



Visualizing Shakespeare

Grades 9-12

60 minutes

Objective

Books have featured illustration since the beginning of bookmaking, from illuminated manuscripts to graphic novels. Today, we will explore how illustration enhances the reading experience by looking at and discussing examples of various exciting illustration styles used in modern editions of Shakespeare's works. Three series – those of Hugh Thomson, the Players' Shakespeare, and The New Temple Shakespeare with Eric Gill's engravings – add a compelling visual character to Shakespeare's plays, including *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; *As You Like It*; *Macbeth*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; and *Hamlet*. All of the illustrations included are from books held in Pequot Library's Special Collections.



Questions

1. How does illustration enhance the reading experience?
 - Adds a visual narrative for the reader
 - Adds a visually artistic component to text
 - Creates a mood
 - Magnifies the power of the writer's words
 - Makes a story come to life
 - Offers visual cues for developing readers
 - Brings the reader deeper into a story
 - Makes the reader think about a story in a new way
 - Creates an emotional response - amusement, fear, etc

Activity

This lesson may be done in conjunction with students' readings of the plays, or on its own. It can be taught based on one, several, or all of the plays included.

Questions to consider and discuss with students who are reading or have read the plays may include:

- How does the illustrator portray the characters and scenes from the play? How does his interpretation compare with what you visualized?
- Has the illustrator set the play during the time period in which it was written, or do you see influences from the time period in which the illustrator lived (or other time periods)? (Consider costumes, scenery, building design, colors, hair styles, etc).
- How does the illustration bring the story to life?
- What mood does illustration create?
- What techniques (colors, lines, forms, facial expressions, relationships between characters) does the illustrator use to achieve this effect?
- How does the illustration enhance the reading experience?
- Do you like having illustrations or do you prefer to use your imagination?
- If you were the illustrator for this play, what would you create?

If students haven't read the play:

- Based on illustration, what do you think the play is about? What is happening in each scene?
- Do you think it's a comedy or a tragedy? What is it about the illustration (lines, colors, forms, facial expressions, scenery) that makes you think that?
- What mood does the illustration create?
- Based on what you've observed, are you interested in reading or learning more about the play?
- Once you have read the play, consider how the story differed from or was consistent with what you thought it would be about given the illustrations.

If teaching the lesson using multiple plays, compare and contrast:

- **Comedy vs Tragedy:** Which plays do you think are comedies? Tragedies? What makes you say that?
- **Time period/art style/genre:** How did the time period in which the illustrator lived influence his interpretation of the play? Do the costumes reflect the time period in which the play was set, the time period in which the illustrations were created, or a different time period? What makes you say that?

Follow Up Activity:

1. **Art:** Choose a Shakespeare play that you are reading or have read, and create your own illustration set in contemporary times (today). Characters and setting should reflect the style, dress, and scenery that is typical of our 21st century world.
2. **Writing:** For students who are viewing illustrations before reading the play, ask them to write their own story, based on what they've gathered from the illustration. After reading the play, compare and contrast students' preliminary interpretation.

Hugh Thomson (1860-1920) illustrated two of Shakespeare's plays held in Pequot Library's Special Collections: *As you like it* and *Merry Wives of Windsor*. Both works, published in 1910, include pen-and-ink drawings at the openings of each act. Additionally, the editions have 40 mounted full-page color plates by Thomson.

Thomson was Irish, born near Londonderry. In addition to the Shakespeare plays, Thomson's illustrations are also found in editions of works by Jane Austen, J. M. Barrie, and Charles Dickens. Thomson preferred pen-and-ink illustrations but would produce watercolor images when publishers requested special editions. The two works on display in the exhibit show warm depictions of the plays' action with great attention to detail. Before creating the illustrations, Thomson would research the works in the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert museum where he could concentrate on costumes and furnishings he later incorporated into his drawings.

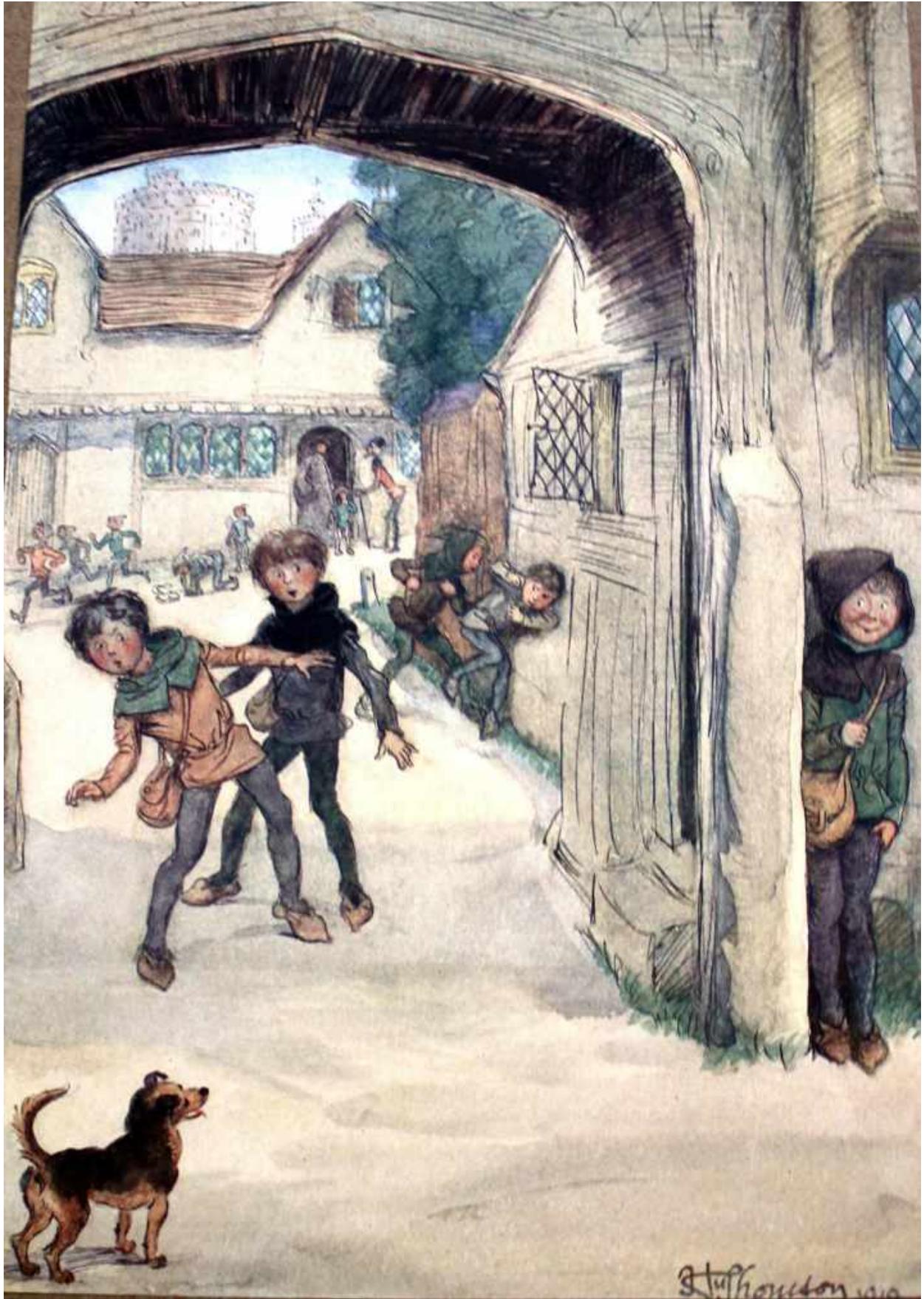


Figure 1 Falstaff with Nym and Pistol in the Garter Inn.









Sturton via







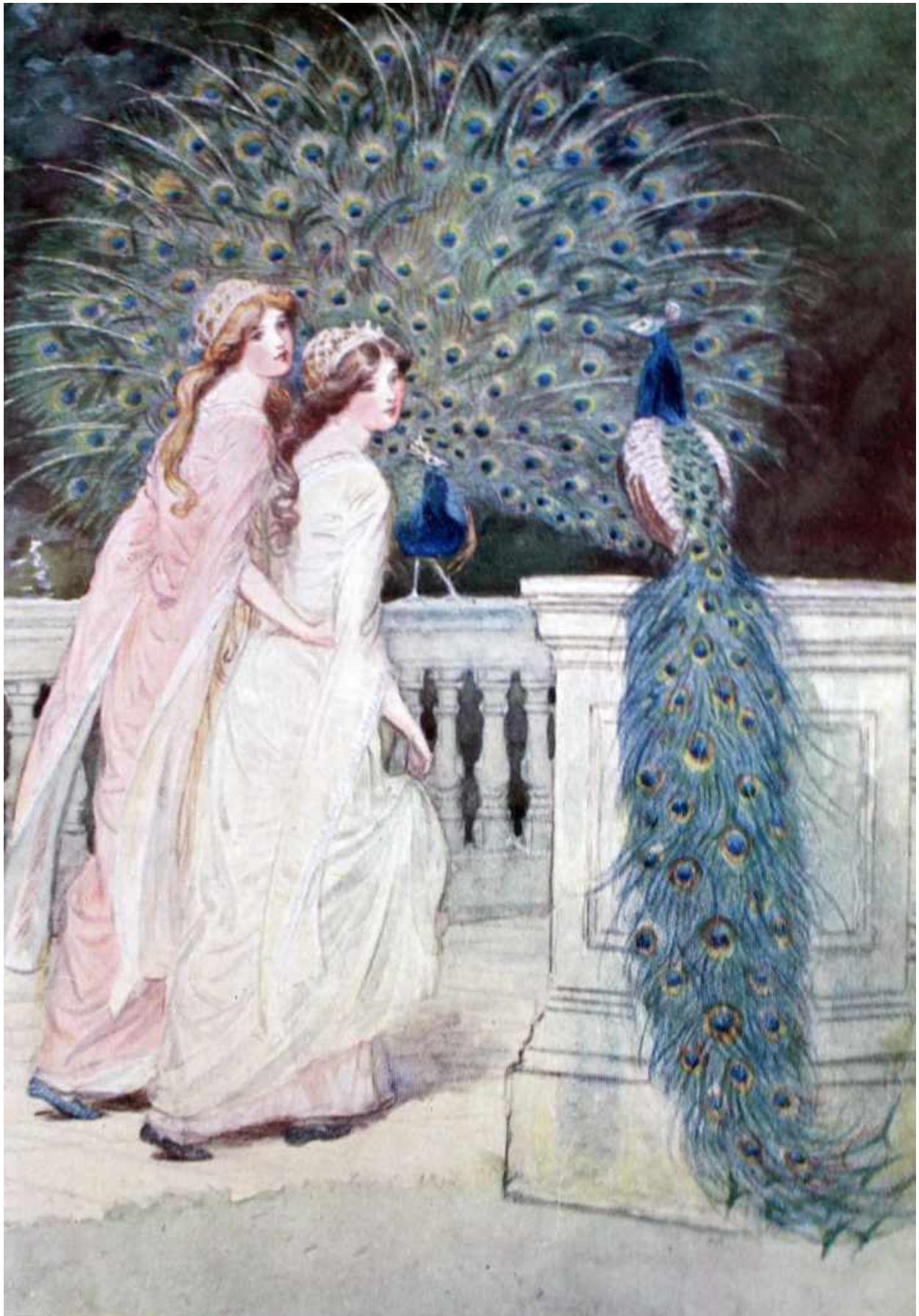
Shakespeare's Comedy
AS YOU LIKE IT
with Illustrations by
Hugh Thomson



HODDER & STOUGHTON LONDON







The Players' Shakespeare

The Players' Shakespeare was printed from the *First Folio* of 1623 at the Shakespeare Head Press, Stratford-on-Avon, for the Patrons of the Tercentenary Celebration in 1923, by Sir Ernest Benn of Benn Brothers, Ltd., London, England. This edition, from the Dean Edmonds bequest, was limited to one hundred signed copies and is number 6.

Each volume contains an introduction by Harley Granville-Barker. The Art Editor is British artist, Albert Rutherston. Each volume bears the signatures of the editorial teams involved, including Charles Ricketts, Thomas Lowinsky, Paul Nash, Norman Wilkinson, and Ernst Stern.

Harley Granville-Barker (1877-1946) began his career as an actor when he was 13. By the age of 23, he was a successful playwright and actor. In 1904, Granville-Barker directed his first Shakespeare play *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. In Shakespeare productions, he introduced continuous action, symbolic scenery and favored ensemble acting. After retiring at age 40, Granville-Barker wrote a primer for directors and actors analyzing the plays from practical firsthand stage experience. Granville-Barker is often referred to as the father of modern British theatre.

The following illustrators and their works are selections from ***The Players' Shakespeare***:

Charles Ricketts (1866-1931) was born in Geneva and studied at the City and Guilds Art School in London. As well as illustrating books and starting an art journal, Ricketts founded the Vale Press in 1894 which published among other books a complete reprint of the works of Shakespeare. Ricketts was made a member of the Royal Academy in 1928.



Figure 2: Lady Macbeth encourages Macbeth to commit the fatal deed.



Figure 1: Lady Macbeth with the bloody dagger.



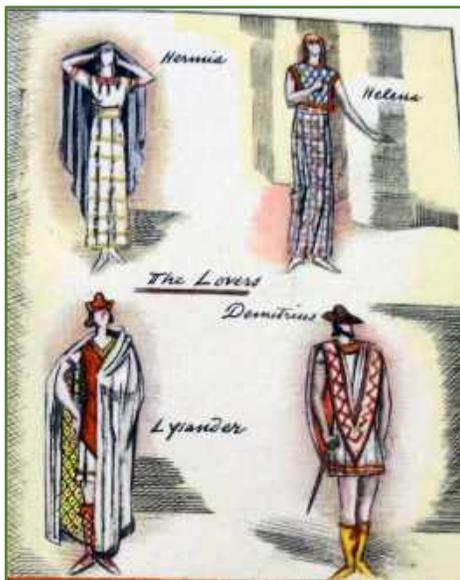


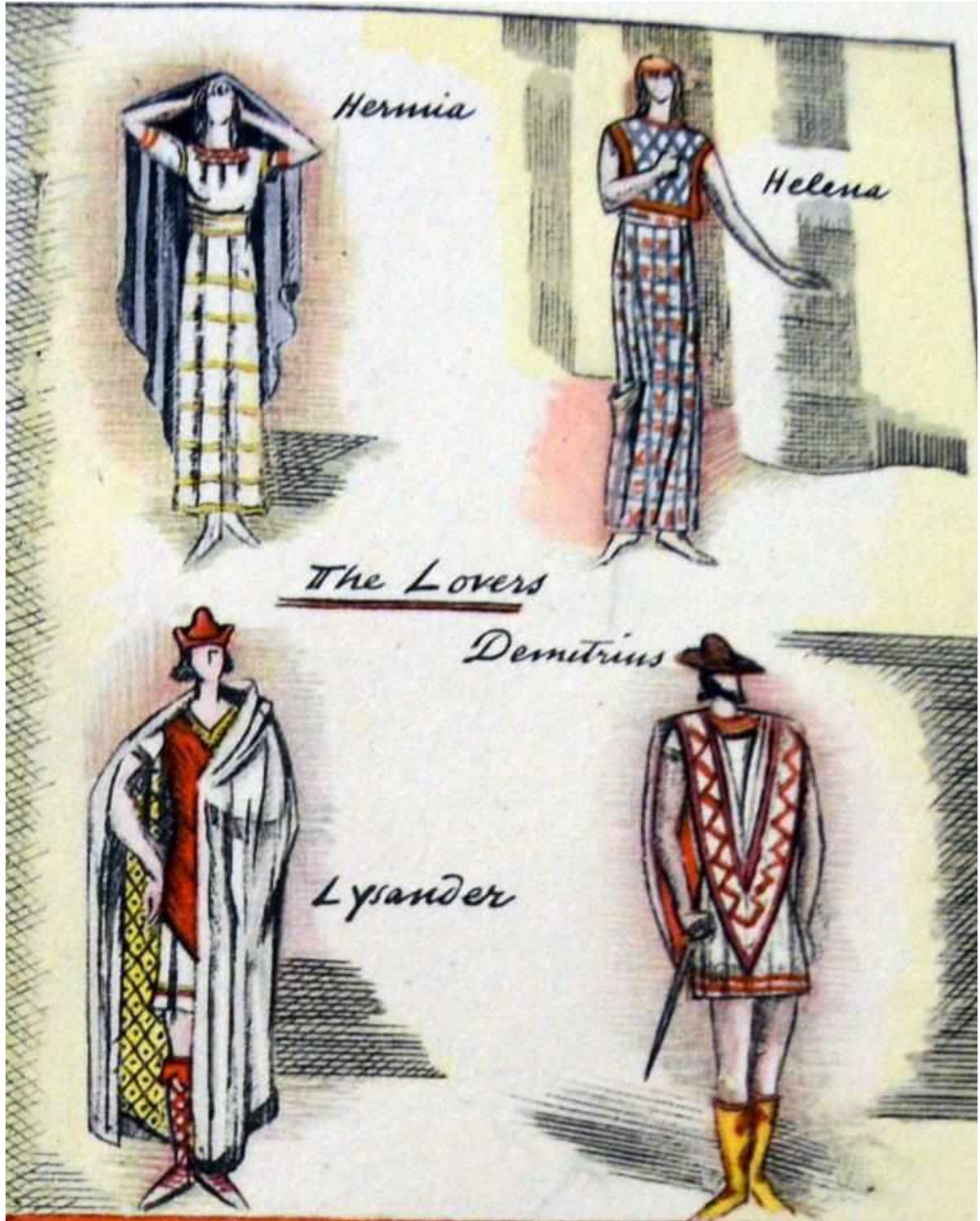
Paul Nash (1889-1946) was a British painter, who served as an official war artist during World War I, focusing on the landscape of the Western Front. Nash took great risks during WWI to get as close to the front lines as possible so that his depictions of the war would bring home its horrors.

Nash suffered from asthma, and between the wars from depression and financial worries. During World War II, Nash again depicted the effects of war, this time on rural England.

Paul Nash was also a photographer, book illustrator, and designer of stage art. His illustrations can be seen in the 1924 edition of *Midsommer Nights Dreame* owned by Pequot Library.

The following are examples of the costumes he designed for the play.





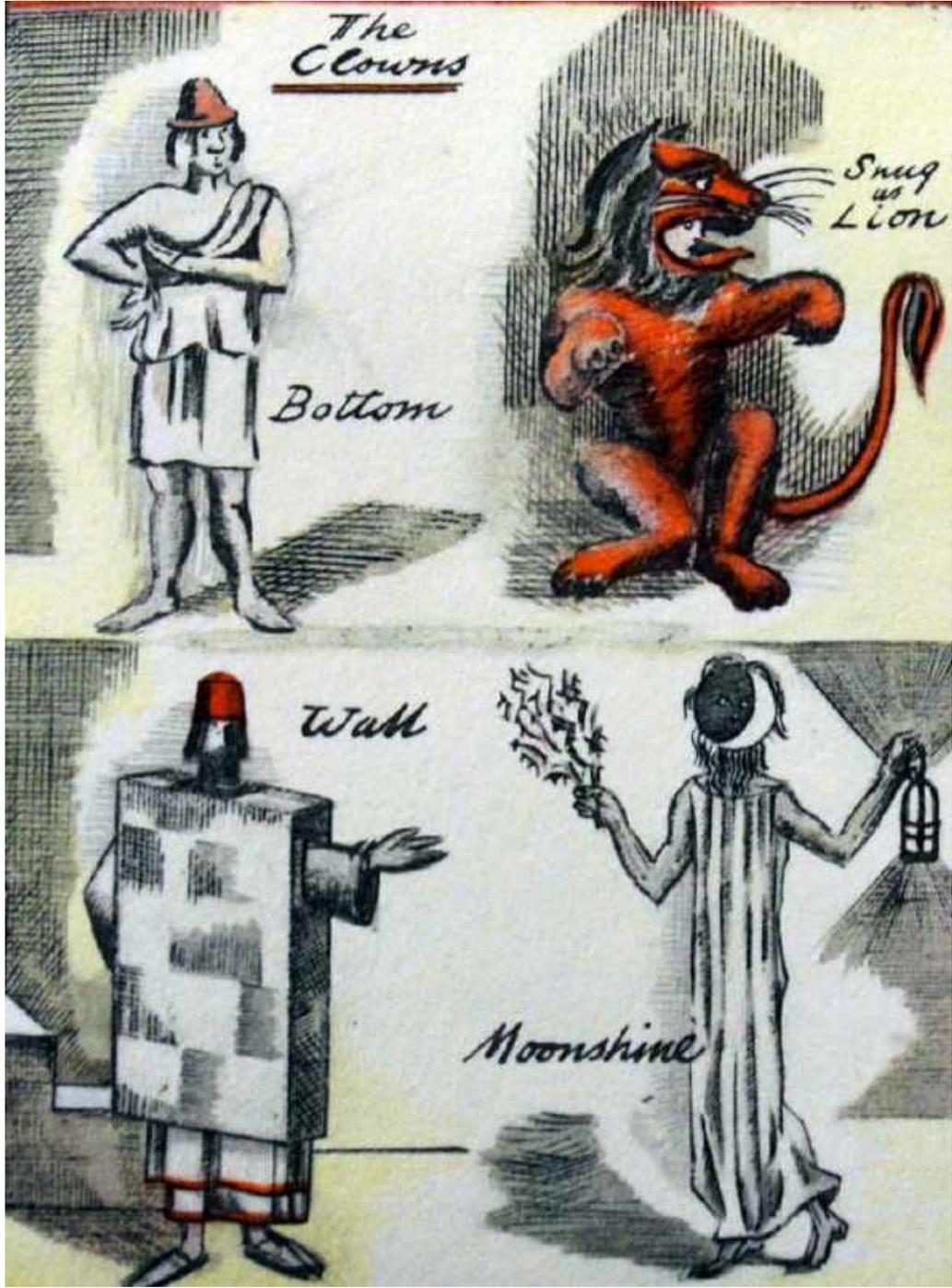
Hermia

Helena

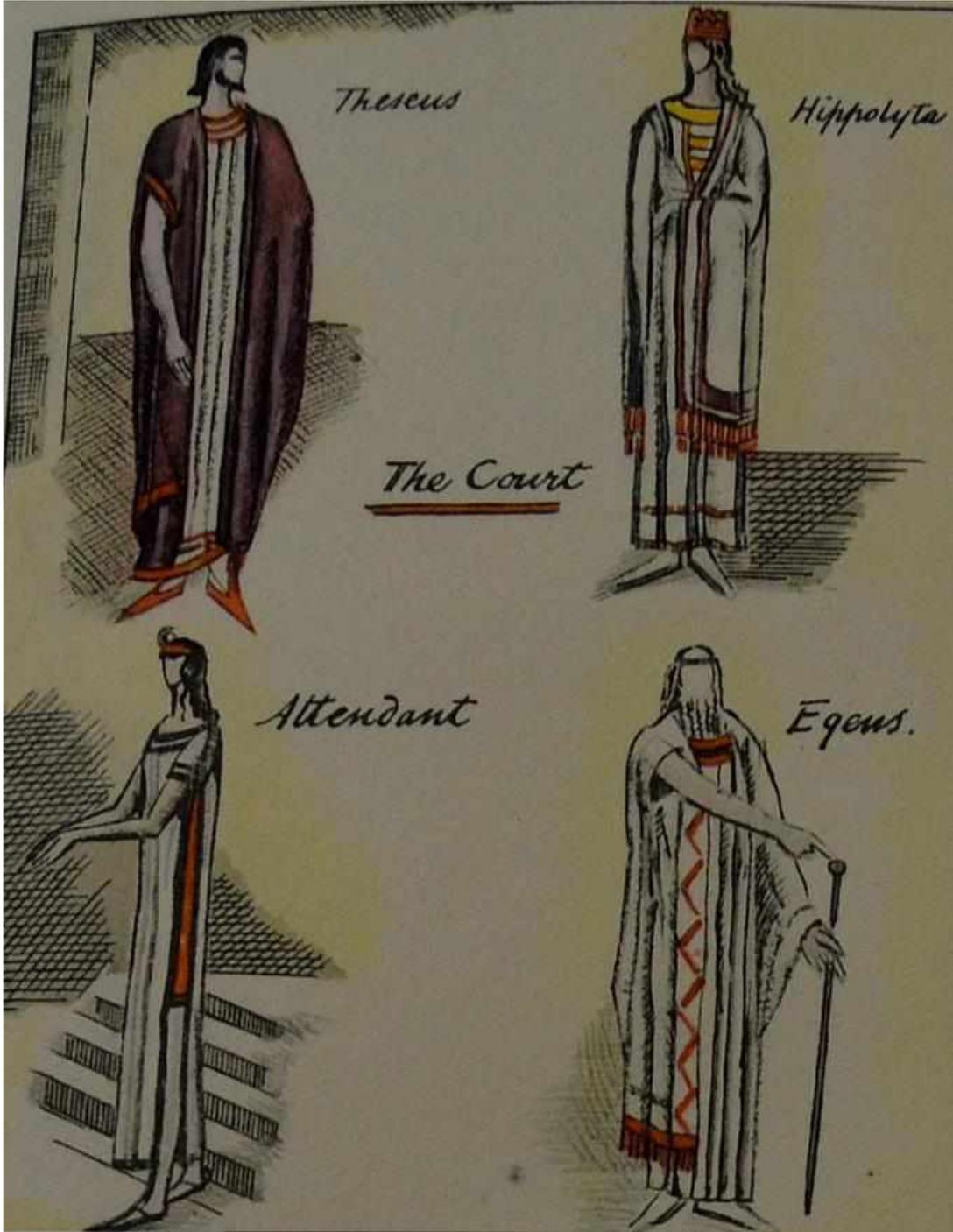
The Lovers

Demetrius

Lysander







The New Temple Shakespeare

Eric Gill (1882-1940) is the illustrator of two popular editions of Shakespeare plays on display for Pages from Pequot: Uncovering Shakespeare. Gill was a British artist known for his sculptures, typeface design, printmaking, wood engraving and illustration of more than 100 books. He is best known today for his typefaces Gill sans, Joanna and Perpetua which can be found on most any computer. The lettering used for the exhibit includes fonts designed by Gill.

Gill, a prominent figure in the Arts and Crafts movement, was commissioned by the League of Nations, the BBC, and the London Transport system to produce architectural sculptures. In 1914, his sculptures of the Stations of the Cross were installed in Westminster Cathedral.

Gill converted to Roman Catholicism in 1914. Unfortunately, he is also known as a controversial figure because his religious views were at odds with his widely published sexual activities including adultery and incestuous relations. Gill wrote and lectured on workers' rights and community living. He and his associates lived together as a community of faith while working on creative projects. The subject matter in his art varied between the deeply religious to the highly erotic.

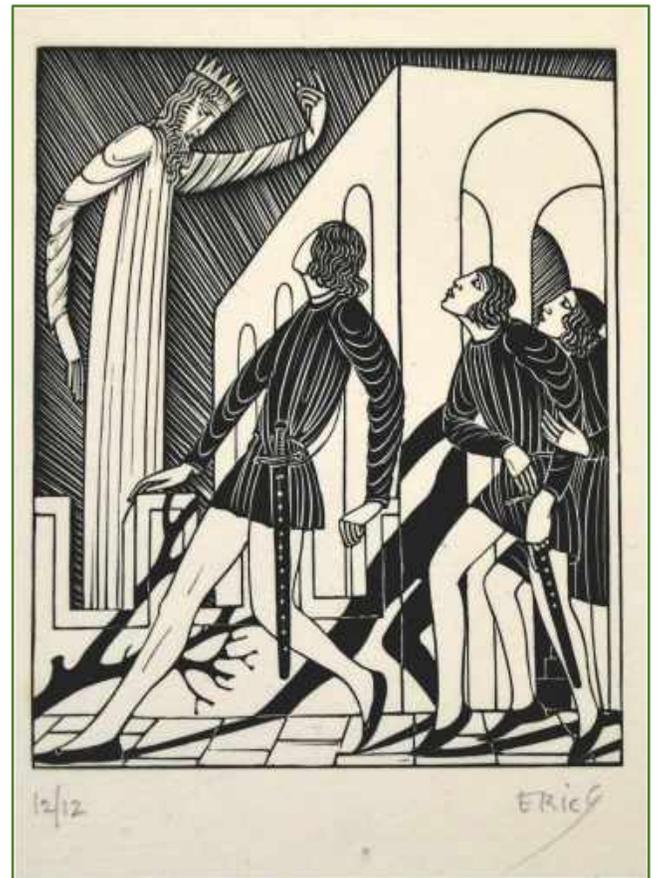
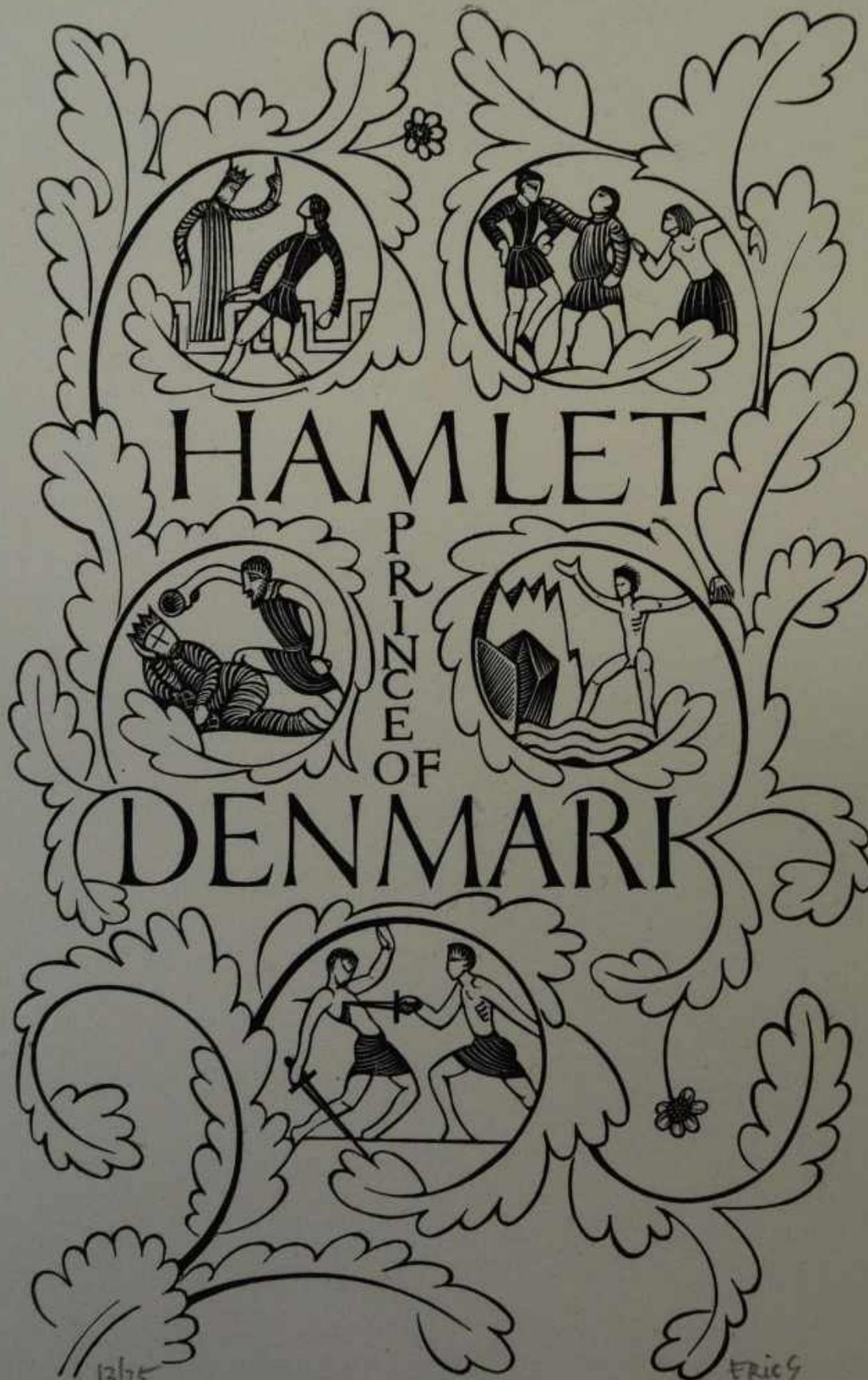


Figure 2: The Ghost challenges his son Hamlet to revenge his murder.



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