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# PROSPERO BECOMES PROSPERA: THE END OF PATRIARCHY IN *THE TEMPEST*

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**Abstract**

William Shakespeare's final play *The Tempest*, has been analysed and interpreted from different perspectives, one of which being the feminist approach. One reason feminist reading of the play became paramount in the second half of the twentieth century is obviously the second-wave feminist movement, the influence of which has intrigued many critics to reread Shakespeare's play from the lens of feminism. Criticising the scarcity of female characters and the highly patriarchal setting in which the only female character has no choice but to behave in a feminine manner, oppressed and subjugated by a patriarchal father figure, these scholars have tried to raise awareness of modern readers and contribute in changing the traditional woman's personality traits. This essay will have a closer look at some of the feminist readings of the play, and discuss how Julie Taymor, the American director and writer of theatre, opera and film, employs a creative approach in her filmic adaptation to make a phenomenal difference to the post-modern world. Taymor's Tempest exemplifies women empowerment by allowing a woman to take the main role, and so she violates Shakespeare's patriarchal ideal that depicted women as shadowy and marginalized in *The Tempest*. By introducing a female Prospera and effacing the male Prospero, Taymor paves the way for more feminist rewritings and more female performances of Shakespeare's plays. In this essay, the feminist features of Taymor's film will be focused on and compared with Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.
Keywords: feminism, Shakespeare, The Tempest, Prospero, Prospera, patriarchy.

*The Tempest*, which is considered by many critics as Shakespeare's final play, has undergone a variety of interpretations and critical analysis. Over the last thirty years, however, the predominant reading of the play has been through the feminist perspective. Ann Thompson, for example, offers a feminist reading of the play with particular emphasis on the absence of female characters while stating that the play "attributes enormous power to female chastity and fertility" (156). *The Tempest* is an absolutely male realm; and apart from Miranda who is seen by many critics as oppressed victim of patriarchy, women are noticeably absent in the play: Claribel, Sycorax, and Miranda's mother are just mentioned and never actually appear on stage, and Ceres, Juno, and Iris, who perform briefly in the play, are not human. The absent female figures function, as Thompson argues, to endorse Prospero's power and dominance in the play (156). Prospero's masculine authority as a father and a ruler is evident

from the beginning of the play. However, Julie Taymor's filmic Tempest, which after a very short run in 2010 went to DVD in 2011, offers a feminist critique of patriarchal power by changing the gender of the powerful Prospero to a female Prospera. This paper aims to explore male dominance and patriarchal power in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and by juxtaposing it with Taymor's modern filmic adaptation, tries to attend to Shakespeare's re-framed romance as a call for the end of Patriarchy.

Miranda, who is the only female character in the play, has long been the subject of feminist studies. But surprisingly, what drives most feminists into a rage is the very representation of Miranda in the play, rather than the omission of other female characters. They view Miranda as "a prototype of that unlikely invention of Puritan conduct book authors and late twentieth-century scholars: the woman who is chaste, silent, and obedient" (Slights 361). Commenting on *The Tempest*, Ann Thompson asks: "what kind of pleasure can a woman and a feminist take in this text beyond the rather grim one of mapping its various patterns of exploitation?" (165). She argues that Miranda is a passive and unassertive female who willingly submits to her father's control of her chastity, so that Victorian women as well as twentieth century female students "find Miranda an extremely feeble heroine and scorn to identify with her" (157). Throughout the play, Miranda is controlled and dominated by her father. While narrating the history of his dukedom in Milan, Prospero asks Miranda to "obey and be attentive" (I. ii 38). He repeatedly demands Miranda's attention asking "Dost thou attend me?" (I.ii.77), "Dost thou hear?" (I.ii.106). She is totally powerless against Prospero's sleep-inducing spell, and Prospero knows that she "canst not choose" but sleep (I.ii.187). Prospero keeps her isolated in the island so that she says: "I Do not know/ One of my sex, no woman's face remember, / Save from my glass, mine own," (III.i.48-50). Ania Loomba argues that "Miranda is ordered to sleep, awake, come on, see, speak, be quiet, obey, be silent, and be mute" (154). Plainly enough, Miranda is obliged to submit herself to the control and domination of her father.

Loomba argues that patriarchalism alternately asserts its knowledge, humanity, and power (153). Prospero reveals his knowledge through his books, magic, and his schooling of Miranda. Indeed, Prospero is defined by books at the beginning of the play: "Knowing I loved my books, he furnished me / From mine own library with volumes that / I prized above my dukedom" (I.ii.166-8). Prospero's power comes mainly from his books, and Caliban knows that "without them / He's but a sod" (III.ii.93-4). He resents Prospero's books as the source of his power, and no wonder then that he would like to burn Prospero's books (III.ii.96). He knows all too well where Prospero's power to enslave him came from. Moreover, Prospero asserts his knowledge by schooling Miranda. Although the play conveys little information about Miranda's schooling, it is evident that Prospero instructs his daughter the way he wants by being his only teacher: "Here in this island we arrived, and here / Have I, thy schoolmaster, made thee more profit / than other princes" (I.ii.171-3) and no doubt, Miranda proves to be an excellent pupil. Prospero "has schooled her to obedience" (Loomba 154). He proudly affirms that Miranda is "ignorant of what thou art; nought knowing / Of whence I am" (I.ii.18-19). She obeys in silence and has been taught not to question why, despite the fact that Prospero has left the story incomplete: "More to Know / Did never meddle with my thought" (I.ii. 21- 22). Prospero has full control over his daughter so that he decides when to teach her: "Tis time / I should inform thee further" (I.ii.24-25). However, this education has had another purpose. Loomba argues that "Miranda's schooling calls upon her to participate actively in the colonial venture" (154). This is almost clear when Prospero tells Miranda that they will visit Caliban. Although Miranda calls Caliban "a villain" who she doesn't "love to look on" (I.ii.310-11), Prospero educates her about the economics of the situation saying that "we cannot miss him: he does make our fire, / Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices / That serve us" (I.ii. 312-14). She has been taught that Caliban, the "abhorred slave" (I.ii.353) is naturally an inferior creature and has a "vile race" (I.ii.358). This is the way Prospero instructs her.

Moreover, feminist dissatisfaction derives from the view that "Prospero must control Miranda's sexuality before he hands her over to Ferdinand" (Thompson 160) by warning Ferdinand against breaking her "virgin-knot before / All sanctimonious ceremonies" (IV.i.15- 16). As Miranda serves as a "property to be exchanged between father and husband" (Loomba 154), her body is most valuable. The purity of her body is reflected through her virginity. Therefore, Miranda's chastity is important not only to Prospero, but also to Ferdinand. Upon seeing Miranda for the first time, he hastily remarks; "My prime request, / Which I do last pronounce, is (O, you wonder!) / If you be maid or no?" (I.ii.425-7). After receiving Miranda's conformation that she is "certainly a maid" (I.ii.429), Ferdinand admits that her virginity is the prime condition for their marriage: "O, if a virgin, / And your affection not gone forth, I'll make you / The queen of Naples" (I.ii.447-49). In fact, Miranda has internalized that her chastity and modesty are the most valuable things in her life, "The jewel in my dower" (III.i.54). Crawford and Mendelson argue that according to studies of women in early modern society, the female body was used to show woman's otherness, weakness and inferiority. They were considered by men as the weaker sex, the second sex. They didn't understand the functions of the female body which frightened them. "Fearing the female body, they sought to contain and control it" (Mendelson and Crawford 30). As a true patriarch, Prospero who is preoccupied with his lineage defends his daughter from Caliban's attempt to rape her and polluting his legitimate lineage. He tells Caliban: "I have used thee / with human care, and lodged thee / In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate / The honor of my child" (I.ii.345-8). In response, Caliban clearly admits to his attack on Miranda: "Wouldn't had been done! / Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans" (I.ii.349-51). Although Caliban's attack, as Hall argues, is the "ultimate threat" to prospero's "quest for social and political integrity" (qtd in Slights 373), Prospero takes advantage of that to justify his attempt of using Caliban as a slave. In the pursuit of his plans to augment his power, Prospero decides to arrange a dynastic marriage for his daughter. He employs the storm to bring young Ferdinand into the company of his daughter. Ferdinand, the heir to the Neapolitan throne, is Prospero's choice not Miranda's. Some critics assume that Miranda is an assertive girl and completely independent in choosing Ferdinand. In her essay, Jessica Slights argues that while Miranda "is certainly influenced by her powerful father and by the expectations imposed upon her as the daughter of a duke, she proves to be strong- willed and independent minded in her dealing with both Prospero and Ferdinand" (365). To some extent, these critics might be true in saying that Miranda challenges Prospero's authority by defying her father's instruction that she refrain from speaking with Ferdinand. Nevertheless, this deliberate disobedience of her father seems a natural behavior for a teenage girl. Furthermore, it shouldn't blind us to the fact that Miranda's choices are limited. She says that Ferdinand is "the third man that e'er I saw, the first / That e'er I sighed for" (I.ii.446-7). Obviously, it was Prospero's plan to bring the lovers together. He supervises them constantly and at the point when his dreams are about to come true, he promises Ariel to "free thee / Within two days for this" (I.ii.422-3). No doubt, both Miranda and Ferdinand are just tools in Prospero's hands and he uses them to achieve his personal goals and to consolidate his power. For Prospero, Miranda is his property who gives it to Ferdinand "as my gift, and thine own acquisition / Worthily purchased, take my daughter" (IV.i.13-14). Miranda and Ferdinand end up playing chess and Miranda accuses Ferdinand of cheating her: "Sweet lord, you play me false" (V.i.173). Symbolically, Miranda tries to win in the struggle between men and women in the patriarchal world, but this is not a "fair play" (V.i. 176) since, it is Prospero who is the real winner of the play.

For Miranda, her mother is a good example of chastity. The only reference to Miranda's mother is at the beginning of the play when Miranda asks Prospero: "Sir, are not you my father?" and Prospero replies: "Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and / She said thou wast my daughter" (I.i.56-7). This only one comment on Prospero's wife is enough to reveal Prospero's general understanding of women as being non-virtuous. He has the same idea when he

refers to Caliban's origin, calling Sycorax a wicked dam: "Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself / Upon thy wicked dam" (I.ii.320-21). For Prospero, Sycorax is the "evidence of the common patriarchal representations of women as unclean, polluted and polluting, and hence dangerous to men" (Mahanta 208). In order to prevent the possibility of illegitimacy in his lineage, Prospero relies on his wife's word that Miranda is his daughter, simply by constructing her as "a piece of virtue". Moreover, Ann Thompson argues that "Miranda demonstrates that she has fully internalized the patriarchal assumption that a woman's main function is to provide a legitimate succession when asked to comment on the wickedness of Prospero's brother" (156): "I should sin / To think but nobly of my grandmother: / Good wombs have borne bad sons" (I. ii. 117-19). Since Prospero is the patriarchal head of the family, both Miranda and her mother receive their feminine identity in relation to him, and both are subject to his patriarchal authority.

Another female character who is physically absent in the play is Sycorax the witch. Although this black woman, the mother of Caliban is invisible and erased out, one can see her massive presence in the background of the play from beginning to end, in the way familiar to feminist critical practice. In feminists' view, Sycorax operates as a powerful contrast to Miranda. For example, Ania Loomba argues that Sycorax "stands in complete contrast to the white, virginal and obedient Miranda. Between them they split the patriarchal stereotype of woman as the white devil _virgin and whore, goddess and witch" (151). Of course, the angelic Miranda whom Prospero has created with the help of his art as a perfect, virtuous woman, "created of every creature's best" in Ferdinand's words (III.i 47), is the exact opposite of Sycorax. Both Prospero and Caliban testify to her powers. Prospero boasts of her power as a witch before his guests saying that she is "so strong / That could control the moon, make flows and ebbs, / And deal in her command without her power" (V.i.269-71); for Prospero she is a powerful and rival witch; And although Sycorax is dead before the play begins, Caliban believes that his mother's power still remains in the island, therefore he invokes it for his own rebellion: "All the charms / Of Sycorax _toads, beetles, bats_ light on you" (I.ii.339-40). He also invokes her magical powers to claim his rights and to fight against Prospero : " As wicked dew as e'er my mother brushed / With raven's feather from unwholesome fen / Drop on you both" (I.ii.321-23). He is proud of his mother and gets his sense of identity from her. But it is Prospero who, as a dominant male, has the authority to identify the witch and judge her as guilty. Reminding Ariel of his imprisonment on the island before his master's arrival, Prospero gives a detailed description of Sycorax, constructing her as a "foul witch" (I.ii.258). In his idea, Sycorax's magic is evil and illegitimate, "her earthy and abhorred commands" (I.ii.273) and her "grand hests" (I.ii.274) are unlike his own legitimate magic, which is used in the interests of maintaining power. It is "Deemed legitimate, as pursuit of power is a male prerogative" (Mahanta 209). Prospero consolidates his power by repeatedly making comparison between his "white magic" and sycorax's "black magic" in order to "legitimize his takeover of the island and its inhabitants" (Loomba152); and claims his greater strength and superiority so that even Caliban has to bow to his authority: "I must obey. His art is of such power, / It would control my dam's god Setebos, / And make a vassal of him" (I.ii.372-4).

In her book *The Patriarchy of Shakespeare's* Comedies, Marilyn Williamson rightly argues that the "absolute power of the ruler to control the lives of others is un-questioned" in all four of Shakespeare's late romances, and she sketches a picture of Prospero as a manipulative father and governor who exerts a rough and self-serving authority over his daughter (112). It might be argued that the paternal affections Prospero shows to his daughter throughout the play demonstrate his love for Miranda. For instance, when Prospero reassures Miranda of his intentions in raising the sea-storm, he insists that "I have done nothing but in care of thee / Of thee my dear one, thee my daughter" (I.ii.16-17). In handing her to Ferdinand, he characterizes her as "that for which I live" (IV.i.4). This apparent love, as Williamson states, shouldn't blind us to his manipulation of her and in the end Miranda remains merely "an object of exchange between Prospero and Ferdinand" (156). If Prospero really loves

Miranda and praises her to the utmost, why does he never consent to her demands? Guessing that her father has been responsible for creating the storm, which has destroyed a ship before her eyes, Miranda demands Prospero that: "If by your art, my dearest father, you have / Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them" (I.ii.1-2). During her initial encounter with Ferdinand, she asks her father: "Alack, for mercy!" (I.ii.437), "Beseech you, father / … Sir, have pity" (I.ii.473-5), "O dear father, / Make not too rash a trial of him, for / He's gentle and not fearful" (I.ii.467-9). But Prospero doesn't pay attention to her demands. For Prospero, accepting influence from his obedient daughter "would strain credibility" (Williamson 157). No one can influence this omnipotent ruler, no human but only Ariel who is a superhuman. Only a spirit can teach Prospero humanity, "virtue" rather than "vengeance", and make his "affections …tender" (V.i.18-19). In his view, Miranda is too inferior to consult with. Even when he is "vexed", he explains to Ferdinand the source of his distemper, not to his dear daughter: "Sir, I am vexed. / Bear with my weakness; my old brain is troubled. / Be not disturbed with my infirmity" (IV.i. 158-60). Therefore, although Prospero acknowledges his love for Miranda, he ignores her at the same time.

In *The Tempest*, children are equated to political power. As Williamson argues, the dependence of both aging rulers on their children is made emphatic in the play through Alonso's supposed loss of Ferdinand and through Prospero's having raised Miranda (155). In fact, what gives encouragement to Sebastian in plotting to take Alonso's crown is Ferdinand's death and Claribel's remoteness. The patriarchal control of daughters and the importance of their marriage with regards to the dynastic inheritance is clear during the conversation between Antonio and Sebastian in the second act:

> She that is Queen of Tunis: she that dwells
>
> Ten leagues beyond man's life: she that from Naples Can have no note, unless the sun were post_
>
> The man I'th'moon's too slow_ till new –born chins Be rough and razorable. (II.i.248-51)

Claribel is not a threat to them until she has born a son and raised him to be a man. Just the same, Prospero sees his daughter as his political power; therefore, he raises her and controls her life. Towards the end of the play, Prospero, the omnipotent ruler and "the prince of power" (I.ii.54), faces his own mortality, and as he prepares to relinquish his absolute control of the island and regain his power in Milan says: "Every third thought shall be my grave" (V.i.312). This sentence brings Miranda to our mind who _for Prospero_ is "a third of mine own life" (IV.i.3) and "whose succession to the power of the father is the life stream of the patriarchy" (Williamson 157).

Shakespeare's *The Tempest* was first performed before King James I at Whitehall in November of 1611. It was presented a second time at the court of king James early in 1613, as part of the marriage festivities of King James' daughter, Elizabeth, who at the age of sixteen was being married to Fredrick the Elector Palatine. As Thompson states, the marriage masque within the play may have been added for this occasion and for many years Elizabeth and Fredrick were the living counterpart of Miranda and Ferdinand (175). Like Miranda, Elizabeth was beautiful, loving, chaste, and obedient. Their marriage had obviously been arranged for political purpose by King James I, who was believed by Elizabeth to be incapable of error. The patriarchal system of English Renaissance is evident in the play through Claribel's politically arranged marriage to the African king of Tunis in one hand, and Miranda's marriage in the other hand. Alonso's daughter Claribel was shipped off to Tunis as a pawn in a political play benefitting her father, the king of Naples. Just the same, Miranda's marriage to Ferdinand forges an alliance with Naples that politically benefits Prospero's return to Milan. He uses the dependent and innocent Miranda as sexual bait for his own purposes. Political and personal ambitions are certainly prime motives for Prospero's action of arranging a marriage between Miranda and Ferdinand. Both Claribel and Miranda are victims of paternal authority and male power politics.

Julie Taymor, however, decided to reframe Shakespeare's play by introducing a female

Prospera. It is well known from Shakespeare's plays that women's parts in Elizabethan England had to be played by boys or men because social restrictions prevented women from taking up acting careers. Women entered the stage at the English restoration, decades after Shakespeare's death. In this respect, Taymor's Tempest offers a twenty-first century perspective on Shakespeare's play. Today, as a social reality not only women take male roles (for example Fiona Shaw played the role of Richard II in 1997), but also can easily change the male character as famous as Prospero to a female Prospera.

In fact, Taymor's choice to cast a woman, Helen Mirren as Prospera rather than Prospero, was neither unique nor surprising to the stage. During the last decade and inspired by critics like Ann Thompson who offered a feminist interpretation of Shakespeare's The Tempest, several directors and actors in the United States attempted to introduce a female Prospero. But, "by stereotyping the female Prospero in a maternal role", says Vaughan, these productions failed to "make The Tempest into a critique of patriarchal control or question in any way the play's emphasis on female chastity and fecundity". Julie Taymor, however, is extremely successful in criticizing the patriarchal system underlying Shakespeare's texts. In addition to Helen Mirren's great performance as a gender-bent Prospera which is a comment on women's empowerment, what gives Taymor's Tempest a feminist perspective, is a number of text adaptations and directorial choices Taymor made in her film. By attempting to re-write Shakespeare's play (she is nevertheless loyal to Shakespeare's original text), Taymor provides a backstory to explain Prospera's status as Duchess of Milan. Prospera explains to Miranda that "her husband, the Duke of Milan, had allowed her to dabble in scientific experimentation, but when he died and left the throne to her, her brother Antonio had conspired with the king of Naples and his brother Sebastian to stage a coup by accusing her of witchcraft" (Vaughan). Therefore, from the beginning of Taymor's adaptation of The Tempest, women's authority and empowerment is evident since Prospera's husband gave the throne to her rather than his brother, and that her interest in witchcraft was supported by her husband. As Henderson states, "the unconventional fun of seeing an actress manage what has often seemed a dared patriarchal role adds pleasure at the performative level while a new dynamic of temporal continuity through the mother-daughter line offsets the fiction's unresolved concern with male usurpation" (142). Shakespeare's Prospero lost his dukedom in Milan since he neglected his duties and focused on his books (I.ii.80-90). Towards the end of the play and when he's about to restore his dukedom, the question that remains in our mind is if he really deserves that. In contrast, Taymor portrays Prospera as a rightful Duchess. In a flashback scene, Prospera is seen sitting in a state room with her counsellors signing official documents. Her interests in alchemical arts never intervened with her responsibilities as a duchess. Prospera's exile is the result of her brother's accusing her of witchcraft. Therefore, she deserves to attain positions of authority and power.

Helen Mirren, as Prospera conveys maternal tenderness both when recalling her desperate sea journey _ a flashback of Prospera hugging baby Miranda in the "rotten carcass of a butt" (I.ii.146) _ and when watching her daughter fall in love. As a mother, Prospera is actually aware of her daughter's emotional experience as a young virgin on the threshold of marriage and womanhood. The maternal dynamic is extended in the film when she holds Miranda by the arms and gently strokes her cheek (III.i). Here, she doesn't control Miranda's chastity and sexuality the way Prospero does; rather, "gender gives Prospera's protectiveness a different edge, her wariness of male behavior warranted by her brother's treachery and her looks implying an identificatory understanding of what it means to lose one's heart to a lovely young man" (Henderson 142).

Prospera's maternal concern stretches from Miranda to include Ariel. Many critics believe that Ariel is an androgynous spirit. Ann Thompson writes that "while Ariel is clearly a male spirit, he is also required to impersonate a nymph of the sea and a half-female harpy, indicating a degree of ambiguity about his gender" (158). Nevertheless, he is portrayed in the film as a fully grown man and in sporadic moments he "produces a fascinating sexual

tension" with Prospera (Vaughan). To him, Prospera is more like a mother than a master. He seems to enjoy his master's appreciation of his actions when Prospera says: "This is well done, my bird" (IV.i.184); and tries to make her proud just as a son would do. This is more evident when he asks: "Do you love me master? No?", and Prospera replies: "Dearly, my delicate Ariel" (IV.i. 48-9). Nevertheless, Prospera's interaction with Caliban doesn't display her maternal affections. What is interesting about Caliban at the first sight is his creative make-up in Taymor's film. He appears to be a wonderful hybrid of white and black with one blue eye in the white part of his face. Although Caliban's enslavement is never denied in the film, his extraordinary makeup suggests a critical response to the colonialist Prospero's exploitation of native black Caliban. Moreover, Taymor cut Caliban's last dialogue: "I'll be wise hereafter, / And seek for grace" (V.i.296-297). Instead, walking up a staircase silently he gazes at Prospera until his final exit, while at the same she looks at him "with grudging respect" (Vaughan). Henderson rightly argues that "by refusing the text's final rapprochement through dialogue, Taymor's film obliquely acknowledges the centuries of suffering initiated by the colonial presumption of white superiority" (143). Despite Prospero who sees Sycorax as his rival, Prospera parallels Sycorax in this adaptation, since both mothers were exiled to the island accused of being a witch. Prospera is accused by her brother Antonio for being "a demon" and although Prospera sees herself as a scientist, engaged in the study of alchemy, she doesn't see her white magic in contrast to Sycorax's black magic the way Prospero sees.

No doubt, Taymor's adaptation of Tempest is a critical commentary on Shakespeare's both patriarchal and colonial island.

One interpretation of *The Tempest* is that as Shakespeare's final play, it is autobiographical in which Prospero stands for Shakespeare himself, wielding his theatrical arts but then concluding his career by breaking his wand (pen), and bidding farewell to the stage and his craft. Like Prospero whose power comes from his magic books, Shakespeare gets his power and fame from his plays. At the end of the play, Prospero decides to break his staff and drown his book (V.i.57) just as Shakespeare decides to retire to Stratford. Since Prospero's books do not need to exist materially as necessary stage presence, Shakespeare's text makes no provision for us to see Prospero drown his book. However, at the end of Taymor's Tempest, Prospera's books are shown floating slowly towards the ocean bottom, musically accompanied by Shakespeare's epilogue. Richard Burt argues that this end-title sequence "allows Taymor to 'double graft' her already gender-bent Prospera to an implicitly invoked 'Shakespeara' as author" (183). The drowning books apparently have no titles or authors on the cover and even though the pages are open, they are unreadable for the audience, "symbolically a repository for other authorial reflections" (Burt 184). As Prospero's book is a metaphor for Shakespeare's play, here in the film, the drowning book serves as a metaphorical storage unit for film, "a book cover like the metal canisters used to house rolls of celluloid film" (Burt 183); and at the end of the film, after the blank book has been plunged into the water and is still open, the production and cast credits appear on the left-hand page and paradoxically save the film author in the fullest sense by destroying or disintegrating Shakespeare's book.

Taymor's film does not deal with the issue of Miranda's chastity. Rather, Taymor views human sexuality in an alternative way. Vaughan States that, "As Miranda and Ferdinand gaze at the heavens, Prospera prepares a spectacular dance of stars and planets that culminates in the figure of Vitruvian man etched in stars, only in this image it's Vitruvian man- woman because separate male and female figures converge into one". Taymor replaces this vision with Shakespeare's masque created by Iris, Ceres, and Juno. As mentioned before, Prospero is most concerned with the idea of controlling his daughter. By contrast, Prospera's main struggle is not with the control of Miranda's sexuality; rather, she is preoccupied with her duties as a mother. She is a kind, caring, and protective mother. However, it doesn't necessarily mean that her role as a mother is a priority to her, as it is a predominant idea about women in patriarchal societies. At the beginning of the film, she tells her daughter that her husband accepted her desire to study the alchemical arts and

"gave license to my long hours in pursuit of hidden truth" (I.ii), but then she admits that "I brooked no interruption but your squalling" (I.ii). Taymor portrays Prospera as a mother who lives in today's social reality rather that in patriarchal society of Elizabethan age.

England was a patriarchal society in Shakespeare's time, and although it was ruled by a female monarch for half a century, people's attitude towards women never changed. In one of her most famous speeches, Elizabeth I admitted that women were weak and feeble: "I may have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king" (Mendelson and Crawford 354). She knew that in this world of men, she would have failed if she demanded equality in actual words; therefore, she did so with her actions, by not marrying and being a successful queen. In the Elizabethan age, women had a lower status than men. They were believed to be intellectually, physically and morally inferior to men. Conduct books and similar works were written in order to instruct and inform women on how they were supposed to behave and think (Mendelson and Crawford 355); what their position and place was in society. Diane Hughes asserts that sumptuary laws regulated female dress and adornment, so that women were not permitted to dress as they wished (153). They had limited amount of clothing choice, a fashion that the patriarchal society imposed on them. These clothes gave the ideal image of a woman as silent, submissive, chaste and modest. According to critics of fashion, clothing functions as a language, incessantly communicating messages about its wearer on the one hand, and expressing social values on the other hand. Hughes argues that while career and socio-economic standing defined men's place in society, women depended on fashion to define and express themselves in society (157). In the symbolic system of clothing, what message could the Renaissance costume of women communicate other than women's oppression and the restrictions imposed on them by men? This is what Taymor highlights in her film.

As the Duchess of Milan, Prospera is appeared at the beginning of the film dressed in the tight corset of Renaissance costume that "indicates the gender constraints she endured as Duchess" (Vaughan). Vaughan writes: "Taymor told me that she intended the corset to signify the confinement of patriarchy". In the island, by contrast, she is shown wearing loose-fitting trousers and tunic, easy and comfortable, and almost androgynous, neither masculine nor feminine. Therefore, "via a brown trouser-suit costume adorned with furs and resembling a cloak, and through a sparkling blue garment woven together from shards of hard natural material, the character is constructed so as to bifurcate and blur standard male-female lines of demarcation" (Wray 507). But it is the corset that she must resume at the film's end when her royal power is restored. Towards the climatic confrontation between Prospera and those who wronged her, Prospera displays her power by producing a circle of fire and entraps Alonso's party including her usurper brother into the circle of ashes. Just before this scene, she orders Ariel to fetch her skirt and bodice. As Ariel tightens the stays on her bodice, Prospera murmurs "So, so, so" in a tone of resignation. This scene provides much discussion on the restrictions that are imposed on women in patriarchal societies. While Shakespeare's Prospero chooses to put his duke's robes back on to resume his political power at the end of the play, and becomes restored, Taymor's Prospera sacrifices herself by putting her corset back on to enter to patriarchal society, and of course, like many other women, she knows how to survive in that society. While Prospero's personal and political ambition inspires him to arrange Miranda-Ferdinand marriage, Prospera gives up her power and freedom for the welfare of her daughter.

In conclusion, Taymor's Tempest exemplifies women empowerment by allowing a female to take on the lead role and violates Shakespeare's patriarchal ideal that depicted women as shadowy and marginalized in *The Tempest*. It might not seem so difficult for many to change that "o" to an "a", but it represents centuries of preparation. At the time when Shakespeare was writing his plays, women "could be good, proceeding from virginity to marriage and maternity, and after a virtuously spent widowhood. Or they could be wicked: scolds, whores, or witches. What they could not be, in

theory, was independent, autonomous, and female-focused" (Crawford and Mendelson 17). Thanks to the efforts of feminists in developing a new social reality, women and men today face similar issues as power, justice, knowledge, and authority. In this respect, Taymor paved the way for more feminist rewritings and more female performances of Shakespeare's plays. Inspired by the character of Elizabeth I, and despite the patriarchal system of that time's society, Shakespeare created some extraordinary female characters who tend to be superior to males in terms of intelligence, wit, and generosity; Cleopatra, Ophelia, and Portia being obviously among them. We can now add Prospera to this list.

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