

## Shakespeare in Pre-Raphaelite Millais:

Millais's Fidelity to Shakespeare's Texts in *Ferdinand Lured by Ariel* (1849-50),  
*Mariana* (1850-51) and *Ophelia* (1851-52)

### ABSTRACT (要約)

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#### Introduction

The three works by John Everett Millais (1828-96), *Ferdinand Lured by Ariel* (1849-50), *Mariana* (1850-51) and *Ophelia* (1851-52), are striking images, and share some particular aspects in common, which underpin the innovativeness of his art. First of all, there are all from Millais's early career as an artist and as a founding member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and these representations are 'faithful to nature', following the Brotherhood's principles. Most importantly, all three were inspired by literature, specifically that of Shakespeare. While their vivid impressions can easily distract the beholders' eyes, the affinity between these works and Shakespearean texts as their sources are, in fact, interwoven in these works at many levels. These representations appear to have been partly liberated from the conventional images of these subjects in Victorian theatre and art, as the impact of Shakespeare's texts surpasses that of the preceding visual adaptations in Millais's creative process. Though the matter has not been widely explored, this thesis pursues the artistry in these three works in order to corroborate the following claim: The three compositions must have derived from Millais's familiarity with the texts rather than visual or theatrical adaptations, especially his attentive reading and interpretation of the Bard's language.

Based on the preceding studies on Millais and the Victorian reception of

Shakespeare, this thesis limits its scope to these three compositions by the artist, exploring their literary subject matter and their representations in depth. Before moving on to the actual analysis of the three works, the thesis first focuses on the trends in the Victorian art market and explores the involvement of particular individuals, especially that of Millais himself. Through this chapter, it aims to shed light on the importance of Millais's decision to explore the genre of narrative painting through these three works. In the following chapters, it then compares the representations by Millais with the literary texts of Shakespeare and others to clarify various qualities particular in Millais's art and analyse how such qualities were derived and imagined from the texts. Simultaneously, it elucidates the several ways in which Millais accessed the Bard's language and the particular edition which he had likely consulted by referring to the exhibition catalogues and the letters and diaries of Millais and his contemporaries.

## Chapter I. Setting the Narrative Trend in the Victorian Art Market: Millais, His Patrons and the Critics

As stated above, Chapter I explores Millais's involvement in the Victorian art market and analyses the narrative trend which affluent patrons, dealers, critics and artists were instrumental in heightening. The emergence of the art market and particular individuals such as middle-class patrons and art critics is identified in this discussion as a backdrop for the success of Millais and his Pre-Raphaelite peers. As all three paintings mainly discussed in this thesis met contemporary tastes in Shakespeare and narrative paintings, the chapter seeks possible reasons for Millais's choice of subject matter, while considering the artist's ability as artist-businessman. Simultaneously, the rising trend of narrative painting is examined in comparison to the falling demand for landscape painting. Through this chapter, the thesis first sheds light on the fundamental link between the three works by Millais as narrative paintings,

which plausibly pleased their potential buyers from the middle class.

## Chapter II. *Ferdinand Lured by Ariel* (1849-50): Neither Theatrical Portrait Nor Fairy Painting

The second chapter analyses *Ferdinand* as the first painting inspired by Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest*, by the Pre-Raphaelite Millais. This chapter brings up some of the qualities which construct the ingenuity of Millais's art, such as musicality, dramatic quality, the fluidity of the narrative, meticulous botanical details, the vivid colour schemes including the striking 'greenness' which echoes the colour in Shakespeare's text as well as the unconventional representation of ethereal subjects such as Ariel and the subordinate sprites. Additionally, looking into the transition of Millais's Ariels, it argues for the liberation from convention in his representation which declaims Millais's attentive reading of the original text by Shakespeare, meticulous technique of drawing and unbiased imagination. Among various elements examined in this chapter, some such as musicality, botanical details and colour scheme have made their ways to the subsequent two works, *Mariana* and *Ophelia*, as explored in the following chapters.

## Chapter III. *Mariana* (1850-51): From Medieval Woman to Victorian Forsaken Woman

*Mariana* is examined in the following chapter, concerning both affinity and distance between Shakespeare, Tennyson and Millais in their representations of the character, Mariana. While the claustrophobic mood in the "moated grange" and the subtle auditory sense seem to separate this representation from its source texts by Shakespeare (*Measure for Measure*) and Tennyson ("Mariana"), there are particular aspects inherent in *Mariana* including religious connotations, which owed much to Millais's careful attention to the original texts and his imagination triggered by the

elements in the languages of Shakespeare and Tennyson. Chapter III further discusses the topicality in this representation and the similarity between Millais's Mariana and Victorian women: Millais depicts Mariana turning her back on the Madonna which symbolises her faith, a pose which implies her agony and exhaustion. This ultimately might reflect the psychological pain suffered by Victorian women in their married life where they were expected to be an 'angel in the house'. Besides, the intricate embroidery on her table appears a key element in the whole composition not only as a detail which displays the artist's keen observation of nature but also as an aspect recalling the activity which dominated Victorian womanhood. In addition, this chapter examines the sexuality of Mariana which links this work to the final work, *Ophelia*.

#### Chapter IV. *Ophelia* (1851-52): Perpetually on "her melodious lay"

The final chapter of this thesis examines *Ophelia* which portrays a moment not directly depicted in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and hardly enacted on stage. As in *Ferdinand and Mariana*, particular elements and qualities in *Ophelia* embody Millais's artistry; these elements include the unique composition which places the supine body of Ophelia surrounded by vegetation in the centre, botanical details from her "fantastic garland" to the "vegetative coffin", symbolism of the plants, tranquil mood, insanity and sexuality: directly and indirectly, all qualities were derived from Millais's attentive reading and inventive interpretation of the Bard's language. Focusing on the expression on her face with its open mouth, almost agape, and vacant stare, the chapter also discusses Millais's *Ophelia* as a woman in a trance, a subject which he repeatedly depicted in other works such as *The Bridesmaid* (1851) and *The Order of Release, 1746* (1852-53) by skilfully representing the numb, petrified state of each female subject under duress.

#### Conclusion

These chapters reveal that Millais had not simply invented those qualities and attributions of the subject matter on his own, but constructed them from his interpretation of the literary texts. Musicality in *Ferdinand* as a harmony of ethereal song and natural sounds lowers its tone in the following work, *Mariana*; then it transformed itself into a different harmony of a singing voice of a drowning girl and natural sounds of flowing river and rustling plants. Dramatic quality, as expected from literary paintings, is shared by all three works, while none owes a great deal to the Victorian theatre, unlike other contemporary Shakespearean paintings. As these qualities emerged and developed throughout the three works, female sexuality is seen to have developed in *Mariana* and *Ophelia*. These two female subjects, in their characters and fates, reflect the double standard related to the Victorian idea of femininity: Such subject matter must have spoken to the Victorian women, who were socially expected to remain innocent and sexually ignorant. Remaining close to the Shakespearean subject matter and following the Pre-Raphaelite principles of artmaking, Millais had developed his unique visualisation of Shakespeare's texts throughout these three works. This thesis clarifies that there is artistry which differentiates Millais from his contemporaries in these three works, by exploring various qualities which were eventually passed down, and became inherent in the following works from his later career.