THE ROMANCES

PERICLES

In the eighteenth century, there was much debate over the admission of Pericles to the Shakespearean canon; it was left out of most editions, including Boydell’s. In 1738, the last three acts were embodied in George Lillo’s Marina, in the belief that these were all in which Shakespeare had had a hand. There was no actual revival until 1854, when Samuel Phelps mounted a successful production laden with banquets, dances, and processions. The first recorded painting from the play predated this staging by two years: Paul Falconer Poole’s scene on the deck of the Tyrian ship, when Pericles is roused by the singing of his daughter Marina (RA 1852). Urbain Bouvier’s Marina was exhibited at the Royal Academy the year after Phelps’s production, and Henry Nelson O’Neil’s two paintings, one of the same scene that Poole depicted (RA 1869) and the other of Marina at the grave of her nurse (RA 1870), followed at some distance. And that is the complete history of pictures from Pericles.

CYMBELINE

Although Cymbeline is not often performed today, among playgoers and picture-lovers from the middle of the eighteenth century through the whole Victorian era it was the favorite example of what came to be called Shakespeare’s “dark comedies,” more than one hundred paintings being drawn from it. After Garrick revived it in 1761, replacing various drastically altered versions that had been current since the Restoration, it was kept in the Drury Lane repertory as long as he remained manager. By happy accident, the revival, so successful that for the next decade the play was performed at least five times each season, coincided with the first art exhibitions in London, and it is conceivable that Garrick immediately recognized the publicity value of having the play represented on their walls. Almost as if part of a campaign, a series of portraits of actors in the roles of Posthumus and Iachimo appeared at the Society of Artists (1762, 1765, 1768). Besides the theatrical portraits, the play was alluded to in landscapes such as one shown in 1763, A Large Landscape, with a Scene in Shakespeare’s Cymbeline. In 1788, William Hodges exhibited at the Royal Academy a similar painting with a more specific allusion: Landscape, with the Story of Imogen and Pisanio, Taken from Shakespeare’s Play of Cymbeline. At the same time, incidents from the plot were painted without reference either to the theater or to landscape. Edward Penny’s Imogen Discovered in the Cave (pl. 239) survives at Stratford-on-Avon, and Alexander Runciman’s portrayal of Iachimo showing the horrified Posthumus the supposed proof of Imogen’s adultery (2.4) (1785) is at the National Gallery of Scotland.

The great majority of the Cymbeline pictures executed in the next hundred years dealt with what can only be called the tribulations of Imogen. Aware of the popular appeal inherent in a combination of sexual intrigue and the flight of an injured wife through a storm, artists concentrated on only two sequences of events: the brief, tense scene in which Iachimo invades the sleeping Imogen’s bedchamber (2.2) followed by his false
report to Posthumus of what occurred there (2.4), and the succession of scenes (3.4–4.2) in which Imogen, disguised as a page, takes refuge in a cave, is succored by the huntsmen Belarius, Guiderius, and Arviragus, and awakens from a drugged sleep to find beside her the headless body of Cloten, dressed in her husband’s clothes.

Some sixteen paintings of Iachimo in Imogen’s bedroom are recorded. James Barry painted one and perhaps two versions of Iachimo emerging from the chest in Imogen’s chamber. Westall’s version for Boydell, of Iachimo standing over her bed, could, except for Iachimo’s color, have done double duty for Othello standing over the sleeping Desdemona. The subject provided Charles West Cope with his first painting as a pupil at the Royal Academy schools, “a very poor performance” as he admitted in his Reminiscences. For some reason—there seems to have been no especially memorable staging at that moment—there was a burst of paintings from this scene in the years 1834–41, when at least eight were exhibited. F. P. Stephanoff showed Iachimo Taking the Bracelet from Imogen in 1834, and William Boxall’s study of Imogen for the 1838 edition of Heath’s Gallery showed her at the moment when she puts down her book and prays herself to sleep, unaware, as presumably some buyers of the elegant annual may have been as well, that Iachimo is in the trunk.

The later sequence of Imogen’s adventures afield and in the cave provided subjects for more than twice as many paintings (thirty-seven) as the earlier. Three different artists toward the end of the eighteenth century portrayed Imogen about to enter the cave as the storm rages: John Hoppner and Westall for Boydell, and M. W. Peters for Woodmason’s New Shakespeare.
Shakespeare Gallery. Some treatments of the ensuing interior scene were set, as it were, to the music of the duet Guiderius and Arviragus sing, "Fear no more the heat o' the sun."

A few other passages in Cymbeline engaged artists from time to time; the trio of huntsmen, for example, were depicted by G. F. Watts (RA 1842) and James Eckford Lauder (RSA 1851). But it was still Imogen who preoccupied the painters. As her presence in two editions of Heath's Gallery only two years apart testified—before Boxall, A. E. Chalon had depicted her in the 1836 edition brooding over Belarius's dinner table, set, for better lighting, at the mouth of the cave—she was among their favorite Shakespearean heroines, the very essence of pathos as well as moral strength, a Griselda in Roman Britain. As regularly happened with such paragons, the name became detached from the dramatic character; and Imogen, like her most celebrated Shakespearean sisters, became, as a critic of one such portrait observed, "less Imogen than any devoted wife or fiancée of our own time."2 There was the occasional difficulty, inherent in disguise plots (cf. Twelfth Night), of maintaining the graphic illusion of masculinity while assuring the spectator that the figure really was a girl. But custom could not stale Imogen's infinite appeal to the gallery-stroller.

THE WINTER'S TALE

The Winter's Tale was among the first Shakespearean plays to attract artists in any number, a fact that can be explained only in part by the popularity of Garrick's abbreviated version of 1756, which shared a double bill in the Drury Lane repertory with his similarly cut version of The Taming of the Shrew, renamed Catherine and Petruchio. Whatever knowledge the contemporary art lover possessed of the first two acts and most of the third was not acquired in the theater because Garrick, who played Leontes to Mrs. Pritchard's Hermione, totally omitted them, moving many of the best passages found there and elsewhere in the play to the sheep-shearing scene and at the same time interspersing what was left of the original text with execrable additions from his own pen. The play as Shakespeare wrote it—in general—was staged in 1802 by J. P. Kemble, and was one of those Charles Kean selected for his lavish productions in the 1850s. Billed as "an opportunity . . . of reproducing a classical era, and placing before the eyes of the spectator, tableaux vivants of the private and public life of the ancient Greeks," Kean's staging featured a curtain-raising feast of Leontes and his guests, followed by a "Pyrrhic Dance by 36 youths in armour" and an elaborate allegorical tableau based on Flaxman's celebrated design of the Shield of Achilles and enhanced by one of the earliest theatrical uses of an electric arc.1

The earliest of the sixty-odd paintings from The Winter's Tale typified several of the chief uses to which Shakespearean material was put in those early years. Robert Pine's theatrical portrait of Mrs. Pritchard as Hermione was hung at the Society of Artists' first exhibition in 1760, and Reynolds's of Mary Robinson as Perdita (1782) was so famous as to provide that adventurous actress, part-time author, and mistress of the Prince of Wales with a sobriquet that largely replaced her baptismal name. At the same time, The Winter's Tale provided characters to be assumed by ladies posing for fancy pictures. An engraving (1781) from a picture ascribed to Zoffany showed the Countess of Derby as Hermione,
and in the mid-1780s, Fuseli painted several such fancy pictures of Perdita, including one of her attended by fairies and Ariel, imported from elsewhere in the Shakespearean canon.

The selection of scenes in the Boydell Gallery accurately foreshadowed, for the most part, the subsequent popular taste in Winter's Tale pictures. There were seven altogether, including four by Hamilton (pl. 241). Henry Thomson painted the finding of Perdita (pl. 111); but the result was not to Boydell's liking, and the canvas was not engraved. William Hodges's Antigonus and the Bear was similarly rejected, Boydell substituting Joseph Wright of Derby's rendering of the storm scene, with Leontes a small figure, arms outstretched, seen against a background of boiling sea and beetling cliffs. The action in act 3, scene 3—Antigonus in the storm and then pursued by the bear, and the finding of Perdita—was one of the most popular Shakespearean subjects in the eighteenth century, despite the fact that it was present only momentarily in Garrick's reworking, where it was sacrificed in favor of the shepherd's and clown's discovery of the castaway Leontes. Between 1771 and 1792, at least ten paintings were derived from the scene.

Two Boydell paintings were of the busy sheep-shearing scene (4.4, more than 820 lines), a natural choice given the popularity of rural festivals as depicted in poems like The Seasons and genre paintings by Greuze and Morland. The more noteworthy of the two—the other was by Hamilton—was Wheatley's, a crowded scene of merrymaking. The next noteworthy portrayals were Leslie's pair, painted for John Sheepshanks: Autolycus (pl. 68) and Florizel and Perdita (pl. 242).

Another Boydell subject, Leontes Looking at the Statue of Hermione as It Moves and Breathes (5.3), was painted less often than its strong dramatic quality would lead one to expect. After Hamilton represented it, it was seen only a few times. Not even the popularity of "attitudes" (the drawing-room entertainment of ladies posing as figures in fancy pictures or as 241. William Hamilton, The Shepherd's Cot (Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery) (Royal Shakespeare Theatre Picture Gallery ©). This painting shows how Shakespearean subjects could accommodate the late eighteenth-century taste for paintings of pastoral life and rural chivalry. The scene is The Winter's Tale, 4.4 (the sheep-shearing scene), but Perdita's costume is scarcely appropriate for a "low-born lass," and the Gothic chapel is not the equivalent of a shepherd's humble cottage.

242. Charles R. Leslie, Florizel and Perdita (RA 1837) (Victoria & Albert Museum, Crown Copyright). Literature supplies an occasion for an exercise in a favorite early Victorian mode, the floral-sentiment painting. Leslie is faithful to the Shakespearean text (The Winter's Tale, 4.4): "Give me those flowers there, Dorcas. Reverend sirs, for you there's rosemary and rue; these keep seeming and savor all the winter long." This is the companion to Leslie's Autolycus (pl. 68), which portrays a later moment in the same lengthy scene.
celebrated statues, à la Lady Hamilton)* or, subsequently, poses plastiques on the stage, stimulated the production of pictures showing the Shakespearean archetype of living statuary. The last in the slender series was Leslie’s (pl. 243). The Saturday Review was waspish:

Mr. Leslie must be very bold, or very blind, to provoke a recurrence to Shakspeare’s description of Hermione as an explanation of his picture; for many of the lines read excellently as satirical criticism on the wooden form before us. Would Paulina have prepared us to “see the life as lively mocked as ever still sleep mocked death,” if she had only to show this white, uninteresting woman—more like a plaster cast than a marble statue, leaning on a stage imitation pedestal, with only three fingers to one of her hands? Or would Leontes have cried, in fixed amazement, “O royal piece! there’s magic in thy majesty”? Mr. Leslie would have been kinder, and much wiser, never to have drawn the curtain.3

The most sensible comment was the Literary Gazette’s: “A representation of a lady standing so as to look like a statue, by the nature of the case excludes all expression, and leaves nothing to be admired but technical skill.”9

THE TEMPEST

Two leading qualities of The Tempest recommended it to theatrical producers and painters: its opportunities for music and spectacle. The musical allusions in the text as well as the actual songs were responsible for the play’s being turned into an opera as early as 1674, when Henry Purcell added a score to the adaptation of Shakespeare’s drama written some years earlier by John Dryden and Sir William D’Avenant. Garrick had a frequently revived operatic version in his Drury Lane repertory, and in 1821 Macready played Prospero in still another pseudo-opera. Meanwhile, the original comedy was occasionally revived, with uneven success. It was only in 1838, when Macready staged it, that Shakespeare finally routed Dryden and D’Avenant. As theatrical technology improved, The Tempest, in whatever form, was a popular vehicle for showing off the latest lighting devices and stage effects. The apogee of the “spectacular” Tempest was reached in 1857, when Charles Kean cut large slices from the text to make room for a lavish display of theatrical beauty and wizardry. It was no accident that the highlights of the production, which received rave notices and ran for eighty-seven nights, corresponded with the subjects most favored by the painters of the period. Indeed, one might say that in this extravaganza of shipwrecks, pageantry, banquets, “visions,” and transformation scenes, replete with animated scenery and props, lighting tricks, fountains, dancing naiads, fauns and satyrs, Kean moved the walls of the annual exhibitions to the Princess’ Theatre.11 His stage pictures were, in effect, a montage of the scores of Tempest scenes already painted (some 200 in all are recorded). And, of course, those produced after that time doubtless incorporated effects in turn from Kean’s stage.

Eighteenth-century artists’ strong interest in the play is nicely epitomized by a picture (1784) by two Scottish artists, Alexander Runciman and John Brown, a conversation piece in the most literal sense, since it showed them “in dispute regarding a passage in Shakespeare’s Tempest.” Fifty years earlier, Hogarth had painted Miranda, Prospero, and Ferdinand attended by the supernatural creatures of the piece, the sprite Ariel and the anthropoid monster Caliban (pl. 172). One of Hayman’s decorations in the Prince’s Pavilion at Vauxhall Gardens was the scene in which Miranda is startled by the sight of Ferdinand. About 1775, Romney

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Only a spectator acquainted with The Winter’s Tale would have recognized this as a pose plastique, a popular form of theatrical entertainment in mid-Victorian England—the sculptural version of the tableau vivant. The model (said to have been Mrs. Charles Kean) assumes the role of a woman who is herself posing—as a statue.

*This was one of the “borrowed attitudes” performed by Gwendolen Harleth in George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda. She modeled her pose as Hermione after Mrs. Siddons’s.
part two • the romances

244. Unknown artist, Prosopo, Miranda, and Ariel (ca. 1770–90) (Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund). The moment in The Tempest, act 1, scene 2, when Prospero summons Ariel as Miranda sleeps. "The unknown artist displays a knowledge of antique statues in Rome: the pose of Miranda is probably based on that of the abandoned Ariadne, Prospero on the Apollo Belvedere, and Ariel on the Capitoline Venus" (Ashton [1], p. 2).

painted a passage in act 1, scene 2, that Allan Cunningham, who saw the picture many years later, described in terms applicable to innumerable renditions of the same scene in years to come: "She gazes with admiration and growing tenderness on Ferdinand; her hair is loosely braided, but is too redundant to be restrained, and floats on the air; the gentle Ariel is in his ministry near, and a troop of shadowy nymphs are dancing on the 'yellow sands.' " Romney was already at work on another Tempest scene when he attended the dinner at Josiah Boydell's that led to the founding of the Shakespeare Gallery. "The original picture," wrote Cunningham, "represented Prospero, Miranda, and Caliban, with a shipwreck in the background. Some pretender to taste declared the composition was not strictly historical [i.e., did not conform to the strict rules of academic painting], as it consisted only of three figures." It was in a dutifully recomposed form that the picture was added to the Boydell Gallery. Only one fragment survives, the head of Prospero.

The Boydell Gallery had seven subjects from The Tempest, a number reached by only five other plays. Fuseli's contribution was The Enchanted Isle: Before the Cell of Prospero, and Joseph Wright's was from act 4, scene 1, with Ferdinand, Miranda, and Prospero in the cell, Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo at a distance outside the mouth of the cave, and, glowing at the top of the composition, the masque of Iris, Ceres, Juno, and the Nymphs. Shakespeare's locale is "the still-vexed Bermoothes," presumably in Tudor times; but, like Fuseli, Wright could not have cared less about period authenticity: Ferdinand was in Van Dyck costume and Miranda in contemporary dress.

Among the various sources of the play's appeal for artists and their patrons in a period that sought to have the best of both the neoclassic and Romantic worlds were the fairy element and the perennial charm of innocent young love, especially love at first sight; Ferdinand and Miranda were Romeo and Juliet on an island, with the bonus of a happy ending. Prospero embodied two themes favored in the painting of the time, the
245. Frederick R. Pickersgill, *Prospero and Miranda* (undated) (Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool). The artist was one of a cluster of related Pickersgills who were well known in their time as painters of narrative and genre subjects, including many from literature; none have benefited much from the recent revaluation of their school. The picture may date from the early sixties, when Pickersgill exhibited two other *Tempest* paintings at the Royal Academy.

In 1793, Lawrence exhibited *Prospero Raising the Storm* at the Royal Academy, but the resemblance between it and Fuseli’s drawing of *Macbeth, the Cauldron Sinking*, exhibited at the same time, was so striking that Lawrence subsequently painted out the picture and frugally re-used the canvas for his portrait of John Philip Kemble as Rolla in Sheridan’s adaptation of Kotzebue’s *Pizarro*.


Shakespeare’s Miranda!—The lovely daughter of the instigator of *The Tempest*, and the tender and soothing love of Ferdinand, is one of the most perfectly innocent and artlessly amiable characters that were ever sketched. She is such as we might imagine the beauteous Eve in the garden of Eden, the purest specimen of her sex. And the scene chosen by Hilton for exhibiting his powers, is the most effective in this drama, some of the finest touches of nature bursting out in the language softly flowing to the heart, whose generous impulses it irrigates and cherishes.”

Miranda was among the favorite heroines of Shakespearean art. Reynolds painted Mrs. Tollemache in the role in 1774, and many years later the actress Priscilla Horton posed for Maclise (pl. 54). As usual with these heroines, many pictures bearing Miranda’s name were, like John William Waterhouse’s later in the century, nothing more than academic figure studies.

From Hogarth’s treatment onward, painters used *Tempest* subjects to illustrate elementary philosophical oppositions: the flesh and the spirit, magician (benign rather than malevolent) and that of domestic instruction, in this case a concerned father serving as moral guide and tutor to a motherless girl. While Caliban catered to the occasional taste for the Fuselian grotesque,* the play was replete with moments that obliged the more pervasive taste for graphic “prettiness”: scenes by moonlit water, the suggestion of the musical qualities of the text and action through overtly rhythmical compositions, the portrayal of figures in the airy motions of dancing and floating, the expression of a pure *joie de vivre*.

In short, *The Tempest* was treasured as a prime source of “poetical” subjects, and critics vied with one another to couch their appreciation in appropriately florid terms. This is a writer in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* praising William Hilton’s *Miranda* (1828):

*PAINTINGS FROM BOOKS*
the ugly and the beautiful, youth and age, good and evil. William Bell Scott thus interpreted his brother David's design in his *Ariel and Caliban* (pl. 72): “The two impersonations . . . represent as it were, the two poles of human nature; the ascending and descending forces of mind and matter. Caliban, the brown and hairy slave, half-brute half-man, has crawled from the capture of a green snake, which he drags by the head. Ariel, long and thin, like a swift bird, touches the monster's forehead with his heel, at the same time striking into the air those sweet sounds that give delight and hurt not.”

But this universally popular subject in the hands of a Pre-Raphaelite painter called forth a very different response from the critical press. Millais's *Ferdinand Lured by Ariel* (pl. 248), the most celebrated of all *Tempest* illustrations, was as roughly handled as Turner's *Shylock and Jessica* had been. The *Athenaeum*: “a scene built on the contrivances of the stage manager, but with very bad success.” The *Times*: “We do not want to see Ariel and the spirits of the Enchanted Isle in the attitudes and shapes of green goblins, or the gallant Ferdinand twisted like a posture-maker by Albert Dürer.” The *Examiner*: “[Ferdinand is] bilious and dyspeptic . . . the artist has portrayed Ariel with the lineaments of Caliban.”

Of all the scenes in Shakespeare's plays, the first major one in *The Tempest* (1.2, following the brief one of the shipwreck) was by a considerable margin the most often pictured. It figured directly or indirectly (by the use of mottoes) in at least fifty pictures, a total that probably would be much larger if the many paintings bearing such indeterminate titles as *Miranda*, or *Prospero and Miranda*, or *Prospero and Ariel*, could be identified more specifically and some attributed to one or another of the half-dozen movements that constitute the 500-line scene. All of these were painted at one time or another, some repeatedly, so that if enough survived they might, like pictures from *Macbeth* act 2, scene 2, be assembled into a continuous narrative montage representing the entire scene from beginning to end. The most painted passage was that in which the invisible Ariel marks Ferdinand's entrance by singing

247. Sir Joseph Noel Paton, *Caliban* (dated 1868) (Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum). Although he often appeared in compositions that included Prospero, Miranda, and Ariel, Caliban was seldom portrayed as a single figure—understandably, because whereas Ariel could grace every home, Shakespeare's half man-half beast would have been welcome, as decoration at least, in few. This picture was equipped with a quotation from *The Tempest*, but it might well have served to illustrate the speaker in Browning's "Caliban upon Setebos," published four years earlier.

248. John Everett Millais, *Ferdinand Lured by Ariel* (RA 1850) (Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool). A sketch for the exhibited picture. Ariel (invisible in Shakespeare's text, as are the "lost fellows" the artist has supplied as accompanists) sings "Full fathom five thy father lies" (*The Tempest*, 1. 2). The artist F. G. Stephens modeled for Ferdinand.
Come unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands.
Curtisied when you have and kissed,
The wild waves whist,
Foot it feately here and there;
And, sweet sprites, the burden bear.
Hark, Hark!

“Come unto these yellow sands” was an open invitation to artists to paint elaborate stylized arrangements of spirits, the Graces, nymphs, sylphs, fairies (the breeds were both indistinguishable and interchangeable) dancing by the seaside—a perfect way to lighten the drawing rooms in prosaic suburban villas with iridescent colors and compositional rhythms that were almost audible. In such an unimpeachable literary context, bevies of sleek female nudes could be introduced without qualm, and they were. Stothard, who said that Purcell’s air to the words “was in my head all the time” as he painted, did several versions of the song.9 Richard Dadd exhibited his own, first at the Royal Academy in 1842 and the next year at Liverpool, under the title Fairies Holding their Revels on the Sea Shore by Night.

The various phases of the final scene (5.1) were the subjects of a dozen or more paintings. Henry Singleton and Henry Howard depicted Prospero releasing Ariel from the cloven pine; Singleton also illustrated, as did Fuseli, the familiar line from Ariel’s song, “On the bat’s back I do fly”; and several artists portrayed the moment when Prospero discovers Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess. Francis Wheatley, who painted it for Boydell, took the permissible liberty of showing the lovers not playing chess. The chessboard indeed is present, but only as a mute witness to Ferdinand’s bending over Miranda and holding her hand.