

Article

Analysing the Meta-Archive Arianna—‘Shakespeariana’: Research and Teaching Opportunities with the Iconographical Database

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Abstract: The application of digital technologies to Shakespeare has advanced considerably over the last decade. The spread of online archives offers new opportunities for researchers and teachers, facilitating the collection of materials. Since 2011, we have seized upon the opportunity afforded by digital archives with a project, Arianna, whose main goal is the creation of the meta-archive *Shakespeariana*, a database that includes iconographical items inspired by Shakespearean plays from the 16th century to the present day. As this article demonstrates, Arianna allows the user to make simple or combined searches in different fields, containing more than 13,000 iconographical items. Managing, sustaining, and refining the project brings new challenges. It poses the need to refine the strategies and methods of data acquisition, to conceive new tools of investigation, and to introduce some possible interactions with the end user. To this extent, two important problems are raised. The first concerns the function of *Shakespeariana* as a research and teaching tool. Since its content is constantly updated by researchers and collaborators, the digital archive is actually a collective and open-access work, but the filling of all the fields requires relevant levels of skills, critical perspectives, and knowledge about the single topics. Therefore, it is necessary to continually reflect on the proper, specific training to fill its content, to make researchers provide new information, and to mold them according to the existing standard. The second problem is the application of *Shakespeariana* to research. We argue that iconography provides some interpretative suggestions or helps to reveal the meaning and the dynamics of many otherwise obscure scenes. The relationship between text (and its adaptations) and figurative imagery has an osmotic character, with reciprocal influences and striking interactions. This article is arranged in two sections. The first explores the methodological questions and didactic purposes of *Shakespeariana*. The second offers an example of research application of the digital archive through the study of Salvador Dalí’s illustrated edition of *Much Ado About Shakespeare* (1968, 1971).

Keywords: Digital Humanities; Illustrated editions; meta-archives; Shakespearean iconography; reception of Shakespeare; Salvador Dalí

1. The Digital Archive *Shakespeariana* by Sandra Pietrini

Online archives are more and more interactive systems, providing access to a heterogeneous variety of resources and allowing users to share documents. The enormous increase in information raises specific questions related to the employment of all this data: The vast field of Shakespearean studies is a particularly interesting context for the elaboration of these kinds of materials. Shakespeare is one of the most trans-disciplinary subjects: his plays have encouraged the creation of a vast and heterogeneous iconography that takes them beyond the merely textual, dissolving traditional disciplinary boundaries to create new fields of interest, and research. This can be seen even in relation to

databases, which constitute the most rational and useful means to organize resources. Large collections of documents are practically unusable if they are not included within a searchable structure such as an archive¹. During the last decade, I have focused on digital resources applied to theatre databases, and together with my team at the University of Trento, I have carried out a project, *Arianna*, whose main goal is the creation of a Shakespearean meta-archive on line (<http://arianna.lett.unitn.it/search/>)².

This meta-archive contains more than 13,000 images and related records. It covers a long chronological span, from Shakespeare's own time to the present. It is a work-in-progress, freely available online, and conceived around a principle of cultural spreading, without any commercial purpose. My personal experience has taught me that a collection of items that results from investigation at various levels both enables and also fosters new research on specific topics. *Shakespeariana* is conceived as a collective and as documentary heritage, which encourages further investigations and research. To that end, the project team are considering the possibility of enabling users to cooperate in the continuous process of emendations, as well as the integration of records. This would realize the creation of another level of operating intervention, one that opens up new contexts and creates a dynamic interaction with users.

The degree of complexity that has been reached nowadays by digital archives requires their 'natural' transformation in meta-archives, connected among them in a sort of progressive intertextuality³. *Shakespeariana* is in fact a meta-archive, since it both shows the documents and redirects the user to the original website through a permalink in the case of images available in specific collections. In this way, online catalogues can be interconnected in a composite network. Providing access to a large repertory of documents is one of the most evident aims of our archive, but it also encourages research on single items or topics. Users can contextualize the images from a historical and artistic point of view and investigate their possible iconographical interpretations. Users can also employ the archive as a useful tool for teaching, with the images that Shakespearean texts have inspired included as part of a trans-disciplinary approach to the plays. This interrelation between text and iconography, which *Shakespeariana* unfolds becomes a dynamic form of re-interpretation and suggests new perspectives for scholarship and staging practice as well.

This paper is a joint contribution that aims to present the meta-archive to the large audience of Shakespeare scholars and teachers. Although we have organized the essay together and discussed its entire content, what follows are two separately authored sections. In the first section, Sandra Pietrini explores the methodological questions and didactic purposes of *Shakespeariana*. In the second, Enrico Piergiacomini discusses a research application of the digital archive using a case study of Salvador Dalí's illustrated edition, *Much Ado About Shakespeare*.

In the database, users can make simple or combined searches in all the different fields, selecting a play, a character, or an actor, an artistic technique, a chronological span, a place of representation, or any combination of these criteria. However, one can also search for depictions of specific acts and scenes, for two characters depicted together, for a technique or a span of years, for a single adaptation, or all the off-stage events, that is scenes only narrated or evoked in the text (or in the entire Shakespearean corpus). The software of the database has been created according to our necessities, with standards specifically elaborated for its employment. The refinement of its structure has been a long process, which continued during the first two years of data acquisition, in order to adapt the software to new needs. In fact, we gradually expanded its fields and research tools, refining its methods and strategies. Recently, we translated all the key-word dictionaries into English so as to appeal to Anglophone

¹ On the potentialities of iconographical databases for Shakespearean studies, see (Galey 2014) and (Best 2011). More focused on video archives and resources on line is the Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project, as well as the Global Shakespeares Video & Performance Archives, on which cf. (Desmet 2017).

² Its *Shakespeariana* section is available on line (accessed on 28 January 2019): <http://laboratorioteatrale.lett.unitn.it/progetto-arianna/shakespeariana.htm>.

³ For a discussion of this concept applied to arts, see (Rajewsky 2005).

audiences and those international audiences proficient in English. Our next goal will be the complete translation of the database, that is of its three descriptive fields: Title, Description, and Annotations.

The notion of a series of images is an essential point for our archive and requires definition. We have singled out a field named “Images from the same set”, which intends to gather visual documents conceived as a whole work or ensemble, such as all of the illustrations from an edition or the stage photographs of a performance. Some sets, such as those concerning illustrated editions, may contain a large number of items and are easy to isolate as they are part of a same source such as a book. This category of “Images from the same set” can include images that are not part of a whole (such as a volume or photograph set), but that the artist nonetheless conceives of as a series. A fascinating example of this is Richard Dadd’s volume, *Sketches to Illustrate the Passions*, created between 1853–1857 during Dadd’s residence at the Bethlem Hospital after the murder of his father⁴. Dadd assembles drawings inspired by various Shakespearean plays, with the aim of representing the overwhelming passion of each text (jealousy for *Othello*, love for *Romeo and Juliet*, and so on). Another example of images from the same set might be the photographs taken from a staging of a play, that is all the documents derived from a specific production, with recognizable actors and actions. In such a case, the relationship between the scenes in a particular production and the act and scenes of the original play, can become the subject of further study. The fourth section of the database, which refers to staging, might be explored within a teaching context. Educational uses of the archive could be carried out on many levels and with varied emphases, moving from the literary context (adaptations and rewritings) to performance studies. As an example of the great complexity of these levels, and the even more complicated interaction between adaptation and iconography, we can turn to an engraving for Jean-François Ducis’s *Roméo et Juliette* in a 1819 Parisian edition in three volumes (*Œuvres de Jean-François Ducis*). Although maintaining the tragic ending, Ducis reverses the way the two lovers die, with Romeo stabbing himself and Juliet taking the poison after resigning to the implacable, renewed enmity of Romeo’s father. This hatred is revealed in a letter, delivered by the girl to his lover, who is reading it with abhorrence, as the caption states: “Quelle horreur ce billet va-t-il me révéler?”. The artist has portrayed Juliet fainted, her arms hanging out, but according to Ducis’s plays, she should be watching and lucidly arguing about the opportunity to commit suicide and so cease the ancient antagonism between the families. Thus, iconography generates a different development of the action, presumably inspired by the staging of the play and aimed at stressing the melodramatic quality of the scene in spite of consistency with the text. While it is not easy to determine the exact data for the fourth section of the database, and to confirm their relation with the image, to a certain extent, the close relation between adaptation and illustration supports an argument for the influence of a staging. Iconography serves as a common axis and starting point of all investigations, but the range of perspectives extends enormously because of the possible interaction between these different levels.

The second section of the database is dedicated to adaptations and rewritings of Shakespearean plays in the form of drama or opera and provides a PDF file of the relevant text itself⁵. While not related to iconography, this section assumes, on the contrary, a remarkable importance when the text is clearly connected with one or more figurative document. To provide just one example, we can consider Pieter van Bleeck’s oil on canvas inspired by *King Lear*, which shows five characters on a heath during a storm (ID 293)⁶. Three of them are not included in Shakespearean tragedy, but are rather inspired by (Tate 1681) adaptation of the play. One is Cordelia’s servant/confidant, Arante, who stands beside her mistress; the others are the two ruffians sent by the wicked Edmund to abduct Cordelia.

⁴ The series includes 33 drawings, but not all of them are inspired by Shakespeare.

⁵ The concept of adaptation and re-writing have been explored in the first symposium on Shakespearean iconography held in Trento (Pietrini 2013).

⁶ New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection. The acronym “ID” which is used here and in the following pages refers to the “Identification Number” of the images that are contained in the database. It can be found in the bottom right part of the screen.

The fifth is Edgar disguised as poor Tom, who in Tate's version drives off the two kidnappers and then reveals his identity to Cordelia. She rewards him by accepting back his love. By adding this romance between the two and resorting to a happy ending, in which the Lear finally regains his throne, Tate made the tragedy more suitable to his contemporaries. Pieter van Bleeck selects the moment of Edgar's intervention to rescue the two women, shown in the foreground. The painting could be appreciated only by an observer familiar with the plot of Tate's adaptation. Since in 1755 the adaptation was still successfully running on the stage—in fact, it would remain the standard performing version for decades, with Shakespeare's text being only gradually reintroduced from 1756—most English audiences would have immediately recognized the scene and even the actress interpreting Cordelia, Mrs Cibber.

Iconographical interpretation presents challenge, as well as pleasures, for researchers and teachers interested in Shakespeare's reception. It requires a thorough knowledge of Shakespeare's plays, in addition to a certain expertise in art history. In many cases, the full understanding of the scene is unattainable by a simple observer who is unacquainted with the complexity of Shakespearean texts and imagery. The construction of a database implies investigations of specific fields of knowledge, shifting from the recollection of information to the application of critical tools for interpreting iconographical documents. The main goal of the archive is to provide basic and useful information to contextualize an item from a historical and artistic point of view. However, sometimes even understanding which scene is depicted in the image requires investigation that goes beyond a common recognition of the dramatic plot. I will offer some examples concerning the composite relationship between text and imagery in some distinctive images that exemplify Shakespearean iconography.

I already mentioned off-stage scenes, meaning the iconographical representations of un-staged events. In the Shakespearean corpus this is a well-represented category of images, exceeding iconography inspired by other playwrights. Among a total of about 13,000 iconographical documents, images referring to off-stage events amount to more than 700, a considerable percentage that establishes the evocative quality of Shakespeare's drama. Characters and situations described are only essential to meaning and they have inspired artists of every period. The significant presence of off-stage scenes casts a different light on the interpretation of the plot and its meaning⁷. Among the characters most often represented in the off-stage scenes is Yorick, who usually appears in the form of a skull in the gravediggers' scene, but in some cases is depicted as a court jester in his typical multi-coloured costume, with the young Hamlet either on his shoulders⁸ (Figure 1; ID 13782) or riding upon his back as if the buffoon were a horse⁹ (ID 15303).

The illustrator thus recreates the protagonist's life, illuminating an unusual side of it that underlines his fragile humanity. In a drawing by Edward Gordon Craig for a German edition of the tragedy, Hamlet's childhood is evoked through the depiction of a tall hunchbacked figure, Yorick, with a babe sitting at his feet¹⁰ (ID 14564). Taking inspiration from Hamlet's words—"Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him,/Horatio: a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent/fancy; he hath/borne me on his back a thousand/times"¹¹—these depictions show the way in which the life of a Shakespearean character can be extended beyond the text, giving birth to a vivid and fanciful imaginary.

The large amount of data included in the archive affords many possibilities for investigation and casts a new light on Shakespearean imagery as it unfolds during the centuries. The statistic about the

⁷ This topic has been discussed in the international symposium *Shakespeare off-scene/Shakespeare un-seen. Visualizing un-staged events in iconography, adaptations, productions* (Trento, 29–30 October 2015), published in (Pietrini and Tirabasso 2016).

⁸ Cfr. vol. 2 of (Cornwall 1843). As proof of the fact that the figurative evocation had a success and diffusion associated with the literary re-elaborations of Hamlet's life, see an anonymous engraving published on 18th October 1884 in "The Illustrated London News", together with the article *The Childhood of Hamlet*.

⁹ P. H. Calderon, *The Young Lord Hamlet*, oil on canvas, 1868. Private Collection (Mr. and Mrs. Sandor Korein).

¹⁰ The engraving has been conceived for the adaptation *Die tragische Geschichte von Hamlet Prinzen von Dänemark* (Craig 1928).

¹¹ Quoted from the edition with parallel text *Teatro completo di William Shakespeare*, ed. G. Melchiori, 9 vols., Mondadori, Milano, Hamlet (V 1, vv. 187–190).

co-presence of characters in a specific scene, for example, may lead a user to identify the symbolic connotations attributed to a certain moment, object, or detail. This information can be employed for teaching and learning purposes too, involving students in cross-searches that may improve their knowledge of the plays. In the gravediggers' scene, frequently represented in iconography, Hamlet is accompanied by Horatio, but if we search for Hamlet and Yorick alone (by clicking the "exclusive search" box in the field "Characters depicted"), we become aware of an interesting fact: in about half of the images, Hamlet is shown alone with the skull in his hands. This visual evidence reveals how strong the symbolic value attributed to Hamlet's personal relation with Yorick is and how the buffoon's skull has become, over a long period, an emblematic object readily associated with Hamlet's now ubiquitous melancholy and solitude.



Figure 1. Engraving by Vizetelly Brothers from a drawing by Kenny Meadows, in *The Works of Shakspeare* [sic], ed. Barry Cornwall, London, 1843, 3 vols., II.

Since the 18th century, we can find an increasing number of images that have a symbolic or metaphorical purpose. Artists drew inspiration from the words of Shakespeare's plays to take from them wise maxims or moral examples, with a tendency toward symbolic depiction and the employment of emblematic objects and animals. In some popular 18th century editions, Shakespearean characters are depicted as animals, referring to a particular behavior or personality trait commonly attributed to them; for example, a faithful character as a dog or a sly one as a fox. This continues in some popular 19th century editions, as in the example from the multi volume *Works of Shakespeare*, edited by Barry Cornwall and published from 1838 to 1843, which includes engravings on wood from drawings by Kenny Meadows (Cornwall 1843). The artist has employed a sensational technique, with imitative and impressive objects, inspired by specific verbal indications in the play, that are used as generic emblems, and generously interspersed through the pages. Some of these figures are in fact animals or hybrids, which exemplify the nature of individual characters and actions, drawing inspiration from single words or sentences of the text. For example, to depict Malvolio's foolish *rêverie* after reading the false letter in *Twelfth Night*, Meadows resorts to the image of a peacock strutting about on a low wall (Figure 2, ID 13526), while in another engraving, the merry band is represented by a pig, drinking with

his nose in the cup, as well as a fox and a duck, each humanely dressed to increase the sense of their ridiculous inadequacy¹² (ID 13522).

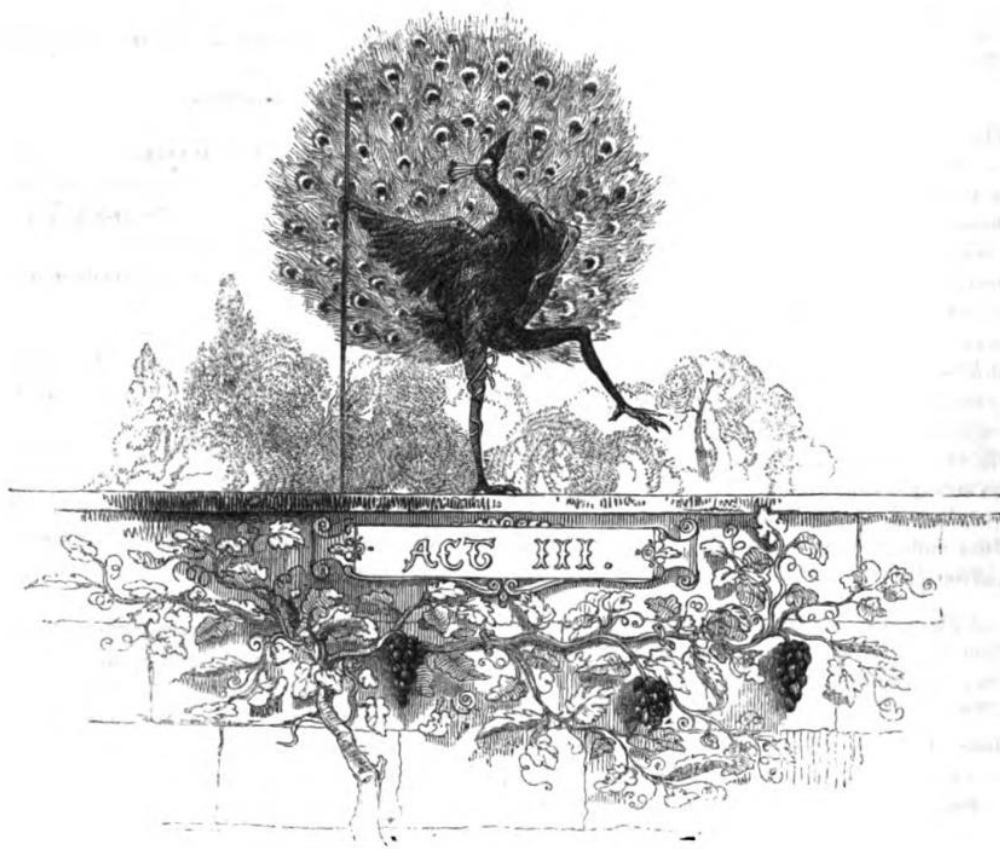


Figure 2. Engraving by Vizetelly Brothers from a drawing by Kenny Meadows, in *The Works of Shakspeare* [sic], ed. Barry Cornwall, London, 1843, 3 vols., I.

In some cases, the re-elaborations of Shakespearean characters display a mingling of traditions with amazing results. The comparison of a single scene or character, something possible because of the large number of items collected in the database, can provide interesting results. For example, since the end of the 18th century, artists have added extravagant touches to the costume of *King Lear*'s Fool, for the most part resorting to details belonging to stereotypical images of court jesters in the late Middle Ages, such as the cap with bells, or the ears of a donkey. The most interesting depictions, however, are those that depart from this dominant line, falling into a zone of ambiguity owing to the absence of a line of reference from the text itself.

An engraving from the 1783 *The Picturesque Beauties of Shakespeare* depicts Feste, the fool of *Twelfth Night*, wearing a hood with donkey's ears and Arlecchino's costume¹³, an incongruous parallel from an historical point of view that clearly reveals the illustrator's embarrassment in dealing with a comic figure as yet lacking well-defined traits (Figure 3, ID 16573).

¹² This particular strategy of iconographical symbolization in 19th century Shakespearean editions has been discussed in (Pietrini 2017, pp. 260–89).

¹³ (Taylor 1787). The Joseph Thornthwaite's engraving is taken from a drawing of Robert Smirke.

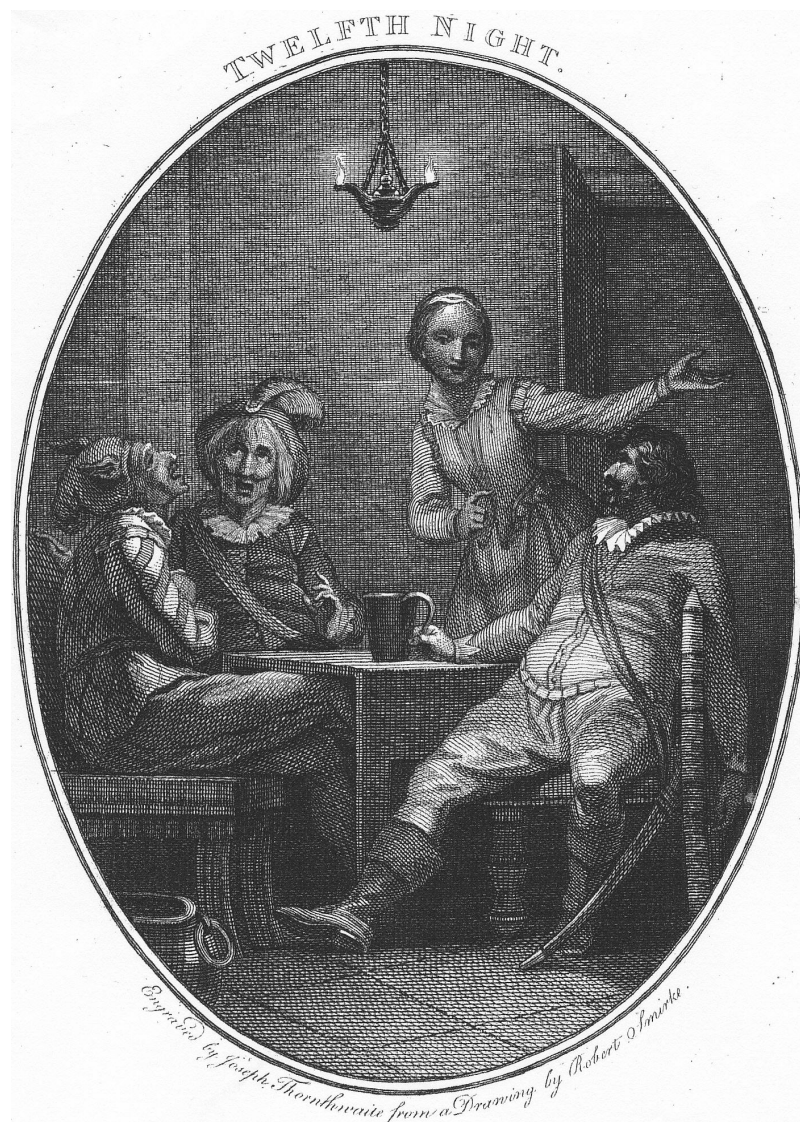


Figure 3. The picturesque beauties of Shakspeare [sic], being a selection of scenes, from the works of that great author, ed. Ch. Taylor, with drawings by R. Smirke and T. Stothard, 1783–1787.

Another image of this kind occurs in the first illustrated edition of the *Tales from Shakespeare* by Charles and Mary Lamb, re-elaborated for children and published in 1807 (Figure 4, ID 12966).

The illustrator, not knowing how to depict the Fool of *King Lear*, dressed him as a Pierrot, the mask invented by Jean-Gaspard Debureau in the second decade of the 19th century for Paris's boulevard theatres.

1.5. In other cases, artists have proposed literal depictions of poetic metaphors, similes, and allusions to a heterogeneous cultural tradition. This particular trend for ekphrastic illustration reached its climax during the Romantic age, most notably in the work of William Blake, but reappeared with different connotations in the artistic productions of the Pre-Raphaelites. Shakespearean words and metaphors are transposed into iconography, which powerfully extends the figurative imagery and displays fertile exchanges between art and literature. The allusions contained in Shakespeare's plays, inspired by classic mythology or medieval figures, have aroused the creative inventiveness of certain artists, who sometimes reinterpreted them within a symbolic context. The rhetoric of visual discourse and verbal painting is thus reversed, while the concept *ut pictura poesis* is achieved in its most extreme and even extravagant way. Shakespeare's words, conceived in order to create a fictitious world

that stimulates the imagination of the audience, find unexpected visual transpositions, often more audacious than those found in contemporary staging.

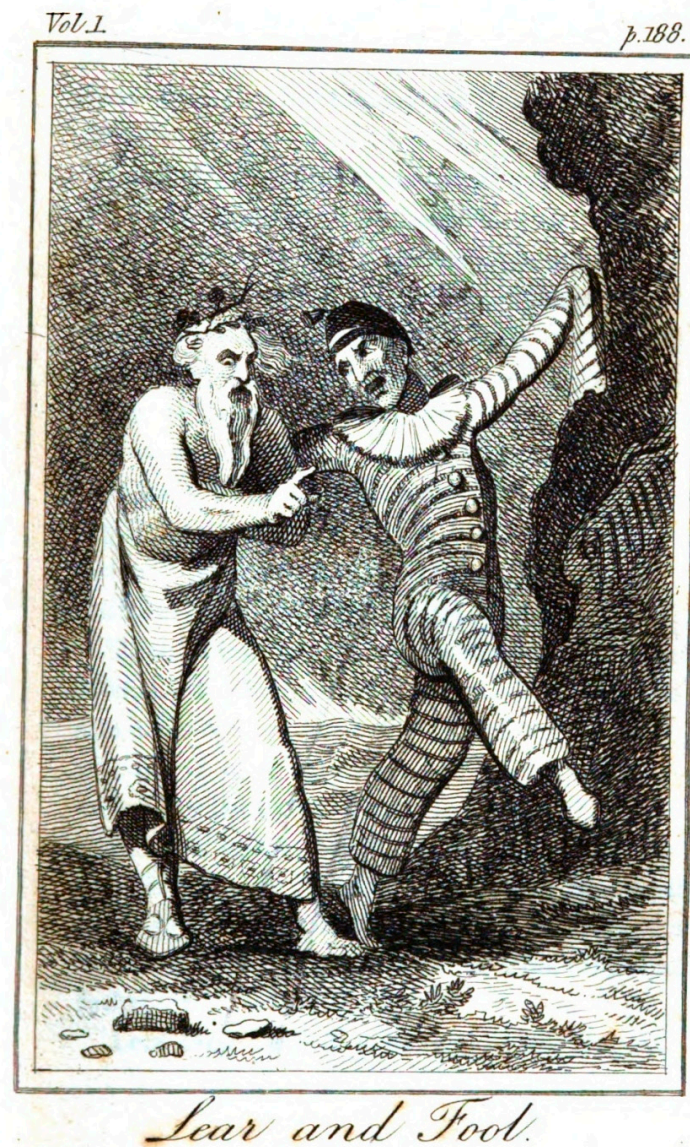


Figure 4. Engraving by William Blake (probably from a drawing by William Mulready), in *Tales from Shakespeare*, by C. Lamb, London, 1807, 2 vols., 1807, I.

In some examples from the beginning of the 19th century, this technique is sometimes exploited to the utmost by a painter's artistic vein. In a drawing by William Blake, *As if an angel dropped down from the clouds* (1809), a white horse, his rear hooves planted on the edge of a cliff, paws the air as, over him, a vigorous naked man stretching out a snare floats¹⁴ (ID 286). Above both these figures, a woman lying on a cloud peruses an open book, bringing to the scene a further puzzling metaphorical meaning. The image would have hardly become part of our archive, being simply dismissed as a fanciful invention of the artist, if the curious compiler of the file record accompanying the image had not investigated it further in order to understand its meaning. The image is inspired

¹⁴ London, British Museum. Pen and watercolor on paper.

by a passage from *Henry IV, part 1*, in which the future king is described as a noble horseman who “Rise from the ground like feathered Mercury,/And vaulted with such ease into his seat/As if an angel dropped down from the clouds/To turn and wind a fiery Pegasus,/And witch the world with noble horsemanship” (IV 1, vv. 106–10)¹⁵. Blake does not follow the text literally, preferring instead not to take the description “all furnished, all in Arms” as a visual suggestion, but to depict Henry naked—as in ancient statuary—like a mythical hero, thus increasing the allegorical connotation of his riding. The passage is one of the most controversial and Blake’s visualization of this puzzling image leaves the observer the task of deciphering its more profound meaning.

Another example of Blake’s approach can be seen in the color print *Pity* (1795), a fanciful visualization of a passage from *Macbeth*¹⁶ (ID 15318) or, as Stuart Sillars observes, Blake’s transposition of “the verbal essence into visual terms”¹⁷. Adding to his pictorial vein his experience as a poet, Blake imbues his verses with visual meaning to create a world of arresting images. The result is a visual language not immediately intelligible to the common reader, but one that presupposes a cultivated and refined observer. In similar ways, Shakespeare too has been positioned as the property of a cultural élite, despite the universal value commonly attributed to his plays. The popular editions of the 19th century contribute to the spreading of Shakespeare’s plots, characters and situations more so than to the valorization of his subtle visual imagery. Yet, in becoming part of an iconographical archive, images like these cast a new light on the depiction and representation of Shakespearean characters, albeit more so in the first example than in the second one, where the degree of abstraction reaches a climax.

Browsing the archive, I have searched for images based on analogous conceptions, in order to verify whether they are confined only to paintings or whether they can be also found in book illustrations, one of the less elitist forms of iconography. Strikingly enough, I did indeed find in the latter ones, which normally adopt a different approach that I would define as ‘narrative’ because of their attention to plot development and their focus on crucial moments of action. Artists of illustrated editions sometimes mingle different iconographical strategies. For instance, in a watercolor by the Irish illustrator Hugh Thomson for a 1909 edition of Shakespeare’s plays (Thomson 1909), a wind-blown bare-foot couple rides a white horse (ID 11183). The image is inspired by the verses of a propitiatory song contained in *As You Like It*, referring to the wedding of Touchstone and Audrey: “both in a tune, like/two gypsies on a horse” (V 3, vv. 13–14). The words are pronounced by two pageboys before tuning the song, as a vivid comparison to introduce their harmony. What was the artist’s aim? Puzzling images of this kind prompt scholars to critically analyze different iconographical strategies. On the one hand, the artist shows his/her witty and cultivated appreciation for Shakespeare, understood as a sort of vast encyclopedia of wisdom and deep thoughts, ripe for application and appropriation in different circumstances. On the other hand, he/she suggests a possible reframing of characters and situations, leading to a broadening of Shakespearean imagery.

1.6. Returning to seemingly more traditional editions from the 19th century¹⁸, we find an example of the pervasive and wide-ranging imagery, which demonstrates how book illustrations constitute a form of rewriting even with regard to plot. *The Spirit of the Plays of Shakspeare* [sic], which contains 483 engravings by Frank Howard (Howard 1833), offers the reader a transposition of Shakespearean works into a visual language capable of completing what the poet has left undetermined. The artist adds an original light to the plays, and suggests new interpretations. His work could be defined as a

¹⁵ IV 1. The painting has been described and analysed by (Sillars 2006, pp. 162–66).

¹⁶ London, Tate Gallery. Colour print on paper. Blake achieved three more versions of this print (ID 5882, 15317, 15320). *Macbeth*, I 7, vv. 21–25: “And Pity, like a naked new-born babe/Striding the blast, or heaven’s cherubin horsed/Upon the sightless curriers of the air,/Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,/That tears shall drown the wind”. Blake discards some elements and highlights others, such as the naked new-born baby, who is gently uplifted by a mounted cherubim while his mother lies still, her hands joined on her breast.

¹⁷ (Sillars 2006, p. 166).

¹⁸ Shakespearean 19th century editions are more and more available on line and an interesting project of database has been created by J.M. Goodman, *Victorian Illustrated Shakespeare Archive* (<https://shakespeareillustration.org/>).

visual rewriting of Shakespeare's work. The choice of illustrated scenes and actions is explained in the commentary accompanying the edition, with particular attention to situations that reveal what Howard names as "the spirit of the play". His purpose goes beyond what he names "a servile imitation of individual passages", in order to "render the plates complete in themselves, that they may interest equally as an illustration of the poet's ideas, and as an intelligible series of amusing designs"¹⁹. Howard also imagines the life of Shakespearean characters to the extent of depicting actions and scenes only evoked or possible with a process of recreation that Stanislavski would have approved of. One of the most striking qualities of all these illustrations is the number of images that refer to off-scene events: 67 of 483²⁰. Among them we find scenes only described or evoked by the characters, such as Sycorax putting Ariel into the pine tree in *The Tempest* (ID 5384) or Portia promising her father never to marry until the right casket has been chosen in *The Merchant of Venice* (ID 5478).

The reinterpretation of Shakespearean tragedies through iconography reaches one of its climaxes in Frank Howard's edition. A drawing illustrating *King Lear* is particularly interesting: an athletic and vigorous Lear kills with his sword the officer who Edmund had ordered to hang Cordelia (Figure 5; ID 5818).

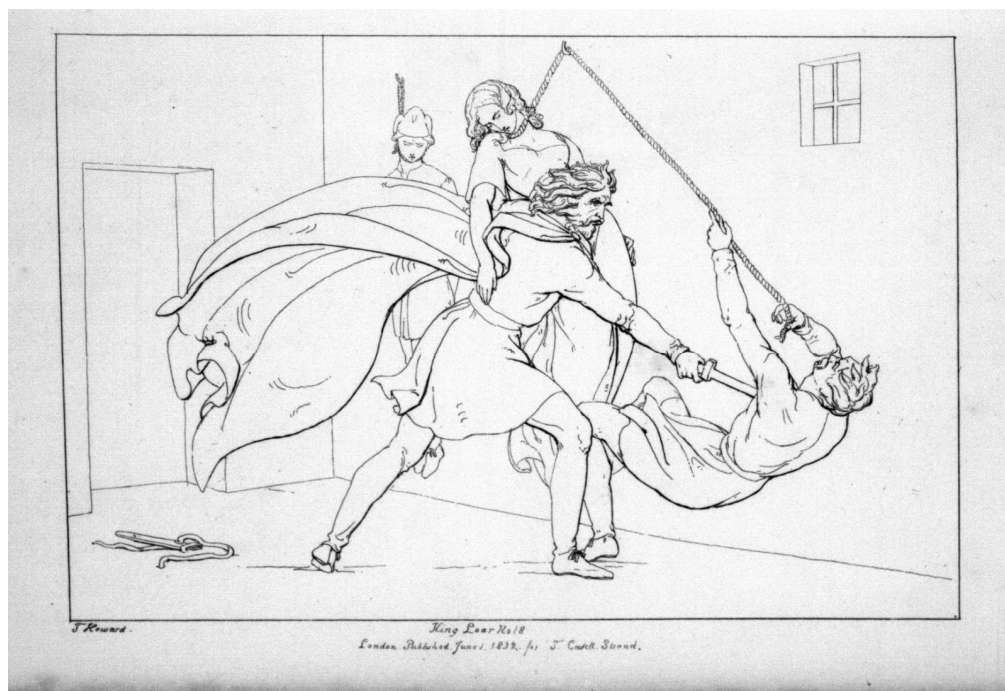


Figure 5. Engraving by Frank Howard, in *The Spirit of the plays of Shakspeare* [sic], ed. Frank Howard, London, Cadell, 1833, 5 vols., V.

The unhappy girl is hanging, with the rope still being pulled by the assailed servant, in contrast to the play, where Cordelia's murder is only described by King Lear, who moans as he holds her corpse in his arms. Howard's depiction of this scene aims to demonstrate the most remarkable actions of the story and, as in other cases, reinforces the narrative connection and consequentiality of the plot. But the image presents another remarkable element. Besides Cordelia, another figure visible in the background has also been hanged. Who could this character that is not mentioned by Lear be? If we peruse the text more deeply, we find an ambiguous sentence pronounced by the complaining Lear: "And my poor fool is hanged!" (V 3, v. 304). He could simply be referring to his daughter, since the word *fool*

¹⁹ (Howard 1833, vol. I), Preface, p. VI.

²⁰ (Rocklin 2000).

was frequently employed as a familiar and tender epithet for a baby (and the childish regression of Lear as a father would justify the use of such a word). Nevertheless, there is no evidence to reject the hypothesis of a hint at the death of the Fool, who has disappeared two acts before (III 6), pronouncing the obscure statement “and I’ll go to bed at noon”. Showing the Fool hanged as well as Cordelia, Frank Howard seems to lean towards this ending, and at the same time suggest a similarity between the wise buffoon and the poor girl, two victims sharing a love for the truth. It has been maintained that Howard conceived his work “as a form of staging the play”²¹. However, in fact, it is more like a form of rewriting through the use of figurative imagery, since the procedure involves an adaptation of the play, its actions and its characters. Through the visual medium, Howard proposes an understanding of the verbal content that fills in the blanks of the plot, suggests a rethinking of characters, and invents possible scenes. Shakespearean imagery is thus remarkably extended and iconography turns out to be a performative ‘device’ rather than a documentary one. This concept can also be applied to iconography referring to a specific staging of a play²², but it is even more valid in the case of those images inspired by Shakespearean words.

2. Much Ado about Dalí. A Case Study for *Shakespeariana* by Enrico Piergiacomini

This second part of the essay provides a case-in-point analysis of how *Shakespeariana* can be employed for research. More precisely, I will try to show how collecting images in a digital archive can help to reconstruct the reception of Shakespeare’s plays in the work of a contemporary artist, thus providing an example of a visual interpretation of a written text. I will also briefly highlight that this kind of investigation can spur further scholarship, as well as have methodological implications for teaching and interdisciplinary research.

Here I provide a study of the representation of some of Shakespearian characters in the pictorial work of Salvador Dalí, of which *Shakespeariana* has so far collected 84 images:

1. One 1942 picture representing Juliet’s tomb (ID 16400);
2. 13 illustrations of Kittredge’s edition of *Macbeth* ((Kittredge 1946) = ID 16358–16370);
3. 20 drawings of the costumes and the set design for the adaptation of *As You Like It* by Luchino Visconti (*Rosalinda, o Come vi piace*), staged at the *Teatro Eliseo* in Rome in 1948²³;
4. 31 engravings of the collection *Much Ado About Shakespeare* (Dalí 1968, 1971)²⁴. Dalí presents a single picture for each play, with the exceptions of *Troilus and Cressida*, *King Richard III*, *King Henry V*, which are represented twice. *The Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter’s Tale*, *Pericles*, *Coriolanus*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Titus Andronicus* have no image;
5. 10 pictures from a French illustrated edition of *Hamlet* of 1973 (Dalí 1973 = ID 16385, 16401–16409);
6. 10 illustrations for the Italian translation of *Romeo and Juliet* ((Baldini 1975) = ID 14709–14719).

While all of these images deserve analysis, due to the limited space available, I will concentrate on a few selected engravings of *Much Ado About Shakespeare*²⁵. Firstly, I present Dalí’s creative methodology. I then show that the application of this method in *Much Ado About Shakespeare* gives some interesting interpretative suggestions about the Shakespearian plays.

Dalí’s writings give only two explicit references to Shakespeare in his writing, neither of which is however useful. One is the opening of the essay *Total Camouflage for Total War* (1942), that constitutes

²¹ (Rocklin 2000, p. 74).

²² The performative and not merely archival quality of documents, material objects, sketches, drawings and photographs referring to a staging has been explored by (Hodgdon 2016).

²³ ID 4794–4798, 15835, 16386–16399. The material is collected in Aguer-Moni 2016. On this play, cf. (Savo 2019).

²⁴ Dalí 1968 (ID 14604–14606, 14608–14611, 14613–14619) and 1971 (ID 14654–14659, 14661–14662, 14667–14674). Due to its focus on Shakespeare’s plays only, *Shakespeariana* did not upload the opening image of the first part of the collection, namely Dalí’s portrait of Shakespeare.

²⁵ For a more ample (yet not complete) examination, cf. (Zbehlik 2015).

an obvious allusion to *Hamlet*²⁶. The other writing is the short introduction that the artist published within the program of Luchino Visconti's *Rosalinda, o Come vi piace* (1948). Dalí insists here on the "joyous and divine" mode of existence that, according to him, *As You Like It* contains and presents. Indeed, he tried to convey this "atomic joy" through the costumes designed for the actors of Visconti's adaptation²⁷.

Given the relative silence of Dalí's writings on Shakespeare, I can only speculate on his way of interpreting Shakespeare and his plays. With much caution, I propose that the artist might have followed, in his reception of Shakespearian works, the poetic theories that he developed during his adherence to the Surrealist movement. I refer to his conception of the "Paranoiac-Critical Activity". Many writings describe this method²⁸, but the most detailed exposition is surely the one contained in two fundamental texts: the essay *The Conquest of the Irrational* (1935)²⁹ and the book *The Tragic Myth of Millet's "L'Angélus": Paranoiac-Critical Interpretation* (1963)³⁰. Dalí theorizes in these writings that painting should try to capture the "concrete irrationality" of reality and a "drama hidden under the most hypocritical appearances in the world", a drama which escapes logic and common sense. Moreover, he describes the artistic process as the systematization of the "irrational solicitations", "obsessive ideas", and "enigmatic and menacing" elements into a unique image, thus rendering the chaotic visions of the artist comprehensible or "communicable"³¹. The caution stated above notwithstanding, it is possible to argue that these principles might have been at work while Dalí was realizing the pictures of *Much Ado About Shakespeare*. The Catalan painter renders visible the "paranoiac" or "irrational" drama of reality that Shakespeare's own theatrical pieces realize.

By following this hypothesis, we can explain why most of Dalí's images of *Much Ado About Shakespeare* share three features. First, the pictures represent the protagonists acting in the most dramatic scenes of the plays. This is the case of Othello's murder of Desdemona (ID 14614) and of Hamlet's monologue in front of Yorick's skull³². Second, Dalí often resorts to symbols that concentrate the plot in a single image, like the piece of armory from *King Henry V* (ID 14658). Third, the focus is on the dark side of the Shakespearian works (death, violence, conflict), even in those plays where the comic/fabulous elements are prominent, or in Dalí's pictures that seem more realistic. Consider, for example, the choice of the fool Lavatch from *All's Well That Ends Well* to represent that play (ID 14655). The artist might have chosen to focus on him because he was interested in recognizing that the most important element of the play is the fool's cynical commentaries on the actions of the characters³³. Dalí might then agree with Lavatch that the comic and fabulous events that occur in *All's Well That Ends Well* actually deserves contempt or mockery. An example of the attempt to hint to a tragic element within some more realistic pictures is the portrait of Julius Caesar (ID 14606), which shows a drawing of an ant on the character's right cheek. Considering that such an insect is usually associated by Dalí with death and decay³⁴, its presence in the portrait of Julius Caesar hints at the future tragic murder of the character.

All these common elements—the dramatic, the symbolic, the tragic—may be read as Dalí's attempt to make appear some "paranoiac" contents in the works of Shakespeare. Symbols like the piece of

²⁶ Cf. III 1 and Dalí's image in ID 16404. The essay can be now read in (Finkelstein 1998, p. 339): "To be or not to be (Shakespeare). To see or not to see (Dalí). That is the question, or more precisely, the problem".

²⁷ The introduction is published in (Aguer and Moni 2016, p. 9).

²⁸ Including *The Rotting Donkey* and *New General Considerations Regarding the Mechanism of the Paranoiac Phenomenon from the Surrealist Point of View* (cf. Finkelstein 1998, pp. 223–26, 259–60).

²⁹ Now published in (Finkelstein 1998, pp. 262–72).

³⁰ There exists no English translation of this volume. Excerpts can be found in (Finkelstein 1998, pp. 282–97).

³¹ I quote some extracts from (Finkelstein 1998, pp. 265, 268, 289).

³² ID 14609, on which cf. (Zbehlik 2015, pp. 13–17). Dalí mentions Yorick also in *Hidden Faces* (= Dalí 1974, p. 238) and represents him also in his *Hamlet* edition of 1973 (ID 16407).

³³ For a similar perspective, cf. (Smallwood 1972; Roark 1988).

³⁴ Cf. (Kritsky et al. 2013, p. 31), and the already mentioned picture of Juliet's tomb (ID 16400), which shows an ant in the first of the two panels on the right.

armory of *King Henry V* can be a way to express the obsession of war, namely the event that dominates the scene from the beginning to the end of the play. Likewise, the attempt to highlight drama and tragedy even in Shakespeare's plays that are comic or fabulous could have a similar intent. Just as Dalí wants to see a "menacing" drama in Millet's *L'Angélus*—a painting that actually represents two pious peasants who stop their work when they hear the bells of the church, which signals the time for praying god³⁵—so he forces tragic tones to appear also in the most optimistic Shakespearian plays.

This might be sufficient for the general perspective. But what could have been Dalí's specific means for achieving these goals? Moreover, does the application of the Paranoiac-Critical Activity distort the contents of Shakespeare's plays? In what follows, I analyze a selection of those pictures that show what might have been some of the means of Dalí's Paranoiac-Critical Activity and that, at the same time, display a subtle knowledge of Shakespeare's verses and imagery.

Of particular interest is Dalí's representation of King Richard III as a wolf (ID 14670). Dalí seems here to follow the verses where Queen Elizabeth mourns her sons and accuses God of having thrown them "in the entrails of the wolf" (IV 3, vv. 22–23). The woman refers to Richard III, who plotted the death of these babies. Now, Dalí creates not just a metaphor with his picture, but what he called in his essay *The Rotting Donkey* a "double image" that is both a Shakespearian character and a beast³⁶. In other words, he suggests that the inner essence of King Richard III is that of a wolf in human skin. Other examples of this technique are Dalí's representation, first, of Petruchio and Kate transformed into a dog and a cat (ID 14671), which was probably inspired by a recurring metaphor with these two animals in *The Taming of the Shrew* (cf. in particular I 4, vv. 269–71); second, of Falstaff transformed into a buck (ID 14668), which depends on the scene where the character enters with buck horns (V 5); and third, of the greed of the Athenians of *Timon of Athens* as whirlwind (ID 14672), which according to the sound hypothesis of Zbehlik³⁷ may depend on a dialogue between Timon and Apemantus (IV 3, vv. 289–91).

Another picture worthy of attention is the one derived from *Cymbeline*: an enormous hand with a big eye in the center that emits a confused mass of rays falling on a lying body (ID 14654). This may be a reference to the Iachimo's intrusion into Imogen's bedchamber. The character here avidly looks upon the naked body of the woman and desires to touch it (v. 16: "That I might touch!"). This interpretation would explain the fact that the hand has an eye on the palm. Iachimo sees Imogen with his eyes, although he would much prefer to do so with a touch. Dalí's picture might suggest that the drama of the *Cymbeline* is caused by a person who menacingly sees and controls everything³⁸. This representation occurs elsewhere in *Much Ado About Shakespeare*, for example, in the image where we see the shadow of King Richard II, who may be observing the dying character of Gaunt (ID 14669).

The final picture, the image of *Love's Labour's Lost* (ID 14667), is probably the most obscure and abstract of the entire collection. It features a hand writing a letter, which has left traces of writing in the background. Jean Dumonteil provides us with a way of interpreting this hermetic picture when he convincingly argues that the core of *Love's Labour's Lost* revolves around the self-centered characters of Berowne and his friend; these suffer under the compulsion to write, a spell which only their love for the French ladies will manage to break³⁹. While focusing on the problem rather than on the solution, it would seem Dalí anticipated Dumonteil's reading. The painter might recognize that the secret

³⁵ (Finkelstein 1998, pp. 288–89).

³⁶ Cf. *The Rotting Donkey* (Finkelstein 1998, p. 224): "It is by a distinctly paranoiac process that it has been possible to obtain a double image: in other words, a representation of an object that is also, without the slightest pictorial or anatomical modification, the representation of another entirely different object, this one being equally devoid of any deformation or abnormality disclosing some adjustment". Dalí later on (*ibidem*) gives the example of an "image of a horse that is at the same time the image of a woman".

³⁷ (Zbehlik 2015, pp. 12–3).

³⁸ I warn the reader that this might just be pure speculation. Another possibility would be a reference to the theophany of Jupiter (V 4), who observes human affairs from above.

³⁹ (Dumonteil 2016, §§ 3–28).

“drama” of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* consists in the obsession of Berowne and friends for writing, which he conveys with the image of a hand compulsively working on paper.

It could be said that Dalí displays a great knowledge of Shakespeare’s text and often recognizes, in the imagery or words contained therein, some important detail, which proves useful for understanding the play. Of course, such a controversial topic requires further research, and the present essay does not pretend to have explored it in its entirety. For example, it could be interesting to investigate whether it produced a change of perspective in Dalí’s interpretation of *As You Like It* in 1948, which argues in favor of the “joyous and divine” mode of existence conveyed by the play, and that of the 1968/1971 *Much Ado About Shakespeare*. Indeed, there is a striking contrast between the luminous costumes that Dalí imagined for the actress that interpreted Rosalinda in Visconti’s adaptations (ID 4794, 4797) and the picture of the character in the latter edition (ID 14605). She wears here a pale blue dress and holds the handkerchief covered with the blood of Orlando who the heroine receives from Oliver⁴⁰. The Rosalind of *Much Ado About Shakespeare* is, therefore, much more dramatic and experiences, through the sight of the handkerchief, the fear of the death of her beloved Orlando.

From this brief case study of Dalí’s Shakespeare, we can arrive at some methodological conclusions. On the one hand, this analysis hints at potential uses of *Shakespeareiana* for teaching and interdisciplinary research. The digital archive collects iconographic material that can suggest how a contemporary artist may have interpreted Shakespeare and what Shakespearean elements are still influential today. The ongoing nature of this kind of analysis could encourage students from different fields to give their own contributions, thus enabling them to exercise their critical judgment and at the same time helping *Shakespeareiana* to update or clarify the information on the pictures uploaded in the system. On the other hand, this case study highlights how *Shakespeareiana* can be conceived as a heuristic tool. By focusing on Dalí’s reception of Shakespeare in *Much Ado About Shakespeare*, for example, it is possible to understand better the artist’s creative method and to see up close the work of visual adaptation and the expansion of the Shakespearean text’s hermeneutic field. *Shakespeareiana* can, therefore, be regarded as a helpful resource for researchers, teachers and students of Shakespeare’s reception. It not only provides insight into the depth of Shakespeare’s influence on the imagination of numerous artists, but also deepens our understanding of Shakespearean plays through their iconographical reception.

3. Conclusions by Sandra Pietrini

All this and much more can be found in a collection of images and texts organized in the form of a searchable database. We hope to have demonstrated that Shakespearean iconography extends the imagination, revisiting characters and situations, and enriching their scenic worlds. Artists draw inspiration from the words of Shakespeare’s plays to take from them wise maxims or moral examples, with a tendency toward symbolic depiction and the employment of emblematic objects and animals. However, they also reinvent characters and situations, imagining their off-stage lives or resolving their aberrations and anomalies, instead assimilating them into apparently analogous figures such as Arlecchino or Pierrot.

Perhaps more than any other playwright, Shakespeare has given rise to such rich and variegated imagery. As we tried to show through our set of carefully curated examples, the amount of empirical data contained in the meta-archive *Arianna* can provide precious starting points for scholars who are interested in investigating Shakespearean iconography and its implications. Thanks to the new horizons that new technologies have opened up, Shakespeare studies can attend in detail to the reciprocal influences of text and image. Further development of the database could include the introduction of new tools to link these two levels, such as symbolic objects referring to moral features, specific details

⁴⁰ Cf. IV 3. If this interpretation is correct, it must be noted that Dalí’s picture differs from the original in an important respect. In Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, Rosalind pretends to be the young man Ganymede and faints at the sight of the handkerchief. Dalí instead represents the character in a female dress and while she keeps the handkerchief in her hands.

added by the artist to a scene, or the replicating of gestures and attitudes in different contexts. It could also include more dynamic interaction with the users, who might propose adjustments to the archive, or provide additional information on single items, thus suggesting new connections between the images, or add new external links in order to create a digital network on Shakespearean iconography. It is through such collective, participatory networks that, as researchers and scholars of Shakespeare, we can refine, deepen, and enhance the application of digital technologies to Shakespeare studies.

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