



# Shakespeare's Spiral: Tracing the Snail in King Lear and Renaissance Painting

*François-Xavier Gleyzon*

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Shakespeare's Spiral aims to explore a figure forgotten in the dramatic texts of Shakespeare and in Renaissance painting: the snail. Taking as its point of departure the emergence of the gastropod object/subject in the text of King Lear as well as its iconic interface in Giovanni Bellini's painting Allegory of Falsehood (circa 1490), this study sets out to follow the particular path traced by the snail throughout the Iuvre. From the central scene in which the metaphor of the snail and of its shell is specifically made manifest when Lear discovers, in a raging storm, the spectacle of Edgar disguised as Poor Tom coming out of his shelter (III.3.6-9) to the monster, this fiend, displaying on the cliffs of Dover, 'horns whelked and waved like the enridg\_d sea' (IV.6.71), this work is the trace of a narrative - of a journey of the gaze - during the course of which the cryptic question of the gastropod - 'Why a Snail [\_]?' (I.5.26) - does not cease to be developed and transformed. Incorporating a wide-ranging post-structuralist critique, the study aims to bring to light the particular functions of this 'revealing detail' in both its textual and visual dimension so as to put forward a new and innovatory understanding of the tragedy of King Lear.

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