# MIMESIS
## INTERNATIONAL

# WORD AND IMAGE

In Literature and the Visual Arts

Edited by Carmen Concilio and Maria Festa

With a Preface by Federico Vercellone

**MIMESIS**
INTERNATIONAL

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# PLAYING WITH SHADOWS: TIME, ABSENT PRESENCE, AND *THE WINTER'S TALE*

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> Yet seemed it winter still, and, you away,
> As with your shadow I with these did play.[1]

> O absent presence! Stella is not here.[2]

> Writing *represents* (in every sense of the word) enjoyment.
> It plays enjoyment, renders it present and absent.[3]

> The 'world' of images does not reject the world of
> logic, quite the contrary. But it *plays* with it, which is to
> say, among other things, that it creates spaces there —
> in the sense that we speak of 'play' between the parts
> of a machine — spaces from which it draws its power,
> which offers itself there as the *power of the negative*.[4]

## *The Daughter of Time*

The subtitle of Robert Greene's *Pandosto* (1588), the main source of *The Winter's Tale*, is *The Triumph of Time*. Since

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1  Sonnet 98, ll. 13–14, in William Shakespeare, *The Sonnets*, ed. by J. Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969), p. 51. Subsequent references are to the same edition.

2  Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*, Sonnet 106, l.1, ed. by A. Pollard (London: David Stott, 1888), p. 146.

3  Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* [1967], trans. by Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997), p. 312. Italics in the text.

4  Georges Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, trans. by John Goodman (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State UP, 2005), [*Devant l'image: question posée aux fins d'une histoire de l'art*, 1990], p. 142. Italics in the text.

Petrarch's day[5] — and particularly in 16th-century England —, the expression had taken on a new meaning, entering the semantic and iconographic field of the representations of Truth. The full title of Greene's tale explains its 'moral' by stating that in it there

> is discouvred by a pleasant Historie, that although by the meanes of sinister fortune, Truth may be concealed yet by Time in spight of fortune it is most manifestly reuealed. Pleasant for age to avoyde drowsie thoughtes, profitable for youth to eschue other wanton pastimes, and bringing to both a desired content. *Temporis filia veritas*.[6]

In many of its visual and verbal renderings, the image of *Veritas filia temporis* was a diachronic projection of another Renaissance topos, that of *nuda Veritas* – the formula originating from Horace (*Odes*, I.24) but the idea of embodying it in an actual icon being ascribable, as Erwin Panofsky demonstrates in his *Studies in Iconology*,[7] to Leon Battista Alberti's 1435–36 treatise *De pictura*. There the Florentine humanist proposes, as a model for contemporary painters to imitate, a lost allegorical work by the ancient Greek master Apelles entitled *Calumny*, describing it on the basis of an account provided by Lucian.[8] A misreading of the latter produces what becomes a recurrent, typical feature of Renaissance allegories of Naked Truth: Alberti attributes 'shame', which Lucian attaches to the figure of Remorse in the same painting, to Truth herself — 'una fanciulletta vergognosa e pudica', 'a young girl, shameful and modest' — thus prompting an iconographic association with the common representation of *Venus pudica*.[9] For,

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5    In the *Trionfi* Time, the protagonist of the fifth poem, wipes out everything in the human world — love, chastity, death, fame — and is only defeated by Eternity.
6    *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time*, http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/ Annex/DraftTxt/Pandosto/pandosto.html (June 2016).
7    Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology* [1939] (New York–London: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 153 ff.
8    See Sara Agnoletto, 'La *Calunnia di Apelle*: recupero e riconversione ecfrastica del trattatello di Luciano in Occidente', *engramma*, 42, July–August 2005, http://www.engramma.it/eOS2/index.php?id_articolo=2288 (June 2016).
9    Alberti, *De pictura,* III.53, http://www.filosofico.net/albertidepictura.htm (March 2016); Eng. trans. by J. R. Spencer, *On Painting* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976), p. 91.

as Panofsky observes (159), 'while repentance implies a feeling of shame, Truth could not conceivably be "shamefaced and bashful" — were it not for her nudity'. This 'shamefaced' Truth appears clearly in one of the paintings inspired by Alberti, Botticelli's *Calumny of Apelles*, and bears a meaningful resemblance to the same painter's Venus rising from the sea.
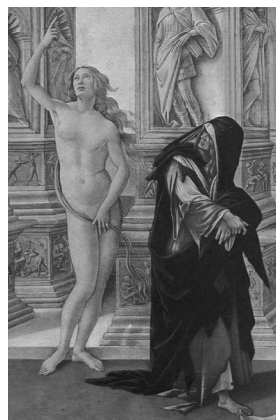


Fig. 1. Sandro Botticelli, *La calunnia* (1496), detail. Florence, Uffizi

The nudity of Truth is obviously a representation of her simplicity and straightforwardness, and Renaissance iconologists stress the difference between this kind of univocal, unmediated self-manifestation and the constant need to dissemble and appear in borrowed wrappings that characterizes life in society, especially as far as the upper classes are concerned:

> Ignuda si rappresenta, per dinotare, che la simplicità gli è naturale, onde Euripide in Phaenissis, dice esser semplice il parlare della verità, né li fa bisogno di vane interpretationi; perciochè ella per se sola è opportuna. Il medesimo dice Eschilo, & Seneca nell'epistola quinta, che la verità è semplice oratione, però si fa nuda, come habbiamo detto, & non deue hauere ornamento alcuno.[10]

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10   Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, p. 499 of the 1603 version: 'She is represented naked to indicate that simplicity is natural to her. Hence Euripides in his *Phoenissae* says truth's speech to be simple and in no need of diverse

Fig. 2. Cesare Ripa, *Verità. Iconologia*, 1603 version, p. 500

The phrase *veritas filia temporis* may likewise be traced back to a Latin author — Aulus Gellius.[11] Originally, in fact, the images that the Renaissance derived from this saying took two different forms, which soon tended to reunite into one. The first had to do with a literal dis-closure — the eventual opening by Father Time of the dungeon or tomb that had previously kept the heavenly virgin hidden.

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interpretations, since she is appropriate by herself. The same is said by Aeschylus, and by Seneca in his fifth epistle: that truth is simple speech. That is why she is drawn naked, as we said, and must wear no ornaments'. Facsimile, https://archive.org/details/iconologiaouerod00ripa (June 2016).

11  *Noctes atticae*, XII.11.7, where an unspecified earlier writer is indicated as the originator of this idea: 'Alius quidam veterum poetarum, cuius nomen mihi nunc memoriae non est, Veritatem Temporis filiam esse dixit', 'Another one of the old poets, whose name has escaped my memory at present, called Truth the daughter of Time'. Orig. and Eng. trans. by J. C. Rolfe (1927), http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Gellius/home.html (June 2016).

Fig. 3. G. Whitney, *Veritas temporis filia*

The second took the notion of revelation back to its etymological meaning — the removal, again by Time, of the "veil" or covering under which his daughter had been previously forced to conceal her radiant beauty.[12]

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12   The combination of the two is evident, for instance, in Carracci's painting (Fig. 5 below), where Truth is placed before the well where she had previously been imprisoned. The illustration above is from Geoffrey Whitney, *Choice of Emblemes*, Leyden, 1636 [1586], p. 4, under the heading *Veritas temporis filia*, and the explanatory lines run as follows: 'Three furies fell, which turne the worlde to ruthe, | Both Envie, Strife, and Slaunder, heare appeare, | In dungeon darke they longe inclosed truthe, | But Time at lengthe, did loose his daughter deare, | And setts alofte, that sacred ladie brighte, | Whoe things longe hidd, reveales, and bringes to lighte. | Thoughe strife make fier, thoughe Envie eate hir harte, | The innocent though Slaunder rente, and spoile: | Yet Time will comme, and take this ladies parte, | And breake her bandes, and bring her foes to foile. | Dispaire not then, thoughe truthe be hidden ofte, | Bycause at length, shee shall bee sett alofte'. Facsimile of the 1636 edition in the 1866 rpt., https://archive. org/details/whitneyschoicee00paragoog (Aug. 2016). A fundamental contribution to the study of the trope and icon of Truth as the Daughter of Time was provided by Fritz Saxl ('*Veritas filia temporis*', in *Philosophy and History: Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer*, ed. by Raymond Klibansky and H. J. Paton, Oxford UP, 1938, pp. 197–222). The antagonistic third figure present in Marcolini's emblem below and in numerous later images of time revealing truth is generally identified as Calumny in Catholic contexts and often as Hypocrisy in Protestant renderings. On Father Time see also the homonymous chapter in Panofsky, pp. 69–94.
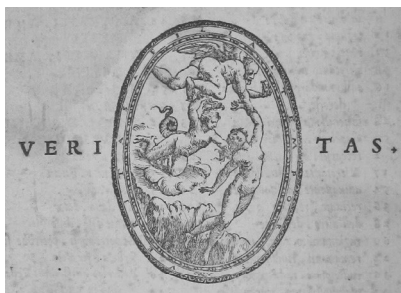
Fig. 4. Francesco Marcolini, *Veritas*. Printer's emblem, 1538,
devised in 1536 by Pietro Aretino

In the two centuries after Marcolini representations of Time
Revealing Truth were numberless, some made by illustrious
painters and sculptors such as Bronzino, Rubens, Poussin,
Bernini, and Le Moine.



Fig. 5. Annibale Carracci, *Allegory of Truth and Time*, detail (1584–85), London,
Hampton Court Royal Collection

The popularity of this image reached an apex with Giambattista
Tiepolo in the 1730s and '40s, after which, like many other
traditional allegories, it gradually disappeared from the visual arts.

Fig. 6. Giambattista Tiepolo, *La verità svelata dal tempo*, ca. 1745. Vicenza,
Pinacoteca di Palazzo Chiericati

Significantly, in 16th-century England the slogan *Veritas temporis filia* was appropriated, in opposite perspectives, by the two queens who ascended the throne in the 1550s. Mary Tudor, who adopted it as her personal motto and had it inscribed in her seal and coins, aimed of course at suggesting her own embodying the definitive triumph of the true Catholic faith over her father's heretical Anglicanism. In what was undoubtedly a deliberate prologue to a swift and irreversible return to the Protestant creed, her half-sister Elizabeth let herself be greeted by the same allegory as part of the coronation ceremonies. The account of the pageants staged for her in the city on January 14th, 1559, records that there

> was made artificiallye one hollowe place or cave, with doore and locke enclosed; oute of the whiche, a lyttle before the Quenes Hyghnes commynge thither, issued one personage, whose name was Tyme, apparaylled as an olde man, with a sythe in his hande, havynge wynges artificiallye made, leadinge a personage of lesser stature then himselfe, whiche was fynely and well apparaylled, all cladde in whyte silke, and directlye over her head was set her name and tytle, in Latin and Englyshe, *Temporis filia*, The Daughter of Tyme [. . .]. And on her brest was written her propre name, whiche was *Veritas*, Trueth, who helde a booke in her hande, upon the which was written, *Verbum Veritatis*, the

Woorde of Trueth. [. . . There] was cast a standynge for a childe, which should enterprete the same Pageant [. . . and] spake unto her Grace these woordes:

This olde man with the sythe, olde Father Tyme they call,
And her, his daughter Truth, which holdeth yonder boke,
Whom he out of his rocke hath brought forth to us all,
From whence for many yeres she durst not once out loke.
                                    [. . .]
Now since that Time again his daughter Truth hath brought,
We trust, O worthy Quene, thou wilt this Truth embrace;
And since thou understandst the good estate and nought,
We trust wealth thou wilt plant, and barrenness displace.

But for to heale the sore, and cure that is not seene,
Which thing the boke of Truth doth teche in writing playn:
She doth present to thee the same, O worthy Quene,
For that, that words do flye, but writing doth remayn. [13]

The whole of Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590–96) is based on the notion of a truth which is still unavailable but exists and is waiting to manifest itself in its fullness. The first book, in particular, foregrounds this image, which surfaces directly in Prince Arthur's account of his past interrogations of Merlin:

Him oft and oft I askt in privitie
Of what loines and what lignage I did spring:
Whose aunswere bad me still assuréd bee,

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13  'The Passage of Our Most Drad Soveraigne Lady Quene Elyzabeth through the Citie of London to Westminster the Daye before Her Coronacion', in *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. by John Nichols, 3 vols. (London: J. Nichols & Son, 1823), Vol. I, p. 50. Facs. available at https://archive.org/stream/progresses andpu01nichgoog#page/n104/mode/2up (Oct. 2016). Saxl synthesizes as follows: 'In the militant days of Henry VIII, the old motto served as a rally-cry of Protestantism. It was revived by Mary Tudor to sum up her joy in the triumph of Catholicism at her coronation. In Elizabeth's first public procession it reappears in a new and contrary significance. In less than twenty-five years it has reversed its meaning twice, and has been made the vehicle three times of strong emotion' (209).

That I was sonne and heire unto a king,
*As time in her just terme the truth to light should bring.*[14]

More importantly, Truth — absolute, theological truth as well as the historically true Church, the Protestant, in opposition to the fallacy and duplicity of Roman Catholicism — is the female protagonist of *Faerie Queene* I. Predictably enough, and reproducing another topos, her name is Una, while Duessa allegorizes her antagonist, false faith.[15] Both, for their own separate reasons — but also because of both of them not only being, but *representing* allegories —, hide their true selves under heavy clothes and cloaks. The disrobing of Duessa produces a ghastly vision:

> that witch they disaraid,
> And robd of royall robes, and purple pall,
> And ornaments that richly were displaid;
> Ne spared they to strip her naked all.
> Then when they had despoild her tire and call,
> Such as she was, their eyes might her behold,
> That her misshaped parts did them appall,
> A loathly, wrinckled hag, ill fauoured, old,
> Whose secret filth good manners biddeth not be told.
>
> [. . .]
>
> Which when the knights beheld, amazd they were,
> And wondred at so fowle deformed wight.
> Such then (said *Vna*) as she seemeth here,

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14  I.ix.5.5–9; emphasis added. *Edmund Spenser's Poetry*, ed. by Hugh Maclean and Anne Lake Prescott (New York–London: Norton, 1993 [1968]), p. 107. Subsequent references are to the same edition, with page numbers in parentheses.

15  The allegorical construct of Oneness is of course intrinsically paradoxical, since by definition allegory, notably in its Spenserian ramifications, leads at least to a doubling, and potentially to an endless proliferation, of meanings and interpretations. The figure of revelation in Book I, as discussed below, functions as a mechanism for eventually re-compressing this plurality into a singular whole and regaining control over the semantic dispersion produced by the allegorical narrative.

> Such is the face of falshood, such the sight
> Of fowle *Duessa*, when her borrowed light
> Is laid away, and counterfesaunce knowne.
> Thus when they had the witch disrobed quight,
> And all her filthy features open showne,
> They let her goe at will, and wander wayes vnknowne.
>
> I.viii.46, 49 (105–106)

Una's final epiphany is the closest viable approximation to the figure of *nuda veritas* — since utter nudity attributed to a virginal figure in a narrative would appear shocking, but, more to the point, because the conclusion of Book I proposes a further deferral. Time has not yet accomplished its course; the male protagonist, Redcrosse, is not yet the Saint George he knows he will eventually be and must in the meantime spend a few more years as a knight in the service of the Faerie Queene; a simple betrothal must suffice to prefigure his final marriage to Truth; the latter's full manifestation will have to wait until then. In the interim, she is to content herself with wearing, like her counterpart in Elizabeth's coronation pageant, a spotlessly white silken robe the luminous simplicity of which forms a perfect frame to her celestial features:

> As bright as doth the morning starre appeare
> Out of the East, with flaming lockes bedight,
> And to the world does bring long wished light;
> So faire and fresh that Lady shewd her selfe in sight.
>
> So faire and fresh, as freshest flowre in May;
> For she had layd her mournefull stole aside,
> And widow-like sad wimple throwne away,
> Wherewith her heauenly beautie she did hide,
> Whiles on her wearie iourney she did ride;
> And on her now a garment she did weare,
> All lilly white, withoutten spot, or pride,
> That seemd like silke and siluer wouen neare,
> But neither silke nor siluer therein did appeare.
>
> The blazing brightnesse of her beauties beame,
> And glorious light of her sunshyny face

To tell, were as to striue against the streame.
My ragged rimes are all too rude and bace,
Her heauenly lineaments for to enchace.
Ne wonder; for her owne deare loued knight,
All were she dayly with himselfe in place,
Did wonder much at her celestiall sight:
Oft had he seene her faire, but neuer so faire dight.

I.xii.21–23 (156)

As is suggested in these stanzas, such a blatant lack of closure — a structural and thematic trait of Spenser's romantic epic in its entirety — has not prevented Una from finally recovering, largely if not entirely, her postulated "plenitude". Now she is no longer just an allegory, or more generally a linguistic sign or visual image — an absence, a "figure" or a "shadow" hopelessly imprisoned in the dungeon of Representation and barred from any actual contact with Reality: a decentred object constantly pointing outside itself, elsewhere, to something which it "is" not — but has achieved a remarkable coincidence between "meaning" and "being"; now she

in her selfe-resemblance well beseene,
Did seeme, such as she was, a goodly maiden Queene.

I.xii.8.8–9 (153)

This self-centring corresponds to what iconologists recurrently represent by making their Truth hold a mirror to herself, 'pour monstrer qu'elle n'a point d'objet que soy-mesme', 'to show that she has no other object than herself'.[16] All other signs, whether linguistic or visual, invite those who observe them to divert their gazes from the images reflected in the mirrors they hold — or rather, *are* — to the concrete or abstract realities which produce those images. Truth, like a divine entity, arrests the gaze and detains it in its perfect circularity.

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16  Cesare Ripa, *Iconologie* [Paris, 1644], French trans. by Jean Baudouin, facs. ed. by Stephen Orgel (New York–London: Garland, 1976), p. 145.

Fig. 7. *Truth Holding a Mirror to Herself*, in Ripa, *Iconologie*, Paris 1644, p. 144.

This process, however, can only come to completion when time reaches its maturity; in a global perspective, Father Time will only unveil Truth wholly and entirely at the instant of his own end, that is, when the human world enters the dimension of Eternity. The connection of the figure of Time Revealing Truth with the narrative of human history constructed by the sequence of books that composes the Christian Bible could not be more evident. Despite differences due to the canon of a certain Church — Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox — including or excluding specific scriptural texts, the structure remains unaltered in all variants. The books which precede the last are either devoted to recounting more or less distant events of the past (Pentateuch, historical books, Gospels, Acts), or to wisdom and prophecy (from Job onwards in the Old Testament as well as the Epistles in the New). Even the prophetic books bear on a future — with regard to the moment of their coming into being — which is still located within the boundaries of historical time. The final text, contrariwise, opens up a window onto eternity, and it is appropriately known as Apocalypse or Revelation, that is, uncovering or discovery.

Consistency in allegorizing requires a narrative based on this model to remain as intrinsically unfinished — as "imperfect" —

as biblical time, and this is precisely what happens in the *Faerie Queene*. On the other hand, since the allegorical words and figures the text offers to its recipients are still "in the making", this can but result in a self-denying product, bound to render its own interpretation equally doubtful and defective, and to cast shadows on the author's creative omnipotence.[17] But self-denial is, after all, implicit in allegory as such — and ultimately in *all* language — even without considering relations with time. For an allegorical construct is, by definition and etymologically, intrinsically other than that which it represents, so much so that once its "meaning" is elucidated, it may be discarded as an empty shell; and this ontological absence is nothing else than an amplified version of the *manque-à-être* that characterizes language and semiotic systems in general. In any other object than God and Truth, "being" is inversely proportional to "signifying", inasmuch as the latter leads to transcend or traverse the object itself, which in extreme cases becomes a mere means of access to the former. At any rate, that the picture of a pipe is not a pipe — that the word "pipe" is not a pipe — has been clear to artists and writers from time immemorial, becoming a recurrent source of concern and grievance.[18] Read in this light, a conventional gesture of modesty like Spenser's avowal of inadequacy in the description of Una's splendour, 'My ragged rimes are all too rude and bace, | Her heauenly lineaments for to enchace',[19] takes on further implications. Like analogous declarations of impotence

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17    In this perspective Spenser may be regarded as a precursor of much 17th-century literature, on the basis of a category formulated for the latter by Stanley Fish (*Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature*, Berkeley–Los Angeles–London: University of California Press, 1974 [1972]).

18    See the paintings of René Magritte, in particular *La Trahison des images* (*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*), 1928–29; *La Clé des songes* (1927–30); *Le Miroir vivant* (1928); *Les Deux mystères* (1966). See also R. Magritte, 'Les Mots et les images', *La Révolution Surréaliste*, 15 Dec. 1929, pp. 32–33, http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k58451673/f39.image (May 2016); and M. Foucault, 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe', trans. by R. Howard, *October*, Vol. I (Spring, 1976), pp. 6–21.

19    *FQ* I.xii.23.4–5 (see above).

in the *Divine Comedy*, going beyond the "emptiness" of allegory it invests the ontological status of language as a whole and its inability to produce truth.

*Figures of Delight*

In the Christian history of the universe the word precedes the image, since it is the former that generates light, hence visibility, without which no image is even thinkable:

> In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.[20]

Five days later, in fact, the adventure of humankind is inaugurated by the production of images, once again announced by a verbal proclamation that seems to coincide with the creative act itself, since, in the absence of an interlocutor, it can only resound to provide the things created with form and function:

> And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (Gen. 1.26–27).

John's Gospel goes back to this anteriority of the Word:

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

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20   Genesis 1.1–4, King James Version, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/k/kjv/ kjv-idx?type=DIV1&byte=1477 (July 2016). Subsequent references are to the same edition.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.[21]

In the Hebrew Bible "image" is *tselem*, "shadow, representation of substance, shade, resemblance, phantom, illusion", and the word for "likeness" is *demuth*, "shape, resemblance, similitude, similarity of features between spiritual and moral, or spiritual and physical".[22] Were the Gospels written in Hebrew, the term for "Word" in John 1 — Greek *Logos*, Latin *Verbum* — would be *Dabar*, in perfect keeping with the central role assigned to the Voice in Genesis 1. For the utterance of *dabar* produces far more than a mere series of signifying sounds and becomes itself "event" and "fulfilment" or "performance" of that which is said.[23] Hence, *dabar* represents the dream of the word that "means" and "is", or "makes be", at the same time, annulling the gap between representation and reality, "figure" and Truth.[24]

The notions of "image" and "likeness" are conveyed in the Septuagint by *eikon* and *homoiosis*,[25] in the Latin Vulgate by *imago* and *similitudo*.[26] Thus images — differently from the Biblical Word — come into existence inscribed with the interplay of presence and absence which characterizes their subsequent existence — they "are" and "are not" at the same time, just as Adam and Eve, while

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21   John 1.1,14, King James Version, https://www.biblegateway.com/ (July 2016).

22   See http://biblehub.com/hebrew/6754.htm (July 2016); https://www.studylight.org/language-studies/hebrew-thoughts/index.cgi?a=592 (July 2016); http://www.ancient-hebrew.org/40_genesis1.html (July 2016).

23   Along with those shared with *logos* and *verbum*, *dabar* has, among others, the meanings of "command", "promise", "advice", "prophecy", "decision", "event "and "cause". See http://biblehub.com/hebrew/1697.htm (July 2016); http://www.midbar.net/blog/?p=2 (July 2016); http://www.morasha.it/riskin/riskin_d06chukkat.html (July 2016).

24   This 'full' language was imagined by numerous medieval and early modern intellectuals, notably John Milton, to be possible in the ultra-earthly context of heaven. See Lucia Folena, 'Dove fioriva l'eloquenza: Satana seduttore nel *Paradise Lost*', in *Retoriche del discorso amoroso nella letteratura in inglese*, ed. by Lucia Folena (Turin: Trauben, 2012), 119–48 (pp. 122–26).

25   Septuagint text, https://www.blueletterbible.org/lxx/gen/1/1/s_1001Septuagint (July 2016).

26   Vulgate text, http://www.vatican.va/archive/bible/nova_vulgata/documents/nova-vulgata_vt_genesis_lt.html (July 2016).

real, living human beings, bear in their physical and spiritual shapes the mark of their ontological lack, of their not being that which they re-present. And yet the self-same condition of an image being a defective replica of an unavailable original is a certification of the latter's actual presence, though in another place. Shadows and reflections in water or mirrors presuppose bodies and call them into being, as it were, while making their distance from them manifest.

The very etymology of *imago* associates the word with the notion of imitation,[27] condemning images from the start to such a status of difference and "belatedness". Even though most classical authors often use *imago* and *figura* as synonyms, the latter term — from *fingere*, originally "to form, mould, shape, forge, fashion, create"[28] — rather than the *écart* between absent original and present copy, foregrounds the interval between the maker and that which is made. Unlike an *imago*, a *figura* is not necessarily a reproduction of something already existing, but at the same time it is always and invariably a work of "art", a creation, whereas an *imago* may well have a "natural" origin, as happens with shadows and reflections in water.

Along with these, at least two other Latin terms related to the same semantic area deserve to be taken into consideration. *Signum*, in addition to a large number of other applications, most of which imply the same derivativeness as *imago*, is often used as an equivalent for the latter and for *figura*, and also means, more specifically, "statue". On the other hand, a *simulacrum* — Greek *eidolon* — does not point back to an original but takes its place: 'the simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth — it is the

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27  See A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1994), p. 309. In the *Summa Theologiae* St Thomas Aquinas already stated: 'imago ab imitando dicitur', 'Image is derived from imitation' (1, quest. 35, art. 1, obj. 3). Orig. http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/sth1028.html; Eng. trans. http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/sum039.htm (June 2016).

28  See the exhaustive analysis of the history of *figura* in Latin literature in Erich Auerbach, '*Figura*' [1938], in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, trans. by Ralph Manheim (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1994), 11–76 (pp. 11–28).

truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true'.[29] In other terms, the 'simulacrum is not degraded copy, rather it contains a positive power which negates *both original and copy, both model and reproduction*'.[30]

An analogous distinction is at the core of Plato's devaluation of mimetic art, hopelessly entangled in a world of *eidola*, which it not only produces but re-produces, since the original it imitates is already a reduction of the real thing to a phantasm or an appearance.[31] The iconoclastic stance which contradistinguishes Hebraism and Islam and has recurrently characterized the Christian world — notably in its Puritan ramifications — is essentially due to the perception of the ease with which an *eikon* may turn into an *eidolon*, an *imago* into a *simulacrum*. Idolatry is the semiotico-moral mistake of ontologizing images, giving bodies to shadows and substances to appearances. And since, in the line of *contemptus mundi* which leads from Plato to Augustine, the whole material world is made up of appearances or *signa* of a true reality which is elsewhere, idolatry eventually coincides with the sin of *cupiditas*, the form of misdirected love which invests its objects with a "fullness" or "presence" they do not possess.[32]

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29    'Le simulacre n'est jamais ce qui cache la vérité — c'est la vérité qui cache qu'il n'y en a pas. Le simulacre est vrai'. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation* (Paris: Galilée, 1981), p. 9; Eng. trans., 'Simulacra and Simulations', in *Selected Writings*, ed. by Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988), 166–84 (p. 166).

30    Gilles Deleuze, 'Plato and the Simulacrum' [1969], trans. by Rosalind Krauss, *October*, Vol. 27 (Winter, 1983), 45–56 (p. 53). Italics in the text.

31    *Republic* X, 598–99, Eng. trans. by B. Jowett, http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.11.x.html (July 2016); Eng. trans. by Paul Shorey (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. P.—London: Heinemann, 1969), http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D10%3Asection%3D599a (July 2016). See Deleuze, pp. 47–51; Alan Silverman, 'Plato's Middle Period Metaphysics and Epistemology', http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-metaphysics/ (July 2016).

32    See Francisco Benzoni, 'An Augustinian Understanding of Love in an Ecological Context', *Quodlibet*, Vol. 6, 3, July–September 2004, http://www.quodlibet.net/articles/benzoni-love.shtml (Apr. 2012); Henry Chadwick, '*Frui–uti*', entry in *Augustinus-Lexicon*, Zentrum für

In the centuries which preceded the invention of modern psychology, the error of Narcissus was precisely idolatry, instead of self-love.[33] The point of Ovid's narrative in *Metamorphoses* III.339–510, according to its medieval and early modern readers, consisted in the protagonist's inability, before it was too late, to see the thing in the fountain as a mere duplicate, decentred from the tangible being which generated it. Ovid's word choice seems to support this view. While what Narcissus initially perceives is an *imago* (416–17),[34] his interpreting it as a self-standing reality capable of becoming an object of love turns it into a *simulacrum* (432), that is, a deceitful (*mendax*, 439) icon. Interestingly, his first reaction of wonder is so overwhelming as to freeze him into a marble statue ('e Pario formatum marmore signum', 419). Thus the body vanishes from the scene at both ends of the desiring gaze when the latter comes into being; in a sense, it will not reappear, its absence not even being eventually palliated by an outright metamorphosis. Rather than that, what the narrator recounts about Narcissus at the end of the story is a substitution: 'nusquam corpus erat', 'the body was nowhere', and what was found *in its place* ('pro corpore') was a flower (509–10).[35] The disembodiment of Narcissus is duplicated and amplified by that of Echo, which in fact begins before this final adventure — though she "is" still a body ('corpus adhuc [. . .] erat', 359) — when Juno severely mutilates her power of speech (356–69). After she is rejected, her misery causes her physical being to evaporate little

Augustinusforschung in Wűrzburg, 2004, www.kirchenserver.net/bwo/.../ fruiuti.htm (Apr. 2012). In a broader perspective, Owen Barfield's *Saving Appearances: A Study in Idolatry* [1957] (Middletown: Wesleyan U.P., 1988) remains very enlightening.

33  See Dante, *Paradiso* 3.10–18, where he is evoked as the one who mistook a shadow for an actual body; L. Vinge, *The Narcissus Theme in Western European Literature up to the Early 19th Century* (Lund: Gleerups, 1967).

34  More precisely, an *imago formae*, the image of a shape. The Latin original is quoted from Publio Ovidio Nasone, *Metamorfosi*, ed. by Piero Bernardini Marzolla (Turin: Einaudi, 1994 [1979]), pp. 108–16. Subsequent references are to the same edition.

35  See John Brenkman, 'Narcissus in the Text', *The Georgia Review*, 30, 2 (Summer, 1976), 293–327 (p. 326).

by little, until she is reduced to a voice and even her bones turn into rocks (393–401).[36]

Ovid's Pygmalion initially experiences a form of idolatry comparable to Narcissus', with the difference that it is he who has deliberately produced, with an art so exquisite that it denies its being art and appears as nature (X.252), the statue — *simulatus corpus* (253) or *simulacra puellae* (280) — that sets his desire alight.[37] Venus saves him from the despair of Absence by endowing the *signum* with the fullness of life. The conclusion literally reverses that of the former myth: 'corpus erat', 'it was a [real] body' (289). Narcissus is infected by the insubstantiality of his love-object to the point where he loses his own substance; Pygmalion succeeds — thanks to a divine intervention — in infusing into his artefact a "presence" equal to that which he possesses.

The Catholic tradition seems to have often regarded the separation between signs/symbols/images and their referents within the religious sphere as a disturbing fact — a temporary and escapable state of things which is occasionally susceptible of being overcome even in the world of appearances where humans are condemned to live. A very evident example of this is the doctrine of transubstantiation, with the dogma of the Real Presence through which bread and wine actually become flesh and blood. An analogous attempt to bridge the gap is attributable to the Fathers of the Church, from Tertullian onwards, who invented the figural or typological interpretation of the Scriptures, where the role of adumbrating divine truths is entrusted to factual things and living beings:

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36    This is one of several Ovidian stories narrating the transformation of flesh into stone — the reverse of what happens to Pygmalion's masterpiece and to Hermione's effigy in *The Winter's Tale*.

37    Here the choice of *simulacrum*, as opposed to *signum, imago* or another synonym, may be due to this statue not pointing back to a tangible original — not attempting to reproduce the likeness of a specific woman — but endeavouring to transcend the physical world in order to attain a higher perfection.

> Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life. Only the understanding of the two persons or events is a spiritual act, but this spiritual act deals with concrete events whether past, present, or future, and not with concepts or abstractions; these are quite secondary, since promise and fulfillment are real historical events, which have either happened in the incarnation of the Word, or will happen in the second coming.[38]

Thus, for instance, Moses delivering his people from Egypt is simultaneously an actual protagonist of past events and a prefiguration or foreshadowing of Christ delivering humankind from sin. By anchoring itself to historical fact, this kind of *figura*, or type, besides establishing a strong link of mutual presupposition between Old and New Testament, overcomes the intrinsic limitation of allegories — and images in general — whose "vehicles" and "tenors" are located on two irreparably distinct planes of reality. Contrary to what happened to transubstantiation, which numerous Protestant denominations, especially among the most radical ones, regarded as a variant of the idolatry attached to the worship of sacred icons and symbols, figural interpretation remained largely acceptable even from a Puritan stance;[39] it was commonly applied until the late 17th century at least. In a Catholic perspective this exegetical practice gives "body" and "presence" to that which would otherwise only re-present, reducing or annulling the gap between "being" and "meaning"; in a reformed one it foregrounds the "semiotic" nature of material reality as a whole — the fact that the latter is merely a forest or labyrinth of signs destined to disappear when the fullness of Truth manifests itself.

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38    Auerbach, p. 53.
39    See for instance John Bunyan's self-defence for using "metaphors", i.e., allegories, in *The Pilgrim's Progress*: 'Solidity, indeed, becomes the Pen | Of him that writeth things Divine to men; | But must I needs want solidness, because | By Metaphors I speak; was not Gods Laws, | His Gospel-laws, in olden time held forth | By Types, Shadows and Metaphors?' ('The Author's *Apology* for his Book', ll. 107–12. Ed. by N. H. Keeble, Oxford, Oxford UP, 1988 [1678], p. 4).

The analogy between the figural bond and the image of Time Revealing Truth is evident. Both presuppose a diachronic process leading to the eventual disclosure, or actualisation, of something which had been there already, but in a hidden, latent, or potential form. Both function, so to speak, as embodied prophecies — conveyed through verbal or visual images rather than through declarations, but as obscure and hard to bring to light before the 'just terme', despite the support of competent interpretation, as authentic predictions.

### The Power of the Negative

Absence is a central premise of the depiction of love in Elizabethan sonnet sequences. This has to do, of course, with the two principal traditions which contributed in shaping them — the literary one stemming from the Petrarchan model and the courtly philosophical one tracing back to Neoplatonism through the mediation of treatises and conduct books such as, first and foremost, Castiglione's *Courtier*. Obviously the moods generated in the loving persona by the beloved's distance — whether physical or spiritual and emotional — differ profoundly in the two traditions. In the former the poetical utterance typically vents the frustration and grief produced by the known unavailability of the love-object. The latter proclaims the bliss, the pure spiritual rapture, awaiting those who, transcending the physical and the individual, climb to the top of the stairway of love and enjoy the contemplation of the spiritual and universal.[40] Here the love-

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40 This is how Castiglione's Pietro Bembo synthesizes the process: 'per la scala che nell'infimo grado tiene l'ombra di bellezza sensuale ascendiamo alla sublime stanzia ove abita la celeste, amabile e vera bellezza, che nei secreti penetrali di Dio sta nascosta, acciò che gli occhi profani veder non la possano; e quivi trovaremo felicissimo termine ai nostri desidèri, vero riposo nelle fatiche, certo rimedio nelle miserie, medicina saluberrima nelle infirmità, porto sicurissimo nelle turbide procelle del tempestoso mar di questa vita'. Baldassar Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano*, IV. 69, ed. by Giulio Carnazzi (Milan: Rizzoli, 1994 [1987]), p. 331. In 1561 Thomas Hoby translated thus: 'let us clime up the stayers, which at the lowermost

object functions as an essential catalyst to initiate the ascent but must needs be surpassed and abandoned — like a deciphered sign or an interpreted allegory — in order for the process to be completed. In both perspectives, in sum, the beloved is always and inevitably "elsewhere".

Moreover, between the late Middle Ages and the 17th century love was almost universally believed to entail, in the process of its coming into being, the production of an image — a "double" or phantasm of the beloved which planted itself in the lover's heart, becoming an indispensable mediator of the emotional involvement.[41] From that moment onwards the lover's gaze was focussed directly on this reflection, which granted constant access to the contemplation of its source without ever lessening the awareness of its otherness from it. "Absent presence" had thus become an inescapable component of the representation of love in poetry as well as in numerous other textual and discursive productions.

Shakespeare's Sonnet 98 thematises this paradoxical condition. Petrarchan affliction and Platonic dematerialisation here concur in constructing a hyperbolic tribute to the Fair Youth, transfigured into a "place" and an Idea by the very first line, 'From you have I been absent in the spring', which reverses the usage of attributing absence to the spoken object rather than to the speaking subject ("my friend was absent" as opposed to "I was absent from my friend"), except when the latter is away from a locality ("I was absent from Rome"). Thus absence becomes a fall from the site of fullness and "being" identified with the Fair Youth into a world of signs that, however beautiful — as beautiful as spring flowers and birds' songs — can only point outside themselves, to the Presence they do not possess and yet presuppose:

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stepp have the shadowe of sensuall beawty, to the high mansion place where the heavenlye, amiable and right beawtye dwelleth, which lyeth hid in the innermost secretes of God, least unhalowed eyes shoulde come to the syght of it: and there shall we fynde a most happye ende for our desires, true rest for oure travailes, certein remedye for myseryes, a most healthfull medycin for sickenesse, a most sure haven in the troublesome stormes of the tempestuous sea of this life' (*The Booke of the Courtyer*, http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/courtier/courtier.html, March 2016).

41    See, e.g., *Cortegiano*, III.66 and IV.52.

> They were but sweet, but figures of delight,
> Drawn after you, you pattern of all those. (11–12)

The good season which turns even the gloomy god of melancholy into a merrymaker (4) is powerless against this metaphysical lack. No 'summer's story' can be told at the moment (7), but only a winter's tale (13), for the time of absence is still there:

> HERMIONE [. . .] 'pray you sit by us,
> And tell 's a tale.
> MAMILLIUS Merry, or sad, shall 't be?
> HERMIONE As merry as you will.
> MAMILLIUS A sad tale's best for winter. I have one
> Of sprites and goblins.[42]

Neither joy nor reality can be adequately staged in the half year when nature is dormant and the world suspended in the expectancy of the renewal of life and vegetation. Phantasms and nightmares invade the imagination and despondency establishes its seat in human minds and hearts. Proserpine seems lost, even though she is only hidden underground, like Truth before her "just terme"; she will manifest herself in her magnificence when cyclical time has accomplished another revolution:

> And now the Goddesse Proserpine indifferently doth reigne
> Above and underneath the Earth, and so doth she remaine
> One halfe yeare with hir mother and the resdue with hir Feere.
> Immediatly she altred is as well in outwarde cheere
> As inwarde minde. For where hir looke might late before appeere
> Sad even to Dis, hir countnance now is full of mirth and grace
> Even like as Phebus having put the watrie cloudes to chace,
> Doth shew himselfe a Conqueror with bright and shining face.[43]

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42  *The Winter's Tale*, II.i.22–26. Ed. by J. H. P. Pafford (London: Arden, 2000 [1963]). Subsequent references are to the same edition.

43  Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, V.566–71, p. 202: 'nunc dea, regnorum numen commune duorum, | cum matre est totidem, totidem cum coniuge menses. | Vertitur extemplo facies et mentis et oris; | nam modo quae poterat Diti quoque maesta videri, | laeta deae frons est, ut sol, qui tectus aquosis | nubibus ante fuit, victis e nubibus exit'. Eng. trans. by Arthur Golding (London: W.

It seems very likely that the principal reason for Shakespeare's reversing the geography of *Pandosto* by opening and closing his play's action in Sicilia, instead of Bohemia, has to do with this mythical subtext — as extraneous to Greene's narrative, like the whole game of absence/presence, as it is fundamental here — which requires the final summer of plenitude brought about by the retrieval of Perdita and Hermione to be set in a land graced by the sun and a luxuriant flora, while the sixteen-year transition through winter is more appropriately placed in the cold climate of an imaginary Bohemia. Furthermore, it is precisely in Sicily that in Ovid's story the abduction of Proserpine by Dis, the god of the underworld, takes place.

Another major difference between this comedy and the novella that inspired it resides in Shakespeare's choice to make Time itself a character, taking Greene's generic and somewhat trite subtitle back to its philosophical implications. Time, designated as Chorus in the dramatis personae, takes the stage in IV.i with a monologue which occupies the whole scene and addresses the audience directly. In appearance he does not say anything particularly significant and is basically there to apologize for the play breaking the pseudo-Aristotelian theatrical convention of the unity of time by 'slid[ing] | O'er sixteen years, and leav[ing] the growth untried | Of that wide gap' (5–7). In fact, he is an essential agent of the transformations that the dramatic world of *The Winter's Tale* undergoes to attain the final epiphany, which requires a long and complex development. Besides, he is a perfect embodiment of the figure of the Discloser. Some kind of final revelation or recognition is indeed presupposed by many contemporary narrative as well as dramatic romances, but in this case, along with the coming to light of *the truth about* one or more of the characters involved, what is eventually unearthed, on one level, is *Truth itself* — absolute truth without qualifications.

In *Pandosto* the wronged queen, Bellaria, actually dies on hearing about her young son's sudden decease just after the

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Seres, 1567), http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Ate xt%3A1999.02.0074%3Abook%3D5%3Acard%3D487 (May 2015).

Oracle has proclaimed her innocence and a happy dénouement seems at hand despite the loss of her baby daughter. In *The Winter's Tale* Hermione's death, made known to Leontes and the courtiers by Paulina (III.ii.172–207), is in fact only the inaugural moment of a sixteen-year dormancy — the winter of absence — which is definitively concluded, after the lost child, Perdita, has been reinstated in her place and her marriage to prince Florizel enthusiastically welcomed by the two fathers, by the prodigy of the statue coming to life. In order for the metamorphosis to take place, solemn words have to be uttered and music must resound:

> PAULINA Music, awake her; strike! [*Music*]
> 'Tis time; descend, be stone no more; approach;
> Strike all that look upon with marvel. Come!
> I'll fill your grave up; stir, nay, come away:
> Bequeath to death your numbness; for from him
> Dear life redeems you. You perceive she stirs: [*Hermione comes down*]
> Start not; her actions shall be holy as
> You hear my spell is lawful. (V.iii.98–105)

Paulina's 'spell' thus shapes itself as *dabar*, the word that acts and "makes be", giving bodily existence and tangible presence to what was previously a mere re-presentation, the marker of an emptiness. Another instance of *dabar* in the play is proposed by the Oracle (III.ii.132–35), whose statement, like all prophecies awaiting their fulfilment, offers a clear example of the role of Time in the complete manifestation of Truth.[44]

Hermione, lost and found like her daughter Perdita, is at the same time Ceres, the bereft mother and universal civilizer,[45] and

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44  Leonard Barkan establishes a correlation between oracle and statue: 'the appearance of the statue forms part of the same mysterious level in the play as the oracle: both are hidden from the audience (though in different ways), and both are connected to resolutions in the affairs of men that seem beyond their individual action. The statue itself appears in a kind of temple, and the events are described in terms of magic: both belong in the historical milieu of statues that come to life'. '"Living Sculptures": Ovid, Michelangelo, and *The Winter's Tale*', *ELH*, 48, 4 (Winter, 1981), 639–667 (p. 658).

45  In beginning her account of the loss and retrieval of Proserpine, the muse Calliope celebrates Ceres for teaching humans agriculture and being the

her child Proserpine in whose absence the physical world suffers the implacable harshness of an endless winter. Only when she returns to her original seat will the good season come to full bloom and the disorder and violence of the human community give way to gentler social practices. In sum, she is an incarnation of Truth, seen not, or not only, as a discursive condition or as the correspondence between an object and something external — "truthfulness" or "truth to . . ." — but as the metaphysical point of arrival of the unstoppable regression of signs, figures and shadows towards the origin of Being. As Una at the end of the first book of the *Faerie Queene* discards the heavy, mournful coverings which concealed her beauty, Hermione here eventually displays herself 'such as she was' — no longer under the borrowed semblance of a stone effigy. Time has let her remain hidden for sixteen years and now, in revealing her, he also manifests himself, for both statue and living body bear the inscriptions of his presence and power:

> LEONTES      [. . .]      But yet, Paulina,
> Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing
> So aged as this seems.
> POLIXENES                  O, not by much.
> PAULINA So much the more our carver's excellence,
> Which lets go by some sixteen years and makes her
> As she lived now. (V.iii.27–32)

This writing on image and flesh, however illegible it may appear, is a piece of historiography — the chronicle of the interval between Hermione's supposed death and her comeback. She thus bears engraved on herself the entirety of her past existence, including the long phase of latency, which no further miracle has enabled her to 'slide o'er'. Like the spoken word that turns image into flesh in this final scene of the play, writing is an indispensable supplement to the visual, which, for all its immediacy and evocativeness, is largely immersed in the present, lifted out of the diachronic dimension and hence dispossessed of

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first to provide them with the laws indispensable to lead a peaceful existence after the fall from the golden age (*Metamorphoses* V.341–43).

the mutability and the metamorphic potential intrinsic in corporal life. Paintings and sculptures require titles and captions which place them in appropriate contexts. Conversely, images need to prop up words by endowing them with an at least surrogate component of "presence" — the illusion that what is spoken about is actually there before the spectators' eyes.[46] And this is precisely what drama in general, and Shakespeare's drama in particular, with the self-awareness it displays, is all about.[47]

The rapport between actor and character, and, more in general, the connection between the fictive world created on stage and that which exists — or existed at a given moment in the past — outside it implies something else than the mere link between a "figure" or "shadow" and the "truth" that generates and validates it. Living beings can be images, as happens when they play other people's roles, but nevertheless they remain placed on the same level of "being" as the "actual" individuals they impersonate. Rather than a parallel with the figural bond — since no shortening of the distance from the Represented by virtue of time passing may be envisaged for an actor — this would suggest a similarity with the Biblical mirroring between the human creatures and their creator, were it not for the fact that in this case the creation involves only the superimposition of a signifying aspect on pre-existent, self-standing entities, and that the relationship it presupposes, rather than bilateral, is triangular, since what is reflected is not, or not primarily, the creator's face but a further reality.

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46    In reference to words and images calling for mutual support, see for example Figs. 2, 3 and 7 above, as well as the whole tradition of emblem books, and that of "shaped" or "painted" poems such as George Herbert's 'The Altar' and 'Easter Wings'. A particularly enlightening and very ample study on this issue is Giovanni Pozzi's *La parola dipinta* (Milan: Adelphi, 1981).

47    In discussing V.ii, where the dialogues have the primary function of offering a synthetic account of numerous events that have taken place off-scene, Barkan comments: 'By withholding dramatic three-dimensionality Shakespeare is preparing us for a scene in which both three dimensional media of sculpture and drama come into their own. The speech-without-drama of this scene is contrasted by the statue-with-silence of the following scene. The verbal without the visual is empty, while the visual without the verbal is frozen. Only Shakespeare's medium can effect the marriage'.

The art of the playwright, at any rate, is akin to magic, as Shakespeare suggests repeatedly in *The Tempest* — where his "face" is indeed reflected in that of his protagonist Prospero — and in this sense it has a remarkable affinity not only with Paulina's conjuring but with the exceptional gift ascribed to Giulio Romano, the supposed author of Hermione's statue,

> a piece many years in doing and now newly performed by that rare Italian master, Julio Romano, who, had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape; he so near to Hermione hath done Hermione that they say one would speak to her and stand in hope of answer. (V.ii.94–101)

As scholars have stressed recurrently, the choice of Giulio Romano, who is not remembered as a sculptor but as a first-rate painter and architect and a pioneer of mannerism, is probably due to the epitaph that Giorgio Vasari, in the first edition of his *Lives* (1550), records as having been inscribed on his tomb:

> VIDEBAT IVPPITER CORPORA SCVLPTA PICTAQVE
> SPIRARE, ET AEDES MORTALIVM AEQVARIER COELO
> IVLII VIRTVTE ROMANI. TVNC IRATVS,
> CONCILIO DIVORVM OMNIVM VOCATO,
> ILLVM E TERRIS SVSTVLIT, QVOD PATI NEQVIRET
> VINCI AVT AEQVARI AB HOMINE TERRIGENA.[48]

In this hypothetical epitaph, Giulio, in sum, embodies the myth of the artist who has appropriated the gods' power of creation, the only force capable of insufflating human shapes fashioned out of

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48   'Jupiter saw sculpted and painted bodies breathe and mortals' buildings equal those in heaven thanks to the art of Giulio Romano. Then, in anger, having called all the gods to council, he removed him from the earth, because he could not bear to be surpassed or equalled by an earthly man'. Vasari, 'Vita di Giulio Romano, pittore et architetto', in *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani* (Florence: Lorenzo Torrentino, 1550), https://it.wikisource.org/wiki/Le_vite_de%27_pi%C3%B9_eccellenti_pittori,_scultori_e_architettori_(1550)/Giulio_Romano (Sep. 2016). The revised edition (Florence: Giunti, 1568) suppresses these lines.

stone or drawn on coloured surfaces with the breath of life. His art is such that it reduces or annuls the distance between "meaning" and "being", "figure" and "truth", endowing with Presence that which would normally be condemned to remain an empty sign. The Third Gentleman who introduces him and his statue to his interlocutors in *The Winter's Tale* is remarkably less hyperbolic, however admiring, and denies him actual superhuman faculties. This artist, notwithstanding his excellence, is just a mortal, with no access to either eternity or the divine prerogative of giving life to inanimate matter. One is led to wonder whether these words may contain an allusion to a famous though somewhat obscure painting by Giulio, *The Allegory of Immortality*, made in Mantua in the 1520s. But the principal analogy between Romano's work and the statue of Hermione in Shakespeare's play might perhaps be offered by a little picture that a majority of experts attribute to the Italian artist — a work known as *Ceres, or Abundance*. Executed in 1516 for Bernardo Dovizi, cardinal Bibbiena — which explains the choice of a figure of abundance or *dovizia* and the presence of six eaves of wheat, the cardinal's emblem, in the deity's cornucopia — this panel was originally the wooden cover of a small devotional painting ascribable to the same hand and representing the Holy Family.[49] That the inscription at the bottom refers to Raphael as the author simply indicates that the two images were produced in the great master's atelier, and possibly under his direct supervision. That was where Giulio Romano — who was probably only seventeen in 1516 — was perfecting his skills[50] before moving to Mantua in 1524 to work for Duke Federico Gonzaga, for whom he created a number of memorable architectural and pictorial masterpieces, and notably erected and decorated the splendid Palazzo Te.

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49    Basic information on this painting is provided by the Atlas of the Louvre at http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car_not_frame& idNotice=13854 (Aug. 2016). See also https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/C%C3%A9r%C3%A8s_(Rapha%C3%ABl) (Aug. 2016).

50    He inherited Raphael's studio in 1520 when the master died.

Fig. 8 Giulio Romano (att.), *Cérès ou L'Abondance* (ca. 1516),
oil on walnut panel. Paris, Musée du Louvre.

Though no sculptures by Giulio are known, this panel *represents* a sculpture.[51] It is placed in a niche within the close-up of a palace wall made into a *trompe-l'œil* by the impossibility of envisioning the complete architectural structure to which it belongs and its location. The subject seems as relevant as the choice of featuring a statue instead of its hypothetical original, since, as was stressed above, Ceres is at least indirectly evoked, in association with the queen coming back to life, at the end of *The Winter's Tale*. In addition, this female body is covered only by a thin veil that, instead of hiding it, enhances its harmonic proportions, calling to mind the figure of Truth and the idea of Revelation in the tradition which the first book of the *Faerie Queene* also appeals to.

But the most fascinating thing about this painting is the combination of the *trompe-l'œil* which frames the effigy of the goddess and the fact

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51    The figure of Ceres might be modelled on an actual classical statue known as the *Aphrodite of Este*, originally in the possession of the Gonzagas and placed with other ancient sculptures in the *Loggia dei marmi* of Mantua's Ducal Palace by Giulio when he redecorated it. The *Aphrodite* is now in Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum.

that the latter is "twice removed" from reality — not being an image but *the image of an image*. The *trompe-l'œil* produces the illusion of a three-dimensional scene located in the same physical universe whence the spectator observes it; such an illusion is however contextually shattered by the evident, self-declared representational nature of the object offered to the gaze — an artefact, not a living being. And then one reminds oneself that the *trompe-l'œil* is, likewise, the pictorial reproduction of an artefact — the detail of a magnificent building. Human art, painting, duplicates human art, sculpture and architecture.

Following Magritte, one would be tempted to complete the picture with a caption, "This is not a statue",[52] which, by another coincidence, would also befit Hermione's staged effigy in *The Winter's Tale*, the pivot of a similar series of removals. For what Shakespeare's audience witnesses at that point is an actor playing, rather than directly a dramatic character — a figure —, the manufactured, sculptural imitation of that character — a figure's figure. From an intra-dramatic perspective, moreover, when enacting the statue Hermione is impersonating *herself* (through the mediation of her own image). That is, she is at the same time splitting her identity into representing "shadow" and represented "truth" — a dispersion reminiscent of allegorical doubling — and reconstructing her unity by turning herself into a mirror showing, not the replica of another being, as is the case with actors, but only and exclusively her own. Thus it is even before recovering her full bodily existence that, like Spenser's Una, she "seems such as she is", enclosed in the circularity characterizing that which "has no other object than itself". And if such a *mise en abyme* were not sufficiently mystifying, one might choose to consider the further level of complexity which the gender of the individual performing the role of the beautiful queen added to it in Shakespeare's day.

Reality disappears in these games of mutual reflections, or turns into the evanescent mirage of a faraway referent, so distant that one starts wondering if it has ever actually existed. Absent presence: *imagines nudas tenemus*.

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52   Just as the statue itself, if it existed, might go under the heading "This is not Ceres".

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