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Excavating loss: rebirth and new media
in *Prospero's Books* and *The Tempest*

If there be nothing new, but that which is
Hath been before, how are our brains beguiled,
Which, labouring for invention, bear amiss
The second burden of a former child?

William Shakespeare, *Sonnet 59*

Computer media return us to the repressed of the cinema.
Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*

As Miranda notes, *The Tempest* is a particularly male play: "I do not know / One of my sex" (3.1.48–49). Despite their significance to the play's back-story, mothers are notably missing from the narrative present. Equally, despite the close attention he pays to his history, all Prospero explicitly has to say about his wife is: "Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and / She said thou wast my daughter" (1.2.56–57). Yet images of birth and pregnancy recur frequently in the play's language, just as screen representations of the female body, pregnancy and procreation proliferate throughout Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* (1991a). In considering the relation of Shakespeare and Greenaway, of vital importance is the time and technology of the adaptation – and subsequently this essay foregrounds the cinema's shift to new media that is showcased in *Prospero's Books*. How is Shakespeare's poetry of pregnancy reworked in the audiovisual tracks of Greenaway's adaptation, the first digital Shakespeare film? How does *Prospero's Books* intertwine *The Tempest's* poetic images of pregnancy with its use of new media technology? And how does this relation pertain to broader questions of cultural inheritance and transhistorical adaptation?

To connect questions of media with issues of silence and loss, I employ Freud's concept of "excavation." For Freud the analytic "work of construction, or [...] reconstruction, resembles to a great extent an archaeologist's excavation of some dwelling-place that has been destroyed and buried" (259).¹ Freud's

¹ As Mimi Yiu eloquently develops elsewhere in this collection, just as in Freud's alignment of reconstruction and remembrance, in the third of Prospero's epynymous

metaphor shares a topographical quality with Shakespeare's images of pregnancy. Freud's psychoanalytic "excavation" involves the expulsion of that which has been long hidden in the piecing together of the analysand's repressed and traumatic memories. Similarly, in *The Tempest* Shakespeare frequently aligns the image of birth, as a figure of expulsion or exposure, with the representation of a lost scene. The ambivalence of Freud's project is to be located at this site of exposure, centred on the conflated yet contrasting notions of "construction, or [...] reconstruction" that psychoanalysis combines (this conflation has long been a source of the criticism directed at psychoanalysis). To what extent, critics ask, is the analyst able to divide his/her own constructions from the reconstructed lost memories of the analysand? Though problematic in psychoanalytic praxis, when turned towards cultural inheritance this ambivalence usefully suggests the transhistorical relation of adaptation and source. If Greenaway's screen images of pregnant women might be said to "reconstruct" *The Tempest's* poetic images of pregnancy, *Prospero's Books* is also very much an independent "construction," informed by the cultural and technological practices of its own historical period.

The temporal ambivalence of Freud's excavation is neatly caught in Shakespeare's image of birth as a metaphor of representation. A concise exemplification of this is found in Sonnet 59, quoted in my epigraph. In the sonnet Shakespeare deploys and diverts the conventional Renaissance image of the poet who is pregnant with inspiration. In perceiving the experience of the present as inaccessible to writing except via that which has already been written ("that which is / Hath been before"), the sonnet figures its own representation in terms of a rebirth: the "second burden" of an already delivered child. Its expression diverted through existing channels, the sonnet is haunted by the sense of what it cannot say: the loss of experience that it must "bear amiss." In the inverse of the problem faced by psychoanalytic praxis, the sonnet cannot construct because it must reconstruct. However, just as Freud's ambiguous (re)constructions suggest the transhistorical relation of adaptation and source, so too the sonnet's "second burden" figures representation as *toujours-déjà* adaptation. *The Tempest* makes a similar use of the figural sense of pregnancy as the belated recollection of that which has been lost. Yet in *The Tempest* the figural and narratological coalesce and intertwine in the poetic images of birth by which Shakespeare's language resists the silence of Prospero concerning his wife.

In considering Shakespeare's intertwining relations of form, content and remembrance in the context of Greenaway's digital cinema, it is insightful to turn to Lev Manovich's claim that "Computer media return us to the repressed of the cinema" (308). For Manovich narrative cinema has served, since the 1920s, as a repressive force that restricts the possibilities of cine-

Books, "A Memoria Technica called Architecture and Other Music," Greenaway explicitly foregrounds the relation of architecture and memory.

matic mimesis. Examining Manovich's idea, I consider how Greenaway's sequences of pregnancy and procreation align their excavation of *The Tempest's* silence with a digital return to something that has been lost from the cinema - a return to what Manovich and others have termed the "repressed" pre-narrative "cinema of attractions" (Gunning 41). In so doing, I develop two strands of investigation, examining both what Greenaway's excavations tell us about pregnancy as a figure in Shakespeare's language, and the extent to which Shakespeare's use of pregnancy may be read forward to provide a poetics of the digital in *Prospero's Books*.

Digital rebirth

Released in 1991, *Prospero's Books* offered a timely response to the new era of digital technology. In the first five years of the 1990s, computerized communication was materialized and globalized in the Internet's arrival to the public domain and the fall of Communism in Europe. According to Manovich, 1995 opened "a new stage in the evolution of modern culture and media," in which the computer has become "a universal media machine" (69). Laura Mulvey similarly refers to "the transitional period of 1995" (2006, 32). For Mulvey, the shift undergone by the photographic image in the early 1990s is characterized by the influx of new media into cinema: "the digital, as an abstract information system, made a break with analogue imagery, finally sweeping away the relation with reality, which had [...] dominated the photographic tradition" (2006, 18). A similar dynamic is important to Manovich, who remarks, "Exactly a hundred years after cinema was officially 'born,' it was reinvented on a computer screen" (313). However one should carefully consider Manovich's connected claim, that digital media, in serving to interrupt the dominance of narrative cinema, "return us to the repressed of the cinema" (308). Manovich argues that new media allow cinema finally to return to the constitutive elements of its development, the non-narrative spectacle of Magic Lantern slide shows, and devices such as the Phenakistoscope and Zoetrope, breaking after one hundred years the hegemony of classical cinematic codes of narrativized representation. I would rather claim, while this notion usefully and accurately describes Greenaway's aesthetic and stylistic use of the Quantel Graphics Paintbox in *Prospero's Books*, that Greenaway's film applies the potentiality of the new digital technology in a manner quite unlike the vast majority of contemporary commercial cinema.

In order to delineate briefly the difference between the incorporation of digital technology in *Prospero's Books* and the majority of commercial cinema, one might compare Greenaway's film with James Cameron's enormously successful *Terminator Two: Judgment Day* (1991). Both films were released in

the same year, and both used cutting edge digital image processing technology. It is certainly the case that the spectacular verisimilitude of *Terminator Two's* computer generated images (CGI) disrupts the reality claims of the photographic index that concern Mulvey. However, in a manner quite unlike Greenaway's film, the illusionism of Cameron's special effects aspires to what Lister et. al. term "photo-realism," which they explain offers "a representation that has not been produced by photographic techniques, but looks as though it has" (140). By these terms, Cameron's use of digital technology is consistent with the historical paradigm of evolving cinematic technologies sketched by Michael Allen: "The drive toward much of the technical development in cinema since 1950 has been towards both a greater or heightened sense of 'realism' and a bigger, more breathtaking realization of spectacle" (127). This continuity of classical cinematic codes in the digital era is also noted in a recent essay by Thomas Elsaesser: "the contemporary industry-standard – the star-and-spectacle-driven blockbuster – dominates the audiovisual landscape more visibly than ever" (14).

Brief consideration of the verisimilitudinous space invoked by classical cinema, Elsaesser's "audiovisual landscape," is here required. For Bordwell et. al., classical cinematic space has been defined and shaped by Hollywood. For various commercial, political and aesthetic reasons, they find Hollywood codes of filmic reality are dominant in world cinema to the extent that "our conception of film [...] rests chiefly upon assumptions derived from the classical Hollywood system" (379). They explain representation of space in classical Hollywood, more-or-less fixed since 1917, is characterized by two factors: (1). An "apparently neutral" (30) filmic, narrational style, with consistent and anonymous spatial composition and little stylistic prominence – which Noël Burch characterizes as a "zero degree style of filming" (110-13). The use of the camera to construct a consistent and realistic space, as if the screen offers a window-view upon reality: "a solid and integral diegetic world" (Bordwell et al. 30), with continuous and logical narrative spatial orientations. Such is the hegemony of the classical style, that they characterize international, art and *avant-garde* cinemas that do not conform to this model (German Expressionism, *Nouvelle vague*) as "oppositional cinemas" (383). Turning their contention of "oppositional" styles to Greenaway's cinematic techniques, this essay argues it is the modes of new media screen formatting that *Prospero's Books* employs against classical Hollywood spatial codes that screen a return to the femininity occluded in Prospero's language. In a digitally facilitated "oppositional" stylistics, Greenaway supplants the silence of Prospero concerning his wife in *The Tempest*.

However, before concluding that new media cinema overwhelmingly employs modes of classical cinematic verisimilitude, one must acknowledge a mode of film criticism that reads the hyperreal excesses of Hollywood CGI

as self-consciously disruptive (rather in the manner that this essay characterizes Greenaway's use of the Graphic Paintbox software to digitally manipulate his photographic images) because they "put the display of the digital artefact at the centre of entertainment experience" (Pierson 158). In this vein Sean Cubitt asserts that 1990s digital special effects provide an illusionism that "succeeds by exceeding the apparent limits of the media" (127). While this might be so, alongside CGI's apparent excesses a key factor is their verisimilitude. An almost constant *reality effect* in commercial cinema situates special effects, such as are found in the morphing 'liquid metal' of Cameron's second generation T-1000 Terminator, squarely within the spatial integrity of the classical cinematic mode of representation. For this reason I take issue with Cubitt's assertion that CGI commonly supplies "fetishistic interruptions of narrative" (127). In this emphasis on the fetish as interruption, Cubitt surely does not refer to the Freudian sense of the fetish as the subject's containment of potentially threatening disruptions of libidinous energy in the object of desire. Following Freud, it would seem more consistent to suggest the fetishistic element of the great majority of Hollywood special effects is that the impossible spectacle is contained within the seamless verisimilitude of photo-realism. One result of the digitally-enabled disruptions to classical cinematic space in *Prospero's Books*, at the levels of both the narrative spaces the actors move in, and the film's multi-layered screen presentations, is that they allow us clearly to perceive the demands that classical cinematic codes of representation make upon the use of digital technology in most mainstream cinema.

Central to my investigation of *Prospero's Books* are the gendered images that Greenaway uses alongside modes of new media screen formatting to destabilize classical cinematic codes of spatial representation. This destabilization to classical cinematic codes is used to bring to visualization the feminine element excluded by *The Tempest's* protagonists, so that it is the digital in the film's visual track that operates constantly to excavate the play's narrative silences. A concise exemplification of this is to be found in Greenaway's diegetic inclusion of Claribel, the daughter of Alonso the King of Naples, who is married to the king of Tunis shortly before the events of the play. As a daughter lost to the machinations of political dynasty building, Claribel refigures Prospero's loss of his wife, serving to align loss and femininity, and to fix the lost feminine as a recurring element in the play's representation. In the sequence Greenaway's camera pans slowly from a shot of Claribel's bedchamber in Tunis, to reveal Prospero observing her calmly from his writing desk (0.54.04–0.54.37). If this suggests that the entire Mediterranean is accessible to Prospero's observational powers, one might argue it is quite contrary to the careful spatial restriction that Shakespeare employs in *The Tempest*. Antonio and Sebastian, for example, discuss the

impossible distance of Claribel in Tunis: "Ten leagues beyond man's life" (2.1.247), and similarly Alonso has already stated "I ne'er again shall see her" (2.1.112). In using the pan to shift in an instant between distant locations, a shot conventionally used to preserve the integrity of represented space, Greenaway profoundly challenges, in a manner quite typical of his film, both Shakespeare's narrative space and classical codes of cinematic space.

As agent and, to use Christian Metz's term, "first delegate" (418) of this representational destabilization, Prospero disinterestedly observes the young Queen of Tunis apparently moments after the consummation of her marriage, her body convulsing in misery on a bed, her hands held at her genitalia to staunch the blood pouring down her thighs (fig. 1). The careful composition of the shot, and the pause in the camera's pan on the affectively loaded scene lend an evocative, painterly quality to the screen image. The sequence corresponds closely to the scopic fascination at violated bodies in evidence in the film's earlier visualizations of the Milanese usurpation that in Shakespeare's play is also not shown, lost to "the dark backward and abysm of time" (1.2.50). Yet the shot of Claribel also partially rethinks, or remedies, Albrecht Dürer's self-conscious analysis of the gendered gaze both deployed and invoked by visual art in his woodcut of a draughtsman drawing a reclining woman, published in *Unterweisung der Messung* (1525) (fig. 2). Barbara Freedman writes of Dürer's woodcut, though she might very well speak of Prospero's observation of Claribel in Greenaway's sequence, "The draughtsman's need to order visually and to distance himself from that which he sees suggests a futile attempt to protect himself from what he would (not) see" (2). Freedman's ambivalence concerning the agency and desire to see/not to see of Dürer's draughtsman catches something of the uneasiness of Greenaway's sequence. With the controlling gaze of Prospero as delegate, the bloody female body excluded from the play is revealed and mediated for the film spectator. In an excessive, one might say uncanny manner, the sequence invokes the mechanisms of the male gaze commonly recognized in classical cinema by feminist critics. "The woman," Stephen Heath argues, "is the omnipresent centre of the film's world" (100). Tellingly, the screen images of Claribel suffering closely fit Mulvey's prescient notion, in her delineation of the cinematic male gaze, of the woman "subjected to her image as bearer of the bleeding wound" (2000, 483). It is an instance in which, for all his spatial destabilization, Greenaway's intertwining quotations from the Renaissance and the cinema intersect to suggest the constancy of the male gaze across these historically divided modes of representation.

Though the sequence uses no digital effects, one particular moment of image framing, which links the sequence aesthetically with the stylistic device of shot framing used throughout the film, borrows heavily and self-consciously from the computer screen's spatial formatting. As the pan moves

fully away from Claribel's bedchamber to fix on Prospero at his desk, it becomes apparent that a mirror or screen of some kind behind Prospero reflects the scene of Claribel (fig. 3). This framing composition repeats within the film's narrative space one of the major contributions of the Quantel Graphic Paintbox, that throughout much of the film is used to lay an alternative visual track over the central portion of the screen. Of this stylistic feature Peter Donaldson remarks, "Though the film pre-dates the popularity of the World Wide Web, it shares with the Web the 'page' metaphor" (4). However, due to the problematic chronology of the Web comparison that Donaldson acknowledges, one might rather consider the tiled desktop 'windows' in existence on computer screens since the 1984 Apple Macintosh. Throughout the film's multi-layered surfaces replicate very closely the format of the Apple Macintosh screen presentation. In the shot of Claribel reflected in the mirror the Graphics Paintbox is not used, and the framing of the shot is created entirely within the narrative space. Yet perhaps even more significant than digital manipulation of the photographic, this denotes an instance in which the photographic image itself is composed to resemble the digital: to resemble the Apple Macintosh with its concurrent coexistence of multiple spaces on one screen surface. It is a clear instance in which the digital aesthetic which Manovich terms "spatial montage" has bled over into photographic representation. For Manovich, in the era of new media, "The logic of replacement, characteristic of cinema, gives way to the logic of addition and coexistence. Time becomes spatialized, distributed over the surface of the screen" (325). So rich in associative representational links between Renaissance art and cinema, Greenaway's film here further introduces a commentary on, or self-conscious reference to, the aesthetic conditions of its own era, the new media reformulation of the screen.

Particularly telling, with regard to Greenaway's cinematography in the Claribel sequence, is its revision of the time Antonio claims is required to travel to Tunis: "till newborn chins / Be rough and razorable" (2.1.249-50). In effect, the period of an entire childhood required for this hyperbolically posited voyage is in *Prospero's Books* collapsed into Greenaway's pan. The innovation in the sequence is thus founded on the use of cinematic technique to destabilize Shakespeare's poetic invocation of narrative space/time. Greenaway's pan makes a visual-spatial refutation of Claribel's distance, reckoned by Antonio to hinge between the moment of birth and the end of childhood, while simultaneously representing the precise and affectively poised moment of her symbolic entrance to adulthood: the consummation of her marriage. In Shakespeare's matrix of space-time, Claribel serves as the excluded, abandoned female body - and it should not be forgotten that the evocation of distance by Antonio is made to facilitate and encourage a murder-



Figure 1: Claribel in Tunis. *Prospero's Books*, Greenaway. Allarts, UK, 1991.

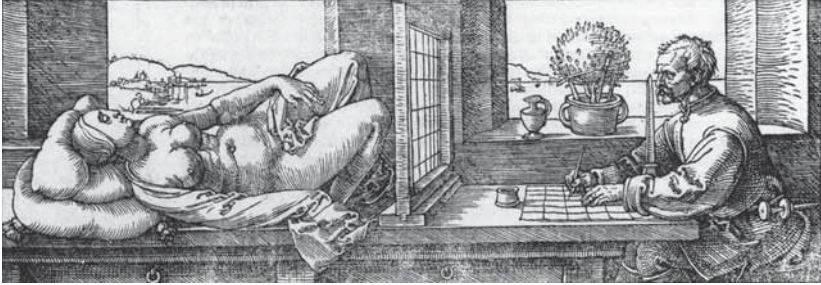


Figure 2: The gendered Renaissance gaze. Albrecht Dürer, *Unterweisung der Messung* (1525), Draughtsman Drawing a Recumbent Woman.



Figure 3: Claribel reflected. *Prospero's Books*, Greenaway. Allarts UK, 1991.

rous usurpation of the throne of Naples by Sebastian, a repetition of Antonio's usurpation of Prospero's dukedom. As an example of Greenaway's unceasing drive towards visual representation of *The Tempest's* narrative silences, *Prospero's Books* returns the lost woman, excluded as impossibly distant 'other' of the play, in terms of an uncanny post-coital scene. The film finds a place for the excluded female body at the precise moment of the potential generation of the life by which Claribel's distance from home, in Antonio's calculation, may be measured. Furthermore, it aligns its various intersecting modes of representation with metaphorical and literal questions of reproduction. The spatial loss of Claribel that in *The Tempest* repeats the narratological absence of Prospero's wife is refigured in discomfiting images of her potential impregnation, which at once reference Renaissance and cinematographic codes of representation, and which are themselves redoubled in a reflection that photographically replicates new media aesthetics.

Representing loss

As I have mentioned, even by comparison with other Shakespeare plays women are conspicuous by their absence from Prospero's island. Equally, excepting her reproductive fidelity, Prospero has very little to say about his wife. One might conclude, with Stephen Orgel, that the legitimacy of Prospero's heir is all that he requires of her. Yet, if Prospero's narrative has no need of his daughter's mother, he nevertheless invests heavily in a language rich with allusions to motherhood. Speaking of Miranda and his journey to their island following their exile, he reports:

When I have decked the sea with drops full salt,
Under my burden groaned, which raised in me
An undergoing stomach to bear up
Against what should ensue. (1.2.155–58)

Orgel finds this language, rich with allusions to pregnancy, to be an "extraordinary [...] birth fantasy" (54). Ann Thompson similarly suggests that the images of feminine gestation depict their journey away from the civilization of Milan as "a kind of second birth to Miranda" (237). Though she does not acknowledge it, Thompson's formulation is reminiscent of the metaphoric depiction, in Shakespeare's Sonnet 59, of poetic representation as "The second burden of a former child."

Paralleling and intersecting with *The Tempest's* language of pregnancy, the theme of confinement and constriction runs throughout the play. Prospero's "cell," most frequently referring to his place of writing, at times confers prison-like status upon the entire island: "Canst thou remember / A time before we came unto this cell?" (1.2.38–39). In his domination of Caliban,

Prospero also calls on an implicitly gendered language of constriction: “thou shalt have cramps, / Side-stitches, that shall pen thy breath up / [...] thou shalt be pinched / As thick as honeycomb” (1.2.326–30).

Deploying computer-based analyses of word frequency, Mary Thomas Crane finds that Prospero’s tortures centre on “an exploration of [...] painful confinement on the island, on the stage, and in the mortal body and also of its yearning for control, escape and transcendence of all these states” (184). She further notes in the images of his poetry “a nexus of confinement, penetration, ‘cramps,’ and loud groans, which also conjure up images of pregnancy and childbirth” (197). Crane’s analysis usefully highlights the stylistically pointed recurrence of alliterative words of confinement in Prospero’s speech: pinch, pitch, pine, and pen. Though one might quibble with Crane’s alignment of “confinement” and pregnancy (the OED gives 1774 as the first use of the term to refer to child birth), confining spaces were certainly aligned with pregnancy as early as the 1590s in English poetry. As I demonstrate below, Shakespeare is keen to emphasize that Sycorax pregnant with Caliban parallels spatially her entrapment of Ariel: “she did confine thee [...] / Into a cloven pine” (1.2.274–77). Similarly, in Sonnet 84 “confine” invokes a spatial connection between the types of redoubling involved in usury and pregnancy: “you alone are you, / In whose confine immured is the store / Which should example where your equal grew” (2–4). This “confine” also suggests a generative-topographical relation between mines and the reproductive organs of female physiognomy: an image to be found in Leander’s persuasive rhetoric, in Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander*, and in Donne: “My mine of precious stones, my empery, / How blessed am I in this discovering thee!” (1256). As is so frequently the case, at the level of the signifying surface Shakespeare’s language structures an innovative and influential array of hermeneutic and affective resonances and relations. The various confinements of *The Tempest*, we might say, are pregnant with an emergent semantics of pregnancy.

The usurpation that Prospero suffers and then inflicts upon Caliban closely repeats the suffering of confinement by which Prospero depicts his own experiences at the hands of his usurping brother. Significantly, his image of Antonio in Milan as the ivy “which had hid my princely trunk / And sucked my verdure out” (1.2.86–87) offers an alternative figuration of the language of feminized birth fantasy that he uses to tell of the journey to the island, this time with himself as enclosed within. As David Sundelson notes, the “princely trunk” provides “an image of male strength defeated or replaced” (35). The imprisonment and subsequent extraction of his essence from the tree by his brother not only aligns his constriction within Antonio’s “ivy” with male impotence, further suggested by the image of his “most ignoble stooping” (1.2.116). It also prefigures imagistically another represen-

tation of his exile, his extraction from confinement as a traumatic expulsion, or violent birth of sorts: "thrust forth of Milan" (5.1.160). Consistently Prospero deploys the language of procreation or pregnancy to figure escape from the recurring threat of confinement that he perceives, just as his tortures upon Caliban's body involve a redoubling of the constriction he claims to have suffered.

The theme of constriction returns centrally in Prospero's Epilogue: "I must be here confined by you" (4); "release me from my bands" (9); "Let your indulgence set me free" (20). What is this entrapment that Prospero fears at the play's close? To answer one should contrast Prospero's recurring fear of constriction with his cautionary reaction to the attempt to remember the loss that accompanies Alonso and Ferdinand's reunion in the play's final Act: "Let us not burden our remembrances with / A heaviness that's gone" (5.1.199-200). This use of "burden" borrows from the semantics of the word in Sonnet 59 as a "labouring for invention," to figure an aversion towards the representational recollection of the usurpation. The sense of representation as the rebirth of a past event is caught in the double sense of Prospero's "heaviness," which simultaneously invokes (as absent) the discomfiting period of the brotherly split and the weight of the recollection as figurative pregnancy.

Of course, this metaphor is hardly new. Shakespeare's figurative use of pregnancy to represent representation develops a topos that reaches back to antiquity. As early as Socrates's notion of himself as midwife of meaning in the dialogue *Theaetetus*, writing, artistic creation and philosophical enquiry have repeatedly been figured and fantasized (by men) as male birth. As part of his anxious, self-conscious recapitulations of the writing which precedes him, Philip Sidney comes belatedly to this tradition in the first sonnet of the *Astrophil and Stella* sequence. The poet, anxious to write yet unable to do so, feels himself "great with child to speak" (11). His flow of words interrupted by his sense of the belatedness of his writing: "others' feet still seemed but strangers in my way" (10), causes the inner burden that he feels. Shakespeare's Sonnet 59 makes a similar complaint concerning belatedness, but weaves into the topos of male birth a commentary on the inaccessibility of the present moment. For the speaker, the experience of the present is inaccessible to writing except via that which has already been written ("that which is / Hath been before"). As Joel Fineman suggests, the speaker "sees the object of his admiration only very indirectly, by looking backwards and through a literary image" (146). Driven by the pursuit of that object, all the sonnet can capture is the "second burden" of an already delivered child. If, as I have suggested, the sonnet is haunted by the sense of what it cannot say, a tension arises in the speaker's unwillingness to accept this inevitability: his "labouring for invention." The double sense of the poet's "labouring" catches

this tension, inscribing both the conscious agency of the poet's struggle to write his own experiences anew, and the pregnant burden of the past that he must "bear amiss." Similarly the object of admiration's "composed wonder" (Shakespeare 2011b, 10) invokes both the undeniable experience of the present that arises from the object's wondrous presence, and the already written ("composed") quality of that wonder. Unlike the self-consciously failing efforts of the sonnet to recall and represent that which has been lost, Prospero's reconciliatory direction of *The Tempest's* ending would avoid the pregnant "heaviness" of "remembrance." Via his deployment of the dialectics of birth/confinement, he would replace pregnancy with silence.

As in the metaphor of representation as "second burden" in Sonnet 59, the repetition of the originary – mimetically unrealized – brotherly usurpation (Antonio's seizing of Milan from Prospero), which *The Tempest* refigures in Sebastian's plan to kill his brother Alonso, and in Stephano and Trinculo's desire to rule the island, implicitly invokes the belatedness of all representation. To the degree that usurpation serves as the central plot impetus of the play, attention is required of Prospero's figurative references to the play's missing mothers in telling of Antonio's theft of his Dukedom. If Prospero's loss of his wife is that which is lost to *The Tempest*, his use of the language of pregnancy both recalls and seeks to evade the recollection of this loss in the play's closing scene. Prospero's plan of harmonic resolution would engineer a patriarchal reconciliation of political usurpation pointedly configured as an evasion of feminine reproduction. It would dissipate the representational "second burden" of the originary scene of loss into a weightlessness of non-representation. So why Prospero's paradoxical figurative invocation of the feminine reproductive function in arguing against memory? How does his poetic language of pregnancy work – at the level of the signifier – against his stated intentions? And if Prospero's images of pregnancy invoke both reflexive reference to the "second burden" of representation, and the lost feminine of the Milanese usurpation that *The Tempest* mimetically evades, how do his poetic pregnancies inform the return to femininity as loss that is visualized in Greenaway's screen images?

One might turn to Fineman's interest in the loss that recurs across Shakespeare's late plays. The self-conscious concern with thematic and stylistic doubles and repetitions in Shakespeare's Romances makes them "the genre of the twice-told tale [...] the drama of the representation of representation" (Fineman 306). For Fineman the doubling-up of the Romances' constant concern with their own representational recuperation expresses a desire for the "loss of loss" (306). Perdita, herself lost to Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, is given the name of loss by the dream of Hermione that comes to the unfortunate Antigonus (who is immediately after eaten by a bear). In the play's second half, her developing romance and presence as potential incipient

mother both signifies the loss of her own mother, Hermione, and makes good the loss. In both *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*, the crisis point for the male protagonist is the generational coming to womanhood of the daughter of the lost mother – who seems both to redouble and stand in the place of the loss.

Just this paradoxical recovery of loss (in the very loss of loss) is exemplified in *The Tempest's* images of pregnancy. Constructing a hopeful image of the future, Gonzalo asks whether the generative patrilineal potential of Ferdinand and Miranda's marriage will make good the loss of the past: "Was Milan thrust from Milan that his issue / Should become kings of Naples" (5.1.205–6)? In the lexical breaking apart of Prospero's titular Dukedom from the geographic place of that authority ("Milan [...] from Milan"), Gonzalo repeats Prospero's earlier image of his violent expulsion from Milan, emphasizing the birth-like outward "thrust" of the exile. In doubling the kingdom, the marriage both resolves the loss of Milan occasioned by the lexical split, yet vitally it does so by reinscribing the birth-like extraction of the usurpation. The descendants of Prospero's "issue" will, at the level of Gonzalo's poetic images, repeat the "thrust" of Prospero's originary expulsion from Milan. The future of Miranda's pregnancy-to-come will double the realms of Prospero's lineage, healing the traumatic split of the usurpation by doubling the figure of loss. In this sense, the rebirth of representation in Sonnet 59 – the burden by which writing re-bears a "former child" – concisely delineates the "issue" by which the violent losses of the past are, for Gonzalo, to be healed.

If the image-organization of *The Tempest's* language expresses a novel arrangement of representation with regard to loss, Jacques Lacan's claim is pertinent that the impossibility of 'the real' is implicitly ever-present in representation. Returning to Freud's attempts to excavate loss, for Lacan the real names a primordial materiality that cannot be described by language, and is thus lost to language users. In *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, Book VII of his Seminar, Lacan states: "the fashioning of the signifier and the introduction of a gap or hole in the real is identical" (1992, 150). This is why four years later he claims, "For what we have in the discovery of psycho-analysis is an encounter, an essential encounter – an appointment to which we are always called with a real that eludes us" (1981, 53). The use of symbols, of language, divides mankind from the real – but this loss is felt constantly as an appointment to which we are called. After the subject accedes to the symbolic (at the end of infancy), thenceforth the real haunts his/her speech with its absence: it "does not stop *not* writing itself" (Copjec 69). As is so often the case, Shakespeare's language provides a visceral and illuminating illustration of difficult philosophical topographies. Just as Sonnet 59 is haunted by that which it cannot say, so too Lacan's real is sensed as an unspeakable absence in the symbolic universe. This loss plays a significant role in

directing human behaviour. A primary function of desire for Lacan is to evade the discomfiting awareness of the loss of the real. That is to say, the attempt to figure the loss of loss – typified in Prospero’s silences concerning his wife, and in Gonzalo’s vision of the birth that will heal the split – offers a quintessential image of Lacan’s topography of desire. Against this desire, Shakespeare’s language of pregnancy as a refusal of Prospero’s silence, and moments of cinematic uncanniness such as Claribel’s bleeding wound in *Prospero’s Books*, involve discomfiting yet enriching, partial recognitions of loss. As Copjec puts it: “This point at which something appears to be missing from representation, some meaning left unrevealed, is the point of the Lacanian gaze” (69). But how does this Lacanian gaze, as a disruption of desire, help in approaching Greenaway’s cinematography? How is *Prospero’s Books*, as a future of *The Tempest*, addressed by Shakespeare’s image of representation as a belated rebirth? And how does the emphasis that *Prospero’s Books* places on visual art suggest a vital relation between Shakespeare’s images of pregnancy and the position the womb takes in Renaissance anatomical art?

Opened bodies / male gazes

In considering visual precursors to Shakespeare’s language of pregnancy, one should turn first to Leonardo da Vinci’s tremendously influential anatomical drawing of a pregnant woman (1510–11) (fig. 4). In the sketch, Leonardo figures an opened cross-section of a female torso to allow depiction of a fully-developed child within the opened womb. As Greenaway has noted, Shakespeare’s magus, Prospero, is “a master enquirer like a da Vinci” (1991b, 50). In the anatomical sketch of pregnancy, Leonardo directs his enquiries towards the mysterious interior of the female body. He masters mystery by opening it to scrutiny. Of Leonardo’s drawing, Barbara Duden observes that, “With deceptive realism, Leonardo places a magnificent portrait of a newborn infant in the place and wrappings of an unborn” (38). In a seeming prefiguration of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 59, Leonardo’s representation overcomes, or reaches back beyond loss – the deaths of the dissected corpses of the mother and infant – by engineering a “second burden.” In a potent metonymy of Jacob Burckhardt’s nineteenth century categorization of fifteenth and sixteenth century Italian culture as staging a “Renaissance” of classical antiquity, Leonardo’s rebirth reaches back beyond the infant’s and mother’s deaths to the lost moment of pregnancy. Yet, to properly recognize the highly-charged quality that the representation of pregnancy held for the period, and the mastery invoked by the opening of (female) bodies, one should recognise that depiction of the Renaissance as cultural rebirth is not itself original to nineteenth century scholarship. The figure of rebirth as

aesthetic advance is specifically deployed, for example, by Leonardo's contemporary, Andreas Vesalius, who claimed that his works facilitated the "reborn art of dissection" (Parks 243).

The connection between Shakespeare and Renaissance visual art is repeatedly suggested by the recurring *tableaux vivants* references to Renaissance visual art in *Prospero's Books*. However, in exploring this link it is necessary first to acknowledge how *The Tempest's* thematic use of pregnancy intersects with the early modern anxiety concerning witches, especially with regard to Sycorax, another of the play's lost women. Useful in drawing these elements together is Ernest Gilman's recent consideration of the commuted sentence of exile suffered by Sycorax alongside the empty womb of the dissected cadaver of the woman pictured on the frontispiece of Vesalius's *De humani corporis fabrica* (1543) (fig. 5). Unlike Sycorax, Vesalius's subject was executed after unsuccessfully and falsely claiming that she was pregnant (known in early modern legal terminology as "pleading the belly"). As Gilman notes, the same plea was made by Sycorax, though honestly, while pregnant with Caliban. Prospero explains, "For one thing she did / They would not take her life" (1.2.266–67).

Prospero's recollections of Sycorax centre on images of pregnancy. Enraged at Ariel's request for freedom early in *The Tempest*, Prospero reminds the "brave spirit" (1.2.206) of his imprisonment with Sycorax, and his rescue, as Nora Johnson writes, "from enslavement to the earthy and abhorred commands of woman and matter" (690). Shakespeare intertwines Prospero's depiction of Ariel's entrapment with his telling of Sycorax's pregnancy with Caliban: "This blue-eyed hag was hither brought with child, / [...] she did confine thee / [...] Into a cloven pine" (1.2.269–77). Likewise, Prospero's freeing of Ariel from the tree intersects oddly with Sycorax's delivery of Caliban: "The son that she did litter here, / [...] It was mine art, / When I arrived [...] that made gape / The pine and let thee out" (1.2.282–93). In the poetic proximity of his telling of Sycorax's biological delivery, and in his birth-like expulsion of Ariel from the tree, Prospero aligns his own liberating and confining powers with female reproductive physiology. It is surely this paired conflation of reproductive constrictions/expulsions that inspires Jonathan Bate's notion of Sycorax as Prospero's "disturbing double" (254).

In the manner that it repositions Prospero's Caesarean-like attack on the pine's constricting space, and its remarkable deployment of pregnancy, an important related sequence of narrative space/time destabilization is to be



Figure 4: The dissected womb. Leonardo da Vinci: *Studies of embryos* (c1510–13), Royal Library Windsor Castle.



Figure 5: The woman on display. Frontispiece of Andreas Vesalius, *De humani corporis fabrica*, 1543.



Figure 6: Susannah's self-dissection. *Prospero's Books*. Greenway, Allarts UK, 1991.

found in *Prospero's Books* (0.20.29–0.21.40). This sequence begins with the film's voice-track description of the eighth book in Prospero's collection, Vesalius's *Anatomy of Birth*. In a voiceover the book is described as "macabre in its single-mindedness" (Greenaway 1991b, 20). The description overlays visual-track images of Prospero's wife (who is named as Susannah), near-naked, laid on a dissection table. This anatomical demonstration reworks photographically Vesalius's *Fabrica* frontispiece (which is explicitly cited as source in the film's published screenplay). The camera moves back, to reveal this scene as represented on a screen of some kind (a further instance of the framing technique I have already discussed), the screen image fringed by a bookshelf and some of the island's naked female "indigenous spirits" (Greenaway 1991b, 12). As the voice-track narration continues, the camera cuts away from the framed image to reveal its observer, Susannah (the first definitive shot of her as a living being, rather than as a stilled image overlaying moving images via the Paintbox technology). In the astonishing following shot, the camera moves slowly away from her, naked and pregnant, shown in three-quarter close-up, as she peels back the skin of her torso and belly to reveal her internal organs and a foetus, reworking the theme of the anatomy demonstration via a grotesquely self-dissecting body (fig. 6). At the end of the sequence, again the shot cuts to a reverse view (Susannah is all the while in view, holding her torso open). Prospero walks from Miranda's bed, where his grown daughter (to whom he tells his story) lies asleep, to the corpse of (another) Susannah laid out in funereal cloth.

In this concisely hyperbolic film moment, Greenaway's film presents a more problematically complex thesis than Lia Hotchkiss's assertion that "the film de-emphasizes *The Tempest* as an embodied performance in favour of

stressing its textuality" (96). Though books and written representation are central to the film, the "macabre [...] throbbing" film-book (in the screenplay's words) is supplanted in the camera's cut away, by a film-body that self-anatomizes, opening uncannily like a book. Stylistically the sequence closely conforms to Manovich's notion of "spatial montage," or to the "spatial density" that Yvonne Spielmann's formalist analysis of digital media terms a "cluster": "a simultaneity of different levels within one single image unit" (57). Yet beyond stylistics, at the level of content, the stripped and/or horizontal female forms that fill the circling and suddenly reversing camera movements indicate a collapsing of time periods, and of the registers of representation, into one place with one traumatically dominant theme. Using new media technology to figure this simultaneity within one space, and aesthetically mimicking the computer screen's multi-layering in overlaying various photographic representations of space both digitally and in a photographic duplication of digital layering, Greenaway's cinematography both destabilizes and feminizes the realistic space of classical cinematic representation. Moreover, it does this specifically as visual corrective to the absences of Prospero's narrative silences.

Like Gilman, *Prospero's Books* herein stresses the connection between *The Tempest* and Vesalius's frontispiece. Greenaway's film in effect demands that one consider further the commuted sentence of exile suffered by Sycorax alongside the empty womb of the dissected cadaver pictured on the frontispiece of Vesalius's *Fabrica*. Vesalius's executed witch provides a poignant example of the many thousands of women murdered across Europe by the institutions of Church and State in the early modern period. Though unique in many ways, this transnational outburst of gynophobic violence resonates with the way that during the Renaissance philosophical, theological and aesthetic questions were demanded of the female body. In Bronzino's *Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time* (ca. 1545), Venus's voluptuous body is presented as a façade that conceals the suffering inflicted by time. Likewise Hamlet's accusation made to Ophelia – but directed at all women – that "God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another" (3.1.144–45), exemplifies how womankind figures for the period as image of artificial display. The violent stripping of Duessa in Book One of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* similarly locates eroticized female display as obstruction to the truth. For the Renaissance loss is to be located behind, beyond or within the woman-as-representation. If Greenaway's film returns to these questions, importantly *Prospero's Books* supplements the *faux*-pregnancy of Vesalius's subject, which Greenaway uses to visually supplement Shakespeare, with a foetus and a grotesquely self-dissecting refiguration of birth.

The significance of this sequence for Peter Donaldson is the manner in which Greenaway replicates the frequent alignment in Renaissance science

(as in art and writing of the period) of “the search for ‘truth’ [...] represented visually by the opening of the (often eroticized) female body” (8). In accord with this claim, Katharine Parks argues that “understanding the secrets of women became one of the principle goals of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century medical writers” (26). She adds, “representing the female body came to stand [...] for the powers of dissection based anatomy to reveal its hidden truths” (33–5). The uterus took the central position in this project, as mysterious unknown site of generation in Renaissance imagination. The new truth of science found its epistemological epitome in the anatomically opened female womb.

This being so, a definite shift in representation occurs with Vesalius’s *Fabrica*. For Parks, the frontispiece of *Fabrica* involves “a significant step in ‘desacrilization’ of the anatomical cadaver” (231). The transgressive and sensational arrangement of the dissected body of Vesalius’s frontispiece emphasizes the display and scientific opening of the female genitalia and uterus. Duden likewise argues it is with Vesalius that ends the womb’s privileged figuration in a light of revelation that resists the visible: “the last feature the anatomist was freely able to scrutinize” (45). For Duden it is particularly the depiction of the womb that resists a representational shift that occurs in sixteenth century anatomical art, away from the ideographic treatment of light in medieval painting, in which “each object is meant to be luminous, to gleam in its own light” (36), to a representation of objects visibly lit by an external light source. Vesalius’s frontispiece completes this transition. As representational innovation it was enormously popular, copied and developed notably in Juan Valverde de Amusco’s *Anatomia de corpo humano* (1560), and Adrianus Spigelius’s *De formato foetu* (1627), in which the female abdomen is represented as opened like the petals of a flower, its “inner organs arranged as seeds and stamens” (Kemp and Wallace 172).

However, if Vesalius’s depiction of the womb both contextualizes historically some of the thematic stresses laid on *The Tempest*’s repeated poetic invocations of pregnancy, and serves as acknowledged source of Greenaway’s visualization of Susannah, it is important to scrutinize further the absence of the foetus from the sixteenth century anatomical drawing. If the absence of the pregnancy, brought to light in the anonymous body of Vesalius’s dissection, testifies to his subject’s guilt – the falsity of her attempt to “plead the belly” – this empty space in her codifies, by a starkly new form of representation, justification of the death penalty that she suffered. This emptiness, located as the spatial centre of the frontispiece of Vesalius’s *Fabrica*, and initiating a new era of representation, answers finally “the anatomical journey [...] in search of ‘female nature’” (Duden 45). If the locus of visual fascination driving this “journey” is one that *Prospero’s Books* shares cinematographically, Vesalius’s emptiness is precisely that which Greenaway’s film refuses.

Within a mimetic space that refutes classical cinematic spatial representations via the aesthetics of new media, Greenaway's cinematography discomfitingly opens (as had early modern anatomists before him) the female body conventionally to be found at the extreme point of cinema's conventional "determining male gaze" (Mulvey 487) – yet opens this space as site of pregnancy.

Conclusion

Developing the Lacanian notion of the real for film theory, Mary Ann Doane explains at the extreme point of the gaze "the 'I,' no longer master of what it sees, is grasped, solicited, by the depth of field (that which is beyond)" (63). Turned towards Greenaway's Susannah sequence, the uncanny object of the spectator's gaze – the foetus of Susannah's self-dissection – would seem similarly to grasp the spectator, disrupting the mastery of the male gaze. However, as Heath writes of the repeated, repeating role of the woman in representation (also deploying a Lacanian framework):

woman is not the ruin of representation but its veritable support in the patriarchal order, the assigned point at – on – which representation holds and makes up lack, the vanishing point on which the subject that representation represents fixes to close the division of which it is the effect. (83)

One might argue, with Heath, that Greenaway's Susannah functions not as Doane's ruinous depth, but as the vanishing point that is so frequently at the heart of representation – the loss central to *The Tempest*, that is aligned – in the silence of Prospero concerning his wife, and in Claribel's abandonment – with pregnancy and with woman. Or might one perhaps claim that combined with the spectator's problematized orientation of the film's space, the reflexive redoubling of types of representation and media, and the film's visual excavations of Prospero's language of pregnancy, that Greenaway self-dissected/dissecting pregnancy achieves a ruinous, destabilizing depth?

This crux is a vital one: in digitally reinstating the feminine, does *Prospero's Books* objectify its female bodies in a manner parallel to Prospero's metaphorical usurpation of the feminine in his language of pregnancy? Might the visual force of Greenaway's affective cinematic inscription be said to redress *The Tempest's* silence concerning the originary scene of maternal loss? Or is the radical force of this narrative excavation constantly problematized by the silence of Greenaway's female bodies, whose visual presence is overlaid by a verbal audio track dominated by Gielgud's voice? At the heart of this question one should consider the effect on the male gaze of the shift in the agency ascribed to the film's female bodies, between the castrated feminine of Claribel's bleeding wound and Susannah's self-dissection. Does Susannah, in uncannily combining anatomical object and agent, invoke a view alternative to the male gaze as it is characterized by feminist film schol-

arship – a more radically Lacanian gaze, that is to say: a uncanny recollection of the impossible real that ruptures the mastery of spectatorship? To reformulate these questions – synthesizing, or side-stepping Doane and Heath – in Manovich's terms might the sequence be said to return digitally to the pre-classical Hollywood codes so long “repressed” from commercial cinema? If this is indeed so, Greenaway's “return” also stresses a broader diachronic relation. At once drawing from, and resisting, patriarchal techniques and concerns that have been recirculated and reappropriated, transnationally and transhistorically, across four hundred and fifty years of visual and verbal European representation, Greenaway's digital return to the cinematic past uses an uncanny refiguration of Renaissance anatomies to excavate *The Tempest's* language of pregnancy.

My focus on pregnancy would thus rethink *The Tempest's* “buried literary history,” by which, in Gilman's account, “Prospero's speech finds its echo in Medea's power to run backwards in order to restore” (117). As in Freud's method, Gilman figures his own critical endeavour as excavating the buried sources to Prospero's speech – rather as I have argued that *Prospero's Books* offers an archaeology of Prospero's silences. The excluded female (Sycorax, Medea) is similarly suggested by Gilman, in the necromantic powers that Prospero claims: “graves at my command / Have waked their sleepers, ope'd, and let 'em forth” (5.1.48–49). While I argue for the primary importance of pregnancy over burial images in the play, further work might align the metaphorical relation of Prospero's necromancy with the structure of release so central to Prospero's gendered presentation of his power. The potent conflation of the dark and confining spaces of the female body and the tomb is, for example, a link strategically deployed in *Romeo and Juliet*: “The earth that's nature's mother is her tomb: / What is her burying grave, that is her womb” (2.3.5–6). In both image schemata, as with Freud's (re)constructions, representation is configured as expelled from an interior space, but also as reaching back toward an originary moment, while simultaneously enclosing, or delimiting access to, that past.

These enclosed spaces are materialized visually in the entrapping, claustrophobic tension of Greenaway's cinematography: the stylistically pointed, strictly lateral movements of his camerawork, and the digitally overlaid, concurrent screens that reformat the classical cinema's presentation of narrative space. Yet beyond entrapment, at issue in this cinematic and digital reformatting is the relation of the adaptation to the poetics of representational return constructed by *The Tempest's* images of pregnancy. If Prospero would evade the rebirth of remembrance, nevertheless, as Sonnet 59 suggests, the representational future cannot but “bear amiss” that which has been lost. Following *The Tempest's* manner of interweaving the figural quality of the rebirth with its own narrative silences, in Susannah's uncanny self-

dissection *Prospero's Books* offers a reflexive image of its own excavations. In so doing, Greenaway's use of digital screen aesthetics excavates the occluded force of Shakespeare's language of pregnancy – refusing the loss of loss that would ensure the smooth passage of Prospero's desire. We might say, borrowing from Shakespeare's recurring metaphor, that *Prospero's Books* both brings to light and supplants, by a digital birth, *The Tempest's* recurring conflation of femininity and loss.

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