with the aid of Loutherbourg, he carried out a similar revolution in stage settings.[20] His cult of Shakespeare invested the bard with a new and splendid grandeur. Garrick's pavilion at Chiswick enshrining Roubiliac's statue, his Shakespeare obelisk at Hendon Hall, Gainsborough's portrait of the actor standing beneath the poet's bust, and above all the lavish, highly allegorical, slightly ridiculous jubilee celebrations at Stratford in 1769: all are indicative of a new position assigned in popular estimation to Shakespeare. Garrick's own estimation kept close pace. Not least of his achievements was his own social status. Shakespeare was a god and Garrick his highly respectable priest, a friend of Johnson, Goldsmith, and Reynolds, received everywhere, no more a vagrant stroller. Reynold's Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy (1760) with its adaptation of a high classical theme marks the transit of the English stage from the age of Hogarth to that of Sir Joshua, with the awareness of being part of a great tradition no longer marked by provincialism.

With the fame of Garrick, paintings and prints of the great actor and his fellows in Shakespearian or other roles became so numerous as to form almost a branch of English art, a special type of conversation piece. Zoffany's famous painting of the murder scene from Macbeth dates from the sixties.[21] Here the actors are still in contemporary costume. Apart from the Gothic hall, there is no attempt at locale or period color. But a change was at hand. In the season of 1762-3, Henry V, Richard III, and Rowe's Jane Shore were produced in costume, "in the habits of the time."[22] The English historical plays were beginning to receive a more historically accurate treatment, a movement which has links with historical study generally and a growing tendency to want to discover distinctly English traits through the perusal of history and literature. The painting, Death of Wolfe, by Benjamin West was revolutionary in its historically accurate treatment of a subject and it affected the later Shakespearian illustrations of Hayman.[23] It was gradually to exert an influence over the whole pictorial illustration of the plays. But it was far from immediate in its effects, and the paintings of Garrick's earlier career are a last glorification of the old tradition. As a splendid example, the portrait of Mrs. Cibber as Cordelia may be taken. This large painting (81 1/4 inches square) shows the actress, in approximately eighteenth-century costume, against a

background of storm and heath treated romantically and with a scope quite beyond any mere recording of stage effects. This is a real visual invention to elaborate and intensify the feeling of the scene, which is characteristically enough not actually Shakespeare's but is from the Nahum Tate version of King Lear where Cordelia and her confidante are rescued by Edgar from ruffians sent by Edmund to assault her. The lines portrayed are singularly unShakespearian.

> Cordelia: What e'er thou art, befriend a wretched virgin
> And if thou can'st direct our weary search.
>
> Arante: Alack, Madam, a wandering lunatic.[24]

The painting however rises above the feebleness of its text and is of the finer and more imaginative renderings of a Shakespearian scene to date. It was painted in 1755 by Pieter van Bleeck, a Dutchman who came to England in 1724 and who was mainly occupied in making engravings after the Old Masters of theatrical subjects.[25]

The last quarter of the eighteenth century saw the business of illustrating Shakespeare in full swing. An enterprising publisher, John Bell, in defiance of many of the conventions of the older established houses, began to popularize the classics at reasonable prices and with copious illustration.[26] He was a pioneer in an area in which he was to have many followers. The preface to his

1773 edition of Shakespeare's plays set the tone of his endeavour. "We have earnestly consulted correctness, neatness, ornament, utility and cheapness of price." All "glaring indecencies" have been carefully removed.[27] The plates were by Edward Edwards, Isaac Taylor and John Sherwin and are rather clumsy, undistinguished works. Their main interest lies in their attempt to show some kind of period costume. Hamlet and Horatio have the trunk hose of Jacobean fashions, not any suggestion of the Scandinavian setting of the play. It should be noted that that is the common meaning of "historically accurate" when speaking of Shakespeare illustration; that the artist more nearly approaches the costuming as it might have appeared in the Elizabethan productions rather than reproducing an historically accurate costume of subjects treated in the play. One might gather, therefore, that this increased interest in the historical was prompted as much by a national need to establish an English heritage as it was by antiquarian zeal.

Bell's second edition of Shakespeare (1785-7) shows a change in taste.[28] The straightforward, rectangular plate gave way to a more ornamental design of circles or ovals set in elaborate frameworks. The prints themselves have a new softness and prettiness, a new sentimentality quite foreign to the earlier feeling of the century. Hero fainting in the church is all gentle feebleness, with the

scene cleverly adapted to the page as a whole. It is unsigned but looks very like an early work of Stothard's, a young engraver who became one of the foremost illustrators of the turn of the century. Sherwin has a really terrible piece where Ferdinand and Miranda gaze in rapture at the Prince of Wales' Feathers, the artist's recently acquired privilege, in a kind of cloud burst at the top of the page. More interesting are the plates of famous actors in Shakespearian roles. Here we have a Falstaff still far from visually convincing, but in some of them there is the élan of an authentically great performance. Mrs. Siddons' sweeping movements as Isabella belong to a different world from the staid grieving of the 1709 Tonson edition. The whole of Garrick's career lies between them. This type of edition reaches its climax in one published by Bellamy and Robarts in 1791. It was illustrated by ovals from the hands of various somewhat hack artists of the period and rejoiced in allegorical frontispieces such as Shakespeare Entering the Realms of Terror and Pity or an even more remarkable subject, Shakespeare Holding up the Mirror to Dignified Guilt. The actual pages were enlivened by the characters of Shakespeare "personified by ifants," where a bloated cherub apes the bulk of Falstaff and a degenerate putto, brandishing a dagger and wearing a kilt, acts Macbeth. Besides the actual editions, there were also picture books of plates only, such as the

Picturesque Beauties of Shakespeare with forty plates by Smirke and Stothard (1783).[29] In 1782, R.E. Pine held an exhibition of a series of paintings from Shakespeare.[30] The Worcester porcelain factory produced a neo-classical tea pot with a scene from Cymbeline on either side.[31] Such were the trivialities of what was rapidly becoming the Shakespeare industry and such was the state of the art when John Boydell launched his Gallery.

Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery was easily the most important and artistically successful venture into the realms of Shakespeare illustration to date--although certainly uneven. The painters, faced with a demand such as they had never hoped for, sought in the most varied ways to expand their powers to meet it. If only a limited aesthetic pleasure is to be found in the bulk of them, there is nowhere a more instructive panorama of English taste and English aesthetic theory. Burke, writing to Reynolds about this "very extraordinary undertaking," elicited the following reply:

> "It is so, I confess. It surprises me. I am sensible that no single school at present in Europe could produce so many good pictures and if they did they would have a monotonous sameness; they would be all Roman or Venetian, Flemish or French: whereas you may observe here as an emblem of the Freedom of the country, every artist has taken a different road to what he conceives to be excellence, and may have obtained the goal."[32]

These different roads fall under two main headings: the Italian school of those who had visited Italy and were

dominated by the theories of Reynolds and who generally considered themselves the aristocrats of the trade, and the others who were largely following in the footsteps of Hayman, men who had worked at Vauxhall or who had done interior decorations for the Adam brothers or other fashionable architects, who were supplying the bulk of book illustration at this time and who had never had the means for foreign travel--in short, the men whose works could be obtained for smaller prices than the kind of figure asked by West and Reynolds.

Reynolds himself, ageing and worried over his sight, had not been particularly enthusiastic about the Gallery. It was only with difficulty and a large payment in advance that he had been won over to contribute to it.[33] But it was to his doctrine and instruction that many of the artists turned for advice. His famous Twelfth Discourse had been delivered in 1784 with its admonition that "the daily food and nourishment of the mind of an artist is found in the great works of his predecessors" and its advice that "hints may be taken and employed in a situation totally different from that which they were originally employed."[34] In the same year he had illustrated his own maxims by his portrait of Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse, with its pose borrowed from Michelangelo's Isaiah and one of the supporting figures from the Angel of Jeremiah. Many

artists faced with this problem of Shakespearian painting were very grateful for "hints" from the past.

In the collected volume of plates, the opening piece was Romney's Infant Shakespeare Nursed by Nature and the Passions. "Very Corregiesque" Romney considered it, and its source of inspiration is easily discernible.[35] But the main work that Romney contributed, one that he was already engaged upon when the Gallery was first planned, was his scene from The Tempest. The painting of it caused him much trouble. Originally designed as comprising only Prospero, Miranda, and Ferdinand, he expanded it to include the shipwreck, with Prospero uttering his incantation on one side of the large canvas, balanced by Ferdinand leaping from the vessel on the other. Romney had been to Italy from 1773-5 but he found his memories too faint. He went to Windsor to study the Raphael Cartoons, to carry out "a new research into the merits of Raphael."[36] These cartoons, the greatest Renaissance work in England, exercised a profound if perhaps not always beneficial influence on English art. Sure enough, in Romney's Tempest, the billowing cloaks, blowing up around bending figures, recall a characteristic Raphael usage, and the whole rhythm of the straining group on the sinking ship recalls the central group of the Sacrifice at Lystra. Boydell paid him 600 guineas for the picture but it was not enough. Romney was slighted because Reynolds and West were each offered 1000

guineas.[37] This, in one form or another, was a constant complaint among the contributing artists.

Another artist who chose a scene from The Tempest and who rated on the 300 guinea level was Joseph Wright of Derby.[38] He had made the Italian journey in the early seventies and with such thoroughness that he is said to have permanently injured his health by lying for too long a period on the floor of the Sistine Chapel. His main interest in Italy, however, seems to have been in the eruption of Vesuvius, a subject well adapted to his love of violent contrasts of lighting. His Prospero with Ferdinand and Miranda shows little Italian influence in the figures, which are perhaps marred by excessive gesture and expression, but the vista through the cave and the whole lighting of the picture is finely composed. As an engraving by Thew, it has much atmospheric quality.

Most Italinate of all was Henry Tresham, who had spent fourteen years in Italy and was a member of both the Roman and Bolognese academies.[39] His Antony and Cleopatra borrows the traditional Paris and Helen type. His Death of Cleopatra has, considering the subject, disconcerting recollections of a Pieta and the weeping Magdelen. It is dry academicism at its worst but was admired at the time, and in the sale of 1805 his pictures fetched reasonable figures and were much commended in the catalogue for their "truly fascinating" and "classical" beauty.[40]

Among the home school of more humble artists and hacks, Robert Smirke stands out as most prolific. He and Stothard, as mentioned previously, had already made a picture book of Shakespearian scenes. Stothard also contributed to the Gallery but his illustrations to Shakespeare have little invention and are considered to be inferior to his illustrations of the Canterbury Tales.[41] Smirke specialized in the comic scenes and had a ready sense of caricature and type. He and Fuseli really created the appearance of Falstaff whom Smirke painted constantly and Falstaff emerges from his plates a complete and recognizable personality. There is no trace of Italian influence. Through the window of Juliet's room (and typical of Smirke it is a study of the nurse rather than of Juliet) can be seen a good English Gothic building, an example of that adherence to Gothic that tended to stamp the native school as opposed to the followers of the grand tour. Smirke's twenty-six pictures are a fairly consistant attempt to deal with one part of the problem, the illustrating of Shakespeare's comic characters.

There remain a few names that are difficult to classify: Mather Brown, the American; James Durno, assistant to Benjamin West and also in demand as a decorator, whose two renderings of Falstaff scenes Fuseli described with characteristic tact as in "the meagre Gothic method."[42] There is James Downman whose As You Like It is

as frankly a contemporary episode as any in the collection, and, finally, Josiah Boydell, John's nephew and a rather painstaking artist in the grand manner who really owes his place in the Gallery to a lucky accident of birth.

The three artists that stood in general estimation at the head of historical painting in England were James Barry, Benjamin West and Joshua Reynolds. Barry painted no special work for Boydell, but the latter purchased for the Gallery his Lear and Cordelia, painted some years previously in 1774. As always with Barry, it is a somewhat frigid work, but it is expertly designed and there is real mastery of grouping. The pose of the king with his daughter's corpse, an echo of many late Renaissance works, has a dignity and genuine feeling which made this one of the more lasting and familiar of all the Boydell works. It is one of the most commonly reproduced of the illustrations. Benjamin West's Lear in the Storm for which Boydell paid 1000 guineas and which the catalogue describes as "that truly grand and capital picture, a most astonishing production, matchless in composition and drawing"[43] is a turbulent affair, dramatic and somewhere half way between West's grand manner and his sublime period. His other picture, Ophelia before the King and Queen, is less successful; the frankly lunatic expression of Ophelia suggests a study out of Lavater.

Reynolds' three paintings for the Gallery were the most admired and discussed of all the exhibition. His Robin Goodfellow is a typical Reynolds child, characterized only by pointed ears and seated on a toadstool. The story went that Boydell had admired a child painting in the President's studio and that Reynolds had converted it into Puck.[44] Macbeth Visiting the Witches is a much more grandiose affair. It is 144" long by 108" high and is, as Hazlitt called it, "a very elaborate and well-arranged inventory of dreadful objects."[45] It is quite overwhelming in its host of symbolic detail. Reynolds has Macbeth straddling the foreground with an ineffective vehemence. Reynolds was working on the picture when he died and his executors had a law case with Boydell to secure the full payment of 1000 pounds.[46] Most celebrated of all was the Death of Cardinal Beaufort. The memoirs of the time are full of talk about this picture which contemporaries regarded as Reynold's final achievement. The talk was not all favourable. There was gossip about his coal-heaver models and the lack of historical dignity in the characters. A long debate arose as to the fittingness of Reynold's having inserted a small devil behind the Cardinal's pillow, a detail that was omitted in the engraving. A contemporary critic complained that it was "too like The Death of Germanicus by Poussin to claim the distinction of an original composition."[47] It seems rather surprising that this

major piece should have illustrated as early and obscure a play as Henry VI, Pt. 2, but the historical plays enjoyed a great popularity in this period of English expansion and conquest. The three parts of Henry VI were much more familiar then than now, and from an early date the death of the Cardinal had been a much appreciated passage. Rowe singles it out in his introduction to the 1709 edition.

> "There is a short scene in the 2nd part of Henry VI which I cannot but think admirable in its kind. Cardinal Beaufort is shown in the last agonies on his deathbed, with the good King praying over him. There is so much terror in the one, so much tenderness and moving piety in the other as must touch anyone who is capable of either fear or pity."[48]

From then onward, it was always the scene chosen to illustrate. In the Hanmer edition of 1744, Gravelot dealt with it in a design which bears little relationship to that of Reynolds except that the outstretched hand of the Cardinal is already a prominent feature. For his grouping, Reynolds borrowed (as has already been mentioned) a vertical design composed only of four characters. Fuseli's design (for an 1805 edition of Shakespeare) is a re-interpretation of that of Reynolds in a much flatter and very linear conception instead of a highly colouristic one and has a thin, grotesque horror more fearful than any effect obtained by Reynolds.

NOTES - CHAPTER II

[1]T.S.R. Boase, "Illustrations of Shakespeare's Plays in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," Journal of the Warburg Institute, 10, 1947, 77.

[2]Ibid., 78.

[3]M.C. Salaman, Shakespeare in Pictorial Art, London 1916, 22.

[4]Boase, 81.

[5]"The First Illustrated Shakespeare," Connoisseur, CII, 1917, 305-9.

[6]Ibid., 306.

[7]Boase, 85.

[8]John Hanmer, Compleat Works of Shakespeare, Oxford, 1744, Preface.

[9]Ibid.

[10]A. Cunningham, Lives of the Most Current British Painters, Sculptors and Architects, London, II, 1830, 279.

[11]Ibid., 279.

[12]Hanmer, Preface.

[13]Ibid.

[14]J. G. Southworth, Vauxhall Gardens, New York, 1941, 42.

[15]Ibid., 42.

[16]Boase, 87.

[17]Ibid., 87.

[18]Ibid., 87.

[19]Salaman, 23.

[20]Ibid., 23.

[21]Boase, 89.

[22]Ibid., 89.

[23]Ibid., 89.

[24]David Nichol Smith, Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century, Oxford, 1928, 23.

[25]S. Colvia, Early Engravers and Engraving in England, London, 1905, 57.

[26]Ibid., 60.

[27]John Bell, The Dramatic Works of Shakespeare, London, 1773, 27.

[28]John Bell, The Dramatic Works of Shakespeare, London, 1785, 28.

[29]Boase, 89.

[30]Salaman, 24.

[31]Ibid., 24.

[32]Thomas Bolston, "John Boydell, Publisher: The Commercial Maecenas," Signature, 8, 1948, 118.

[33]J. Northcote, Memoirs of Sir Joshua Reynolds, London, 1813, 337.

[34]Ibid., 288.

[35]J. Romney, Memoirs of George Romney, London, 1830, 151.

[36]Ibid., 155.

[37]Ibid., 161.

[38]Lawrence Thompson, "The Boydell Shakespeare: An English Movement to Graphic Arts," Princeton University Library Chronicle, 1, 1940, 23.

[39]Ibid., 24.

[40] Ibid., 24.

[41] Boase, 99.

[42] Eudo C. Mason. The Mind of Henry Fuseli. London, 1951, 146.

[43] Boase, 104.

[44] Northcote, 340.

[45] Ibid., 342.

[46] Ibid., 342.

[47] Ibid., 342.

[48] Boase, 104.

CHAPTER III

HENRY FUSELI

Henry Fuseli made nine contributions to the Boydell Gallery. These nine paintings have elicited the least uniform opinions among the historians of Shakespeare illustration. T.S.R. Boase refers to the Fuseli paintings as the most "puzzling of the whole business" and relegates his style to a "peculiarly Germanic violence with a surrealism of outlook that is familiar enough today, but which is hard to place in the eighteenth century."[1] Sadakichi Hartmann admits that Fuseli had an excellent understanding of northern folklore but ventures no further explanation than to say that he was "powerful but perverse."[2] What is initially confusing is the lack of easy categories and precedents from which to make a visual account of the man's work. His true peers were literary and his inspiration both in subject matter and stylistic terms is most often found in literature. If it is difficult to account for Fuseli in the company of Landseer and Reynolds, it is easy to see his acceptance in the circle dominated by Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, and Oliver Goldsmith.

Johann Heinrich Füssli was born and bred in Zurich and began his career as a poet and writer and only much later, in England, took up painting professionally. It is important to remember that the cultural background of his youth was the incipient Sturm and Drung movement which originally started in criticism, mainly in Switzerland, and soon expanded into Germany and into fiction. Most famous and most representative of the products of this movement is Goethe's Sorrows of Werther. The Storm and Stress was a proto-romantic movement that was characterized by a mania for Shakespeare and Ossian and the quest for intensity, originality and freedom of self-expression. Contemporary with the explorations of theories of the Sublime taking place in England, the Sturm and Drung movement pursued essentially the same ends but with a greater naiveté. It is important only because several of its representatives grew up to achieve artistic maturity as internationally renowned poets and dramatists. Fuseli was a young disciple of Bodmer, the premier aesthetician of the Sturm and Drung who held court in Zurich while Fuseli was growing up. Bodmer's Aesthetics, although highly emotional and elemental, included a great amount of rationalism which was held in rather a mystical conjunction with the rest.[3] This was the position Fuseli himself adopted and held successfully for the rest of his life.

One of the first translaters of Macbeth into German, Fuseli also was the first to translate Winckelman into English.[4] While a young man in London, Fuseli translated Rousseau into English and published his own defense of Rousseau's doctrines against the attacks of Voltaire. He was simultaneously a friend of David Hume, the arch supporter of experiential objectivity, and an intimate of William Blake who was content to create the universe out of his own head. Fuseli was, in short, at the intellectual pivotal point of his age and was first and foremost a scholar of contemporary philosophy and literature and was appropriately lionized as such in London. His creations on canvas, combining exquisite use of line and composition with a penchant for the bizarre, the violent, and the perversely erotic, were understood as a visual equivalent to the debates of the literary elite. It is to this same literary elite that he directs his work and to whom he is largely indebted for his respected position in the contemporary art world. While the popular press was labeling him as "Shockingly mad, mad, madder than ever" and "painter ordinary to the devil,"[5] he moved steadily up into the hierarchy of the English art world to his election as an R.A. to his final status as Professor of Painting.

In 1764, Fuseli arrived in London at the age of twenty-four with a modest but impeccable reputation earned in the literary circles of Berlin. He soon entered the

intellectual first circle of London, moving in the literary crowd dominated by Samuel Johnson as well as becoming intimate with such men as Joseph Priestley and Erasmus Darwin.[6] Fuseli's background in scientific matters was nearly as extensive as his literary one. His family included a number of recognized biologists and his brother became a rather renowned entomologist. Entomology became a sort of hobby for Henry Fuseli as well, and his collection of insects, particularly moths and butterflies, was quite extensive.[7] Fuseli came to London with a scholar's grasp of German, English, French, Latin, Greek and Hebrew. He executed translations from all of them and wrote bad poetry in most of them. Between 1764 and 1767, Fuseli published his translation of Winckleman's first book, some works of Rousseau, and his own anonymous Remarks on the Writings and Conduct of J.J. Rousseau which was rather flatteringly attributed to Smollet.[8] He spent much of his free time at the theatre where he became a devotee of Garrick, the great Shakespearian actor and producer.[9] Garrick brought considerable vigor into the productions of his day and was particularly noted for combining exquisite tableau-like arrangements of characters and scenery with life-like movements and delivery in the broken rhythms of natural speech that seemed to his admirers the most perfect metamorphosis of life into art. Fuseli observed that his friend, the actress Mary Ann Yates, in the role of Hermione made "no

insignificant leap, as from Nature into a portrait."[10] Certainly it must have rounded out Fuseli's education to have seen Shakespeare played as he had seldom if ever seen it before. It can be assumed that he knew the texts of many of the plays by heart. As mentioned earlier, he had translated Macbeth while in Zurich. But to actually see so many familiar scenes enacted on stage must have driven home to Fuseli the visual potential of the Shakespeare texts. It would have required, therefore, no great intuitive leap to picture such scenes, and it is impossible not to regard the contemporary theatre as a source for many of Fuseli's compositions, especially those illustrating the tragedies. Garrick, who owned many engravings and paintings and who was a patron of contemporary art, based many of his scene positions on the compositions found in paintings with which he was acquainted.[11] It is likely Fuseli had "legitimate" art historical sources for many compositions he borrowed from the theatre; such was the blurring of the borders of the arts at that time.

In 1778, for reasons that are far from clear, Fuseli gave up his career as a literary figure for one as a full-time artist. Up until this time, he had been little more than a weekend artist, trying his hand at illustrating friends' books but seldom if ever moving beyond his sketches. Popular myth has it that Reynolds, catching a glimpse of some of Fuseli's drawings, ordered him to

abandon writing and to begin working in oils immediately.[12] The reality may have been something very like that for Fuseli was able to leave for Rome within the year through the patronage provided him by way of Reynolds' connections. With these commissions and through sales to visitors, Fuseli financed his stay in Rome for eight years. During his sojourn, his primary influences were not Italian but, oddly enough, English and German. He read and re-read Shakespeare, Milton, and Goethe and worked on a twenty-six scene series based on the Sistine Ceiling but with Shakespearian instead of Biblical subjects. In 1774, he made his Royal Academy debut with a pen and wash drawing of The Death of Cardinal Beaufort, a scene from Henry IV, Part II, about which Dr. Johnson had remarked in 1765.

> "This is one of the scenes which have been applauded by the critics and which will continue to be admired when prejudices cease, and bigotry give way to impartial examination. There are beauties that rise out of nature and truth; the superficial reader cannot miss them, the profound can imagine nothing beyond them."[13]

Fuseli chose to illustrate the scene in a manner that would have appeared obscure to any but the literary sophisticate and he continued to turn out works that would have their greatest appeal to the scholar.

Fuseli returned to London in 1779, a late starter at thirty-eight in the art world dominated by Reynolds, West, and Barry, and by the taste for glamorous portraits

and rather fatuous classical subjects. All of this appeared inane to Fuseli who gave vent to his opinions in a poem written shortly after returning to London. The following extract from his Dunciad of Painting (1780-89) gives a fair idea of his stance:

> "Where London pours her motley myrieads, Trade
> With fell Luxuriance the Printshop spread:
> There as the wedded elm and tendril'd vine
> Angelica and Bartolozzi twine. . .
> Love without Fire; Smiles without Mirth;
> bright Tears
> To Grief unknown; and without Beauty, Airs;
> Celestial Harlots; Graces dressed by France;
> Rosy Despair and Passions taught to dance
> Irradiate the gay leaf-the charm struck crowd
> Devoutly gaze, then burst in raptures loud."[14]

Fuseli was never to stoop to what he considered this frivolity and was in consequence never taken to the hearts of the critics nor the greater part of the buying public. He was always to be dependent upon his own loyal circle of patrons and admirers, most of whom stemmed from his original literary clique.

In November, 1786, Alderman Boydell gave the famous dinner party at which the project for a Shakespeare Gallery was first considered. In none of accounts is Fuseli named as being present although it is likely that he was responsible for the idea in an indirect way. Romney was present and it seems probable that he acted as Fuseli's mouthpiece in this affair. Romney's stay in Rome had overlapped Fuseli's and while in Italy he had made many drawings of Shakespeare subjects as Fuseli had done,

although never with the same thought of a cycle. When Romney broached the subject of a Shakespeare Gallery at the Boydell dinner party, Lord Thurlow remarked, "Romney, before you paint Shakespeare, do, for God's sake, read him."[15]--a piece of advice that might have been given to all of the Boydell contributors save Fuseli. It seems unlikely that Romney would have been capable of conceiving such a scheme had it not been for Fuseli's extensive ground work.

Fuseli was the largest contributor to the first stage of the Boydell scheme and probably would have preferred to be the only contributor, could he have found the backing. He was the highest paid after Reynolds, West, and Barry and was, without question, the best prepared for the project. Nowhere was Fuseli's erudition and dependence on literary patrons more in evidence than in his paintings for the Boydell Gallery.

NOTES - CHAPTER III

[1]T.S.R. Boase, "Illustrations of Shakespeare's Plays in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," Journal of the Warburg Institute, 10, 1947, 103.

[2]Sadakichi Hartman, Shakespeare in Art, Boston, 1907, 148.

[3]Frederick Antal, Fuseli Studies, London, 1956, 12.

[4]Ibid., 21.

[5]Peter Tomory, The Life and Art of Henry Fuseli, New York, 1972, 32.

[6]Antal, 14.

[7]Eudo C. Mason, The Mind of Henry Fuseli, London, 1951, 123.

[8]Antal, 15.

[9]John Knowles, The Life and Writings of Henry Fuseli, Esq. M.A.R.A., London, 1831, 81.

[10]Tomory, 15.

[11]Ibid., 15.

[12]Knowles, 110.

[13]Antal, 79.

[14]Tomory, 32.

[15]Ibid., 37.

CHAPTER IV

FUSELI'S ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE TRAGEDIES

Fuseli painted three scenes from Shakespeare's tragedies for the Boydell Gallery: King Lear, I, i,; Hamlet, I, iv.,; and Macbeth, I, iii; and one from the histories, Henry V, II, ii. Each of these paintings shows Fuseli's penchant for the heroic and outsized and his tendency to place the percipient in a frog's-eye view with respect to the figures on the canvas. Far from a mere eccentricity on the part of the artist, or a Freudian compensation for his short stature as has been suggested, this heroic distancing has the very real and important function of signalling to the observer that the artist is not dealing with real life. Rather he is depicting characters and actions of mythic proportions, not truth itself but grand generalizations and allegories of truth. Among the other artists of the Boydell Gallery, it is usually difficult on viewing alone not only to distinguish which play is being illustrated but if it is an illustration at all and not a contemporary portrait or idyll in fancy dress. Fuseli's paintings announce themselves as illustrations with such accuracy that it is always possible to quote scene and

verse at a glance. They also are often complex and sophisticated comments upon the texts of the plays, requiring considerable scholarship from the observer for full appreciation. Fuseli's King Lear, c.1786-89, is a particularly good example of the artist's ability to include a large amount of significant iconographic detail in a readable fashion that does not overwhelm the composition as a whole.

Fuseli's King Lear illustrates Act I, Scene i, from verse 108 to verse 137. More specifically, the lines being uttered are:

Kent: Good my liege,-

Lear: Peace, Kent!
Come not between the dragon and his wrath.
I lov'd her most, and thought to set my rest
On her kind nursery. Hence, avoid my sight!

At the center of the composition is the adamant Lear, arm outstretched in the process of denouncing Cordelia, his youngest daughter. The map of the realm is unrolled, stretching out toward Cordelia, the rightful heiress, but Lear cancels out her legacy by placing his foot in the middle of the scroll. Kent, half kneeling in his plea, stretches an arm across Lear to stop the unjust condemnation of Cordelia. This pair occupies the center of attention in the composition just as they occupy the center of the action for the next five acts, seldom missing from any scene. On each side of Lear are lined up the crucial

characters by allegiance. On the observer's right, Lear's left, are aligned the forces for evil; on Lear's right is the company for good. A shadow moves across the scene from Lear's left and has just moved past the center point of Lear's throne, coinciding with the pivotal point in the action as Lear makes his disastrous decision to disinherit Cordelia and turn his kingdom over to her wicked sisters. The figure of Kent not only gestures on behalf of Cordelia but compositionally occupies space between Lear and the characters bent on his destruction. This is the role that Kent will act throughout the play, a buffer for the dethroned King. To the right and behind the figure of Kent stands a courtier holding the coronet mentioned in line I, i, 137 which Lear has just given to Goneril and Regan as a symbol of their sovereignty. To the right of the courtier is a helmeted guard pointing off into the distance at the gathering gloom foreshadowing the wars and deceptions to come. Next to him is the Duke of Cornwall, conferring with his wife, Regan. Goneril stands next, watching the proceedings with a wicked glee. Last, and behind Goneril, is her husband, the Duke of Albany, who looks on perplexed, an unwilling participant in his father-in-law's ruin, and who, by his very position in the painting, shows his domination by Goneril.

Fuseli's use of light and dark symbolism is most signficant for it reflects the dominant symbol system in

Shakespeare's text: light and darkness, blindness and sight. Shakespeare's second most common image concerns clothing: luxury vs. rags; natural man vs. the unnatural; and Fuseli has dressed Cordelia's hair with flowers and Goneril's and Regan's with satin, feathers, and pearls.

On Lear's right, on the brighter side of the composition, is a curious triumvirate of a swooning Cordelia, supported by Edgar, and a stooping King of France who bends to pat a dog. The animal has an air of wounded loyalty, tail between its legs and looking up for reassurance. We know that it is the King of France for Cordelia's finger is pointing out the Fleur-de-lis attached to his cloak. What appears odd to modern eyes is the presence of Edgar in this scene and the decidedly secondary position of the King of France. In the texts currently in use and in the original Shakespeare quarto, Edgar does not enter the play until Scene 2 and Cordelia exits in Scene 1, affianced to and supported the King of France. In the eighteenth century, however, King Lear was always played and all the superior editions printed with the Nahum Tate revision of the text.[1] Tate's version, perpetrated in 1680, concocted a love affair between Cordelia and Edgar, ending the play in their marriage and the restoration of Lear to his throne. This version held popular sway until 1838 when the tragic ending was restored and the Fool brought back on stage.[2] Nahum Tate's revision was respected by the finest minds of the

eighteenth century who saw it as the necessary improvement to a brilliant but uneven and unjust plot. Samuel Johnson was so shocked by Cordelia's death in the original quartos that for many years he refused to read any but the Tate version.[3] This indignation at cruelty coupled with the eighteenth century habit of revising and updating a past artist's work when it seemed advisable produced the climate in which many versions of the plays thrived. Fuseli would have never seen any other version of Lear performed nor would he have heard any other approved in the literary set he frequented. Although he certainly was exposed to the original, he probably shared Dr. Johnson's opinions as he did in most other literary matters. Samuel Johnson was one of the few men who maintained that the Ossian legends were a forgery from the beginning and a shoddy piece of writing as well.[4] Henry Fuseli, premier illustrator of epics though he was, never painted a single scene nor made a sketch from Ossian. Whatever Fuseli's private thoughts on the Tate revision, he had the good sense to work from the text that the Boydell prints were ultimately going to illustrate, the National edition printed in 1802. Oddly enough, neither Benjamin West nor Smirke, in their paintings of King Lear, used the contemporary text but worked from either the old Folios or from hearsay and ended up with scenes at odds with the National edition text.

Though less complex than his Lear painting, Fuseli's Macbeth shows an equal knowledge of the text and an understanding of the play. Like the Lear painting, Fuseli's Macbeth illustrates the pivotal moment in the play from which all action evolves and shows the tragic figure at the moment of fatal decision. Macbeth is shown on the heath with Banquo at his first meeting with the three witches in Act I, Scene iii, verses 49 to 54.

First Witch: All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!

Second Witch: All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor!

Third Witch: All hail, Macbeth; that shalt be king hereafter.

Macbeth is revealed at the moment he is being tempted by ambition or at the moment when his secret fantasies become conscious, depending on one's preference for the literal or psychological interpretation. Banquo dodges this temptation but Macbeth is struck fully in the face and chest by the force emanating from the three weird sisters. Fuseli has effected a small revision of the text with his depiction of the severed head which is seen under the arm of the witch at the right. Fuseli maintained that Macbeth simply meeting the witches on the heath was not sufficiently terrifying when portrayed on canvas although it represented the most psychologically and philosophically important scene.[5] That is why Fuseli transformed it into

a visionary night scene and added the head rising out of the darkness.

Fuseli had begun work on sketches illustrating Macbeth while he was still in Italy and continued to execute works on that theme when he was finished with the Boydell commission.[6] It was one of his favorite plays and it is to be remembered that he translated it into German while still a youth in Zurich. Fuseli's delight in Shakespeare's text is easily understood when one considers that the play combines a bloody psychodrama with accounts of sleep disturbances and nightmares, intrusions of the supernatural, and the decidedly sad-masochistic relationship between Macbeth and his Lady. All this was preferred grist to Fuseli's mill and while he chose the thematically most essential scene to illustrate, he made sure that it could stress the terrible as well. Fuseli understood fully the principle of impending doom being more sublimely frightening than a graphic display of the aftermath. Unfortunately Reynolds did not and it is this failure as much as any that accounts for the impotency of his Macbeth painting. Reynolds' work looks like a general casting call for grotesques with a stocky Macbeth standing in an ill-defined center, flaying his arms in a stock gesture of amazement.

Fuseli's Hamlet is very similar to his Macbeth painting in feeling and composition. It, too, has a dynamic couple on the left juxtaposed with a supernatural

figure on the right. In this case it is the actively drawn Hamlet, being restrained by Horatio, who tries to confront his father's ghost who walks on the battlements. Like the Macbeth painting, it is a night scene, and a full and unnatural light falls from the Ghost unto Hamlet's face and chest. Fuseli has again chosen the pivotal point in the play to illustrate, the point at which the tragic hero is confronted with a choice, the consequences of which comprise the rest of the drama. The verses illustrated are Act I, Scene IV, 79-82.

Hamlet: It waves me still.
Go on, I'll follow thee.

Marcellus: You shall not go, my lord.

Hamlet: Hold off your hands.

The Ghost gestures to Hamlet to follow him away from his friends to hear his message while Horatio and the Guard, Marcellus, warn him against following the apparition who may be trying to lure Hamlet over the edge and into the angry sea. In the painting, Marcellus in his officer's cap gestures his concern while waves toss in the background behind the Ghost's feet. The figure of the Ghost is probably borrowed from that of a gesturing soldier in Raphael's The Freeing of St. Peter. This is even more evident in Fuseli's 1805 version of Hamlet and the Ghost which has all the figures of the Boydell painting in nearly identical poses, but the viewer's position has shifted to one directly behind the Ghost so that he towers above the

foreground and dominates the composition. Fuseli loved his monsters and, as one finds in later works, they progressively tend to hold center stage.

Fuseli's Henry V, though not strictly an illustration of a tragedy, has most in common with his tragedy series. The artist again has chosen to preserve the tension by dealing with the crucial moment of decision. The scene is rather complex. In Henry V, II, ii, King Henry is in his council chamber with the peers of the realm, about to set sail for France and the battle of Agincourt. Two of his dukes beg Henry to execute a man lately sent to prison for insulting the King. No, says Henry, "We consider it was excess of wine that set him on,/And in his more advice we pardon him" II, ii, 41-53. Furthermore how is one to punish real traitors if one executes mere drunks? The king then hands Scroop, Cambridge, and Grey the notices which include their own names, at which they repent their treachery to the throne and beg forgiveness. King Henry denies their appeal, saying that he could forgive them the threats to himself but not to the country.

> "Touching our person seek we no revenge;/
> But we our kingdom's safety must so tender,/
> Whose ruin you have sought, that to her laws/
> We do deliver you." II, ii, 174-177.

The traitors then exit to their death.

One notices that the composition of Fuseli's Henry V is nearly identical to his King Lear. This is not

accidental. Placed side by side, they represent the essence of wise and foolish Kingship, Fuseli's and Shakespeare's own narrative of Good and Bad Government. In both paintings, the sovereign commands the central position, and in both he stretches out his arm to denounce his supposed enemies at the left side of the canvas. Both paintings align the loyal on one side of the King and the treacherous on the other, but only Henry has properly discerned at the moment of decision which is which. Both paintings align three against three: Cordelia, Edgar, and France against Cornwall, Regan, and Goneril in Lear; Scroop, Cambridge, and Grey against Exeter, Bedford, and Westmoreland who draw their swords in defense of King Henry V. Fuseli continues the device of the paper trod underfoot in Henry V but this time it is the death notice under the foot of the condemned--a symbol of the preservation of the realm. In Fuseli's King Lear, the King puts his foot literally in the middle of the kingdom as he disinherits Cordelia--a symbol of dissolution. Shakespeare's Henry V is meant to be the example of perfect kingship. Shakespeare's own historical source for his play, Holinshed, overflows with eulogy: "This Henry was a king, of life without spot; a prince of all men loved. . . that both lived and died a pattern in princehood, a lodestar in honor, and a mirror of magnificence."[8] Fuseli has managed to illustrate Shakespeare's purpose with an ingenious device

that allows him, in the much reduced arena of painting, to describe such abstract virtues as wisdom and executive competence.

NOTES - CHAPTER IV

[1]David Michael Smith, Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century, Oxford, 1928, 20.

[2]Ibid., 21.

[3]Alfred Harbage, Shakespeare, the Tragedies, Englewood Cliffs, 1964, 74.

[4]Peter Tomory, The Life and Art of Henry Fuseli, New York, 1972, 13.

[5]E. Lucie-Smith, "London Commentary: Fuseli at Roland, Browse, and Delbanco," Studio, 175, May, 1968, 270.

[6]Frederick Antal, Fuseli Studies, London, 1956, 189.

[7]Tomory, 129.

[8]Thomas Marc Parrott, Shakespeare, New York, 1938, 434.

CHAPTER V

FUSELI'S ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE COMEDIES

Fuseli's paintings of comic scenes were done somewhat later than the tragedies.[1] These works, mostly painted in the years spanning 1787-92, are: A Midsummer Night's Dream with Titania and Bottom, A Midsummer Night's Dream with Titania, Bottom, and Oberon, Puck, The Tempest, and Falstaff. These five paintings, particularly the three from A Midsummer Night's Dream, show Fuseli's increased preoccupation with the supernatural and the erotic and a new tendency to use Shakespeare's text as a point of imaginative departure rather than as an end in itself.

Fuseli's two large paintings of Titania and Bottom are remarkably similar in composition and it is only with close examination that one sees that they represent two different scenes in the play. The first, depicting Bottom with the ass's head, refers to Act IV, Scene 1, where Titania is yet enamored of Bottom, still under the influence of the drug, "Love-in-Idleness." The large central figure of Titania is shown embracing the ass's head and commanding her fairies to obey him. One of the sprites, Peaseblossom, is shown scratching Bottom's head and another, Mustard Seed,

reaches up from his hand to scratch Bottom's nose because, as Bottom says, "Methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face; and I am such a tender ass/ If my hair do but tickle me, I must scratch." IV, i, 25-28. Two figures standing to the right of the central grouping, a young woman with a diminutive old man on a leash, are a thematic echo of the irrational passion depicted in the center. These two figures are an allegorical representation of Reason in chains to Folly, a change rung on the old Aristotle and Phyllis theme which Fuseli made sketches of as a boy. Peter Tomory identifies the female figure as Queen Mab on the basis of a line from Milton's L'Allegro which Tomory has misread. Tomory states that:

> "the Fairy Mab is identified by her companion carrying a dish of junket, and by the diminutive friar who leads her. 'And by the Friar's lantern led,' wrote Milton, in a reference not lost on Fuseli."[2]

The full quotation concerning Mab is as follows:

> "With stories told of many a feat: How
> fairy Mab the Junkets eat-
> She was pinched and pulled, she said,/
> And he by friar's lantern led; Tells how
> the drudging goblin sweat."[3]

The pronouns, he and she, refer to peasants remarking their encounters with fairies. Further there can be no doubt that the bowl held by the female figure's companion does not hold junket, a sweetened thick cream, but rather some kind of berries. One can identify three other figures in the painting. There is a face peering out of the

underbrush, its features expressing mischievous glee and its hand making an apotropaic sign against Titania's hostile magic. The figure is Robin Goodfellow spying for Oberon to make a report on Titania's foolishness. On the far left is another diminutive fairy, Cobweb, who is doing battle with a bumble bee in order to bring the honey sack to Bottom. This fairy sports his heraldic device on his shield, a cobweb-spinning spider. Next to Cobweb is a group of serving women, one of whom holds Titania's foundling child who reaches out her hands but is ignored. None of the other figures is readily identifiable except as ladies-in-waiting and various anonymous fairies. In the lower right-hand corner is a crone fondling an idiot child, possibly her offspring by the Devil, but sure identification is impossible.

The second large Midsummer Night's Dream painting continues Fuseli's visual bestiary of the supernatural with a new supporting cast of freaks and fairies, but the central figures are essentially the same. The verses illustrated are Act IV, Scene i, 79-85, in which Oberon awakens Titania. She repents her ill-considered love, King and Queen are reunited, and Bottom is put into a deep sleep so that he may remember it all as a dream. The theme of the reunited lovers is reiterated among the figures to the left of Titania and Oberon. A dancing couple embrace, and far up in the left-hand corner a pair of swans glide

suspended in space, symbols of lifelong fidelity in love. To the right of Titania lies Bottom in his trance-like sleep while a tiny figure representing deep sleep and dreams gallops madly over his head. This figure may well be Mab as she is described in Romeo and Juliet, "she gallops night by night/ Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;" I, iv, 71-72. To the right of the sleeping Bottom are three witches, one of whom indeed holds a devil's offspring between her breasts as evidenced by its tiny ram's horns. At her feet a young girl covers her eyes and another hides under her skirts, young initiates in witchcraft. Again there are a number of anonymous sprites, one of whom balances delicately upon a moth's back, showing evidence of Fuseli's entomological studies. Another cheerful gnome crouches at the left of Oberon with a smaller figure playing bag-pipes between his knees in an obvious sexual pun.

Fuseli's third illustration for A Midsummer Night's Dream is a painting of Puck on his errand for the drug, Love-in-Idleness. In the speech beginning with II, i, 54, Oberon asks Puck to find the flower with all possible speed, to which Puck replies, "I'll put a girdle round about the earth/ In forty minutes." II, i, 174-175. Puck's left hand describes a literal "girdle" of this sort in a halo comprised of planets, moons, and stars and what appears to be a Mobius strip. This device describes both unnatural

speed and freedom from natural law, as if Puck could juggle celestial bodies. Puck himself is shown as mature with whiskers and hair on his chest; he is not of the world and neither is he an innocent. He is certainly no relation to Reynolds' plump toddler with pointed ears. Fuseli's Puck is an amoral spirit capable of much mischief but no great evil, closely following his description in Shakespeare's text. "He that sometime make the drink bear no harm. . . but those that Hobgoblin call him and sweet Puck/ He does their work, and they shall have good luck." II, i, 34-42. In the left foreground is a Mab-like creature holding up the flower that Puck seeks and in the right is a confounded horse and rider who have become vitims of Puck's tendency to "mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm." II, i, 38.

The Midsummer Night's Dream paintings show Fuseli at his favorite pastime, concocting a kind of third world in which myth and allegory share space with the natural world and are the more frightening for that slight grounding in reality, like awakening to a nightmare. The play also gives Fuseli a chance to dabble safely with such themes of perverse eroticism as bestiality and dominance-submission under the recognizable guise of fantasy.

Fuseli's The Tempest also deals with the juxtaposition of the natural and unnatural world and the erotic possibilities between the two. The scene illustrated comes

early in the play when Prospero catches Caliban trying to "violate the honour of my child." I, ii, 348. Prospero here is all the outraged patriarch, standing between his daughter and this unnatural match. Perversely, Fuseli has Miranda looking not overly concerned by the prospect but rather bored, perhaps at her father's sermonizing. Fuseli has no inhibitions about showing characters scared out of their wits and Miranda does not even look unnerved--rather scandalous under the circumstances. The composition is similar to that found in Fuseli's Hamlet and Macbeth. The figures representing human civilization stand on the left aligned with the observer whose eyes travel with theirs to the right side of the canvas to confront the supernatural. Each gestures to each across a space which in this case is filled by the mediating figure of Ariel who is neither human nor of Caliban's order but an incorporeal spirit. Prospero never deals with Caliban directly but always through the intermediary, Ariel. On the other level, Fuseli is juxtaposing human culture versus the order of nature to which Caliban belongs with the crayfish, mullusks and monkey which are grouped with him on the right. The mediator in this case is the domestic cat which sits precisely between Prospero and Caliban on the ground beneath the suspended Ariel.

Fuseli has created in this painting several grids on which to evaluate the play's experience. On the

spiritual level it reads left to right as Good--Amoral Innocence (Ariel)--Evil. On the physical level it reads Culture--Domesticated Nature--Nature. One is tempted to add Super Ego--Ego--Id, espcially when one remembers Ariel's constant pleas to be freed even from Prospero's righteous domination to simply run and play. Beneath Prospero's cloak are some tiny creatures, lesser spirits, who, like Ariel, were trapped by Sycorax, Caliban's mother, but who are now being rescued simply by Prospero's nearness.

Fuseli's last comic scene is that of Falstaff and Doll Tearsheet from King Henry IV, Part Two. This is simply a scene of lasciviousness and excess. The central focus of the composition is upon Falstaff's belly balanced on the one hand by an outsized glass of sack and on the other by the whore, Doll Tearsheet. Through the door in the right middle ground, come the young Prince Henry and the servant, Poins, laughing at the incorrigible Falstaff. Fuseli has added, as usual, some symbolic detail that reduces the scene to its essence. Over the door he has created a coat of arms for Falstaff, a cooked boar's head, garnished and ready to be served. One notices, also, that Falstaff does not merely clasp Doll around the waist, he imbeds his fingers in her hip and his sword is lying out of reach on the floor where it is least likely to force Falstaff to honourable action. As Prince Henry enters the

room, Falstaff banters insults with him, calling him a "Whoreson mad compound of majesty" and "a bastard son of the King." II, iv, 320. The Prince responds in kind and then gently reminds Falstaff of his rank and place with respect to a prince of the realm. The scene is the precedent for Act II, Scene ii, of Henry V where the mature Henry shows no inclination to hang a drunk simply for an insult. Falstaff in the earlier play is under indictment for cowardice as he ran from the battlefield earlier in the day--again the significance of the tossed-down sword. In Falstaff's own words, "the better part of valour is discretion." I,ii, 206-7. Fuseli's particular contribution in this work was to create the memorable and archtypical Falstaff that had been missing in Shakespeare illustration prior to the Boydell Gallery.

NOTES - CHAPTER V

[1]Gert Schiff, Johann Heinrich Füssli, Zurich, 1974, 631.

[2]Peter Tomory, The Life and Art of Henry Fuseli, New York, 1972, 100.

[3]John Milton, L'Allegro, Lines 30-33.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Henry Fuseli, without a doubt the most erudite artist of his age and one of the most sophisticated, was perhaps the first to combine considerable scholarship with artistic prowess to confront the problem of Shakespeare illustration. His nine contributions to the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery are the most imaginative of all, and by placing them beside Shakespeare's lines it is possible to see not only their fidelity to the text itself but also to the inherent abstractions. Fuseli is particularly worthy of study as a bellweather of his time because he was worked upon by so many contemporary influences. Fuseli's acknowledgement of the irrational and erotic undercurrents of Shakespeare, his willingness to demonstrate vulgarity or earthiness found in many of the plays, parallels the innovations occurring in contemporary criticism. Just as Fuseli broke from the traditionally prettified illustrations of his predecessors, so too were young critics and scholars beginning to feel the influence of such thinkers as Burke and Goethe and leave behind the tradition of Pope, Dryden, and Ben Johnson who saw Shakespeare as merely an

exceptional teller of moral tales who nevertheless needed restraining. Fuseli became recognized as a figure of international import early in his career and by the time he returned from Rome, he was already famous. With Lavater's help, both Goethe and Herder had become staunch admirers of his work and the literary Sturm und Drang movement recognized him as the artist who emulated their own aims in visual terms. In London he was equally lionized, and, backed by the literary avant-garde, he set about introducing historical painting to England with his monumental representations of scenes from literature, mythology, and history. At this point in his career, Fuseli drew his subject matter primarily from Shakespeare and the following paragraph from an essay by Guilio Carlo Agan explains a good deal of Fuseli's attitude toward the poet:

> "What Fuseli really discovered in Shakespeare, apart from his immense dramatic variety, was the mysterious, secretive, orphic nature of the theatre. . . Emotion has nothing pathetic or moving about it for Fuseli. He sees it in a purely moral light. . . it does not occur naturally in his works but is to a certain extent artificial, like the emotional outbursts of the mad or the possessed. Fuseli found in Shakespeare the most suitable themes for his rebellious, failing morality."[1]

Fuseli's recognition of this "orphic" quality is most readily seen in his illustrations of the tragedies which always depict a crucial scene chosen for its prophetic relation to the rest of the play. The power that he commands with his somewhat outsized and artificial

emotion again parallels strides made in other fields. Garrick's innovations in production are described as a combining of life-like but rather grandiose movements and speech with a stylization that was the norm of an earlier period in dramatic fashion.

Fuseli was to retain his ties with the literary world all his life and in his old age enjoyed a correspondence with Lord Byron whom he much admired.[2] Byron and Fuseli have much in common in their approach to art. Both deal with essentially "romantic" themes of grand passion and terror and both build upon essentially traditional neo-classical foundations in terms of technique and composition.

NOTES - CHAPTER VI

[1]Tate Gallery, Henry Fuseli 1741-1825 (exhibition catalog), London, 1975, 11.

[2]John Knowles, The Life and Writings of Henry Fuseli, Esq., M.A.R.A., London, 1831, 352.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration 1: King Lear. Act I, Scene I. Painted by Henry Fuseli. Engraved by R. Earlom. (Photo: The Boydell Shakespeare Prints)

Illustration 2: King Lear. Act III. Scene IV. Painted by B. West. Engraved by W. Sharpe. (Photo: The Boydell Shakespeare Prints)

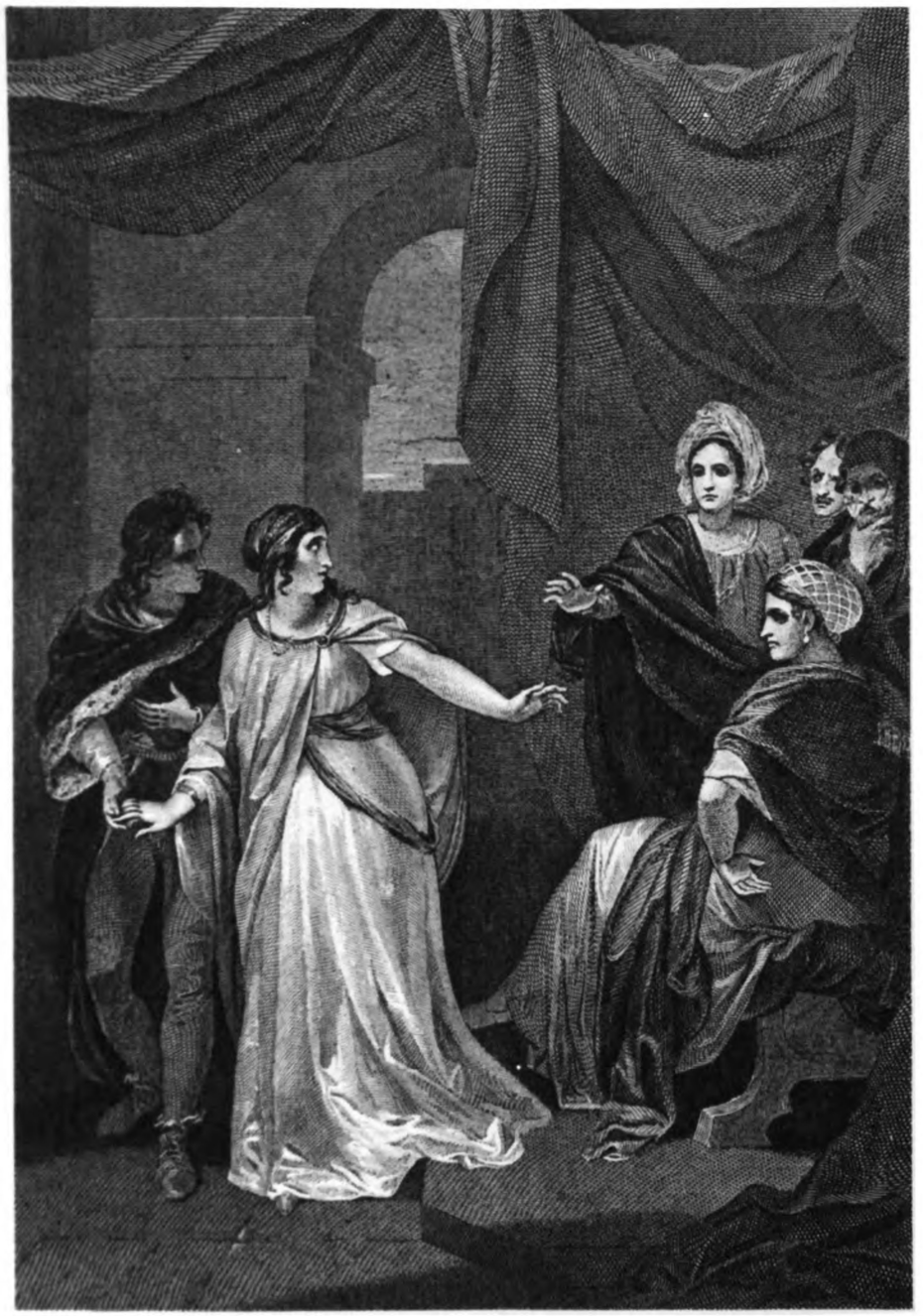

Illustration 3: King Lear. Act I. Scene I. Painted by R. Smirke. Engraved by W. Sharpe. (Photo: The Boydell Shakespeare Prints)

Illustration 4: Macbeth. Act I. Scene III. Painted by H. Fuseli. Engraved by J. Caldwall. (Photo: The Boydell Shakespeare Prints)

Illustration 5: Macbeth. Act IV. Scene I. Painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Engraved by R. Thew. (Photo: The Boydell Shakespeare Prints)

Illustration 6: Hamlet. Act I. Scene IV. Painted by H. Fuseli. Engraved by R. Thew. (Photo: The Boydell Shakespeare Prints)

Illustration 7: King Henry V. Act II. Scene II. Painted by H. Fuseli. Engraved by R. Thew. (Photo: The Boydell Shakespeare Prints)

Illustration 8: Midsummer Night's Dream. Act IV. Scene I. Painted by H. Fuseli. Engraved by P. Simon. (Photo: The Boydell Shakespeare Prints)

Illustration 9: Midsummer Night's Dream. Act IV. Scene I.
Painted by H. Fuseli. Engraved by T. Ryder.
(Photo: The Boydell Shakespeare Prints)

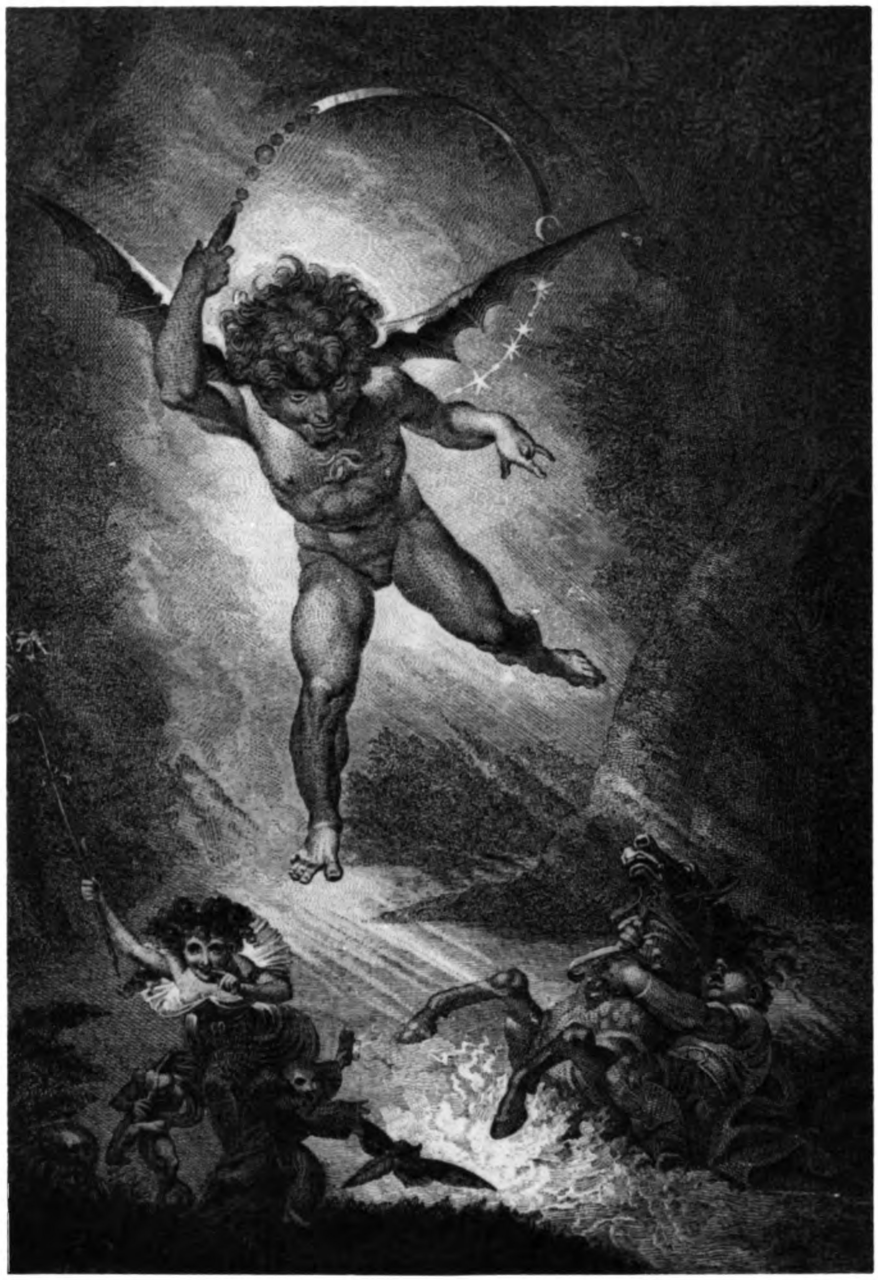

Illustration 10.--Midsummer Night's Dream. Act II. Scene I. Painted by H. Fuseli. Engraved by J. Parker.
(Photo: The Boydell Shakespeare Prints)

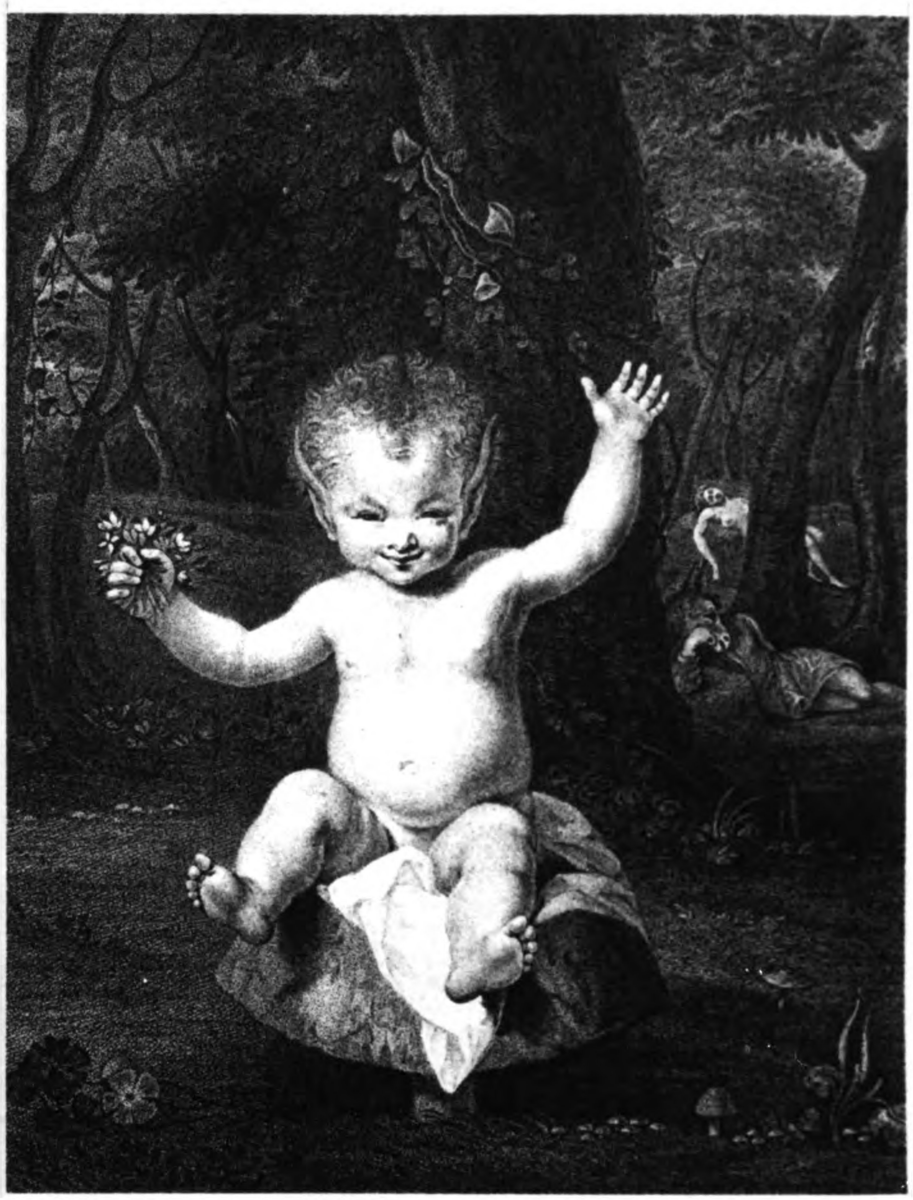

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Illustration 11: Midsummer Night's Dream. Act II. Scene II. Painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Engraved by L. Schiavonetti.
(Photo: The Boydell Shakespeare Prints)

Illustration 12: The Tempest. Act I. Scene II. Painted by H. Fuseli. Engraved by P. Simon. (Photo: The Boydell Shakespeare Prints)

Illustration 13: The Tempest. Act I. Scene III. Painted by G. Romney. Engraved by B. Smith. (Photo: The Boydell Shakespeare Prints)

Illustration 14: The Tempest. Act IV. Scene I. Painted by J. Wright of Derby. Engraved by R. Thew. (Photo: The Boydell Shakespeare Prints)

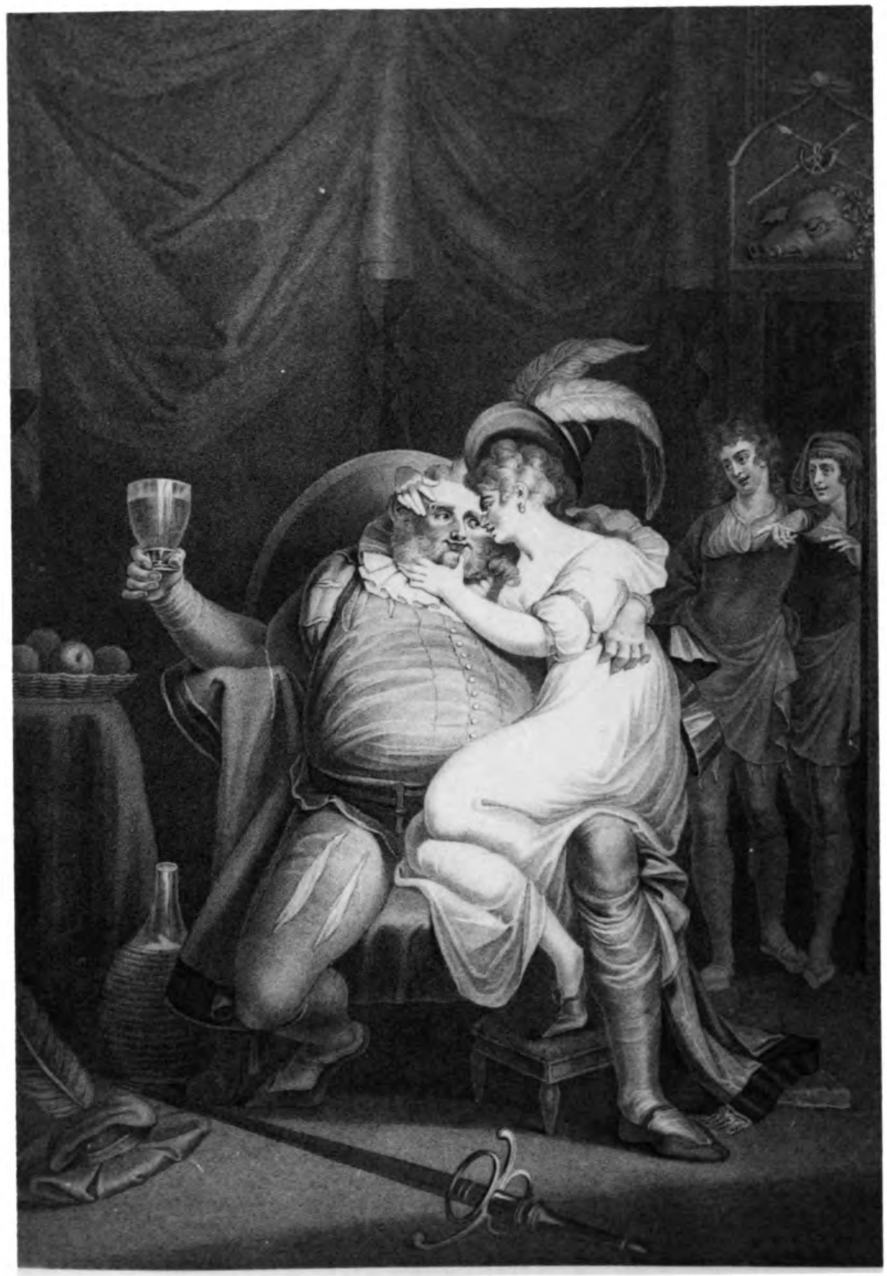

Illustration 15: King Henry IV, Part II. Act II. Scene IV. Painted by H. Fuseli. Engraved by W. Leney. (Photo: The Boydell Shakespeare Prints)