

“No Man’s an Island: The Art of the Storyteller in Oral Cinema”

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*Abstract: Plato’s dialogues bear considerable political insight into the art of the storyteller. Directing this insight toward the character of the storyteller as it is depicted in two oral films, Pierre Perrault’s *Pour la suite du monde* (1963) and Peter Greenaway’s *Prospero’s Books* (1991), this inquiry seeks to outline the distinction between base and noble storytelling and to draw closer attention to some of the virtues of the Quebecois storyteller as exemplified by Perrault’s *conteur*, Alexis Tremblay.*

“...[M]y astonishment, naïve as it seems to some people, that you can use human speech to bless, to live, to build, to forgive and also to torture, to hate, to destroy and annihilate.”

— George Steiner (Cited in Wachtel, 97)

As Francois Baby maintains in “Pierre Perrault et la civilisation orale traditionnelle,” because oral stories are “performances in situation,” the role of the teller, of the *conteur*, is pivotal. He argues that orality is inscribed into Quebecois cinema, which tends quite often to feature such performances, all the way down to the types of character that we see in these films, such that in Quebecois oral films, some of the characters themselves *are* storytellers. Writing about Perrault’s oral film *Pour la suite du monde* (1963), in particular, Baby states:

Ce sont en effet les personnages du film eux-mêmes qui développent presque entièrement le sujet en le vivant et le racontant. Or ce sont des conteurs, ils se développent donc comme personnages et ils développent les éléments qui constitueront le récit, à la façon des conteurs de la littérature orale traditionnelle. Si Perrault intervient par la suite au montage, c’est presque exclusivement à partir des matériaux que lui auront fourni ces conteurs-personnages.
(129)

From this description, one might derive a general precept concerning characterization in all of oral cinema or, at the very least, in certain prolific kinds. That precept would be simply that one of the defining elements of this breed of cinema, necessary though perhaps not sufficient to distinguish the “oral” from the “literary” film, is the presence of the storyteller-character and his/her dominance over the narrative. In effect, it is as though their activities, their stories shape the final product of the film, weaning and molding it despite the fact that they are merely personalities within it and not its final

‘author.’ The *conteur-personnage* is a peculiar case in which the fictive character, and the performance of that character by an actor or some other order of player, influence, and even usurp power from, the work of the *auteur*. As we shall plainly see, such is the force retained by those who are inspired to recite tales. However, one must not narrow one’s understanding of the storyteller to mere fictional portrayal of character. We require a wider frame of reference.

The storyteller is not just a type of character to be played. It is also, and more importantly, a social role that bears the weight of great communal responsibility. The various types of storyteller one might encounter simply in the context of oral tradition as it impacts practices of filmmaking and film going are worth considering alone. The *benshi*, the *bonimenteur* or the film lecturer is one genus of storyteller; the *auteur*, the actual filmmaker is another. These two types of storytellers, as conduits of tradition and as oral radicals in a literary culture, have obligations within a given community. Storytellers’ performances, whether live before an audience or in the form of a mounted film, have an effect upon people and their self-perceptions and, as a result, the activity of storytelling is explicitly a political activity.

If we accept this then we might ask ourselves: in films that depict storytellers and their activities as their central theme, what kind of storytellers are they depicting? Is it a positive or a negative portrayal of storytelling? And what are the filmmakers’ motivations behind the depiction? I am going to suggest that we might be able to classify different films according to the characters that they create. In the case of those films in which storytellers feature prominently, the best way to gain insight into character is to return to Plato’s dialogues and their author’s quarrel with spinners of tales, poets and rhapsodes alike. As we examine storytelling through the *optique* of the ancient political thought of Plato, it will become apparent that he developed some lasting ideas about the power of this activity, especially its capacity to appeal to “unreason” or the emotions. Ultimately, he concluded, in the *Republic* most notably, that these appeals lead to a tyranny of the self and then to political tyranny, but this does not mean that, in its content *and* form, his discussion of storytelling is entirely one-sided or useless. On the contrary, a closer reading of Plato’s texts, of what they say and how they say it, reveals not a complete condemnation of storyteller-poets, but an understanding of what truly effective political storytelling is. It is this model for virtuous tale-spinning that we will apply to the character of the storyteller in Quebecois oral cinema.

By way of methodology, then, the character of the storyteller in Quebecois oral cinema will be examined with the tools of political and moral philosophy—appropriate tools given the various layers of impact this practice can bring to light. We will study what ancient political thought reveals about the activity of political resistance to be found in the character of the storyteller in this cinema—specifically, in Perrault’s film. Plato’s dialogues and their attack upon the political force of the art might be one origin, if not *the* origin, of the Western opposition to the practice of storytelling, thus making a return to them self-explanatory. As is commonly known, Plato wanted to eject the storyteller-poet from his Ideal City. But, more importantly to our project of qualifying the kind of ‘oral’ narratives we find in Quebecois films, we find that despite his strong desire to challenge

creative or poetic storytelling, his work provides us with a standard for evaluating the virtues of this or that storyteller, of qualifying this or that *conteur-personnage*. His dialogues argue that only *certain kinds* of storytelling are a danger to a politically just society. Making Eros, desire, flare up; seeking emotional response from an audience: these are activities which Plato deems too reckless, too eminently subversive to permit a rational city to function in a healthy manner. *Yet*, the dialogues themselves are oral dramas, verbal exchanges; their very form bears the markers of significant oral residue. Much has been made, moreover, of Plato's decision to compose the final book of the *Republic* with Socrates' recital of the myth of Er, or what is in philosopher Stanley Rosen's terms "a prophecy about the psyche's crucial choice of a good life" (Rosen, *Nihilism* 175, note 64).¹ Far from being a self-annihilating paradox, Plato's simultaneous rejection and embrace of storytelling is emblematic of his dialectical mode of thinking, from which we might derive a morality of the teller, a *conteur* ethics that makes his work useful to all discussions of storytelling and its political ramifications.

What kind of storyteller does *Pour la suite du monde* offer us, and is it of the self-indulgent, reckless order which Plato would have ousted from his City? What I will argue is that the kind of storytelling that Plato rejected was the kind that resulted in the dissolution of the foundations of community and society. But the storytelling of Quebecois cinema, with its oral narrative elements, pre-occupied with identity, with preservation and transmission, with construction of community and with cultural memory, does the very opposite. It builds up rather than tears down; it sanctifies community, maintains tradition, and preserves it in the face of cultural hegemony. Quebecois oral cinema is radical and oppositional, but not in favor (at least in the case of Perrault's film) of radicalism for its own sake and thus not in favor of chaos, which as we shall see, is what concerns Plato about oral transmission of tales. In the most significant cases, it maintains the unity and identity of a people and is therefore in my view an example of positive, constructive storytelling in harmony with the broad outline of Plato's guidelines that we will develop here.

Briefly, in order to demonstrate these assertions, this inquiry will first engage in a close textual analysis of the most pertinent passages from Plato's dialogues, from the *Ion*, the *Republic* and the *Laws*. It will then compare and contrast two oral films, one Quebecois, one not: Perrault's *Pour la suite du monde*, and Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* (1991). In so doing, it will show that while both are concerned with orality and storytelling, only Perrault's film approaches the character of the storyteller in ways that demonstrate a concern for community construction and social harmony. The other, however, dramatizes the potential threat that the self-indulgent storyteller can yield to the very idea of community. Prospero is the storyteller as tyrant, solipsist, as seduced by his own powers, using them to control others and to seek revenge. As such, Greenaway's film is concerned with *a person*, with *one* voice, whereas Perrault's film is a document of a *people*, of *many* voices and their rituals, and their re-emergence as a community via the actual making of the film. In short, Greenaway's film portrays storytelling gone wrong, while Perrault's film is an example of storytelling at its most effective and responsible. The moral tenor of each film can perhaps best be felt through their characters.²

The expulsion of the storyteller-poet has been a recurring theme throughout Western society and culture. Roaming through the writings of a few significant artists and thinkers, through the dialogues, Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, of which Greenaway's film is an adaptation, and through a more recent source, Walter Benjamin's essay "The Storyteller," we find the theme of the rejection or removal of storytelling in various permutations. Most germane to this inquiry is Benjamin's claim that the disappearance of the storyteller might just be a defining characteristic of modernity, of the post-industrial, late capitalist condition. The "practical interests" of the storyteller as provider of "advice" and "counsel" has been undermined by modern civil life, "because the communicability of experience is decreasing" (86). This constitutes for Benjamin a "symptom of the secular productive forces of history"—one that sees the "epic side of wisdom, truth" die out, and in which we are witnesses to the removal of "narrative from the realm of living speech" (87). Thus, possibility of counsel, of practical instruction from those who "know," the tellers themselves, has evaporated under the pressure of modern alienated living and its attendant isolation.

Running against this threat, perhaps as an antidote that could be more effective than we might at first suspect, is the trend of orality in film culture. If the storyteller is indeed an endangered species, then in some ways it must be protected. But militating blindly in its favor amounts to little more than patronizing it. What is called for instead is a revisiting of the challenges that the teller must face and to which he/she might answer. If the role of the *conteur* has come under fire or been subjected to ignorant apathy, it is because we have lost a sense of what basic unifying services they render. Thus, positing the challenges storytelling can meet, reviewing the difficulties (inner and outer) it might face, is tantamount to its revivification as a social role.

The storyteller, for Benjamin, is one who is perpetually "rooted in the people" (101). As a storehouse of experiences, he is also "the first tutor of children" (102). In his role, he combines "didactic content" with refined "tricks" to grab the attention of all listeners (101). To some extent, then, he is a craftsman, but beyond this, "the storyteller joins the ranks of teachers and sages" (108). The storyteller is not just rooted in the people; he is, on one level, a prime mover, an educator, who shapes and molds—and potentially manipulates.

It is precisely these elements of trickery of craft as they are used in the education of citizens, and of children particularly, and the questions surrounding the "wisdom" of storytellers that preoccupied Plato.

Broadly speaking, Plato's conception of aesthetics drains art of its modern-day claim to self-sufficiency. Perhaps this is why modern readers tend to be insensitive to what is truly at stake in the conversations on the subject in his dialogues. Why, a contemporary reader might query, should the arts, spoke and written, be modified and censored in the name of civic virtue, a conclusion Socrates and the Athenian Stranger arrives at in the *Republic* and the *Laws*? Plato does not share with us the assumption that

freedom forms the essence of art, that art is justified for its own sake. But in the same breath it should be added that he would also be a harsh critic of today's political regimes which demand virtually nothing in terms of political duty from their citizens. In *Laws*, Plato approaches the question of the place of art in life in the context of his portrait of a small republic which encourages and urges every member of the community to play a significant role in the daily affairs of the local government—artists, poets or storytellers included. This kind of self-government can only be achieved by the truly virtuous. The task that Plato's Athenian Stranger (who in this dialogue stands in for the absent Socrates) takes for himself in his discussion with his interlocutors, Kleinias and Megillus, is to combine these elements of virtue and self-government with artistic excellence. Discussed here is a republic whose internal and external health, whose ethical well-being would in some measure be reliant upon the purging of philistinism. This city, *any* city must be as a symphony with the arts occupying center stage. But in order for this to be the case the artist must be virtuous, at the expense of "art for art's sake" autonomy, if necessary. A brief detour via the *Ion* and *Republic* will tease out further details of Plato's unique views.

Although a short and minor work, *Ion* focuses on the paradox of artistic inspiration and its potential power over audiences. Here, Plato inquires into the possibility for the aesthetic—a story or a poem or a painting—to represent that of which the artist possesses no direct knowledge. How is it that a storyteller, for example, who has never fought a day in his or her life, can sing of great battle? How is it that a painter, who has spent not a day at sea, can depict the life of a seaman? If the storyteller is not a master of the arts of seamanship, or military strategy, if he/she is not a possessor of such knowledge, then what is it that he/she is transmitting to their audience? On what authority do they instruct their listeners? What Plato throws into question is the belief, held firmly by Benjamin, that storytellers possess wisdom. Stated differently, he wanted to question their effectiveness as teachers and therefore as reliable shapers of tradition and conduits of a community's identity—issues latent in the recited narratives of *Pour la suite du monde* and *Prospero's Books*.

Ion is a "rhapsode," a song-stitcher or professional reciter of poetry. According to R. E. Allen's introduction to this dialogue, rhapsodes in ancient Greece were professional performers who were concerned not merely with audience reaction and inciting emotional response but with interpreting the thought of the poem being recited as well; they were "commentators" as well as actors (3). In many ways, they might be considered the ancient ancestors to the Quebecois *bonimenteurs*.

Socrates' argument against storytelling as a form of wisdom creates an opposition between 'art' and 'divine inspiration' and culminates with the view that rhapsodes do not themselves have an art, for they are merely divinely inspired. The term 'art' in this context is not equivalent to artistic creation, as Allen illustrates: "the art of the rhapsode, like the art of the poet, was associated in the Greek mind with such disparate arts as medicine, angling, backgammon, horseracing and prophecy" (4). An art in this sense being a craft, it is reliant upon knowledge of the techniques and practices required to

accomplish the task to which it is aimed. Inspiration, however, does not depend upon technique, as Socrates argues:

For your speaking well about Homer is not an art, [...], but a divine power which moves you like the stone which Euripides called Magnet [...] So too the Muse herself causes men to be inspired, and through these inspired men a chain of others are possessed and suspended. For all our good epic poets speak all their beautiful poems, not through art, but because they're inspired and possessed [...] Just as the Corybants do not dance in their right minds, so poets do not compose these beautiful songs in their right minds, but when they step to the mode and rhythm they are filled with Bacchic frenzy and possessed ...
(*Ion* lines 533d-534a)

According to Socrates' thinking, rhapsodes, like poets and other oral transmitters of tale, are crazed messengers and little more. If the purported 'art' of the poet or rhapsode allows him to sing of anything and everything, then he must have knowledge of all of these things, or arts. Why must this be so? Because if storytellers or poets have no such knowledge, no awareness of what is true or false in the songs they produce, then they are not conscious of the potentially complex tensions and contradictions between the various things they wish to transmit. *Ion* is in fact unable to expound upon what it is that rhapsodes know and, in consequence, Socrates finds no justification for believing that they are wise or possess knowledge, or that they have an art, which comes to the same thing. Storytellers, poets and rhapsodes are, in the end, mere media, spurting beautiful song that is essentially unguided by knowledge of what is base and noble. Each is chiefly a bundle of emotions, a medium for the gods (like the medium in the 'oral' film, *Rashomon* [Akira Kurosawa, 1950]). What they say emerges from divine madness, therefore they are neither wise nor reliable teachers, or, stated otherwise, they have no obligation or duty to remain true to the content of the songs they sing, and neither do those who witness their performances. The political ramifications are manifold.

In the *Republic*, Plato tries to determine whether or not the dangers attendant to oral transmission of stories have their place within a rational and just society. The common understanding of this dialogue is that Plato rejects *poets* from his City. This is correct, but the 'oral' nature of activity to which he was referring surfaces as we come to grips with the fact that the art that preoccupies him most is "addressed to the ear" (*Republic* X. 602). This oral art's appeal "is not to the highest part of the soul, but to the one which is actually inferior" (X. 604, p.337). The storyteller-poet possesses "a most formidable power corrupting even men of high character" (X. 605), for, according to Plato, he "ministers to the satisfaction of that very part of our nature whose instinctive hunger to have its fill of tears and lamentations is forcibly restrained in the case of our own misfortunes" (X. 605). Setting aside the details of Plato's assessment of the pros and cons of epics and tragedies, it is this very ability to call upon certain forces within the hearer, to bring to the surface certain prerational impulses and desires, that make of any storytelling, of all 'oral' arts, a powerful form of *political* persuasion.

The secondary material analyzing Plato's expulsion of the storyteller-poet defies paraphrase. Furthermore, I would not presume to offer a fresh perspective on it, although it would be a timely occasion to underscore parts of it that tend to be overlooked. Stemming entirely from his confidence in the guiding force of reason, Plato's outline of the political deficiency of poetry in Book X of the *Republic* does not depend upon his conviction that artistic creation is a mimetic activity. The adverse effect that storytellers might bear on Platonic politics "has nothing to do with the copying of physical artefacts, or more generally, with the production, veridical or otherwise, of images of things," argues Stanley Rosen in *The Quarrel between Philosophy and Poetry* (6). It is not in this manner that oral delivery of stories and fictive tales mislead. They lead to political vulgarity because, through their "fine sonorous voices," oral performers "sway the inclination of the assembled crowd towards a despotic or democratic constitution" of the body politic and the soul (*Republic* VIII. 569). According to Plato's model, despotism and democracy are close neighbors, for, as Rosen claims, "[a] democracy is characterized by license and pleasure rather than excellence and virtue, or in other words not merely by pleasure but by unnecessary desire" (3). Because of its tendency to inspire the replacement of reason with the force of passion, most storytelling is as much an enemy to the governed soul as it is to the ordered commonwealth.

According to this formula, if people live their lives immoderately, if they live licentiously driven by the emotions alone instead of by right reason, then the just city can never be established and society will crumble into a wasteland of democratic impulses followed by rampant tyranny. Storytelling has a part in this process of decay: its potential to unleash a cavalry of destructive forces within the just city thus make the risk too high. The storyteller, for Plato, is a chameleon-like seducer, the snake in Eden as it were, able to take any form or shape it chooses and to draw the audience into its spell. His practice is, as it was argued in the *Ion*, a form of mysticism, of emotional enchantment. The expulsion of the detrimental storyteller-poet from his city is thus a necessity:

Suppose then that an individual clever enough to assume any character and give imitations of anything and everything should visit our country and offer to perform his compositions, we shall bow down before a being with such miraculous powers of giving pleasure; but we shall tell him that we are not allowed to have any such person in our commonwealth; we shall crown him with fillets of wool, anoint his head with myrrh, and conduct him to the borders of some other country. (*Republic* III. 397)

But—and this is crucial—Plato does not suggest that all storyteller-poets should be exiled:

For our own benefit, we shall employ poets and story-tellers of the more austere and less attractive type, who will reproduce only the manner of a person of high character and, in the substance of their discourse, conform to those rules we laid down when we began the education of our [children].
(III. 397)

Of what, it might be asked, would this “more austere” and “less attractive” type of storytelling consist? Might the dialogues themselves be taken as models?

The answer lies in the *Laws*, to which we now briefly return. Ultimately, Plato’s concern is with the ethics of storytelling, insisting that its powers must have a purpose. If not all storytellers are to be exiled, then surely it is possible to distinguish between base and noble storytellers? It might be fruitful to recall that the dialogues themselves are just that, dialogues, which is to say stories in the form of verbal exchanges. Their form is tattooed with the stamp of orality.³ The chief *dramatis personae* of these ‘philosophical dramas’ find themselves in situations that entail the kind of speeches and interactions that rebuke to possibility of self-contained soliloquizing. Socrates assists, prods; he does not reveal. But the question remains: given what Plato says about the harm that storytellers can do to a just community and given that the dialogues themselves are in fact oral stories, how are we to deal with this paradox and distinguish between the constructive and the destructive storyteller?

Stated with the utmost brevity, Books II and VII of the *Laws* teach that virtuous art makes possible an education by habituation. The pleasure induced by the recited tale or the musical chorus encourages communion, bringing forth in a public forum those forces that may potentially harm a harmonious society (and a harmonious soul) if not acknowledged and integrated correctly. Art purges and unites. (The ‘dialectics’ of ‘telling,’ the ‘toing’ and ‘froing’ of perspectives aimed at communal harmony that storytelling excites, form the core of the drama of Perrault’s film, to which we shall shortly come.) The rhythms of art inject themselves into and win over the sometimes unruly rhythms of the soul.

Moreover, as Plato was well aware, what makes storytelling a perennially radical force, then as now, is that storytellers excite by being *imaginative constructors of alternate possibilities*. As such, stories are, by their very essence, persuasions to action and change. A good storyteller uses this power to some higher, virtuous purpose that benefits many; a bad one uses it aimlessly and harmfully, or with chaotic purpose. The noble *conteur* will accept his moral obligation to sing of the highest virtues that his community knows and bring pleasure in the process; the base one will ignore this call, indulging himself in his own powers and harming those around him.

In film, the issue of storytelling, of the ability and desire of individuals to genuinely communicate experiences verbally has been rekindled and variously taken up by national cinemas emerging from cultures with significant oral residue. Several random examples spring to mind each seeing the development, appearance, or prominence of a *conteur-personnage* of some sort. *Wend Kuuni* (1983), an African film by Gaston Kaboré, depicts a young boy, from whom the film gets its name, losing his power of speech and subsequently regaining it, becoming a storyteller transmitting the tale of his past. Atom Egoyan’s *Ararat* (2002) demonstrates the difficulty and importance of dealing with an *unrecorded, unwritten, and ultimately denied* historical event (the Armenian genocide) and, in so doing, with the emergence of the lead character as an amateur film lecturer, recounting the story of his people as he shows video images of the devastated

Armenian homeland. Most famously, there is *Rashomon*, a film about both the fallibility of storytellers and their importance in the rebuilding of a community. Yet the two examples that this inquiry will call attention to particularly are *Prospero's Books* and *Pour la suite du monde*, both representing national cultures and their oral traditions,⁴ but both working toward very different ends.

An important aspect of the 'orality' of these films is their focus on the power and authority of the spoken word. A word spoken is a word that is 'bodied forth.' It is, in the most literal sense, an action of the lips, tongue and jaw. For Walter Ong, author of *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, in an oral culture spoken words are "occurrences, events" (31). "The Hebrew term *dabar* means 'word' and 'event,'" continues Ong, "[A]mong 'primitive' (oral) peoples generally language is a mode of action and not simply a countersign of thought" (32). In this way, words have a permanence, even a tangibility in cultures with strong oral residue. But they are also carriers of a greater power in a manner directly linked to their utterance or verbal performance. "[T]he fact that oral peoples commonly and in all likelihood universally consider words to have magical potency is clearly tied in, at least unconsciously, with their sense of the word as necessarily spoken, sounded, and hence power-driven" (32). This power of words and of their speaker to enchant the listener is at the very heart of Plato's discourse about storytelling as a subversive force and forms the core of our taxonomy of good and bad tale spinning.

Comparing Perrault's reflexive documentary on small-town Quebec (the island of Ile aux Coudres) with Greenaway's modernist and experimental adaptation of Shakespeare may seem like a bizarre choice at first. What these films have in common, however, is telling. On a mundane level, both films take place on an island, depicting the acts of the tellers in relatively 'closed systems.' On a more relevant level, in some measure, both films engage in a critique of the authoritative 'voice of God' narration that we find most commonly in the documentary form—a critique which informs the films' respective depictions of the nature of the storyteller. Finally, these films open with something of a prologue, or preamble. They begin as the act of storytelling is itself just beginning. In fact, the beginnings to these films are so similar, so comparable in the several strategies they employ to privilege the character of the storyteller and the authority of his words that they call for closer inspection.

Prospero's Books' lavish fantasy tale has as its main character a figure who is both a sorcerer-magician and, according to the story, the rightful Duke of Milan. His Dukedom was usurped by his brother, Gonzalo, who then banished Prospero and sent him away on a small boat with only his books and the accompaniment of his daughter. The core of the film takes place on the island where Prospero was shipwrecked. It shows him using his magical powers as a sorcerer *and* a storyteller to weave a tale that is so powerful as to bring those who betrayed him to this savage island, enabling the spinner to exact his revenge. After a written title card describing the particulars of the story, the film commences, quite tellingly, just seconds prior to the start of the recitation of the tale by Prospero himself, played by renowned British actor, John Gielgud. The first few shots are as follows: a shot of a drop of water followed a shot of a text that is being simultaneously

written and spoken by Prospero (“Knowing that I loved my books ...”). These shots alternate and are followed by a presentation of “The Book of Water.” (We are presented with twenty-three other such books throughout the narrative; Prospero presents them and we are then witnesses to how a particular book has shaped the imagination of its all-powerful reader.) “As *Prospero’s Books* opens,” illustrates Amy Lawrence, “the word calls the world into being. Like God, Prospero creates the world not out of a drop of water, but with a word” (140). The storyteller then utters the word “bosun,” “which,” in one critic’s words, “is a very interesting word because it is one that is never written down. It was used by seamen who were basically illiterate, so that when they came to write the word down it was “boatswain” (cited in Lawrence, 142). It is with this utterance that the viewer becomes aware of the one uttering:

As a pen completes the word “Boastwain,” its writing is superimposed over Prospero’s forehead. Almost as an experiment [...], Gielgud voices it: “Boastwain?” [...] As the word is written again, a chorus of voices joins in. Gielgud playfully echoes the reprise with a series of alternative readings. Instructing the sailors in how to command a ship in a storm, Prospero makes a boatswain, his mariners, their ship and the storm appear in a mirror—by saying so. (Lawrence 140-1)

Gielgud’s performance of the words, his “saying so” and his play with their sound, along with Prospero’s creation and direction (similar to a theatre director) of the tempest and the shipmates are brought to the fore in overture.

The prelude to *Pour la suite du monde* is no less revealing about how the role of the teller is being depicted. Like *Prospero’s Books*, it makes verbal performances its central organizing principle while at the same time presenting the words of the storyteller as images, as objects to be heard *and* seen.

Alexis Tremblay’s preparation for the reading of passages from Jacques Cartier’s *Le Brief Récit* and subsequent reading of those passages begin the film. David Clandfield provides a detailed analysis of the first four shots of the film in “Linking Community Renewal to National Identity: The Filmmakers’ Role in *Pour la suite du monde*.” Perrault’s film, like Greenaway’s, begins with a title card detailing the time, place and content of the film’s action. “Now,” writes Clandfield:

the screen goes black (for four seconds). We hear an elderly male voice. We at once interpret the black as darkness. From this darkness the voice is telling us that its owner is in no condition to dance but is ready to begin singing. [...] The voice, as we shall later learn, is that of island farmer Louis Harvey (Grand-Louis), a 67-year-old *raconteur*.
(73)

To paraphrase Clandfield, this darkness underscores the performance nature of what we are hearing and what we are about to see. It calls attention to the theatrical quality of the speech (and later, of the (re-)enactments)—namely, that they are *performed*. Clandfield

equates this moment with the seconds prior to the raising of the curtain, with “the moment the lights go down, the moment of anticipation” (73). Yet, this presentation of speech over darkness also functions in a manner overlooked by Clandfield. The simultaneity of voice and dark image, which may be taken as no image at all, focuses our concentration on, privileges, *voice*, or the verbal performance of words. This opening is a form of preparation, acclimatizing the viewer/ hearer to the experience that will follow in the film, for, taken as a whole, the film is expressly one that favours the oral over the visual. Here, as in *Prospero’s Books*, the visual is subordinate to, accompanies, the aural.

“The third shot is even shorter (three seconds),” continues Clandfield:

Soundless, it shows an elderly man in glasses, lighting his pipe. It is this gesture of the pause, the relaxation, the prelude to reflection and recital. This, we shall later learn, is Alexis Tremblay [...] the community patriarch, principal authority on the history of the island and its origins. His readiness to recite will be confirmed following Grand-Louis’ *turlute* in the next shot, when we hear his voice introducing a reading from Jacques Cartier’s *Le Brief Récit*. The act of striking the match coincides with the cut. Light seems to spring from the apparent darkness of the preceding shot.

(73)

Shortly after, following the title sequence and a set of images describing the arrival of winter on the Island, Alexis begins to read from Cartier. As he recites, the explorer’s words appear in their original form across the middle of the image.⁵ Therefore, just as Prospero writes “Boatswain” and speaks it, so too does Alexis, book in hand, speak Cartier’s written words, and in each case, the viewer is equally a reader and a listener. Both films compile writing, speech and image in their opening sequences in a fashion that places the on-screen teller, the *raconteur*, at centre stage. It is their words, as we shall hear and see them, that will shape the story that will unfold. In the end, the compiling of the verbal and written is a strategy used by both films to empower the storyteller.

Perrault’s film comes in many versions, but all hold in common the twin presence of verbal and written text. In every case, Cartier’s words (and only his words), as Alexis reads them, are printed onto the surface of the image as titles. So as he speaks, we see the words. The words are made palpable; they are embodied. This rendering of Alexis’ and so Cartier’s words into images was a choice made by Perrault when he made this film. However, I do not believe that these printed words function merely to provide subtitling and translation. In a commentary on the film, published in 1992, Perrault states: “Le texte de Cartier est sous-titré parce qu’Alexis prononce *sus le vieux français*” (22; italics from the original). It therefore seems on first glance that Perrault chose to insert the words simply to make comprehensible the old form in which the text was written. However this does not summarize their effect, which could be qualified as a twofold responsibility by the spectator to the words.

The effect is similar to the opening to *Prospero’s Books*, and it is directly related to the spectator’s position toward the character of the *raconteur*. There is in these two films a *doubling effect*, which is to say a depiction of words as they are written at the very

moment that the storyteller speaks them. When Alexis speaks Cartier's words, we hear them and see them simultaneously; when Prospero speaks the word "bosun," again, we hear it and see it at the same time. Of course, the question to ask is, "what does this have to do with storytelling?" In this doubling effect, the storyteller is positioned as an authority whose words become things, even actions. What they say, in other words, literally *is*. This "doubling effect" grants the storyteller unquestionable authority in these films. The words of the character of the storyteller possess a powerful ability to control perception (of the characters *and* the viewer) because of the strength of his words, which are imbued with a certain permanence by becoming themselves a series of observable images.

But, while both films privilege the power of the storyteller, the types of character that are depicted in these films are quite different.

Perrault's career did not just consist of filmmaking. He was also a poet and an essayist as well as being a *cinéaste*. Above all, he liked to refer to himself as a "cinéaste de la parole" (Clandfield 73). It might be argued that the principal service he was providing in the making of this film was as a poet compiling various elements of Quebec's linguistic and cultural uniqueness into a foundational myth, one that is as much about the character of the storyteller as anything else.⁶ Drawing conclusions from *Pour la suite du monde*'s first shots, Clandfield argues:

If on the one hand they are expository (setting the scene) and self-referential (drawing attention to aspects of film language), on the other they can claim mythical power. The sequence moves from the word to darkness to the coming of light and finally to a finished universe with its signifiers of the world of work (the sweat of the brow) and the promise of spiritual redemption (the church).
(74)

Clandfield proposes that a poetic analogy is created in the film between the speech of the storyteller and the coming of light, the beginnings of things. These first few shots are indeed a prologue to an epic poem that is to be composed initially of one voice, that of Alexis. But the film does not remain a soliloquy. The *many* voices of the island's *various* storytellers, including Grand-Louis, Léopold, and others, form a kaleidoscope of speakers. The film depicts a collection of storytellers, a community of exchanging voices each in dialogue with the others. Even when Alexis, who, one might add, *is* privileged as an authoritative voice, reads from Cartier the words are not totally his alone. They belonged to Cartier first, and now by reading them aloud they are made to belong to the community. As he recites, Alexis is acting as a conduit, transmitting his island's history not for personal benefit, but for the continuity of the founding myth of his community. No one on the island could have read this text to those in the film and to the spectators watching it but Alexis, making him a vital player in the community's sense of identity. Only he can read this Old French, and in so doing, only he can make the words of Cartier live and breathe. But only with the concerted effort of all the other island members and of the spectators as well can this myth be spread.

It is important to point out that while Alexis is reading a text here, the written word is not what is being favoured. The act of telling is. Otherwise, Perrault could have simply shown the spectator Cartier's text like we see in the prologue to *Star Wars*, for example. In showing us the text being read Perrault is making a conscious choice that favours the storyteller as a key character in his film.

In summary, the storyteller in *Pour la suite du monde* appears as a mouthpiece (albeit inspired) and as a midwife. This concept of midwifery is of the utmost relevance to this inquiry, for it is central to Plato's dialogues. Midwifery, or "maieutics,"⁷ is a process whereby the listener is not simply told the truth, but one in which the listener learns from the process itself, from the active verbal exchange. It is therefore animate with notions of engagement and community, and most importantly, of construction and betterment, and in this manner, it is a point of intersection between the storytelling in Perrault's film and Plato's dialogues. The lives of inhabitants of this small island are educated by the words of their storytelling elders and quickened by the rhythms of the 'dance' that is the ceremonial re-enactment of the *pêches aux marsouins*.

The same cannot be said of Greenaway's central storyteller, Prospero. He is neither a midwife nor a mouthpiece for some older tradition. Prospero's treatment of Caliban is a good illustration of this.

Prospero's Books' Caliban is a native of the island that Prospero conquers with his language. A post-colonial theoretical discourse has emerged in literary theory surrounding Shakespeare's original play because it essentially deals with a European's conquest of the New World.⁸ Caliban is a native of this New World, a kind of savage. Prospero tries to 'civilize' Caliban by teaching him language, his language, but it never takes. In a scene approximately one-third into the film, Prospero confronts Caliban. What the viewer observes is not a dialogue between two characters, but a monologue, with Prospero speaking both his part and the part of the other:

CALIBAN (Gielgud's voice⁹): When thou cam'st first,
 Thou strok'st me and made much of me, wouldst give me
 Water with berries in' t, and teach me how
 To name the bigger light, and how the less,
 That burn by day and night. And then I loved thee
 And showed thee all the qualities o' th' isle,
 The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile.
 Cursed be I that I did so! All the charms
 Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!
 For I am all the subjects that you have,
 Which first was mine own king; and here you sty me
 In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
 The rest o' th' island.

PROSPERO (Gielgud once again): Thou most lying slave,
 Whom stripes may move, not kindness! I have used thee,

Filth as thou art, with humane care, and lodged thee
 In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate
 The honor of my child.

CALIBAN: O ho! o ho! Would't had been done!
 Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else
 This isle with Calibans.

PROSPERO:¹⁰ Abhorred slave,
 Which any print of goodness wilt not take,
 Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,
 Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
 One thing or other. When thou didst not, savage,
 Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
 A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes
 With words that made them known.

CALIBAN: You taught me language, and my profit on't
 Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
 For learning me your language!

PROSPERO: Hagseed, hence!
 Fetch us in fuel, and be quick, thou'rt best,
 To answer other business. Shrugg'st thou, malice?
 If thou neglect'st or dost unwillingly
 What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps,
 Fill thy bones with aches, make thee roar
 That beasts shall tremble at thy din.

CALIBAN: No, pray thee.
 I must obey. His art is of such power
 It would control my dam's god, Setebos,
 And make a vassal of him.

Subjected to Prospero's absolute linguistic control, all Caliban can do is respond with futile curses (the only use he can find for words), but even they are not articulated with his own voice. Beyond this, Caliban, played by dancer Michael Clark, can answer Prospero's challenges with only weird bodily gesticulations. Quite literally, Caliban has no voice of his own, for Prospero himself voices his verbal responses. And this is just a sample. In fact John Gielgud's is the voice used to play all the verbal parts in this film, including that of the daughter, Miranda. All of the other parts are pre-scripted in this way, so that in fact, Caliban, like all the other characters in the film, says nothing.

Thus we arrive at the claim that *Prospero's Books* depicts a storyteller as tyrant. Prospero is a Duke, as previously mentioned. He is a practised despot, and this fact bleeds down into the type of storyteller he plays. Ultimately, the isolationist storyteller

that Prospero is has only destructive potential. He is not out to build a community, but to please himself, to conquer, and to seek revenge.

Greenaway's portrait of the character of the storyteller is therefore quite unique, for because the character in his film is both a storyteller and a magician, the character is able to put the powers of storytelling on literal display. As was mentioned in citing Walter Ong, in oral cultures people believed that words had magical potency. This is literalized in the character of Prospero, as he plays not only the role of an oral dramatist, but ultimately that of a ventriloquist, magically silencing other voices and controlling the other characters as one would a series of puppets. Stated in a different manner, Prospero plays God, as the many Biblical references in the film attest.

Analyzing the power wielded by Prospero, Lawrence writes:

Prospero's 'characters' are not fictional variations but actual figures upon whom Prospero wants revenge. Under the constraint of surveillance and subject to his spells, they cannot speak. ...*Prospero's Books* presents the author as omnipotent despot, exemplified by the ubiquitousness of his voice. [...] Everyone else is allowed to exist only as he sees them. He hears only what he wants—as do we. [...] In *Prospero's Books*, Prospero only allows others to speak once they cannot challenge him. He removes the chains once the beasts have been tamed.
(148)

This is the epitome of the danger of the storyteller's ability to enchant as Plato outlined it. The storyteller's power can be used to control others, to silence other voices and create a state in which the unbalanced imagination of the storyteller reigns supreme and in which others are mere slaves to this enchantment.

Seen in this new light, the *conteurs-personnages* that compose Perrault's film take on added significance. One might speculate that the differences in pre-occupation between *Pour la suite du monde* and *Prospero's Books*, the former concerned with community, the latter with the individual storyteller and with a deconstruction of the first person singular as it fragments Prospero's voice into many, can lead to a delineation of sub-types within the movement of oral cinema. *Pour la suite du monde* represents perhaps *classical* oral cinema, or at least its storyteller-characters are 'classical' oral characters, retaining their individuality within a community setting. By contrast, *Prospero's Books* would represent *modernist* oral cinema according to this model, splintering the voice of the storyteller into many disparate, even competing, voices. Undoubtedly, this is an area for further research.

Our concern has been with political responsibility and effectiveness of storytelling as it is depicted as an activity enacted by characters in selected oral films, and in the pursuit of this seemingly timeless theme, we have only scratched the surface. We could broaden it, for instance, to critique the role of the filmmakers themselves, of the roles they play in culture at large. The purpose of this essay was merely to open up a discussion and not to finish it off. From the start, it was meant to be an introduction to a

theme and an excuse, if you will, to introduce Plato to the critical discussion of oral cinema. If it has not become self-evident that any well-rounded examination of orality and the oral transmission of tales in cinema cannot escape the pull of Plato's probing ethical and political questions, then the fault is mine and not Plato's.

From the perspective of this essay, Greenaway's film does not match Perrault's in terms of taking an interest in the idea of a healthy community. *Prospero's Books* is in line with Plato's criticisms of storytelling, offering to the viewer its potential perils and pitfalls. *Pour la suite du monde*, however, depicts storytellers at their ethical best, acting as the glue that binds the small community of Ile aux Coudres; moreover it acts as a slingshot, propelling this community and its past forward into the future. Naturally, though, my point is not to suggest that Plato would condone everything that Perrault's film represents, but to show that the film, in encouraging storytelling, assisting a community and demonstrating the positive effects that a newly re-ordered community can have on the souls of its members, is emblematic of the cross-pollinating just soul/ just city duality that forms the very crux of Plato's political philosophy. Thus it demonstrates the importance of the noble storyteller to the continuity and growth of Quebecois culture. The community in Perrault's film and its members were made to function healthily, to live again, due entirely to this film and to the storytellers involved, with Perrault acting as the primary catalyst. Perhaps in envisioning his Ideal City Plato did not really have the tiny community of Ile aux Coudres in mind, but the effects of constructive storytelling were felt there nonetheless.

The crux of what I have been arguing is that storytelling is a powerful mode of communication, and as such, it has various political trappings, ones that carry with them issues of moral responsibility and accountability. It follows that storytelling is a tool that is neither innately good nor bad, and so Plato's message seems to be that the moral storyteller does not just seduce or arouse the soul of the listener, but accepts the responsibilities of his/ her political activity. The power of storytelling positions it as a permanent challenge to passivity and acquiescence, combating atrophy and routine, but the question that must be asked of all storytellers is one that Plato has provided us with: does this or that storyteller contribute to despotism or solidarity, chaos or advancement? The characters of the storyteller that we find in *Prospero's Books* and *Pour la suite du monde* indicate that the filmmakers have pondered this issue.

One last point is worth considering in this context and it pertains to the issue of orality versus literacy. Francois Baby's claim, in the article cited at the outset of this inquiry, is that a film movement, such as oral cinema, might be defined by the types of character that it portrays. This essay has supported this claim and offered the suggestion that oral storytellers are a key element to oral films. However, this begs the question: is it not possible to find the character of the storyteller in non-oral narratives? Is the character of the storyteller something that can be assimilated fully to 'literary' cinema or is it strictly indigenous to a cinema with considerable oral residue? Is the character of Marcel in Proust's *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, for example, a novel that has been adapted in Raoul Ruiz's *Time Regained* (2000), an oral or literary storyteller? In order to answer this, a more detailed outline of the different types of storyteller to be found in oral and

literary narratives would need to be offered. All storytelling, in some measure, contains at least a granule of oral residue, so the question, as is often the case when dealing with issues of orality in cinema, is a matter of degree. Perhaps the greatest difficulty in developing ideas about the parameters and qualities of oral cinema is that the one developing them is called upon to deal with very close shades of gray, rather than the starkly contrasting tones of black and white.

We will conclude by calling attention to a forgotten term but one that speaks to the role and accountability of storytelling in modernity. That is the notion of “remembrancer.” It is a term that George Steiner applies to his role as a critic and scholar, but that clearly applies to the storyteller as well. “Remembrancer” comes from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century law books and refers to one who “tries to make other people responsible to their own memories” (Wachtel 126). It is therefore inflected with elements of ethical imperative and transmission. A remembrancer is one who is a “witness through memory,” one who learns “by heart,” and as such, one who plays a role that counters the “planned amnesia” of insitutionalized thought (126). I can find no better words to describe the role of Alexis in *Ile aux Coudres*, and of Perrault as well in his task as a shaper of Quebec national culture.

Notes:

¹ For a discussion on Plato’s use of myth, see Jean-Francois Mattéi’s “The Theater of Myth in Plato,” in *Platonic Writing/ Platonic Readings*, a series of essays that deal with the problem of interpretation in the reading of Plato’s dialogues.

² We are concerned in this essay with the moral evaluation of *character*, not of the films themselves, their aesthetic qualities or their makers. It does not therefore follow from the claim ‘Prospero is tyrannical’ that *Prospero’s Books* or Greenaway exhibit morally reprehensible qualities as well.

In addition, as is evident from my introduction, this essay takes the influence of oral narrative forms on the art cinema narration as a given. Narrative form is not our current topic, but this is not to say that it would be irrelevant. We have simply elected to leave to others the establishment of this fact.

³ Much has been written about the dramatic, let us say ‘oral,’ form of Plato’s writings. “Plato’s dramatic method is especially equipped to generate the *exhibitive* and *active* functions of *utterance*,” demonstrates Jerome Eckstein in *The Platonic Method: An Interpretation of the Dramatic-Philosophic Aspects of the Meno* (11; the emphasis is mine). These “active” and “exhibitive” elements as they underscore the “utterance” of the characters in Plato’s oral dramas re-enforce the orality of these writings. Moreover, as Jurgen Mittelstrass argues in “On Socratic Dialogue,” the dialogues present us with a prime example of form mirroring content. The ‘verbal,’ ‘dialogic’ form of Plato’s writings is commensurate with his ideas about knowledge and its acquisition. *Stricto sensu*, knowledge cannot be *revealed* or *spoken*, and this explains the form of the dialogues. At no point, then, should one take the claims made in them literally, or as clearly representing ‘the views of Plato.’ Plato wishes to teach the reader ‘indirectly,’ just as Socrates ‘teaches’ his various interlocutors. The dialogues present us with a radical form of philosophical investigation; they are neither theoretical structures nor systems of thought. “[T]here does not exist, nor will there ever exist, any treatise of mine dealing with my philosophy,” writes Plato in the Seventh Letter (cited in Desjardins, 110-111). They are, states Mittelstrass, “a form of verbal communication” (126)—an attempt to overcome the limitations of the medium of writing. In this manner, in fact, Plato’s dialogues, both explicitly (in another dialogue, *Phaedrus*) and implicitly, are a critique of the written word, of its insufficiency as a medium for expressing knowledge. And the difficulty lies with the fact that writing “conveys meaning, not practice” (Mittelstrass 137). A written philosophical doctrine (as opposed to a

dialogue) is a report that isolates knowledge from *praxis*, from active living, thus failing to engage or implicate the reader or to encourage significant changes *now*. Writing also diminishes the value of knowledge itself, for “[t]he communicability of philosophical knowledge through writing is purchased, according to Plato, at the expense of a transformation of knowledge into opinion” (137). As Mittelstrass claims, the oral or dialogue form of Plato’s texts is essential especially due to its stronger force as a persuasion to action: “The dialogue transmits less theoretical knowledge than *exemplary* knowledge, a knowledge the acquisition of which the reader (as dialogical self) can identify with and which he can even continue (something other literary forms such as the novel and drama do not give rise to)” (140; emphasis in the original).

(On broader terms, however, Plato’s criticisms do not limit themselves merely to writing—they extend to the limits of all discursivity, or *dianoia*. Discursive thinking, which encompasses speech and writing, is by nature incomplete, thus requiring *noesis*, or perception of the intelligibility of things, to guide them. While man is limited to the realm of expressed opinion and therefore must deal with the absence of determinate knowledge, noetic perception or vision paradoxically ensures that determinate knowledge is possible. In Plato’s quarrel with poets and sophists, he posits that in order for speech or writing to be rational man’s knowledge cannot be limited to *dianoia*, that the intelligibility of the differences in form of things is in fact independent of any subject’s adoption of a presupposition. Rosen’s discussion of this forms the core of his essay on *Nihilism*.)

Beyond this, the Dialogues also exemplify Plato’s devoted use of poetry to compose them and the ideas that they express. “Plato’s language [...] necessarily becomes imprecise, metaphorical, or analogical: poetry is not dispensable for the Platonist,” asserts Charles L. Griswold, Jr., in “Plato’s Metaphilosophy: Why Plato Wrote Dialogues” (163). In his use of irony, of “dramatic imitations” (160), for instance, it is evident, writes Griswold, that “poetry and mimesis are indispensable to Plato’s presentation of the nature of philosophy” (160). We are thus encouraged to wonder how these forms are to be ‘correctly’ used if not in the manner habitually adopted by rhapsodes, poets and storytellers.

⁴ In “Daddy Dearest: Patriarchy and the Artist in *Prospero’s Books*,” Chapter 6 of *The Films of Peter Greenaway*, Amy Lawrence discusses Walter Ong’s take on the orality of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. She cites Ong as describing Shakespeare’s as “a culture with a still massive oral residue” (142). Then, in a footnote appended to this citation, she remarks: “[Ong] cites 1610 specifically. *The Tempest* was written in 1611, when *Prospero’s Books* is set. For Ong, the traces of an ‘oral culture’ continued ‘roughly until the age of Romanticism and even beyond’ (41).” This most definitely inserts Greenaway’s film into England’s deeply entrenched oral tradition. As it pertains to *Pour la suite du monde* and Quebec’s purported oral tradition, the work of Francois Baby (in the article cited above), Germain Lacasse and others is working toward establishing and documenting the existence and nature of oral tradition in Quebec as well. This would clearly put Quebecois folkloric culture in that “even beyond” category that Ong mentions above.

⁵ The first section of lines that Alexis reads from Cartier, and that the spectator simultaneously sees and hears, are as follows:

le sixième jour dudit mois,
avecq bon vent,
fismes courir amont ledict fleuve ...

environ quinze lieues,
et posasmes à une ysle
qui est bort à la terre du nort

icelle ysle contient
envyron troys lieues de long
et deux de laize (large)
et c’est une fort bonne terre
et grasse

plaine de beaulx et grandz arbres

de plusieurs sortes

et, entre aultres,
y a plusieurs couldres
que nous treuvasmes
fort chargez de noiselles (noisettes)

et, pour ce, la nommasmes ...

l'ysle es Couldres
(Perrault 23-26)

⁶ In the “Préambule” to his commentary on the film, Perrault goes to some length to describe the importance of memory. He states that the principal reason for making the film was for memory’s sake, “pour mémoire,” “[p]our mettre en archives” (8). In addition, he positions himself as a Homeric poet, proposing a gift in the form of a poem about Odysseus (8). But he might have more accurately said Achilles. In “Homer and the Scholars,” an essay from *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature and the Inhuman*, George Steiner contends that “the Homer whom we know, who continues to shape many of principle forms of the Western imagination, was the compiler of the Iliad and the inventor of the Odyssey” (185; my emphasis). Therefore the claim that Perrault is a compiler of Quebec’s myth in no way slights his contribution as an artist.

⁷ See Mittelstrass’ essay for a further discussion on “maieutics,” in which he writes: “According to the principle of independent learning, the Platonic Socrates does not teach; he only assists, although in such a way that the dialogue, which helps one to acquire both knowledge and reason, is understandable as a learning process” (134).

⁸ See “‘This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine:’ *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism” by Paul Brown, for example.

⁹ Here, the actor’s voice is altered electronically to seem more ‘beast-like,’ and therefore to distinguish it from the voice of Prospero.

¹⁰ In the original play, this section of dialogue is accredited to Miranda, Prospero’s daughter. In a manner suited to his reduction of all the parts to one voice, Greenaway has the character of Prospero utter these lines. See *The Tempest*, Act I, Scene 2, Lines 344 to 361, for the difference. In the film, Miranda is present in the scene, at her father’s side, but she does not speak a line of dialogue. This alteration probably also has to do with Greenaway’s desire to make Prospero the speaker of these words, to make Prospero call Caliban his “slave” and to make him the owner of the efforts to teach Caliban and cure him of his “brutish” “gabble.” This re-enforces Greenaway’s depiction of Prospero as a linguistic dominator.

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