

**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RACISM AND SEXISM IN
SHAKESPEARE'S *OTHELLO* AND *THE TEMPEST*, AND THEIR
SELECTED CINEMATIC ADAPTATIONS.**

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B.ed. (Hon.), Dip.Ed.

REG. NO.: 2009/U/HD/51//MALT.

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
ARTS IN LITERATURE OF KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY**

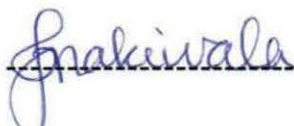
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2016.

DECLARATION.

I, Edison Etori, do declare that this dissertation is my original work; that any material that is not mine has been identified and duly acknowledged; that neither the whole of this dissertation nor any part of it has ever been published before, whether in print, electronically, in microfilm or any other form; and that there is no part of this dissertation for which a degree has previously been conferred upon me, or any other person.

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DEDICATION.

This thesis is dedicated to all the students that I have taught: past, present, and those to come; at whatever level: Secondary School or University. I say to you all: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to learn from you and to sharpen my abilities! You have helped me, and continue to help me, to grow in the profession and to achieve self actualization. You will always be cherished and remembered as my partners in the creation of new knowledge.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all the people who played major roles in the academic engineering that brought me this far. Firstly, I thank all my lecturers at Graduate School at Kyambogo University: Dr. Christopher Kirunda, Dr. Patrick Mukakanya, Dr Okaka Opio Dokotum, Dr. Sr. Frances Nakiwala, Dr. Okot Benghe and Dr. Michael Kakooza. I found every course unit useful in analyzing Shakespeare's texts. For example, Dr. Mukakanya's Advanced Literary Theory was the foundation of the theoretical underpinnings in this thesis. There are course units whose contribution is indisputable, such as Dr. Sr. Frances Nakiwala's Research Methods and Shakespeare, and Dr. Okaka's Film Studies— course units that are the very life and blood of this dissertation. Apart from teaching me, I found Dr. Sr. Francis Nakiwala a pleasant person to deal with: I found her gregarious, quiet and gentle in spirit. As the co-supervisor of this research project she was invaluable in the conceptualization of research issues and in giving direction to the writing of this thesis. She stepped in and took charge of the situation at the most challenging moment and she steered the project to its logical conclusion. I am also greatly indebted to my lecturer in Film Studies— the course unit that makes the DNA of this dissertation— and my mentor and research supervisor: Dr. Okaka Opio Dokotum. He opened his personal library for me to access textbooks, journals and articles on Film Studies and adaptation. He secured for me the DVD's of *Othello* (1995) and *The Tempest* (2011), without which the whole project would have collapsed. Dr. Okaka even invited me to be his research assistant in his post-doctoral research project; this paved the way for me to engage in part-time tutoring of students in the Literature Department. Lastly, I want to thank my very valued friends and colleagues in the Department who kept pushing and encouraging me when the project appeared to hit a snag: Dr. Tugume, Mr. Cassian Ochieng, Mr. Eriya Kamugisha, Ms. Connie Habe'ilemye and Ms. Elizabeth Asimwe. Accept my thanks, ye good men and women and may God bless you all.

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ABSTRACT

This is a comparative study of the artistic representation of racism and sexism in two different media: the written text and the film text. The primary texts of investigation are two ancient plays by William Shakespeare, *Othello* (1604) and *The Tempest* (1611), which are compared with their modern, Hollywood, film adaptations of the same titles: Oliver Parker's *Othello* (1995) and Julie Taymor's *The Tempest* (2011). Six dramatic techniques which Shakespeare uses to portray racism and sexism in the English society at the time of writing the two plays are compared with their six film equivalents that are employed by the film directors to portray the same ideas of racism and sexism in adaptation. The six dramatic techniques selected to demonstrate the tendency to treat black and female characters as inferior human beings include: physical setting, characterization, props/costumes, blocking, special effects/stunts and songs/music/ plus all other sound effects. The film directors innovate with filmic techniques to recall the history of racism and sexism in England that is reproduced in a modern, Hollywood, American setting. It is argued that the two film adaptations present a more graphic version of discrimination against black people and women in the 20th/21st Centuries than the one dramatized by Shakespeare in the 17th Century. It is also argued that racism and sexism are universal themes that defy time and geographical space. The study is grounded in Kamilla Elliott's six "unofficial" theories of adaptation that are used to explain the power in the selected films to magnify and accentuate representations of racism and sexism. These six theories of Elliott are: the "psychic," "ventriloquist," "incarnation," "genetic," "De (Re)-composition" and "trumping." The analysis, however, emphasizes and focuses on the "psychic" and "ventriloquist" theories. The primary methods of investigation include a focused reading of the literary techniques and a corresponding focus on their filmic renditions, which help in establishing why the films have tended to exaggerate racism and sexism. The findings are presented qualitatively in an extended analysis that describes and explains how and why the films tend to blow up ideological representation of racism and sexism beyond what was envisaged by Shakespeare in his two plays. It is concluded that cinema exaggerates racism and sexism because it employs unique, extra-representational features— both visual and sound effects— that directly impact on the viewer's senses as compared to the ways of the written texts where meanings are implied and must be drawn from reading texts. Cinema also employs special effects and stunts to manipulate pictures and sounds, which magnify ideas even further. The final outcome is a depiction of graphic and exaggerated images of racism and sexism on the screen.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Background to the Study

1.1 Introduction to the Study.

This study compared Shakespeare's two plays, *Othello* (1604) and *The Tempest* (1611), with their modern Hollywood adaptations— *Othello* (1995) and *The Tempest* (2011)— directed by Oliver Parker and Julie Taymor, respectively. The focus of the comparison was Shakespeare's dramatic techniques and the corresponding filmic techniques in as far as they portray the ideas of racism and sexism. These techniques— dramatic and filmic— were subjected to a psychic and ventriloquist interpretation in line with Kamilla Elliott's "psychic" and "ventriloquist" adaptation theories that underlie the practice of creating movies out of literary texts. According to Kamilla Elliott, film artists unconsciously employ adaptation theories as they translate literary texts into movies. Elliott formulated six adaptation theories, which she discussed in her ground-breaking work: *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (2003), namely, the "psychic," "ventriloquist" "incarnation," "genetic," "De (Re)-composition" and "trumping" theories. Two of her theories, the "psychic" and the "ventriloquist," underpin this study to explain the transposition of the two literary texts to film without necessarily excluding the other four theories. This comparison between Shakespeare's plays and their selected adaptations reveals a magnification of depictions of racism and sexism in the cinematic rendition, which gives the filmic renditions a greater effectiveness in communicating the enormity and the seriousness of these practices in contemporary society than the corresponding lifeless, written depictions of racism and sexism in the 17th century English Monarchy under Queen Elizabeth I and her successor, King James. The greater effectiveness of the film medium was found to reside in the filmic techniques which the

directors deploy so as to depict racism and sexism, namely: moving pictures, casting Hollywood stars, natural setting, props, costumes, architecture (all these are embedded with Technicolor), imaginative lighting techniques, sound track acoustics (which capture dialogue and tone, music and songs, plus other natural sounds like the clashing of swords, the roaring of the sea waves, the crashing of the ship,) among others. The magnification of ideas is particularly true when the filmic techniques are subjected to a ventriloquist interpretation, whose premise is that the film medium adds something to the adaptation and thereby enriches it in the process.

1.2 Background to the Study.

Numerous studies on Shakespeare present him as one of the most prolific and celebrated 17th century English poets and dramatists to date. Samuel Johnson (1983) describes Shakespeare as “a poet whose works have outlived his century.” G.B. Harrison (1968) agrees with Johnson when he states that Shakespeare is an enduring and universal artist because,

He is the wisest, that is, he can understand and sympathize more than other men. He can see the whole picture of humanity and recreate it so that men of every kind, country, creed and generation understand. Knowing humanity as no one else did, Shakespeare is nevertheless neither a mocking nor a weeping philosopher and he is so great that he can refrain from moral judgment (3).

Shakespeare wrote literature that captured the social prejudices of his times, such as the segregation of blacks by whites and the marginalization of women by men. These were common ills that existed in the Jacobean and Elizabethan English societies. These prejudices that are dramatized in the two plays of *Othello* (1604) and *The Tempest* (1611), together with their selected film adaptations, essentially defined this inquiry. The adaptations retain much of the

form and the content of Shakespeare's plays, but they also employ their own unique strategies of representation other than those found in the hypotexts. These differences in the literary and the film imaginaries are extensively discussed by many scholars. James Neramore (2000), for one, attributes these differences to the "unique formal and narratological possibilities in film art." He explains further how a film is always

Less reverent towards literature and more apt to consider such things as audiences, historical situations and cultural politics...which emphasize differences rather than similarities, individual styles rather than formal systems (8).

In film analysis, it is important to consider the historical, geographical and cultural contexts of written texts when they are compared with their film adaptations. Adaptations involve translating literary words into moving pictures, a concept that informed the theoretical analysis of this study in as far as it explained how the two film directors transposed the 17th century Elizabethan/Jacobean English plays to the 20th/21st century American/Hollywood movies. Adaptation is an overarching concept because it can also involve non-literary texts like histories, biographies and diaries; moreover, even one film can be adapted to another film. J. Hillis Miller states that, "There is an element of a picture in every letter, and an element of writing in every picture...One runs into the other" (Qtd in Elliott 64). In the same way every literary word in Shakespeare's selected plays finds a pictorial signification in adaptation.

This study adopted Elliott's (2003) six "unofficial concepts of adaptation" (134) in its detailed analysis of how the film artists undertook the task of converting Shakespeare's *Othello* (1604) and *The Tempest* (1611) into motion pictures. Elliott's complete list of six adaptation theories

appears in the introduction above and includes, the “psychic,” “ventriloquist,” “incarnation,” “genetic,” “De (Re)-composition” and “trumping” models. These six theories (also called models or concepts) were constantly found to work together in film adaptation rather than in isolation. Although the focus of this study was on the “psychic” and the “ventriloquist” models, it did not completely exclude Elliott’s other four concepts, especially when they were found to best explain the transposition of some scenes from the plays to celluloid.

In her distillations, Elliott presents a theoretical discourse of each one of her adaptation theories. Elliott defines the “incarnation” concept as the “animation” of the literary text where “the word is made flesh” and “the characters are reverently brought to life” in the film (161). In other words, the film creates illusions that are indistinguishable from the audience’s perceptions and experiences of reality. The characters in a film are acted by humans that move, converse, think, act and behave like people in real life. Elliott’s “genetic concept” is a biological analogy that explains how the genetic material awaits “a manifesting substance in the cells and tissues of the body” (150). In adaptation this “genetic material” is the deep narratological material shared between the literary text and the film. The film becomes the director’s canvas— the cells and the tissues— for expressing the “genes” that are shared between the literary text and the film, which is the shared form and ideological content. Elliott’s third concept of “De (Re)-composition” is a complex process of merging the “textual and filmic signs with cultural narratives” which then decompose and recompose in each viewer’s consciousness into something new (157). This makes the experience of watching a film adaptation a unique psychological reconstruction of meaning for each viewer. In other words, a film can have different meanings depending on the interpretation that each viewer gives it. Elliott’s fourth concept is “Trumping,” which is an adaptation model that blatantly alters aspects found in the literary text by claiming that they are

depicted “wrongly” and the film has “corrected and represented them better” (174).

Elliott’s list of six adaptation models is completed by the “psychic” and “ventriloquist” theories, which form the spine of this study. The “psychic” concept of adaptation considers “what passes from the book to the film as the spirit of the text,” which is equated to “the spirit or the personality of the author” (136). In other words, the director draws inspiration from the written text and tries to preserve the authorial style and intention. The “ventriloquist” concept on the other hand is when the adaptation “empties the body of the literary text of its spiritual contents and gives it a new voice,” a process that is compared to that of a ventriloquist or a magician who “props up the dead novel by throwing his voice onto the silent corpse” (198). The corpse is thereby given a new life by the film because the director has given it a new spirit or in the words of Elliott, “written texts become mere dummies or vessels to be filled with new meanings” (143). Thomas Leitch (2009) (paperback edition) calls it the “colonization” of the literary text by the material of the film text (109). The colonizing material is the filmic spirits that bring the text back to life because it was dead following the expulsion of the authorial spirits. James Neramore (2000) explains this colonization of the literary corpse by the filmic spirits in terms of the film medium that is blessed with “the semiotic richness of moving images, music, props, architecture, costumes, audible dialogue and more” (144). Elliott renames these Neramorian elements “filmic embellishments” or “new spirits” (143). According to Elliott, film directors employ these filmic embellishments to enrich their adaptations, thereby giving them expanded meanings beyond the literary meanings. Whenever they choose to embellish their adaptations, film directors are said to employ Elliott’s ventriloquist adaptation theory. Elliott, however, does not dichotomize the psychic and the ventriloquist models, but emphasizes the close relationship between them:

While the ventriloquist concept of adaptation at first appears to be

diametrically opposed to the psychic view, its idea of residual meaning lingering in so-called empty forms does not differ essentially from the idea that a spirit passes from the literary text to a film adaptation. The two concepts, therefore, emerge as inseparable sides of the same coin (149-150).

This thesis is a comparative analysis of Shakespeare's dramatic techniques and their corresponding filmic techniques in the selected adaptations of *Othello* (1995) and *The Tempest* (2011) in as far they portray racism and sexism. This analysis is underpinned by the theoretical principles of Elliott, particularly the "psychic" and the "ventriloquist" adaptation theories that are used in interpreting the magnifications of racism and sexism by the film medium. Elliott's other four theories are occasionally invoked to explain a few peculiar sequences in the adaptations. For example, "Trumping" was found useful in explaining Julie Taymor's creation of a filmic matriarchy out of Shakespeare's patriarchy in her adaptation of *The Tempest* (2011).

Synopsis of Shakespeare's Othello (1604):

The play dramatizes the rise of Othello, the Moor of Venice from being a mere soldier in the service of the Duke to one of the magnificos of the land. Shakespeare invents the invasion of the Mediterranean Island of Cyprus by the Ottomites as the opportunity for Othello's rise from being a mere black soldier in the employ of the Duke to the position of governor of Cyprus. At the very opening of the play, the Duke and Venetian senate decide that Othello is the man to repulse the Turkish invasion of their island colony. This rise of Othello gains its proper perspective in the context of the preceding events: Just before the Turks had invaded Cyprus Othello had eloped with Desdemona, a Venetian lady of high birth whose father, Brabantio, is one of the senators. There are a few white people who are prejudiced against Othello on account of his being black,

namely, Iago and Roderigo. It emerges that Iago hates Othello because Othello had promoted Cassio to the position of lieutenant by-passing him, yet Iago considers himself a better soldier than Cassio. Roderigo, on the other hand, is motivated by jealousy. Roderigo is a secret admirer of Desdemona and had even intimated to her father that he wished to marry the lady. So the current elopement and secret marriage between Othello and Desdemona riles him because he cannot imagine a black man defeating him in winning the hand of such an exquisite white lady. Therefore, out of different motives, Iago and Roderigo become allies united by a common cause to destroy the Moor. They convince Brabantio that the Moor had stolen his daughter and being a prejudiced man himself, Brabantio concludes that Othello must have employed witchcraft to compel his daughter to marry him. This becomes the first stereotypical labeling of Othello in the play. As the play progresses, Shakespeare parades other black stereotypes against the Moor in line with the realities of the 17th century English society, such as portraying Othello as an epileptic freak. Othello is also portrayed as a violent, cruel and murderous husband who kills his own wife.

The above mentioned labels on the Moor constitute the racist dimension of Shakespeare text. The sexist dimension is revealed by killing of Desdemona, a female character, by Othello. The motive of this killing is Othello's self-righteous determination to punish a female character for her alleged transgression of social norm. She is falsely accused of committing adultery, which is considered the most heinous transgression of a moral code in a male dominated society. Sexism is a function of Shakespeare's characterization when he creates one of the most cunning, hateful and vicious white characters in English drama: Iago. Iago is Othello's antagonist who concocts a love affair between Desdemona and the newly promoted Cassio. Shakespeare creates a situation in which Iago uses a prop (the handkerchief as a stratagem to destroy the trust and friendship

between the Moor and his lieutenant. According to this narrative, Iago uses this handkerchief to convince Othello that the affair between his wife and Cassio is real. This handkerchief is stolen by Emilia and is planted on Cassio. It becomes the evidence against her because when Othello later sees the same handkerchief in the hands of Cassio, he decides to kill Desdemona.

The closing Act the play is arguably created by Shakespeare for redeeming the Moor's image, in which the playwright depicts a tragic ending of events. In it Roderigo attacks Cassio on the streets following the incitement of Iago. According to this narrative, Cassio's death help Roderigo get rid of his rival in love. Cassio is slightly wounded and Iago who is watching nearby comes out of the dark and stabs Roderigo in a fit of supposed righteous indignation. Meanwhile, something even more sinister is happening inside Othello's bed-chamber in the castle. Othello is having the final confrontation with Desdemona. He accuses her of giving his handkerchief to her lover, Cassio, and despite her pleas to him to let her "live to-night!" (V.ii.80), Othello refuses to listen and declares to her consternation that "It's too late" (V.ii.83). He stifles to death where she lies. In the same scene Iago has been apprehended and is brought in to explain his role in the attempted assassination of Cassio. To the shock and dismay of everybody, Iago stabs Emilia when she reveals how he (Iago) had incited her to steal the handkerchief. Othello realizes that Iago had all along duped him into killing Desdemona and he gives a final speech before he pulls out a dagger he has hidden well. Othello stabs himself and falls dying next to Desdemona.

Shakespeare uses dramatic techniques in the above narrative to depict the racism and sexism in the 17th century English society that he was writing about. For example, he employs dialogue, characterization, props/costumes, stage directions, among others. But this technique are represented by written words on the page and they require the powerful imagination of the reader

the seriousness and the gravity of the racist and sexist depictions by Shakespeare must be appreciated by the reader. In contrast, the filmic version of these ideas are represented by corresponding techniques like actors and performance, audible dialogue, three-dimensional props and costumes (presented in Technicolor), music and other sound-track accompaniments that deepen the depiction of racism and sexism. The effect of the filmic techniques is to enrich, embellish and magnify racism and sexism, thereby presenting a more effective communication of the seriousness and the gravity of these social ills in a modern setting.

Synopsis of Shakespeare's The Tempest (1611):

The play depicts the contribution of magic and witchcraft in depicting racism and sexism in Shakespeare's play. For example, the storm in the first scene is created by Prospero using magic in order to shipwreck King Alonso of Naples and his entourage, who are returning home from the wedding of the King's daughter in Tunis. There is a stampede and verbal confrontation between the boatswain and the King who is helped by his two of his hot-headed men, Antonio and Sebastian. Somewhere on an island close by, Prospero, the right Duke of Milan, and his fifteen year-old daughter, Miranda, watch the wrecking of a ship. The compassionate Miranda is horrified by what she sees, but Prospero assures her that all the men on the ship will be safe. He reveals his role in the shipwreck and his relationship to the men on board. He had used his magic to cause a storm that has wrecked the ship carrying his enemies. Prospero then summons his servant, Ariel, an airy spirit who recounts to the Master how he has used magic to put the passengers into a trance and dispersed them about the island, ensuring that the King's son, Ferdinand, is by himself as instructed by Prospero. Shakespeare contrasts this incident with the one where Sycorax, the late African witch, who had been banished from Africa for practicing witchcraft. According to this incident, Sycorax had imprisoned Ariel, the spirit, inside a pine

ranch for twelve years. It may not have been Sycorax's intention to keep Ariel incarcerated for so long; however, she died before she had undone her spell and it is left to Prospero to rescue Ariel. The other associated contrast between the two spiritualists is invoked by Shakespeare through a representation of Caliban as a disfigured slave and savage. Caliban is demonized as an offspring of the dead witch, Sycorax who had mated with the devil himself to bring forth this aberration of nature. These are the representations that are racist because they contrast a white character that practices magic for the common with a black character that practices witchcraft to harm others. Caliban is demonized even further when he recruits two worthless characters, Trinculo and Stephano to help him kill Prospero so that he could regain ownership of his island.

It must be remembered that Shakespeare employs dramatic techniques like contrast and characterization which bring out the racism. He also employs the accompanying techniques like music and songs of Ariel (as the loyal servant to Prospero) which he contrasts with the dull and un-rhythmic singing of Caliban to communicate the beauty and the goodness of Prospero's magic as opposed to the evil of Sycorax's occult that is encapsulated by her disfigured son. In Act IV Prospero uses his magic to forecast a marriage Miranda and Ferdinand through an invocation of a wedding masque for the two lovers. The masque is suffused in soft music and three spirits pretending to be the goddesses, Iris, Ceres, and Juno, descend to participate in the celebration. Other nymphs appear and they all dance and make merry. This beautiful festivities are suddenly cut short by a harsh "hollow and confused" noise coming from outside Prospero's dwelling (IV.i. & Stage directions). It is the sound of Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo, still drunk approaching and ready to kill Prospero. Prospero dismisses the spirits and he brings the masque to an end so that he can deal with the conspirators.

Shakespeare invokes other sounds that reinforce the romance artform. For example, in another scene there is burst of thunder that compels Trinculo to crawl under Caliban's cloak for protection. In his now famous words, Trinculo laments how "Misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows!" (II.ii.40). Stephano, the butler to the King, provides yet another confused noise as he sings drunkenly on the day when he stumbles across what he thinks to be a two-headed monster with four legs, indigenous to the island. These are racist depictions that Shakespeare achieves through the dramatic techniques of sound effects. Lastly, Shakespeare employs contrast of props and to depict the different effects of Prospero's magic and Sycorax's occult. Prospero's magic stick, magic gown and book are instruments for controlling Sycorax occult so as to do good things on the island. For example, Prospero finds these fetishes very useful in controlling his slave, Caliban, who is a savage with aggressive tendencies. Prospero uses his fetishes to frighten this black monster into submission. On the other hand, the pine branch symbolizes Sycorax tyranny on the island because she had used this prop to forcefully restrain Ariel. She dies and leaves Ariel in a state of interminable suffering and it is up to Prospero to use his props more positively to rescue Ariel. The final proof of the goodness in Prospero's props is when he renounces forever his magic: "But this rough magic/ I here abjure" (V.i.50-1). He immediately follows up this promise when he breaks his magic staff and declares that he will drown his books; he proceeds to discard his magician's robes and adorns the robes of the Duke of Milan. Amidst solemn music, reconciliation is realized between Prospero and his enemies. He forgives them and they restore him as the Duke of Milan. Alonso is immediately reunited with Ferdinand and the two men seal their peace with the marriage of their children.

It must be reiterated again that, like in the adaptation of *Othello* (1995), Julie Taymor's *The Tempest* (2011), depicts racism more graphically when Caliban is incarnated on the screen. He is

a product of make-up: his artificial skin, webbed toes and fingers, blue eye and aggressive demeanor appear magnified on the screen. The audible dialogue and acoustics of the sound-track enrich the feminist depictions of Prospera's white witchcraft in ways that oppose Shakespeare's sexist depictions of women, but ironically also reinforce the sexist depictions of females as the natural witches. On the other hand, the incarnations that depict Sycorax as a black witch through her act of imprisoning Ariel inside a pine branch and siring a monster-child are magnified and enriched in film, and the extent of racism cannot be doubted. A few more cinematic highlights are discussed in the next section.

Highlights in the Cinematic Renditions of Othello (1995) and The Tempest (2011).

Shakespeare created a black hero out of the Moor (Othello), thereby undermining the widespread demonization of blacks as witches, epileptics, violent and murderous people. Oliver Parker's 20th century movie recreates the story in Shakespeare's *Othello* (1604) and also creates a black hero through debunking, a function of naturalistic acting by Laurence Fishburne, an African American film star in the role of Othello. In ordinary usage, the word "debunk" is an English verb defined in the *Oxford Learner's Dictionary* (6th edition) thus: "To show an idea, a belief, etc is false" (300). In film art, "debunking" retains this dictionary meaning, but is rendered functionally. Film makes debunking a technique for portraying or showing that an already established depiction(s) of a character or theme is false because the subsequent depiction(s) destroy the already established depiction(s). In the case of Parker's *Othello* (1995), the established stereotypical depictions of the Moor as a "witch," an epileptic, a cruel and violent husband are "debunked" or destroyed by subsequent depictions of him as a courageous warrior and Army General. Othello also emerges as an honest man who trusts others as well as a remorseful character who takes his own life to atone the death of his beloved wife. A detailed

discussion of this debunking process as a filmic technique in Parker's *Othello* (1995) is found in Section 3.7 of this thesis. Meanwhile, the film also portrays sexism more effectively than the written text by magnifying Desdemona's womanly lack of judgment. This magnification is exhibited in a series of cumulative sequences beginning with the sequence when Desdemona accepts to plead Cassio's case with Othello in a bid to have the two friends re-united after they had fallen apart in Cyprus. The sequence which follows up Desdemona's acceptance of this mediation role shows Othello, who is already suspicious of Desdemona's motives, greatly irked when she begins to plead for Cassio. Othello's irritation with Desdemona is so great that he is shown storming out of the castle— a reaction that accentuates sexism in as far as Desdemona is made to appear imprudent when she fails to realize that she has chosen a wrong moment to raise such a delicate subject.

On the other hand, Julie Taymor's adaptation of *The Tempest* (2011) goes beyond the filmic representation of a written text, but also becomes a means for critiquing the Shakespearean text. The film's critique role conforms to Elliott's "Trumping" adaptation concept by substituting a male character, Prospero with a female, character, Prospera. The director thereby opposes "a faulty representation of the literary author" by changing the sex and gender of the protagonist (2003:174). This is how the film faults authorial representations that wrongly give a female role to a male character. The film, therefore, claims that all mystical practices whether magic, alchemy or the occult are the preserve of female characters.

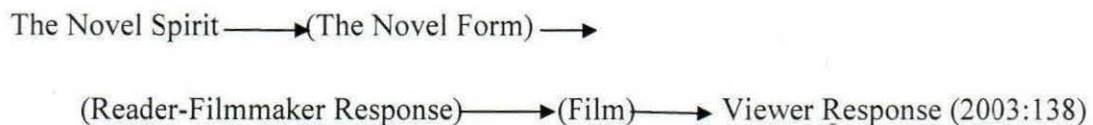
This is a patriarchal definition that equates a "witch" to a woman or female character and this definition is rejected by this study. A contrary argument is advanced, and it finds the portrayal of both Sycorax and Prospera in adaptation to be in line with the more affirmative matriarchal

definition of a “witch” that was found in primal society. This primal society was installed on earth by God himself. At the heart of this primal definition is an argument fronted by Robert Graves to the effect that witchcraft and/or the dark arts was glorified by matriarchal society and women who practiced the occult were originally exalted and held in the highest esteem (Qtd in Guerin, et al 207). The movie reconstructs this unadulterated state of Nature in which a powerful and dominant woman, who is also a witch, presides over society and makes all the decisions.

Furthermore, the adaptation of *The Tempest* (2011) highlights how the film director makes Caliban her tool for magnifying white racism against blacks through a complex process of interfacing him with other filmic techniques. At the centre of these multiple interfacing of techniques stands a Hollywood star, Djimon Hounsou, a national of Benin, in the role of Caliban. Among these filmic techniques are: the imaginative use of make-up to create a grotesque image of a savage, the innovative use of audible sounds that deepen the grotesqueness of the visual images, the deployment of colourful props and costumes that are put at the disposal of the character, to mention only the major ones. When these techniques come to life on the screen, they cause a magnification of black savagery and the racism that is suggested by it. Caliban’s physical ugliness on the screen becomes a symbol of his intellectual, moral and cultural backwardness and savagery. Caliban’s physical ugliness is achieved through make-up. For example, covering him in an artificial, fossilized skin constructed from pieces of volcano and old shells; implanting a synthetic blue eye on him, which he allegedly inherited from his mother; adorning him with artificial frog-like webbing between his toes and fingers, which makes him incarnate as a human-amphibian; and inserting long and curved nails into his toes and fingers to make him appear like a ferocious bird of prey.

1.3 Elliott's Psychic and Ventriloquist Adaptation Theories.

An analysis of cinematic adaptation in general, as well as the cinematic equivalents of the Shakespearean physical setting in particular, requires a brief theoretical exegesis of Elliott's psychic and ventriloquist adaptation theories. Sometimes, adaptations impoverish the representations of a written text, while in the majority of cases it enriches them. These two aspects are observable in the two movies selected for this study. The explanation for these differences is found when a comparison is made between Shakespeare's literary techniques and the film director's techniques. Such a comparison where the movie is subjected to an Elliottian theoretical reading reveals magnified depictions of the ideological content of racism and sexism. It was stated earlier that Elliott's "psychic" concept of adaptation claims to invoke the "spirit or the personality of the author" (136). This mystic "spirit of the author" begs the question: What might Shakespeare's spirit be in *The Tempest* (1611)? Elliott's answer simplifies the literary spirit to mean "authorial style or intent...his (author's) personality or imagination" (137-138). The psychic adaptation, therefore, emphasizes "fidelity to the literary text's spirit rather than its letter" (138). This also implies that the viewer's response to the film must necessarily coincide with Shakespeare's intention when he was writing the play. In Elliottian terms, there has to be a "psychic connection" between the viewer's response and "the author's (Shakespeare's) intention," whose diagrammatic representation is:



The psychic connection in this model is established between the first segment, the Novel Spirit, and the last segment, Viewer Response; the middle segments in parentheses facilitate the transmission of the formless literary spirit to an equally formless viewer response.

Elliott goes on to state that the film director who uses the psychic adaptation model has latitude to subjectively decide the nature of the authorial spirit and to import “a host of personal, filmic and cultural agendas to be projected into the literary text and identified as its spirit” (139). This calls for the discretion of the film director to stay within the limits of the intention of the author, otherwise he may end up emptying the literary text of its authorial spirit. He is only allowed to import material to the extent that his film should be seen to be inspired by the literary text. As soon as his importation of filmic material produces noticeable embellishment or extra additions to the adaptation that are removed from its literary source, then he crosses the borderline between the “psychic” and “ventriloquist” models. He crosses into the realm of enrichment because the cinematic innovations he employs produce new permutations into the representation. This crossing of the borderline invokes the Elliottian ventriloquist adaptation concept, the twin concept to the psychic. The psychic and the ventriloquist concepts are intricately tied together, and as such, they always work together in adaptation.

Elliott observes that in the “ventriloquist” model, “what passes between the two signifying systems, the literary text and the film adaptation, is considered an empty form” (144) and this is subsequently filled with the content of the second system, which is the film system. Kamilla Elliott’s diagrammatic equation of the ventriloquist adaptation model has two parts: the lower case equation representing the first system (the literary text) and the upper case equation representing the second system (the film adaptation). Adaptation, therefore, combines features of

a written text (narrowly defined by Elliott in the formula as the “novel”) with those of the film. For this reason, an adaptation is always richer than pure film because it is a hybrid of the two systems— the literary and the celluloid:

The novel’s signs – the novel’s signified = the novel’s signifiers.

THE NOVEL’S SIGNIFIERS

+ THE FILM’S SIGNIFIEDS = ADAPTATION SIGNS (2003:144).

The mathematical representation above means that a film adaptation contains additions that cannot be traced to the literary text; it is a summation of the literary signs and other signs that the film medium brings to the adaptation. Being a hybrid of two systems— the literary and the celluloid— a film adaptation benefits from these two systems. The film medium creates changes by adding new things to the text, such as moving pictures, acoustics that are heard, three-dimensional illusions of objects and more. Elliott explains this heightened effect of a film adaptation in terms of cultural and symbolic resonances, whose components are:

The semiotic, narrative, and generic conventions; the significations that the film brings to its surrounding culture (like the star system); the significations film derives from its surrounding culture (like cultural myths); the industry constraints on the film (like film budget, casting and length constraints); and the cultural constraints on the film industry (like censorship) (143-144).

Adaptations of literary texts into cinema, therefore, tend to magnify and enrich themes. Cinema tends to blow up the ideological contents found in literary works since an adaptation adds significant meaning to depictions by importing a few or all aspects mentioned above, in addition to creating three-dimensional illusions of reality.

1.4 Statement of the Problem.

Shakespeare depicts vicious practices in his two plays of *Othello* (1604) and *The Tempest* (1611), namely, racism and patriarchal sexism. Anybody who reads these two plays, however, cannot appreciate the enormity of these inhuman practices that were actually prevalent in the Elizabethan and the Jacobean societies. This is so because the written texts that Shakespeare uses fail to capture the seriousness they deserve. The film adaptations of *Othello* (1995) and *The Tempest* (2011) by Oliver Parker and Julie Taymor, on the other hand, are more striking in the way they magnify the negative imaging of black and female characters in the contemporary world. Consequently, the film adaptations communicate the seriousness of racism and sexism in modern society more effectively than their Shakespearean sources about the same practices in the 17th century English society. Therefore, there was a need to do a comparative study of literary and filmic techniques to appreciate the magnification of themes. This comparative study was informed by Kamilla Elliott's "psychic" and "ventriloquist" theories which were used to explain the greater effectiveness of the filmic techniques.

1.5 Purpose and Scope of the Study.

This study was designed to compare Shakespeare's two plays: *Othello* (1604) and *The Tempest* (1611) with their selected film adaptations by Oliver Parker (1995) and Julie Taymor (2011) respectively, focusing on dramatic techniques and the corresponding filmic techniques in as far as they portray racism and sexism. The filmic techniques are underpinned by Elliott's "psychic" and "ventriloquist" adaptation theories.

1.6 Objectives of the Study.

(a) To demonstrate how the filmic techniques are responsible for the magnification of racism and

sexism in the two adaptations of *Othello* (1995) and *The Tempest* (2011).

(b) To show whether Elliott's "psychic" and "ventriloquist" adaptation theories are sufficient in explaining the magnification of racism and sexism in the two film adaptations.

(c) To describe the process of the successful creation of a filmic matriarchy in *The Tempest*.

1.7 Review of Related Literature.

1.7.1 Introduction.

This section examines the existing studies with a bearing to this investigation. It is conveniently divided into three parts. The first part examines studies on adaptation, which are applied in defining and explaining what happens when Parker and Taymor transpose *Othello* (1995) and *The Tempest* (2011) into motion pictures, respectively. The second part looks at scholarly critiques of racism and sexism generally, which are then used to inform the transpositions of Shakespeare's *Othello* (1604) and *The Tempest* (1611) into movies. The third, and final part, distills a number of theories on adaptation, highlights a few of them and uses them to explain the changes that occur in the selected adaptations of Shakespeare's two plays.

1.7.2 Literature and Adaptation.

There is a sufficient amount of scholarship on Shakespeare on the screen, including Jorgens, *Shakespeare on Film*; Donaldson, *Shakespearean Films/Shakespearean Directors*; Collick, *Shakespeare, Cinema and Society* and Ace G. Pilkington, "Zeffirelli's Shakespeare." These film scholars and others mentioned below advance arguments that are relevant and pertinent to this analysis. There is an agreement amongst these scholars with regards adaptation as the process of translating written texts into films. Robert Stam's essay "Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of

Adaptation” champions the argument of adaptation as a translation. It is the process of converting literary words into moving pictures (Qtd in Neramore 2000: 54).

In his book *Palimpsestes* (1982), Gerard Genette approaches adaptation from a relational angle. His concept of “hypertextuality” refers to a process of establishing “any relationship uniting a text B (the hypertext) to an earlier text A (the hypotext).” In the present study, Shakespeare’s plays came earlier than the films, which makes them the hypotexts and their film adaptations that came later as pictorial translations of the literary texts constitute the hypertexts. James Neramore observes that,

Shakespeare’s plays are in some essence cinematic...He (Shakespeare) like other Elizabethan playwrights builds up his actions in brief scenes and organizes both time and space in an extremely fluid fashion, naturally suited to the cinema (577).

Roger Manvell (1971) holds the same view as Neramore since he asserts that Shakespeare constructed his plays “in such a manner which closely resembles the structure of a screenplay” (9). The two medieval plays, *Othello* (1604) and *The Tempest* (1611), consist of Five Acts and each one of these Acts is also subdivided into shorter scenes. Reading the different scenes produces a mental “montage” or a rapid changing of events, setting and characters that is cinematic. Anyone who views the pictorial realizations of Shakespeare’s plays finds residual aesthetic similarities between them and their literary sources. It is important to note that the transposition of Shakespeare into film began with the pioneering adaptations of Orson Welles that date back to the 1940’s. Neramore (2000) identifies three movies on Shakespeare that were made by Welles: *Macbeth* (1948), *Othello* (1952) and *Chimes at Midnight* (1967) (154). Michael

Anderreg makes a related argument:

The Shakespearean films of Orson Welles and Laurence Olivier initiated an interest in Shakespeare that would speak of international culture that came to the fore in the late fifties and the early sixties with Italian, Soviet and Japanese film-makers bringing a new distinctive approach to filmed Shakespeare (Qtd. in Neramore 156).

This leads us to another common argument among scholars to the effect that the translation of written texts into film always generates controversy between its supporters and detractors. Adaptation scholars often disagree with film makers as audiences also disagree with both; audiences often question whether the films they watch have any relationship whatsoever with the books they purport to translate. The novelists, too, complain about adaptations that have little or no relationship with their books. For example, Umberto Eco sees “no relationship between his book, *The Name of the Rose*, and Jean-Jacque Annaud’s adaptation by the same title” (Qtd. in Elliott 135). Eco consistently argues that “adaptation does not and cannot occur,” a view that is supported by Babbit (1910) as “a confusion of the arts” and by Welleck & Warren (1942) who call it “a theoretical impossibility” (Qtd. in Elliott 134).

The element that is common in the arguments of all the scholars mentioned above is that words cannot be translated into images because the two aspects of form and content are always separate. They argue strongly that only the literary form is transferable to film, that is the setting, plot, characterization and other rhetoric devices, but not the literary content, namely themes and ideology. In effect, they argue that the racism and the sexism that is dramatized in Shakespeare’s *Othello* (1604) and *The Tempest* (1611) is not transmitted to their adaptations, yet this study

found evidence to the contrary that these ideas were actually passed on to, and were even magnified by the movies.

Such arguments come from a school of thought that was eventually overtaken by that of the post-structuralist semioticians like Walter Pater (1890) and Saussure (1965) who argue that there can be no dichotomization of the twin aspects of word/image or form/content in adaptation. They argue that literary form and content are always merged and are passed on together from books to films, and this study found this to be true. There is evidence that shining the Elliottian torch at both the formal (the rhetorical devices like setting, characterization, plotting, props, costumes and others) and the ideological contents of racism and sexism reveals that the two aspects are transmitted together to the film adaptations of *Othello* (1995) and *The Tempest* (2011).

1.7.3 Racism and Sexism.

Racism and sexism are terms used to describe people's attitudes and prejudices against other human beings of a different skin colour and gender, respectively. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (6th ed.) defines racism as "the belief that some races of people are better than others" (Hornby 2000: 959), and sexism as "the unfair treatment of people, especially women, because of their sex" (Ibid. 1080). Racism and sexism constitute the two "major oppressions" of race and gender respectively, the third one being class oppression. Selden (1988) argues that the development of society was matched by the growth of people's consciousness on these oppressions, which became "a major source of revolutionary and reformist ideologies in modern times" (520). Barenstein (1994) supplements this with a historical survey of racism and observes that racism gained its peak during the era of slave trade in the 18th and 19th centuries and she puts the blame squarely on the white race as the architects of racism since slave trade

was driven by the belief that the black race was naturally destined to serve the white race. Patrick Brantlinger (1985) takes up Barenstein's arguments of slave trade which he connects to the European colonization of Africa. Brantlinger examines the argument that the colonialist adventures in Africa were fueled by the need to "civilize the Dark Continent," which claim he labels as racist aimed at justifying the European colonization of Africa. Thomas Huxley's (1863) remarks are symptomatic of even a more bizarre type of racism when he claims that Africans are closely related in kinship to chimpanzees and gorillas (184).

Walker and Rasamimanana (1993) make a follow-up of Huxley's dehumanizing claims above when they find that Western art-forms and imaginaries are repositories of black denigration in as far as the African is looked at as a beast. According to them, such claims are aimed at destroying the black man's sense of self-worth since his "self image" is degraded (14). These suggestions of his beastliness are psychologically damaging at both individual and a collective level. Besides, the image of the African as a beast invokes the associated image of ugliness as a black label, which makes blacks unfit to inter-marry with the white race. Blacks are only suited to serve as servants and slaves of whites. This idea of blacks as servants is highlighted by Kevin Dunn (1996) in her discussion of imaging that is achieved through characterization in Western imaginaries, particularly the "image of an African as a loyal servant" (154). According to this discourse the colour black is not just semantically symbolic of evil, but also a metaphor of lowliness, backwardness and savagery. This thesis makes an extensive discussion of racism through its analysis of the Shakespearean methods of depicting the theme that are compared with the filmic methods employed by the selected adaptations of these plays that is underpinned by Elliott's "psychic" and "ventriloquist" adaptation theories. The findings pointed to the fact that the film adaptations were more effective in portraying the idea of racism on account of the

enrichments that these adaptations bring into its depictions. For example, where the films employ moving pictures, audible sounds and three-dimensional representations of the filmic material world, the literary medium relies on word masses that require the reader to put an interpretation into them and to imagine the movement, the gestures, the action and the dialogue of the characters. The effect of these additions and enrichments is to magnify racism on the screen.

In same way, the idea of sexism against women is presented more graphically in the film adaptations than in the literary texts. It is important to note that sexism thrives in a patriarchal setting that is dominated by men. The patriarchal ideology is used as a tool for disempowering and disenfranchising women. The history of the oppression of women by men gave birth to the Women's Liberation Movement of the late 60's, which also gave birth to the Feminist Movement of the 70's. The Feminist Movement was a political struggle for women emancipation whose best known ideologues were Mary Ellman and Kate Millet. Millet wrote what is now considered a classic of feminist criticism, *Sexual Politics* (1970), soon after Ellman had written *Thinking About Women* (1968). These two women belonged to a generation of pioneer feminist thinkers and they continue to be a great influence in the gender liberation debate up to date. Elaine Showalter was a latter feminist critic who devoted herself to revising male literary history by exposing "sexual stereotyping in canonical texts and reinterpreting or revising the works of women writers" (330). Showalter turned literary texts into opportunities for female activism since these texts had always served as powerful tools for disseminating the patriarchal ideology. Another argument on sexism by Helene Cixous (1988) analyzes "the evolution of women's inferiority in a patriarchal setting." Cixous looks at the pseudo-scientific theories of patriarchal England in which "the Victorian anthropologists believed that the frontal lobes of the man's brain were heavier and more developed than the female lobes, and thus women were inferior in

intelligence” (Qtd. in Showalter 344). Cixous concludes that sexism against women goes back to classical society and was pioneered by the classical male philosophers, such as the renowned Greek philosopher, Aristotle. Aristotle had declared that “the female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities... We should regard female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness” (Ibid. 534). Aristotle’s sexist remarks are built on a religious argument in which the alleged inferiority of women is something willed by God. This thesis found that the interpretations of sexism given by all these great scholars are brought to life by the filmic representations. It is argued that film is a more a potent and powerful weapon for social indoctrination than the literary text. The adaptations of *Othello* (1995) and *The Tempest* (2011) retain the racism and sexism in Shakespeare’s plays; however, the two films also enrich and magnify the representations of these ideas. Taymor’s *The Tempest* (2011) particularly portrays graphic images of the black character (Caliban) as a monster sired of the Devil as his father and a black witch (Sycorax) as his mother. The screen incarnated Caliban is a product of make-up whose synthetic skin was constructed from volcanic lava and shells. In casting Djimon Hounsou in Caliban’s role, the film achieves even a more forceful dehumanization of a black character: Hounsou brings into the film the accumulated acting experience of a Hollywood star who has acted different roles in many movies. His way of acting communicates a more enriched version of black savagery than Shakespeare’s idea of it.

It is this image of Caliban that Henderson (2011) castigates because she considers it Hollywood’s way of promoting Western prejudice against blacks. Caliban symbolizes the cultural inferiority of the black race, fronted in the image of a deformed “savage and heathen in the jungle” (101). Similarly, Brantlinger highlights another aspect of such depictions of black characters in the image of “fetishistic devil worshippers” (179) who live in the jungle crawling

with demons. These depictions are explored in greater detail in this thesis. The dehumanization of Caliban in *The Tempest* (2011) echoes and reinforces the numerous arguments by Western anthropologists that blacks are less human than whites.

1.8 Hypothesis.

It was hypothesized that although Shakespeare's texts, *Othello* (1604) and *The Tempest* (1611), portray stereotypical images of black and female characters, the film adaptations of *Othello* (1995) and *The Tempest* (2011) by Oliver Parkers and Julie Taymor, respectively, magnify the negative imaging of black and female characters because they use extra-representational methods, such as moving images, audible dialogue, music, architecture, special effects and more for enriching and embellishing distortions of screen images of black and female characters. This makes film depictions more racist and sexist than depictions in Shakespeare's plays.

1.9 Research Methodology.

Shakespeare's 17th century plays, *Othello* (1604) and *The Tempest* (1611), were read and subjected to critical studies on them by a number of scholars like Charles Nauert (1965), Samuel Johnson (1983) and Michael O'Toole (1986), among others in as far they portrayed the themes of racism and sexism. Oliver Parker's adaptation of *Othello* (1995) and Julie Taymor's adaptation of *The Tempest* (2011) were viewed repeatedly and the focus was on the cinematic techniques, especially how these techniques exaggerated, magnified and enriched representations of racism and sexism. These cinematic techniques were matched and contrasted with the corresponding literary techniques used by Shakespeare to dramatize the same ideas of racism and sexism, and the literary techniques were found not to be quite as effective as their cinematic counterparts. This intriguing finding was subjected to a theoretical analysis that was underpinned

by Kamilla Elliott's adaptation theories, especially the "ventriloquist" model, and also the "psychic" and the "Trumping" models. The "ventriloquist" theory proved to be sufficient in explaining the cinematic magnification of the two ideological representations of racism and sexism. A qualitative analysis of the cinematic techniques, underpinned by Elliott's theories, revealed the centrality of cinema's unique extra-representational features (like moving pictures, colourful costumes and props, make-up, lighting, special effects, stunts, audible dialogue and other acoustics of the sound-track like music, singing, clashing swords, roaring sea waves and more) in magnifying, enlarging and enriching portrayals of racism and sexism, which significantly dwarfed their corresponding Shakespearean depictions in the two plays.

1.10 Theoretical Framework.

Gerard Genette's theory of "transtextuality" looks at all aspects that "set a text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts" (*Palimpsestes*, 1982). Genette's concept is built up by other sub-concepts that often work together in interpreting a literature/film interchange; it is, however, "hypertextuality" that was most useful in this study in the way it establishes a link between a film (the hypertext) and a literary text (hypotext)" (Qtd. in Leitch 94). Genette's concepts facilitate the classification of Parker's and Taymor's adaptations of *Othello* (1995) and *The Tempest* (2011) respectively, as the hypertexts, while Shakespeare's plays become the hypotexts. Genette's theory is useful because it establishes a direct link between Shakespeare's plays and their selected adaptations; however, it does not help in explaining why the film adaptations magnify the Shakespearean ideas of racism and sexism. For this reason, Genette's theory does not play a central role in this analysis. Thomas Leitch, on the other hand, uses a different nomenclature of adaptations, which includes "celebrations, replications, realizations, adjustments, colonizations and allusions" (93-126). It is the three Leitchian concepts of

“replications, realizations and colonizations” that best explain how the selected plays of Shakespeare were translated to movies. These concepts explain precisely why the films are sometimes similar to the plays and why significant differences sometimes emerge between them. For example, a “realization” is an incarnation of the written text into a movie and “colonization” is an enrichment of the movie. Leitch theory practically provides an alternative argument to this thesis, particularly his idea of “colonization.” This is because Shakespeare’s literary texts being “colonized” by the “filmic spirits” in adaptation (Elliott 143) is same as the Elliottian argument that a ventriloquist interpretation of the film adaptation explains the enrichment of representations of ideas by the film medium. These enrichments or embellishments result in the magnification of themes that are dramatized in the written text. The shortcoming of Leitch’s theory and the reason why it was not adopted in this thesis is its failure to connect the “colonization” of the adaptation with the filmic techniques. Its argument is premised on the direct replacement of the literary ideas by new filmic ideas without explaining the process of this replacement. The other elements of Leitch’s theory like “realizations” and “adjustments” were useful in explaining the process of creating a film out of a literary text, but not why an adaptation magnifies representations of themes. Another group of film theorists called the narratologists (like Seymour Chatman and Brian McFarlane) take a different approach which attempts to distinguish the story in the film and “its discursive manifestation in a given fabula or discours or l’nonciation” (Qtd. in Leitch 99). At the discursive level, the narratologists recognize the following methods of modifying a film adaptation: “compression, expansion, updating and superimposition” (98-103). The concepts of “compression,” “updating” and “superimposition” were particularly applicable to the pictorial realizations of *Othello* (1995) and *The Tempest* (2011), but they, too, do not explain enrichment of themes. It is true that “compression” and

“updating” helped the directors to shorten the dialogue in the adaptations and to introduce contemporary cultural values into the adaptation. Such processes are useful in explaining what makes adaptations more relevant to modern audiences; however, “compression” and “updating” do not explain the accentuation of ideas in the film medium.

This thesis, therefore, did not find the above-mentioned theories sufficient for analyzing the selected film adaptations because of their inability to explain magnifications of racism and sexism in *Othello* (1995) and *The Tempest* (2011). It was Elliott’s theoretical concepts, especially the twin concepts, namely: the “psychic” and “ventriloquist,” which provided sufficient explanations for the ideological magnification of the cinematic imaging of racism and sexism in Hollywood representations of these practices in modern society. Such cinematic magnifications surpass by far the Shakespearean representations of these practices in the English society of the 17th century. The “Trumping” theory was also found useful in explaining Julie Taymor’s feminist representations of a matriarchy in her adaptation of *The Tempest* (2011).

1.11 Significance of the study.

As a comparative study of representation in the literary and celluloid media, this thesis explores a substantial number of criticisms on Shakespeare the poet and dramatist. Its point of departure with other studies on Shakespeare is its singularity in using Elliott’s adaptation theories as academic tools for explaining the graphic nature of film adaptations when compared to and contrasted with their parent written texts. This study focuses on Elliott’s “psychic” and “ventriloquist” adaptation theories to explain the cinematic enrichment, expansion and magnification of ideas, resulting in more graphic and magnified representations on the screen than corresponding representations in the literary text. This is evident and illustrated by the

graphic imaging of racism and sexism exhibited in the selected adaptations of *Othello* (1995) and *The Tempest* (2011). How filmic magnifications of ideas is achieved is the contribution that this study makes to the existing knowledge of literary and film studies on Shakespeare.

1.12 Problems Encountered in the Study.

The greatest challenge encountered in this study was the unavailability of secondary texts on Shakespeare and films. Film adaptations of Shakespeare's *Othello* (1604) and *The Tempest* (1611) by other directors were lacking, which limited a comparative analysis of techniques and content which would have enriched this thesis. The researcher, however, used the available materials to come up with the findings in this thesis.

1.13 Definition of Terms.

In this study, the following terms had the following functional meanings:

- Adaptation:** Refers to the process of translating or transposing literary texts into films.
- Intertextuality:** This is a relationship between a literary text and a film text as conceived by Gerard Genette, where there is "an actual presence of one text within another" (Qtd in Leitch 94), which in the present case means the transfer of elements from Shakespeare's literary texts into film.
- Paratextuality:** These are elements in the film adaptation which Genette considers "to place them within the totality of the literary work" (Shakespeare's plays) (Ibid. 94) such as titles, illustrations on the dust covers and forewords/preliminary remarks by directors, prefaces, postfaces etc.
- Metatextuality:** Refers to the films' modes of critiquing or commenting on their Shakespearean sources without necessarily

mentioning the fact in aspects like characterization, costumes/props and plotting strategies.

Hypertextuality: Refers to aspects that establish a relationship between the films, which Genette calls “hypertexts” and their literary sources upon which they are grafted (in this case, Shakespeare’s plays), or Genette’s “hypotexts.”

Psychic adaptation: Refers to Elliott’s mode of translating Shakespeare’s literary texts into film, which claims to reproduce the original intention and style of the author: this model features prominently in the present study.

Ventriloquism: Refers to Elliott’s model of translation that results in “cinematic enrichment” of a text (2003:144), where a movie imports interpretations and new meanings that cannot be traced to its literary source: this model also features in the present study.

Replications: Are film adaptations that represent faithfully all aspects of their literary sources— word for word — the formal elements i.e. plot, structure, action, character, setting, props, costumes, dialogue, music and tone; and the ideological contents— i.e. theme and message.

Realizations: Are also called “incarnations” by Elliott and they refer to cinema’s power to create three dimensional illusions of the real world images. When they are compared to the literary texts from which they were derived, pictorial realizations are authentic depictions that are accessed visually and aurally by viewers.

Colonization: These are actually Leitch’s equivalents of Elliott’s “new spirits” (2003:149) in the ventriloquist adaptation model whose effect is to

introduce and import an added meaning to the film.

Celebrations: These are film adaptations that glorify canonical works by some of the most iconic writers/authors and these adaptations attempt as much as possible to preserve the form and ideas of their parent literary texts. The adaptations in this study are in a way celebrations of Shakespeare's plays.

Allusions: These are intertextual references in films to other existing texts that are closely and sometimes even remotely connected to them; they help in explaining and enriching the film, thus expanding its meaning.

Adjustments: Refers to the approaches and strategies developed by Thomas Leitch that enable literary texts to be converted to cinema; its four sub-sets are defined below:

Compression: This is a strategy of converting a literary text into a film, which involves cutting down its size to produce a short, filmic version suitable for filmic entertainment. The adaptations in this study are truly compressions.

Expansion: Is the opposite of "compression" above, and involves adding material to the shorter literary text (e.g. a short story, poem or song) in order to make it long enough for filmic entertainment.

Updating: This involves introducing contemporary material (e.g. setting themes/ideas, costumes, practices and objects/props, among others) into a canonical text like a Shakespearean play so as to create a sense of relevance and universal appeal to modern viewers. Hollywood has truly updated Shakespeare's plays here.

Superimposition: This is Leitch's coinage, which means incorporating all borrowed and/or suggested material that is used to enrich a film, in which every contributor is considered a co-author of the movie. Among the movie co-authors are: the movie directors who impose their own ideas and interpretations on the product, movie stars who may introduce unique dialogue and unique acting style, script writers who may introduce changes or completely new material to the dialogue, costume designers, sound track producers etc

CHAPTER TWO

Literary and Cinematic Techniques Portraying Racism and Sexism in *The Tempest*

2.1 Introduction.

This chapter examines Shakespeare's literary methods in *The Tempest* (1611) and how he uses dramatic techniques to bring out the themes of racism and sexism. It also analyses Taymor's corresponding cinematic methods, which she uses to portray racism and sexism. It is important to remember that the play is Shakespeare's artistic depiction of these vices in the 17th Century English society in which he was nurtured and wrote. It is not possible to carry out an exhaustive analysis of every technique that Shakespeare employs; therefore, the focus is on only six dramatic techniques that are significant in portraying the themes of racism and sexism in *The Tempest* (1611). These techniques include physical setting, characterization, props/costumes, blocking, stunts/special effects and songs/music/and all other sound effects.

The comparative analysis that matches Shakespeare's dramatic techniques with their filmic equivalents is underpinned by Kamilla Elliott's six adaptation theories, although emphasis is placed on only two of them, namely, the psychic and ventriloquist theories. These two theories are based on the principle of varying degrees of fidelity to the authorial text. Section 1.2 of this thesis makes a detailed discussion of this idea of textual fidelity. The significant difference between these two models is the consistent attempt by the psychic model to retain the author's style and ideological intention, as opposed to the ventriloquist model that enriches the author's style and intention. Film directors who use the psychic adaptation model are conservative, but film directors who employ the ventriloquist adaptation model are less restrained since they take risks in their transpositions. In ventriloquism, the directors invariably introduce their own artistic

elements to suit both the film medium and the times, thereby producing more impressionistic transpositions. Some of these elements are visual aspects that innovate with colours, props, costumes, performance and architecture; as well as novelties in sound effects that are imaginatively rendered in the acoustics of the sound track. These directors always believe that the cinematic way of rendering ideas is completely different from the written way; therefore, the two media must employ different strategies of representation. Whereas the writer relies on dialogue and descriptions on a page, the film artist employs spectacle and sound to create illusions of reality. Notwithstanding these apparent differences, Elliot sees the two adaptation models as “two sides of the same coin” (149) since the psychic and the ventriloquist models always work together in a transposition.

This study gives a detailed analysis as to why Taymor’s adaptation of *The Tempest* (2011) maintains faithfulness Shakespeare’s play in some scenes when depicting racism and sexism, and why in other scenes it is more adventurous when it imports aspects that cannot be traced to the literary text.

2.2 Literary Physical Setting in *The Tempest* (1611).

The physical setting falls under the geographical location(s) or place(s) where the action takes place. Shakespeare’s play does not specify names of places, such as countries or towns, but adopts a material definition of physical setting under the two sub-headings of the sea and the land. It is this material definition of setting, together with its ability to portray racism and sexism that is analysed in this section.

Shakespeare’s employment of the sea-water and land masses motifs is not as innocent as it appears to be; it contains a deep-seated racism and sexism. The sea is the arena for witchcraft

and mysticism. Both the racist and the sexist dimensions are found in the claim that the late Sycorax nurtured and presided over the metaphysical mysteries that are found in the sea; that even in death, she is responsible for the dark forces that continue to haunt the island. The claim is racist because she was black and it is sexist because she was a female character. She allegedly left a legacy of cosmic turmoil in the forests and the surrounding sea as confirmed by her own son, Caliban, when he delivers a curse at his Master:

As wicked dew as e'er my mother brushed
With raven's feather from unwholesome fen
Drop on you...
All the charms
Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats light on you! (I.ii.321-40).

2.2 (a) The island landmass.

Shakespeare sets his play on a deserted island surrounded by an infinite vastness of the sea. It is an exotic setting that brings out the idea of an enchanted island governed by witches and magicians. Shakespeare provokes readers to mentally visualize the island's terrain from the descriptions in the dialogue of his characters. A variety of features constitute the island's terrain— some parts are bare and rocky, therefore, dry and arid, whereas other parts are green and bushy. Prospero's prison, for example, is located in the dry part, as revealed in Caliban's complaint to Prospero:

And here you sty me
In this hard rock whiles you do keep from me
The rest o'th'island (I.ii.342-3)

Caliban is “confined into this rock” after Prospero allegedly caught him red-handed trying to rape Miranda (I.ii.345-361).

A great deal of the island is fertile, green and bushy and is covered in a thick jungle. That explains why Gonzalo is thunderstruck by what he beholds: “How lush and lusty the grass looks! How green!” (II.i.53-54). Gonzalo paints a picture of purity, completely uncontaminated by the vices of modern living that characterize his hometown, Milan. The original owner of the island, now deceased, is said to have been an African witch, Sycorax, whose mind-boggling witchcraft is illustrated by the way she had imprisoned Ariel inside a pine branch (I.ii.274-77). The ownership of the island later passes to a white magician, Prospero, who together with his only daughter, Miranda, had been banished from the Dukedom of Milan.

The virginity of the island echoes Montaigne’s idealization of the New World (Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean) before it was colonized by the Old World (Europe). Michael O’Toole (1986) in his essay, “Shakespeare’s Natives: Ariel and Caliban in *The Tempest*” makes a critique of Montaigne’s wistful idealizing of Nature. It is important to note that it is Montaigne who actually inspired Shakespeare to write *The Tempest* (1611). Montaigne continually asserts that Nature herself ought to be the light by which human action is guided. He presents a highly idealized characterization of the natives of the New World or “cannibals,” as he calls them, as men who live the way Nature intends them to live, unadorned and unfettered by modern civilization (Qtd. in Wells 173).

The Shakespearean setting contradicts Montaigne as it anticipates the idea of Africa as a danger to the Westerner. There is a big difference between Europe and Shakespeare’s imaginary island in terms of the terrain, the weather, the vegetation and infrastructure such as roads, buildings and

communication technologies like the telephone, radio, television and the internet. The island is wild and medieval; the surrounding sea is tempestuous and violent; and the waves continually batter the coastlines. Inside this wilderness and cosmic chaos resides a mysterious force whose embodiment are the invisible spirits under the leadership of Ariel. Ariel's mind-blowing capabilities are described elsewhere in this thesis.

The idea behind this untamed physical and cosmic setting is to make the island a white man's grave since its environment is completely ruthless and unsympathetic to his delicate physiology. The bushes and the jungles are swarming with vermin: zillions of mosquitoes and other microbes that are poised to infest him with disease and to indiscriminately kill the un-acclimatized Westerners, including Alonso and his men who are presently shipwrecked on the island. The "sterilized cleanliness" of Europe makes them easy prey considering that the New World (Shakespeare's imaginary island) is covered in the filth of its jungles, caves and coastlines. There are no hospitals to run to in case one contracts malaria or is bitten by a snake or any other creature that might be lurking in the wilderness. The natives like Ariel and Caliban, on the other hand, are acclimatized and they also know their way around. Their tough bodies can stand the strains of the elements, the bites of myriads of insects, snakes and scorpions. Shakespeare's imaginary island becomes a foil of Europe; it also serves as a warning to Westerners to beware of the allure of Africa with its exotic jungles, bushes, beaches and wildlife. They would be better off avoiding this environment as much as possible because of its latent dangers. It is this representation of the natural environment that this thesis finds to be racist because it paints negative images of the island as the white man's grave, on top of being the abode of natives who are savages, especially black Sycorax and her son, Caliban.

Brantlinger (1985) traces the roots of such negative representations of Africa and her people to The Berlin conference of 1884, which marked the start of the “Scramble for Africa.” He observes further that, “The British saw Africa as a centre of evil, a part of the world possessed by a demonic ‘darkness’ or barbarism, represented above all by slavery and cannibalism, which it was their duty to exorcise” (17).

This thesis agrees with Brantlinger’s analysis above and examines further how these negative representations have been incorporated into Shakespeare’s play, *The Tempest* (1611), and its 21st century cinematic adaptation by Taymor (2011), which make both the play and the film effective tools for marketing the ideologically distorted images of Africa and her peoples.

2.2 (b) The sea-water mass.

Shakespeare’s play is full of references to water. Water can be found in the scene where Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo enter “all wet,” after being led by Ariel into a swampy lake (IV.i.1); and in the closing scene where Prospero promises that once he has reconciled with his enemies, “deeper than did ever plummet sound/ I’ll drown my book” of magic (V.i.56–57). But it is the opening scene that is significant; it features mariners battling the waves as they try to save the ship carrying Alonso and his companions on their way to Italy from Africa where they had gone to attend the marriage of Alonso’s daughter, Claribel, to the king of Tunis. The whole of Act I, scene one is set on the sea and ends with the sinking of the ship, killing everyone on board. That precise moment of catastrophe is marked by the cry of the Mariner: “All lost! To prayers, to prayers! All lost!” (I.i.55). Miranda is equally fearful of the sailors’ fate:

Brave vessel,

Who had no doubt some noble creature in her,

Dashed all to pieces...

Poor souls, they perished! (I.ii.6-9).

Perhaps, the most important overall effect of this water motif is to heighten the symbolic importance of the tempest itself. It is as though the water from that storm runs through the language and action of the entire play—just as the tempest itself literally and crucially affects the lives and actions of all the characters. Charles Nauert (1965) explains how magic was controversial in Shakespeare's day. The whole of Europe was gripped by a campaign against the occult. In Italy, for example, Giordano Bruno was burnt at the stake for his occult studies in 1600. Outside the Catholic world, in Protestant England where Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest* (1611), magic was also taboo, albeit not all magic was considered evil. Several thinkers took a more rational approach to the study of the supernatural; they were driven by the determination to discover the workings of unusual phenomena. Among them was the German thinker, Henricus Cornelius Agrippa, who published *De Occulta Philosophia* (A.D.1531, 1533). He gave an analysis of "divine" magic basing on his observations. Agrippa's work influenced Dr. John Dee, an Englishman and student of supernatural phenomena. Both Agrippa and Dee describe a kind of magic similar to Prospero's, one that is based on 16th-century science, rationality and divinity rather than the occult. When King James took the throne, Dee found himself under attack for his beliefs, but he ably and successfully defended himself when he explained the divine nature of his profession. This did not save him from eventually being executed on account of these beliefs.

Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest* (1611) at this tumultuous time and was, therefore, most careful to make the distinction when he portrayed Prospero as a rational and not an occultist magician (Nauert 36). He does this by providing a contrast to him in Sycorax. Sycorax is said to have

worshipped the devil and to have mated with him, besides being full of “earthly and abhorred commands” and as such, she was unable to control Ariel, who was “too delicate” for such dark tasks (I.ii.272-3). Prospero’s rational goodness, on the other hand, enables him to control Ariel where Sycorax can only trap him inside a tree (I. ii.274-79). Sycorax’s witchcraft is frequently described as destructive and terrible, where Prospero’s magic is said to be wondrous and beautiful. Prospero seeks to set things right in his world through his magic and once that is done, he renounces it and sets Ariel free. We must of course understand that Prospero never actually does any magical acts, only Ariel does. So the act of Prospero setting Ariel free in the end is symbolic of Prospero ridding himself of his magical powers. Prospero’s loss of magical powers translates to loss of political and spiritual control over the island and its immediate impact is the liberation of the natives. Caliban is the greatest beneficiary of this liberation. He (Caliban) is set free and regains possession and control of his heritage, the island, which historically symbolizes the independence wave that swept across the African colonies when the Western colonialists renounced their territorial hegemony in the early 1960s.

It is this distinction by Shakespeare between Prospero’s and Sycorax’s mystical practices that is overtly racist, albeit he must have been striving to avoid the King’s wrath against the occult. The fact that Shakespeare found it safe to portray the black character, Sycorax, as an occultist or demon worshipper but not white Prospero is a mark of black stereotyping and racism. It was acceptable to portray blacks as witches, but the whites had to be vindicated from witchcraft. Shakespeare’s bias in representation is further compounded in sexism; he together with his white society appears to be comfortable with the idea that Sycorax, a female character, can engage in witchcraft but not Prospero, a male character.

2.2 (c) Cinematic On-location Filming in *The Tempest* (2011).

The Shakespearean physical setting presented above is translated by the film into on-location filming, which brings to life the settings and objects. The preliminary comments of the film director reveal how seven years earlier she (Julie Taymor) had travelled to the Hawaiian chain of islands and had been mesmerized by one of the islands in the chain— Linai. When she was subsequently offered the project of adapting Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611) into film, she immediately decided that Linai would be the perfect natural setting. She remembered the island's fascinating primeval ambience— its wild jungles, its rocky, rugged and surrealistic coastlines, its caves and occasionally wild, tempestuous seas and its vast, uninhabited wilderness— as a perfect setting for a medieval drama of an enchanted island. She persuaded the owner of the Island, a man who delightfully turned out to be a lover of the arts, to allow her to shoot the film on location.

Corrigan and White (2004) discuss the history of on-location filming that dates back to the 1930s and 1940s when “cinematic realism” gained emphasis: a practice that was good for showing “exterior places and actual places— identifiable neighbourhoods and recognizable cultural sites— as the primary mise-en-scene” (50). There are many arguments in favour of on-location shooting rather than studio settings, such as its ability to establish scenic realism and the scenic atmosphere. Corrigan (2004) defines “realism” as a term that describes “the extent to which a movie creates a truthful picture of society, person or some other dimension of life, but also its psychological or emotional accuracy” (45).

Shakespeare's physical setting described above is, therefore, appropriated by Julie Taymor, the director of the film adaptation, for her own representation of the intentions of the playwright. In

creating cinema Julie Taymor capitalized on the film's material world, which Corrigan and White (2004), refer to as "mise-en-scene... or elements of film that are independent of the camera and the processes of filming and editing... the elements that are put in position before the filming actually begins" (42). Mise-en-scene is constituted by the scenic elements of a movie, including actors, lighting, sets and settings, costumes, make-up and other features of the image, which Neramore (2000) calls the "semiotic richness of moving images, music, props, architecture, costumes, audible dialogue and more" (144). Corrigan and White state further that "the film's material world may be actual objects and people set in actual locations... or it may include objects and settings constructed by art designers" (43-44). Shakespeare's physical setting finds its equivalent in the movie's material world, whose primary aspect— sets and settings— is perceived by the viewers with their eyes and ears. The literary text on the other hand tends to emphasize the subjective imagination of this physical setting by the readers, which can vary from reader to reader since it is something that is also determined by cultural influences and/or horizons of exposure to different environments and world views. Although literary critics argue that Shakespeare employs physical setting as a dramatic technique to portray racism, the same critics leave the readers to imagine how physical setting actually works in the text.

It is argued in this thesis that cinema transcends these barriers since it is more definite than the words in the written play. Film does not leave viewers to reconstruct the physical setting from the written words; it presents this setting to them visually and aurally and empowers them more than readers because they are able to verify their experiences with their senses and to draw relatively similar, if not identical conclusions. This is evident in the way *The Tempest* (2011) is incarnated in a natural environment resplendent with colours and noises. For example, there are amazing sequences of the natural forest, a thick tropical jungle, in which Alonso and his men get

lost, whose thick canopy obscures the sunlight. There are images of huge lianas or climbing plants winding round mighty trees hundreds of years old, as they struggle to reach the sunlight. There are also sequences of endless and winding coastlines, bordered by huge boulders and crags and rocks, rising high and mighty. The sheer size of these coastal mountains is illustrated by the diminutive image of Ferdinand in a sequence where he walks alone searching for his companions after the storm. There are also amazing footages of tropical primal beaches, haunted by voices of ghosts singing ditties; these beaches are covered in thick, alluring sands that mesmerize Alonso and his men. The same footage of a wandering Ferdinand shows him being led by Ariel's singing voice along one of the beaches, eventually into the jungle where Prospera and Miranda await him. He cuts the image of a lost voyager as he sits alone with a bowed head amongst the rocky outcrops before he is suddenly woken up from this stupor by a singing voice. He is later shown walking along the unfriendly, endless and winding coastline— the cliffs rise above him in rugged savagery, dwarfing him to insignificance— as he follows the singing voice of Ariel, the invisible sea spirit. It is a shot that communicates the idea of Ferdinand's insignificance and impotence amidst the colossal artifacts of Mother Nature; he is a white character that is at the mercy of an incomprehensible black cosmos, teeming with demonic forces. These images of tropical coastlines that can only be described in modern terms as a tourist paradise would provide places for the rich and mighty Westerners to escape from the depressing the wintry, temperate conditions of Europe. They should come to enjoy summer holidays in the tropical sun. The film, however, gives a contrary narrative to the Westerners: they should to avoid the allure of these beaches because they spell death to them. Lastly, is the indomitable, expansive and boundless sea that extends far into the horizon. It is the playground of both the black occult of Sycorax and the white occult of Prospera. This sea is the arena for witches to engage in dark rituals that raise

sea storms, as illustrated by the sequence of Prospera's invocation of the storm which shipwrecks Alonso and his men. It is this natural environment in Shakespeare's imaginary island, haunted by invisible forces, that is brought to life in the movie. The movie leaves a more lasting impression than reading the play because it presents sensorial impressions that are easier to interpret and retain than written words on a page. The film sequence that makes this possible presents amazing shots of a natural terrain and the omnipresent sea, filmed in deep focus, full of spectacular and arresting scenes as described above. It is explained in Section 2.8 of this thesis that the film director rejects Shakespeare's male magician and substitutes him with a female witch. This is beautifully illustrated by a number sequences, including one dramatizing Ferdinand's star-crossed meeting with Prospera. Prospera's sorcery is responsible for engineering this meeting since it is her intention that Ferdinand and Miranda should fall in love. This thesis strongly refutes any later suggestions in the film that Prospera's art is not witchcraft, but Western science and technology. This ambivalence of representing Prospera's powers by a white film director points to a deep-seated discomfort with having a white character indulging in witchcraft. It is part of the racist Western narrative which denies the reality of the occult in white people's cultures, yet it openly parades the occult as a norm in the black people's cultures.

The most graphic filmic sequence of the occult, however, is presented in the form of a pagan ritual performed by Prospera on top of a mountain over-looking the sea, which is described fully in section 2.9 (a) of this thesis. This footage greatly illustrates how the natural setting is employed to magnify stereotypical representations of black witchcraft, played out in the middle of an allegedly hostile and an inhospitable environment that is poised to destroy white characters. An overhead deep focus, high angle shot from Prospera's point of view as she performs the ritual shows an infinite vastness of the sea that stretches to narrowness at the horizon. This shot creates

an impression of a deeply mysterious cosmos inhabited by spirits, a world of ritual and the occult ready to destroy the white strangers.

There are other sequences are equally latent with racism. For example, the film's material world frames the island as a vast emptiness with virgin forests inhabited by a few savages like Caliban. The question that should be asked is whether there is any truth in this type of portrayal. This thesis strongly rejects this portrayal because the island (a symbol of Africa) is not a vast emptiness without inhabitants. This is simply a misrepresentation since this seemingly empty sprawling forest and vast sea are inhabited by innumerable invisible spirits, and there is also Ariel and Caliban to add to that number. The idea of having the island inhabited by invisible spirits is, however, consistent with the colonial practice of denying human presence on the African lands because, in the colonialists' bizarre logic, the natives were simply "invisible."

The natural setting is equally prominent in yet another sequence where Alonso and his men are shown lost in the tropical jungle as they search for Ferdinand. A close up shot shows them battling the undergrowth as the trees rise mightily around them. They are in a difficult situation and they are mocked as white characters thrown into unfamiliar surroundings. Their dilemma arises from their lack of experience with wild outdoor places since they come from a world that is structured differently. Their home, Europe, is full of the high rise buildings, hard-surface roads, motor-cars, telephones, aeroplanes and other technological trappings of the developed world. They are thrown into this wilderness without roads or any means of communicating their plight to the outside world. This footage communicates a familiar message: Africa is a savage terrain waiting to destroy the more civilized whites.

The adaptation also serves the related purpose of denigrating the few Natives on the island, portraying them as raw savages that are not far removed from beasts. This idea is played out in another sequence on another part of the island that is equally bewildering to the white characters. The cinematic terrain is framed in a vast wasteland where Trinculo and Stephano are facing even greater challenges than Alonso and his men. Trinculo and Stephano come separately upon a “monster of the isle” (Caliban) who does not look like them. Trinculo who first arrives on the scene notices something lying flat on the ground. This indecipherable mass on the ground is Caliban pretending to be dead. A deep focus panning shot reveals a desolate scene of barrenness and just as suddenly clouds gather overhead. There is a blinding flash of lightning and a sharp crack of thunder in the wasteland, both of which frighten Trinculo. Since there is nowhere for him to shelter, Trinculo is forced to take cover under Caliban’s gabardine. The scene invokes an uncanny atmosphere that pervades the barbarous celluloid cosmos.

A panning shot on Stephano shows him stumbling drunkenly through the hills as he sings incoherently. This is closely followed by a tracking shot of Stephano’s drunken progress through the barren undulating hills, which is made to alternate with panning close up-shots of the mysterious creature (actually Trinculo and Caliban) covered in a brightly coloured gabardine. Stephano finally arrives and solves the mystery of “the creature” of the island. The details of this scene are fully discussed in Section 2.4 of this thesis. This study takes the view that the depiction of Caliban as a savage is a grave misrepresentation of facts. Caliban and the rest of the natives are not savages as portrayed in the movie; they are just different in appearance and their way of thinking and behaving on account of their environment and nurture. It is this “otherness” that the white characters erroneously call “savagery.”

It is the view of this thesis that these footages and filmic sequences of a vast and wild wasteland are calculated to depress Western viewing audiences, which also happens with the presentation of the rest of the terrain – the jungle, the tumultuous sea, the ghostly coastlines and vertical cliffs. These pictures symbolize the soul of Africa with all her incomprehensible possibilities that should frighten the white characters. The natives do not find anything unusual in all these things, although the white characters are unduly disturbed by them since their environment and nurture have not prepared them to deal with this black cosmos.

2.3 Literary Characterization of Racism in *The Tempest* (1611).

Any discussion of Shakespeare's employment of characterization to render racism in *The Tempest* (1611) invariably centres on two black characters, Caliban and his mother, Sycorax. Although Ariel, the spirit, is also a native of the island, his status is completely different from that of Caliban and Sycorax, as shown later in this analysis.

The Tempest (1611) is essentially a Shakespearean romance; it is a dreamlike and magical portrayal of an uninhabited island enveloped in witchcraft, magic and spiritual omnipresence. These supernatural presences are attributed to the protagonists that are also the owners of the island– Sycorax and later, Prospero, both of whom cast spells on the island. But it is Sycorax that is portrayed as the aboriginal witch on the island. She came from Algiers, in North Africa, where she was banished for allegedly practicing witchcraft. According to Prospero: "This damned witch, Sycorax,/ For mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible/...from Argier,/...was banished" (I.ii.264-66). She ended up on the island, which she conquered. She went further and enslaved all the spirits on it, including their leader, Ariel– the spirit that represents the active principle behind the isle's supernatural powers. After Sycorax's death, the same island, together

with its invisible inhabitants and even the corporeal ones (Caliban and Ariel), were passed on to and became the property of a white male magician called Prospero.

Shakespeare sensationalizes Sycorax's wickedness by alleging that she had an affair with "the Devil Himself," which made her conceive and give birth to "a monster-child." Caliban, her offspring, is further demonized as one who is "half fish and half man" (II.ii.25, 34). In the words of Trinculo, the Jester, Caliban is "Legged like a man! And his fins like arms" (II.ii.34).

In his study of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Michael O'Toole (1986) takes a particular interest in comparing the characterization of Ariel and Caliban. He concludes that Shakespeare's Caliban is pathetic, crass, and vulgar as any individual can possibly be portrayed. O'Toole considers both Ariel and Caliban as the "colonized subjects" of Prospero, and the differing attitudes of these subjects towards their Master is indicative of the differing ways in which human nature responds to modern civilization. Both Ariel and Caliban are individuals undoubtedly oppressed by Prospero, yet each develops a different relationship with their Master based on their natural character as well as their prior circumstances. Whereas Ariel is presented as a refined subject who is willing to serve Prospero unreservedly, Caliban comes across as a crude, rebellious barbarian who is confrontational to the Master. O'Toole clearly faults Shakespeare's negative characterization of Caliban, which he sees as being racist. O'Toole actually exalts Caliban who he sees as a natural man living in a natural environment, the way God intended it to be.

Shakespeare, on the other hand, paints Caliban negatively as the symbolic perfection of deformity as a characteristic of black savagery. Other characters in the play deride Caliban and describe him variously: Trinculo describes Caliban as "A strange fish" (II.ii.27-8). Stephano

describes him as the “Monster of the isle” (II.ii.67). Prospero calls him “The beast Caliban” (IV.i.140) and also “A devil” (IV.i.189), and Alonso calls him “A strange thing” (V.i.290). One literary critic, Kevin Dunn (1996), is irked by this type of labeling that is found in the Western representation of Africans, whose ill-intention is “to exaggerate, emphasize and belittle their *unusualness* in the Western eye” (158). This study finds Dunn’s views above as legitimate concerns regarding Shakespeare’s demonization of black characters and his analysis of the situation is generally justified.

Caliban’s first speech emphasizes his barbarism and lack of gratitude towards his Master. It must be remembered that Prospero as the civilizing influence on Caliban expects gratitude from the slave, not the hostile welcome directed at him and his daughter:

As wicked dew as e’er my mother brushed
With raven’s feather from unwholesome fen
Drop on you both! A south-west wind blow on ye
And blister you all o’er (I.ii.321-24).

Caliban rejects everything that he has inherited from Prospero, including his language (I.ii.363-65). O’Toole (1986) finds significance in Caliban’s rejection of language, since he (Caliban) is rejecting knowledge itself. O’Toole argues that with knowledge comes a realization of one’s inadequacy and Caliban prefers to remain in that primitive state of blissful ignorance. He concludes that Caliban deserves pity because Prospero gives him the tools of communication and self-knowledge, but fails to give him the freedom and self-responsibility that are required in the enjoyment of these tools.

This thesis finds that Caliban's character goes through surprising changes in the second half of *The Tempest* (1611) during his encounter with Stephano and Trinculo. It is possible to view Caliban in the first half of the work as a slave who is rebelling against his oppressive Master; he employs the language of resentment and unwillingness to serve Prospero. Yet when Caliban encounters Stephano and Trinculo with their "celestial liquor" (II.ii.122), he willingly subjugates himself to them. Caliban does not ask them for his freedom, as would be expected. He instead begs them to be his Masters; he even begs Stephano to be "his god" (II.ii.153). Caliban thus shows himself to be incapable of autonomy. In his relationship with Stephano, Caliban is even more pathetic than in his relationship with Prospero, for he abandons his rebellious attitude for one of hero-worship and grovelling. By offering himself willingly as a slave to Stephano, who according to Trinculo is nothing but "a drunkard" (II.ii.169) if not a buffoon, Caliban shows himself to be a true raw savage. The vicious curses that he had constantly sent to his old Master, Prospero, are replaced by requests to lick the foot of his new Master and god: "And I will kiss thy foot. I prithee be my god" (II. ii.153). Caliban's attitude shamelessly suggests that the new arrivals do not impose themselves on the native, but the native himself voluntarily invites Stephano and Trinculo to be his Masters.

It is for this reason that Patrick Brantlinger (1985) takes up this theme of volunteered subjugation and castigates the uncharitable labeling of Africa as the "Dark Continent" in the 19th Century, which he considers an aspect of colonialist stereotyping of a continent and her people. It was also a justification of what Brantlinger calls "intervention by a higher moral power... and the rationalization of the colonizers presence in Africa" (178). Walker and Rasamimanana (1993) agree with Brantlinger in their explicit condemnation of the Western arrogance of representation

that seems to suggest that “Africans would probably die if the white man was not there to save them” (4).

When the above discussion is contextualized in its totality, it can be stated that the epitome of racism in *The Tempest* (1611) is found in Prospero’s accusations against Caliban to the effect that he had attempted to rape Miranda (I. ii. 344-348). Caliban does not actually deny this accusation; he responds with chivalrous abandon: “Oh ho, oh ho! Would’t had been done! / Thou didst prevent me. I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans” (I. ii.349-50). Caliban’s reaction shows his self-awareness of his human right to procreate. Prospero takes the contrary view and thinks that since Caliban has confessed to his crime, he deserves more than prison, namely death for daring to sexually molest a white girl. Prospero is furious that this black and monstrous slave had the audacity to molest his daughter. Prospero is riled by Caliban’s perceived ingratitude: he (Prospero) had taught Caliban human language where he used to “gabble like / A thing most brutish” (I. ii. 355-56); he trained Caliban in etiquette where he used to be a beast; and he had given Caliban a place to live inside his cell. Caliban had abused the Master’s hospitality and good intentions and as such, he deserves to pay with his life for attempted rape (IV.i.189-91). It is this portrayal of Caliban which demonizes him and condemns him to eternal damnation.

Caliban’s character that is displayed by this attempted rape of Miranda becomes the proof of the commonly held view in Western scholarship that black men have an uncontrollable desire for white women (Barenstein 231). This thesis finds the idea of a black man who sexually lusts after a white girl as something that is not confined to *The Tempest* (1611), but is a long-standing subject in the racist narrative, whose proof is documented as recently as the 1990’s in Apartheid South Africa. The black man’s lust for white women was one of the justifications for the racist

policy of Apartheid since it was always argued that white women and girls had to be protected from the criminally inclined black rapist. Rhona Barenstein (1994) agrees that the “myth of the black rapist” dominated Western thinking, gaining its peak in the slave trade era of the 18th and 19th centuries, and its function was and remains the perpetration of

White fears of black male aggression against white women, first, to justify the physical and sexual abuse of blacks during slavery and, second, to defend their lynching as punishment to fit the most heinous crime (318).

It is this theme of the black rapist that is repeated in the *King Kong* film series where “King Kong is the ultimate rapist” (Barenstein 231). The coinage, “King Kong,” has since then become a common label for a sexually active black man. In addition, Caliban’s physical deformity in *The Tempest* (1611) confounds his condition because he is automatically disqualified from cross-breeding with any white female character. It is this dehumanization of blacks that is starkly and shamelessly promoted in Thomas Huxley’s book, *Man’s Place in Nature* (1863). In his critique of Huxley, Patrick Brantlinger examines closely the claim in that book that,

There is proximity between the African and the chimpanzee and gorilla..., (and that) there is an African tribe who believe that the great apes were once their next of kin (184).

Huxley’s misrepresentations in his book are callous and offensive, and also constitute the universal insult that equates physical ugliness with blackness. According to Walker and Rasamimanana (1993), black ugliness is a claim that has found its way into many world cultures and is popularized by the beauty industry. For example, lightening creams is big business that recruits millions of African girls into believing that their black skin is a mark of their ugliness;

therefore, in order for them to become beautiful they should aspire to look like white girls, a feat they can achieve through lightening their skins. Moreover, blackness is also considered a mark of “savagery,” the more reason black girls are urged to get rid of it. No wonder then that many scholars see a connection between the beastly images in Western imaginaries about Africans and their role in creating what Walker and Rasamimanana (1993) call the “absence of a positive self image, both individually and collectively among the Negroid peoples” (14). The two scholars further find the beastly images of blacks in Western literature, including Caliban in *The Tempest* (1611) to underscore the psychological manifestation of “Western fascination with the sensational and bizarre” (5) in the depictions of Africans. Clara Henderson (2000) draws parallels from the cinematic image of a black King found in the adaptation of *King Solomon’s Mines* (1950) which presents “the one-eyed King of Kukuana... and we are expected to gather from this physical deformity his embodiment of evil and cruelty” (164). *The Tempest* (1611), therefore, belongs together with these other imaginaries, which constitute ideological tools for promoting Western racism against blacks.

2.4 Cinematic Characterization Portraying Racism.

The foregoing analysis of Shakespeare’s characterization as a means of depicting racism finds its cinematic equivalent in Julie Taymor’s casting of actors/actresses and in their performance. Both the literary characters and their film star equivalents play the central role of initiating and driving the action; therefore, there can be no story, literary or celluloid, without the characters getting involved in the action. Corrigan and White (2004) emphasize how “actors and performance” is at the centre of most mise-en-scene: “...a flesh and blood actor who embodies and performs a film character through gestures and movement...*Performance* describes the actor’s use of language, physical expression and gesture to bring a character to life” (52).

The film director deliberately casts the seasoned and experienced Djimon Hounsou in the role of Caliban and makes him the means for portraying racism. In the jargon of Hollywood, Hounsou is a film star and Corrigan and White (2004) define a “film star” as that actor or actress who does not only “dominate the action and space of mise-en-scene,” but also brings the “accumulated history and significance of their past performances to each new film appearance” (54). A comprehensive description of how Hounsou’s performance accentuates the portrayal of White racism against blacks is given below.

The lead actor and star in *The Tempest* (2011), Djimon Hounsou, was born Benin in West Africa. His long career in Hollywood has seen Hounsou in many roles that have earned him recognition in the film industry. He was nominated for the Golden Globe Award for the best actor in the film *Amistad* (1997); nominated for an Oscar for the best performance in a supporting role in the film *In America* (2003) and again for his supporting role in *Blood Diamonds* (2006). He played leading roles in *Gladiator* (2000) and *Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life* (2003). These are just a selection of his major appearances, excluding his less known appearances. His rich acting experience is a matter of course and cannot be questioned. Hounsou in the role of Caliban brings glory both to himself and to the film the director; however, this glory rides on the back racism. If *The Tempest* (2011) is to be ranked a great movie, it should be considered a lopsided greatness full of white cultural arrogance that relegates the black race to inferiority. The film demonizes Caliban as a monster when it portrays him in the image of a character that is physically, spiritually, intellectually, culturally and morally deformed and depraved. Moreover, film artistry is used to exaggerate Caliban’s physical deformity through the use of make-up by giving him an artificial skin. It is the spectacular performance of Djimon Hounsou, however, that brings Shakespeare’s character to life because he does what Corrigan and White refer to as

“naturalistic acting” when he gets immersed in his role “fully and naturally... in order to communicate that character’s essential self” (53).

Hounsou’s method of acting may be perfect; however, his admirable portrayal of Caliban as a savage in *The Tempest* (2011) makes one wonder whether he does not participate in his own self debasement, if not the collective debasement of the whole black race. According to Corrigan and White the role of a leading actor, who is also a star, invests him with the status of “a cultural celebrity” (54), therefore, an icon to the viewers. It is a great irony that Hounsou’s excellent acting in which he presents a negative image of a black person is also likely to inflict damage to the black image because it legitimizes the Western world view which equates blackness with savagery. Hounsou accepts to be used as an agent of black degradation and is, therefore, a mercenary who rides into fame through the destruction of his own people’s black image.

The question is: How does Djimon Hounsou rise to this level of infamy in the movie? The answer can be found in the forcefulness of his acting. Casting Hounsou in the role Caliban was an inspired choice because he is the very personification of savagery brought to life on screen.

The film director tried to capture the Shakespearean fish-like image, but it must have proved to be practically and technically challenging. The anatomy of a fish, especially its lack of limbs is fundamentally different from the human shape. Julie Taymor’s subjective rendering of Caliban in celluloid is, however, not far removed from “the spirit of the literary text” (Elliott 136). The film captures the idea of “half fish and half man” (II.ii.25) in spirit rather than in letter and the Taymorian image of Caliban may not be a replication of the Shakespearean idea, but an essential rendering of it.

In her preliminary remarks regarding the making of *The Tempest* (2011), the film director (Julie Taymor) outlines how the celluloid Caliban was engineered. His fossilized skin was covered all over with black and white splotches of raised scars on which were curved Elizabethan swear words: “COCKRED, RATSBRAIN, SPURGGLED, FENSUCKED, HELL-HATED, PUTTOCK, RUTTISH and BOARPIG.” He was given one blue eye which he allegedly inherited from his mother and was made to wear frog-like webbing between his fingers. He was given artificial nails that were long and curved. Julie Taymor recalls that the pictorial realization of Caliban was an arduous process that would take three hours of meticulous making up and another two hours of removing the make up after shooting. Caliban incarnates as a menacing figure: he is squat, stout and physically strong. His thick lips and blue eye give him an aggressive face. His stalking gait and growling voice is threatening. He is naked save for the scanty wrapper around his genitals passed between the legs and fastened around the waist.

It is, therefore, accurate to say that Taymor’s screen rendition of Caliban is recognizably a human being in shape; he has a head, a torso and limbs. What makes him inhuman and grotesque is his bloated amphibian skin, which is not terribly divorced from the Shakespearean idea of “half fish and half man” (II.ii.25). Compared to Shakespeare’s image of him that most readers had anticipated of a human-fish monster, the celluloid version of Caliban consequently impoverishes the Shakespearean text. Shakespeare’s idea of a mobile and talking human-fish is not achieved, but we have to agree that even Julie Taymor’s version has its merits and can be very captivating to viewers in its grotesqueness.

The very first shot taken of Caliban’s is visually captivating because of the uniqueness of his anatomy. A close up image of him reveals an ugly black body mass of a half naked man peeling

a tuber with his teeth and growling, "I must eat my dinner!" It is an image that expresses a racial prejudice that is familiar to white audiences, but which can be troubling to a black audience. A close up-shot of Caliban seated inside a cave, reveals the black enormity of him. It is a breath taking sight because he looks more like a gorilla-frog than a human being. The extreme close-up shot emphasizes his imposing width (he is not tall, at all!) and when it changes to deep focus, Caliban is shown emerging from the hole and climbing over the cliff. The deep focus shot extends far into the horizon of an infinite sea, thereby emphasizing Caliban's gorilla-like posture as he struggles to rise to an erect position. This amazing image of Caliban is a function of perspective; since he is in the foreground, therefore nearer to the camera, he appears comparatively larger than the objects that are framed further behind him.

An imaginative application of lighting on the scene results in a brightly lit background and a darker foreground. Cinematography creates a silhouette of Caliban in the middle ground; he is dark, formidable and inhuman. Throughout this sequence, Caliban is framed on a higher ground than his tormentors, Prospera and Miranda. Caliban's elevated position creates a dominant image of him, which is symbolic of his dominance on the island. Caliban is heard growling, cursing and whimpering, all of which reinforce the impression that he is a beast. This portrayal of Caliban fulfills Harrison's introductory remarks to *The Tempest* (1611) where he states that "Caliban is Shakespeare's image of a horrid savage" (1968: 1,473). Caliban certainly looks physically ugly and temperamentally vicious; an image that is brought to life in celluloid Technicolor, albeit the Shakespearean fish component has been lost. The director's reconstruction of the savage is shamelessly racist; its visual impact surpasses the attempts of any reader, however concerted, to invoke a mental picture of the monster. Caliban's animation is calculated to appeal to the resistant colonialist sentiment about blacks as sub-humans.

In yet another sequence, Caliban is projected as a slave who carries logs of firewood slung on his shoulders. He looks exhausted as he trudges along. He is heard mourning and growling repeatedly: "Prospera, Prospera ...!" words that are directed at his absent "Master" and tormentor. Caliban throws down the fire-wood and as they strike the ground, the sound is transformed into cracks of thunder. The frame immediately becomes dark; Caliban is shown repeatedly hitting the wood with his bare fists. The pathetic ethos is reinforced by the mournful sounds of a flute playing in the background, whose wailing is juxtaposed to Caliban's iterations of injustices inflicted on him by Prospera.

This footage is calculated to appeal to Western viewers who should find this image of the African as a beast of burden quite authentic because it re-inscribes familiar tropes of "Dark Continent" narratology. A deep focus shot of Trinculo as he approaches Caliban introduces even a more exaggerated contrast of characters: Trinculo is voluble and full of energy compared to Caliban who is pathetic with his incessant complaining. Trinculo is dressed convincingly like a real comedian: he is wearing a tight-fitting tuxedo with an extension like a tail. He sports a goatee and his enormous artificial teeth make him look like a vampire looking for someone to suck blood from. He talks and acts like a comedian, whining about the unruly weather and the lack of shelter in case there is a down pour. His gestures are exaggerated as he stomps about and kicks the ground with his tennis shoes. He points at the gathering clouds and as he does so there is a sudden crack of thunder.

A panning shot immediately follows. It depicts Caliban scampering for cover under the gabardine which he had used to tie the firewood. He is in great fear of Trinculo, so he flings himself on the bare ground where he lies still pretending to be dead under the gabardine. Since

he has never seen a white male before, Caliban mistakes Trinculo for a spirit sent by Prospera to punish him for delaying to bring home firewood. Trinculo, too, is in great fear because it is his first time to see what he takes to be the “black monster” of the isle. He is shown circling and sniffing fearfully at Caliban’s immobile body. More violent cracks of thunder frighten Trinculo and he is shown scampering desperately as he joins Caliban under the gabardine. The panning shot momentarily shows the surroundings, and its deep focus perspective reveals desolation everywhere. There is no shrub in the vastness of the frame for any character to shelter from the imminent storm and the only viable alternative for Trinculo is Caliban’s gabardine.

When Stephano appears later on the scene, he is shown to be in even greater fear and terror. He discovers what appears to be a mutant with four legs and two voices hiding under the gabardine—what he calls “the monster of the isle” (II.ii.67). Stephano is shown crouching over it and stalking it for a while before tugging at one end of the gabardine. After repeated tugs he eventually manages to uncover Caliban’s face. A close-up shot indicates that Stephano is puzzled and scared, and curiosity gets the better of him. Stephano is heard speculating that either the monster of the isle was struck dead by thunder or is suffering from an ague. He finally decides that it must be fever and out of pity he begins feeding wine into Caliban’s mouth. Caliban under the gabardine is in great fear himself, shaking and sputtering. The lower part of Caliban’s body under which Trinculo is hiding is covered by the colourfully designed gabardine. The selection of this intricately designed costume appears to enhance Caliban’s monster image. The multi-coloured piece of cloth shimmers like a python, which exploits the fears and terrors evoked by the African python that is reputed to swallow antelopes and human beings whole. Both Trinculo and Stephano display a similar terror when they first encounter this outer covering on Caliban. Trinculo could not initially bring himself to touch the creature in front of him. It is a great irony,

therefore, that he chooses to join Caliban inside the gabardine; perhaps his fear of the thunder overrides his fear of earthly monsters. Stephano experiences a further problem when Trinculo calls out his name underneath the gabardine. Stephano loses his courage and is shown jumping up involuntarily. He repeats the words in the play in a trembling and breathless voice as he backs away from the creature:

Four legs and two voices – a most delicate monster...!

Does thy other mouth call me? Mercy, mercy!

This is a devil and no monster: I will leave him, I have no long spoon

(II.ii.93, 101-3).

The movie renders this utterance in a more enriched way since it is accompanied with pictorials of a staring, breathless Stephano. The film has added spectacle and voice tone to the literary words, the extras in adaptation which produce one of the best presented scenes in the movie.

Caliban is made to drink copiously from Stephano's bottle, which is recklessness on his part considering that it is his first time to taste bottled wine. Caliban apparently becomes drunk and his tongue loosens. He begins to act drunk and to utter foolishness:

CAL: Hast thou not dropped from Heaven?

STE: Out of the moon, I do assure thee. I was
The man in the moon when time was.

CAL: I have seen thee in her, and I do adore thee.

STE: Come, swear to that, kiss the book... swear!

CAL: I'll show thee every fertile inch of the Island
And I will kiss thy foot. I prithee be my god (II.ii.152-157).

Caliban swoons in grotesque submission as he responds to Stephano's directives to kiss the Master's foot. Caliban bends forward, crooks his elbow as he makes to lick Stephano's foot. Trinculo is heard cackling gleefully at the black creature's foolishness and he accompanies this glee with a cry: "By this light, a most perfidious and drunken monster!" (II.ii.154). Caliban is shown preparing to kiss Stephano's foot because in his foolishness and drunkenness he is convinced that Stephano is a god. This is an act of self debasement and enslavement that was mentioned earlier. It is a funny scene but it is also pathetic since Caliban has fallen under the spell of Western liquor and is behaving like a moron. The Western viewers may find the scene funny, but the black viewers may be goaded by a sense of shame since one of their own appears to voluntarily engage in worshipping a fellow mortal.

The scene becomes more pathetic when Caliban scatters the firewood and begins to celebrate what he thinks to be his new found "freedom" under a new "Master" (II.ii.191). He grabs two sticks as he improvises a jig and a chant across the frame of the shot. The tracking shot follows Caliban's comic performance; he strikes the ground repeatedly with the two sticks and the film's acoustics transform the act into reverberations of the African drum. The panning shot on Trinculo and Stephano is transformed to a close-up shot that registers the surprise and the bewilderment in their eyes. They gape at Caliban and when he finally throws away his sticks, the white characters have made up their minds to go along with the foolish creature's scheme of murdering Prospera. An extreme close-up shot registers a fierce expression on Stephano's face as he whispers aggressively at Trinculo's ear: "Trinculo, the King and all our company else being drowned, we will inherit here!" (II.ii.178-79). A lively tune strikes immediately to the delight of the three conspirators. Trinculo and Stephano join Caliban in a jig as they dance away into the distance. The tracking shot taken in deep focus follows their darkened and diminished

silhouetted dancing forms in the horizon. The music picks up in tempo and is transformed into the rapid beating of the African drums and the derisive twang of the guitar.

This is a more enriched version of the Shakespearean scene, which also illustrates the film director's employment of the ventriloquist adaptation concept for greater effect. This is evident in additions or what Elliott (2003) calls "filmic enrichments" (144), such as music rendered in the acoustics of the sound track, a subject that is fully discussed in Section 2.12 of this thesis. It is also evident in animations of performance, such as Caliban drinking from a bottle and the three characters dancing across the frame; it is also found in the spectacle of costumes and props resplendent in Technicolor. These are aspects that are possible only in the film medium. The literary text is incapable of the animation and the audible acoustics found in the footage. Sounds in film add aesthetic meaning to representations since they convey the dimensions of atmosphere and mood. The image of the three men dancing away in joy highlights the power of Western liquor to delude Caliban into thinking that these white characters will help him to get rid of Prospera and to regain his freedom. The viewer can clearly appreciate the foolishness of it all, since he can read the cunning expression on Stephano's face as he whispers to Trinculo. It is a historical reality that the white people who came to Africa were in many guises: some were missionaries, others traders and yet others were administrators. But in varying degrees, they all had the same mission of colonizing and exploiting the New World. Likewise, Stephano and Trinculo cannot be different from Prospera in their mission of enslaving and exploiting the natives and would, therefore, be totally uninterested in helping Caliban to regain his island.

Hounsou's star performance, in the role of Caliban, is taken to a higher level when he is depicted as a violent black savage. A close-up shot shows a worked up Caliban, his blue eye

flashing, his gestures suggesting the goriest alternatives that Stephano should employ in killing Prospera. He presents Stephano with alternatives, ranging from “battering her skull,” “punching her with a stake,” “cutting her weasand with a knife” to “knocking a nail in her head” (II.ii.97-99), accompanying each suggestion with a vicious gesture. In the literary text, this dialogue between Caliban and Stephano lacks the potency it gains when rendered in the movie, although the same words are spoken by the Shakespearean character. On the screen, however, Caliban comes across as a blood thirsty sub-human when we hear the conviction and determination in his tone; these are reinforced by his murderous gestures of drawing his index finger across his throat and his energetic hammering of an imaginary nail into a phantom skull. The pictorial animation also brings out Caliban’s other weakness, his lust for Miranda. He is heard briefing the new Master about the old “Master’s” daughter. An extreme close-up shot reveals the unmistakable glint in Caliban’s blue eye, a tremulous voice, and a distracted look over the frame, all signs of unbridled lust, as he employs poetic diction to describe the beauty of Miranda to an equally lustful Stephano: “... I never saw a woman/ But only Sycorax my dam and she,/ But she as far surpasseth Sycorax/ As great’st does least!” (III.ii.106-110). Stephano is visibly mesmerized by Caliban’s words and manner of description. A close-up shot on his face reveals a fixed stare and an accelerated breathing, which degenerates into shameless lewdness— he is shown distractedly licking his dry lips as Caliban’s description works through him.

Both the celluloid text and the literary texts are overtly racist in their presentation of Caliban as violent and lustful. The above sequence among many others defines how a star performance adds value to a text. In this case, Hounsou’s exceptional acting confirms the deep seated fears among the white people that black men are irresistibly attracted to white women. It is even alleged that

black men are prepared to employ force in order to sexually possess white women. There is a full discussion of this in Section 2.3.

Finally, racism is particularly poignant in the sequence of the wanderings of Alonso and his men as they search for Ferdinand. They emerge out of the woods and they behold at a distance a table laden with dinner in the middle of the filmic wasteland. A paved path lays itself up to the table, an unmistakable use of special effects, and they walk on it. After a short debate around the table laden with food, they agree to eat. Just as they are about to start sampling the foodstuffs, the table together with its contents miraculously disappears into thin air, an impressive use of special effects. Shakespeare uses stage directions to invoke the scene, whose covert principle is Prospero's magic to achieve a similar effect, thus: "Thunder and lightning. Enter Ariel like a harpy, claps his wings upon the table, and, with a quaint device, the banquet vanishes" (II.ii.52). An explanatory footnote appears below the page. In this footnote "a harpy" is defined and further explanations are given on the incident, thus:

"Harpy:" a foul creature— half bird of prey, half woman. This episode was suggested by an event in Virgil's *Aeneid* when the harpies seize and foul the food of Aeneas and his followers.

The movie uses special effects to bring to life these stage directions and footnotes, resulting in a footage that depicts harpies as black creatures that are "half birds of prey, half women." A full explanation of how these harpies are engineered in the movie can be found under section 2.9 (d). The monster image of a harpy recalls that of Caliban as "half fish, half man." Shakespeare does not mention in his text that a harpy should be black, yet the movie director found it fit to have a whole swarm of black harpies invading Alonso and his men, eventually driving them mad. The

harpies in the film are incarnated as black birds with human heads and breasts on their chests, which is clearly the film-makers version of the Shakespearean concept of a harpy. This screen incarnation of harpies dehumanizes blacks. Other directors could have realized the harpies in a different form depending on their subjective imagination of what harpies should look like. This director deploys Elliott's ventriloquist model to consistently make offensive representations of black characters, in the imaging of Caliban, Sycorax and harpies.

In this case, the familiar face of Ariel, the spirit, is easily identifiable among the harpies in his new role as their leader and spokesman. These harpies possess abnormally large wings which they use to hit their victims, namely, Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio, through powerful flapping. It should be noted that, except in this scene, Ariel is presented throughout the film as a handsome spirit with aquiline features. Ariel's incarnation as a harpy is, therefore, an aberration. He is transformed into fearful ugliness— his face, body and teeth are gleaming black, while his white eyes contrast sharply with his black face. His eyes glare sadistically at his victims, his growling voice is wolfish, and his enormous black wings with equally enormous black feathers keep him hovering menacingly over his victims. He perches on a rock where he swings his wings threateningly as he growls: "You fools! I and my fellows/ Are ministers of fate.../ But remember—/...that you three/ From Milan did supplant good Prospera,/ Exposed unto the sea, which hath requit it,/ Her and her innocent child. For which foul deed/ Incensed the seas and shores.../ Against your peace," a speech that borrows words directly from the play (IV.iii.60-74).

A close-up shot highlights his sturdy legs with long curved talons that are capable of ripping his victims to shreds. This image makes a collective portrayal of black characters as killer birds of prey. The sequence uses the "bird" imagery to portray the dehumanization of blacks that is

reflexive of Caliban's incarnation in Section 2.9 (b). This mode of representation is virulently racist and surpasses Shakespeare's idea of a harpy. Julie Taymor's pictorial representation is, therefore, richer and a magnification of Shakespeare's depiction.

2.5 Sexism and the Patriarchal Ideology.

Sexism is a term that broadly describes male chauvinism manifested in the thinking that women are generally inferior to men. Sexism can be broken down to its components that are employed in demonizing and denigrating women, namely: gender stereotyping, lexicon/language, phallocentrism, myths and legends, philosophies and scientific theories. Gender stereotyping exploits the weaknesses of a few women to create negative images, which are then attributed to all women or what is normally referred to as a fallacy of generalization. These images are used to undermine women's human dignity, a practice perpetrated in a patriarchy. The *Oxford Learner's Dictionary* (6th ed.) defines a patriarchy as "a society, system or country ruled and controlled by men" (855). Such a system marginalizes women. Dahlerup (1987) gives a more comprehensive definition of a patriarchy as, "Any system of organization— political, economic, industrial, financial, religious or social— in which the overwhelming number of upper positions in the hierarchy are occupied by males" (94). The patriarchal system uses the patriarchal ideology to justify the oppression, marginalization or subordination of women. De Beauvoir makes a comprehensive analysis of how patriarchy is sustained by the concerted and unrelenting effort of the "patriarchal superstructure— legislators, priests, philosophers, writers and scientists, whose duty is to show that the subordinate position of women is willed by Heaven and advantageous on earth" (Qtd. in Selden ed. 535). The mission of the ideological superstructure is to undermine the position of women using all means, especially gender stereotyping and/or denigration so as to keep women always subordinated to men.

It is important to distinguish the two terms, “gender” and “sex,” because there is a tendency to confuse them as synonyms. Kate Millet (1970) describes sex as “a biologically determined condition” and gender as “a psychological concept that refers to a culturally acquired sexual identity” (167). Feminists state that although sex is naturally determined at birth (i.e. the state of being male or female), gender is a socio-cultural construct that varies from society to society and from period to period. De Beauvoir asserts that “one is not born but rather becomes a woman... It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature which is described as feminine” (Qtd. in Selden ed. 533), and it is this creature that is oppressed in a male dominated world. The marginalization of women, therefore, is not a biological attribute of their sex, but a social construct of their femininity.

For this reason, feminists believe that patriarchy was invented by men and in many a society it is rendered as the dominant ideology. Others believe that the patriarchal ideology is responsible for the indoctrination of even its victims, the women, into accepting their inferior status as something natural and God given. There are also some feminists who believe that women themselves are responsible for their inferior status, which they have accepted. The patriarchal system, which is embedded in the history of mankind, is believed to even predate class society. The accompanying patriarchal ideology has infiltrated all the cardinal institutions and is responsible for the evolution of all socially constructed roles associated with biological maleness or femaleness.

It is on the basis of the above arguments that Dipio (1998) highlights societal demands for “femininity” which expects women to be “submissive, tender, self-sacrificing, patient, docile, humble, understanding, self-effacing and cowardly,” as opposed to “masculinity” that

presupposes “toughness, self-assertiveness, objectivity, arrogance, aggressiveness, fearlessness, courage and determination, among the men” (211). On the basis of these expectations, society gives women demeaning roles and gives men economically rewarding and prestigious roles. For example, women were traditionally confined to motherhood, basically procreation and child rearing. They were and are the cooks and home managers while men were given the more empowering trades like manufacturing, construction and engineering, service in the armed forces or the public sector. Such gendered occupations concentrated wealth in the hands of men, which led to the emergence of two gender based classes— the class of men as the bread winners and the decision makers, and the class of women as the subordinates who served the men. Over time, the men have erected ideological structures for promoting and sustaining the patriarchal system, including literature and film that are at the centre of this investigation.

2.6 Literary Patriarchal Ideology in *The Tempest* (1611).

A reading of Shakespeare’s play shows that it is a glorification of patriarchy since the playwright gives ownership of the imaginary island to a male, white magician, Prospero, notwithstanding that he is a foreigner on the island. Prospero becomes Shakespeare’s chosen instrument for championing and advancing patriarchal ideas in the play. The isle is in the grip of Prospero’s magical powers and no creature can escape from his spell. All the other characters obey him and do his bidding.

This is illustrated by Prospero’s enslavement of Caliban, the heir apparent of his late mother, Sycorax, and the legitimate owner of the island (I.ii.310-14, 361). He disenfranchises Caliban and compels him to do lowly jobs like collecting firewood for him. Prospero also subordinates and exploits Ariel who is the active principle behind the spell that grips the island. Ariel is

Prospero's beast of burden who performs magic and does all the challenging tasks for the Master. Ariel is the real architect of the storm that wrecks Alonso's ship and he is also the one who undoes its effects later (I.ii.195-205, 219-226). Ariel initiates the meeting between Miranda and Ferdinand which he follows through with a conjuring of the wedding masque that foreshadows their wedding (I.ii.419-20; IV.i.56-162). Ariel leads the harpies that drive Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio mad; he later reverses this madness when he restores their wits (II.ii.53-109; V.i.65-68). He is the master-mind of the diversion of the would-be killers of Prospero (Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano) using brightly coloured fabrics hanging on the drying line (IV.i.186-7, 193). Ariel conjures and leads the four flaming spirit-dogs: Fury, Mountain, Silver and Tyrant to drive the three conspirators away from precincts of the cell (IV.i.256-258); and to crown it all, Ariel is the one who mobilizes all the enemies of Prospero and brings them inside the charmed circle where they are finally forgiven by Prospero, which facilitates a reconciliation between Prospero and his enemies (V.i.117, 165-170).

Besides its racism, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611) also perpetuates sexism, notwithstanding that a woman, Sycorax, was the owner and natural ruler of the island. Shakespeare's image of Sycorax thrives on sabotage when he portrays her as a witch, a spouse of the Devil, an oppressor of her subjects and a raw savage. For example, the enormity of Sycorax's witchcraft and oppression of her subjects is highlighted when Ariel begins to show signs of incipient rebellion with demands of "My liberty" (I. ii. 245) and Prospero reminds him how he (Ariel) had been spell-bound by Sycorax:

... Hast thou forgot

The foul witch Sycorax...

Refusing her grand hests, she did confine thee,

By the help of her more potent ministers

Into a cloven pine...(I. ii. 258-289).

Sycorax's black occult is also highlighted in the last scene of the play when Prospero claims that Sycorax was an unparalleled "witch, and one so strong/ That could control the moon, and make flows and ebbs/ And deal in her command, without her power" (V.i.269-271). This accusation is definitely an exaggeration as it claims that Sycorax used her witchcraft to hijack the powers of the moon to create waves and tides at sea. The accusation of witchcraft against Sycorax is a classical type of gender stereotyping in which a woman is always suspected to be a witch, even when there is no evidence to confirm it. In patriarchal ideology, the word "witch" has been incorporated into the English Language lexicon where it is defined as "a woman who employs magic to cause harm" (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 6th ed. 987). A man, therefore, cannot be a witch, because the patriarchal language created and controlled by men is gender specific in its definition. On the other hand, Sycorax is the true witch whose involvement with the "Devil" allegedly resulted in the birth of a monster offspring, Caliban, who is "half-fish and half-man" (II.ii.25, 34).

It is in this sense that Shakespeare's play is sexist since it demonizes a female character (Sycorax) and covertly undermines her rule over the island. Moreover, the play also becomes an ideological tool for female disenfranchisement when it brings the female legacy to an end and ownership of the island is passed to a male Prospero. Sexism, therefore, is at the heart of Prospero's negation of everything that Sycorax had stood for in her life.

It is accurate to state that Shakespeare parades sexism when he presents Sycorax as a witch and Prospero as a magician. He makes sharp contrasts between witchcraft and magic throughout the

play. For example, whereas Sycorax imprisons Ariel inside the Pine branch, Prospero sets him free from this incarceration (I.ii.258-289). Whereas Sycorax was hounded out of Argier for practicing “sorceries terrible/ To human hearing” (I.ii.264-65), Prospero raises a sea storm which, though it appears to destroy Alonso’s ship and cause the drowning of the men, actually causes “No harm” to the sailors (I.ii.15). The boatswain corroborates this incident when he pronounces delightfully that the ship is safe and undamaged since it is “Tight and yare and bravely rigged as when/ We first put out to sea” (V.i.24). There is inherent sexism in a representation which paints witchcraft as invariably harmful, and magic as a force that aims at controlling nature for good intentions. For example, Prospero gains control over the island and uses it to empower and civilize Caliban. Prospero uses his magic to control the harmful effects of the black occult for the common good and in a stage production or filmic rendition of *The Tempest*, magic serves in mesmerizing rather than causing harm. Besides, Shakespeare also equates Prospero’s art with Western science and technology since, according to Caliban, it is knowledge obtained from books: “Remember/ First to possess his books, for without them/ He’s but a sot..., / Burn but his books! (99-103).

Good intentions emerge towards the end of the play when Prospero himself decides to break his magic and to free himself of all potent art through a process which he describes, thus:

But this rough magic
I hereby abjure...
... I’ll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I’ll drown my book (V.i.50-56).

The centrality of the book in Prospero's magic cannot be missed: as soon as he throws the book into the sea, he loses his magical powers. Prospero's powers are, therefore, obtained from books; these powers are harmless, temporary and can be discarded. Sycorax's witchcraft, on the other hand continues to haunt the island because she dies before she had undone and reversed the adverse impact of her witchcraft, which symbolizes her inability to do good or even make amends. This explains Ariel's continued incarceration inside the pine trunk long after Sycorax had died. It is Prospero who later breaks the spell and rescues Ariel (I.ii.289-92). This act sustains the argument that Sycorax's witchcraft is rendered ineffective by Prospero's magic when he frees Ariel from confinement. The male character, therefore, possesses the antidote to the witchcraft of a female character. The playwright thereby suggests that the super-natural powers of Sycorax are reversed and terminated by the more potent powers of Prospero. This representation is sexist because it establishes a spiritual inequality between Sycorax's witchcraft and Prospero's magic.

2.7 Cinematic Matriarchal Ideology in *The Tempest* (2011).

It should be stated from the outset that whereas Shakespeare glorifies the patriarchal ideology as discussed in the previous section, Julie Taymor's adaptation of *The Tempest* (2011) negates and trumps this patriarchal ideology which it replaces with the matriarchal one. The film depicts a female character as the primal owner and ruler of the island. Where the play makes Sycorax the aboriginal authority over the island, the film goes even further— it creates a legacy of an all female rule, beginning with Sycorax who is succeeded by a fellow female, Prospera. The imaginaries of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611) and Taymor's adaptation (2011) dramatize Davidson and Broner's (eds.) legend in *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature* (1980). According to this legend, were the first rulers on earth, chosen and willed by Nature

itself. The legend gives moving accounts of witches as the original and natural embodiments of supernatural powers. The legend emphasizes that the matriarchal system was the primal and natural social organization that was willed by God himself on earth. The question that should be asked is: How did women lose this God given authority and power? It is evident that the present state of the world is rooted in male domination in all spheres. So how did influence and power pass over to the men?

There are several answers to these questions. The most interesting answer is found in Guerin's analysis of Robert Graves' thesis, "The Great Battle of the Sexes" (206). Graves gives an account of how the original rulers of society, the women, were finally defeated by the men. The men were weighed down by the oppressive rule of women, so they came up with a plan where they made all their women rulers pregnant before staging a revolution against them. On the day of the revolution, the women could not fight back since the most influential among them were in advanced stages of pregnancy. The few women who tried to resist were easily defeated by the men since they lacked organization and leadership from their indisposed female leaders. The men took charge of society and since then they have never looked back. This legend has already progressed into a myth that attempts to explain the origins of male dominance and the prevalence of the male oppression of women in contemporary society.

2.8 Cinematic "Trumping" in *The Tempest* (2011).

It is argued in the preceding section that Shakespeare's play is male-centred because it creates a literary patriarchy. The motion picture diverts fundamentally from Shakespeare's glorification of the patriarchy when it deploys Elliott's "Trumping" concept so as to recreate a matriarchy. It follows that the director's rejection of a male magician who is replaced by a female "witch," can

best be explained as the “Trumping” of Shakespeare’s text. Trumping is one of the tenet of Elliott’s adaptation theory which claims that some literary aspects are inherently faulty and the adaptation has “corrected such representational errors” (174). In other words, the movie becomes a means of critiquing the literary text by exposing its mistakes, which it corrects.

As the movie progresses so does the audience’s recognition of Prospera as the most influential character on the island. This projection of female dominance that overshadows male influence introduces an ideological shift in representation. The film is pervaded by the image of a witch as a female character because by its very nature it conforms to the English Language lexicon and to the universal cultural construct, both of which represent a witch as a woman, not a man. The film director introduces changes that contradict Shakespeare’s projection of male dominance in the play. Consequently, the film adaptation opposes Shakespeare’s idea and becomes the instrument for establishing a new idea of female dominance on the island. The adaptation revives Montaigne’s idea of natives living in harmony with Nature in a society where all major decisions are made by women. As stated earlier, this matriarchal society ruled by women was the first society willed by Nature itself before the foreigners arrived and turned the system upside down with the rule of male colonialists, such as Prospero on the island.

The film director, thus, creates a paradigm shift when she introduces a completely different concept of interpretation to the narrative in as far as the female organization of society is different from the male organization of society. Firstly, a new plotline had to be invented for the movie: Prospera becomes the wife of the Duke of Milan. According to this storyline, the Duke in his lifetime was a liberal man who allowed his wife to indulge in scholarship at a time when women were not allowed to study the sciences in all its three branches – the Dark sciences, the

White sciences and Alchemy. Upon the death of the Duke, Prospera was appointed Duchess of Milan according to her husband's dying wish. Prospera still loved her studies, so she delegated most of her administrative duties to her younger brother, Antonio, who himself proved to be a competent leader. After getting the taste of power, Antonio started scheming for the Duke's job. He hatched a plan for undermining his sister's claim to the throne, accusing her of practicing witchcraft, using her scientific studies as evidence against her. Witchcraft was then a capital offense, but Prospera's subjects rejected Antonio's idea of having her put to death; instead, Prospera and her three year old daughter, Miranda, were put in a boat and made to drift away into the open sea.

The movie's point of departure from the hypotext is its rejection of a male Prospero as a son and the heir to the throne. The convenient accusation of witchcraft cannot be invoked in Shakespeare's text because it would not even make sense. Witchcraft cannot be used by Antonio against his brother in the play because as a man, Prospero, cannot be accused of an exclusively female transgression. The film, therefore, corrects this error and makes a more appropriate representation of characters that mirrors the social realities in a patriarchal society where a witch and/or a mystic was and is always understood to be a woman.

This reconstruction of the plot is in line with the re-creation of a filmic matriarchy which rejects Shakespeare's patriarchy. Shakespeare experimented with the idea of a man performing magic against the general belief system where mysticism, especially witchcraft, was the exclusive preserve of women. As earlier discussed, Shakespeare was careful not to draw the King's wrath at a time when witches were being hunted down and executed; so he made the distinction that established Prospero as a rational and not an occultist magician, but contrasted him sharply with

Sycorax. According to Shakespeare, Sycorax did not only worship the devil, but also entered into a blood pact with him by sleeping with him thereby becoming one body with him, which is completely removed from Prospero's ways. Prospero possessed a rational goodness that enabled him to create order on the island. His first act of social restructuring was to control Ariel where Sycorax could only trap him in a tree. Prospero sought to set things right in his world through his magic, and once that was done, he renounced it by symbolically setting Ariel free and drowning his book of magic.

The often repeated argument that Shakespeare was a progressive artist who rejected negative representations of women is actually dispelled by his portrayal of a black female character, Sycorax, as the author of evil on the island. This evil is left to the white male magician to cleanse. It is, therefore, evident that Shakespeare was not free from the Elizabethan/Jacobean prejudices of his nurture. Just like the rest of his contemporaries Shakespeare seems to have harboured conservative views against both the black race and the female gender, which he sheds in *The Tempest* (1611). Shakespeare contradicts his seemingly liberal views when he attempts to create a parallel image of Prospero as a scientist whose powers of alchemy originate from books. Shakespeare's representation consequently rescues the white male protagonist from the ignominy of witchcraft and/or mysticism. It is even questionable whether this can be explained as Shakespeare's fear of political persecution from the King or whether Shakespeare was voicing the unconscious prejudices of his culture. Clearly, Shakespeare's much hyped liberalism is tainted because he shows no qualms with portraying a female character, Sycorax, as a black witch, yet he appears to be uncomfortable with portraying Prospero as an occultist. He instead makes Prospero a white magician and also a Western scientist. Shakespeare ends up in double

jeopardy because he champions the very stereotypical thinking of blacks as witches (and also women as witches), which continues to be the trademark of both racism and sexism to date.

The movie, on the other hand, is a bold portrayal of Prospera as a white witch. There are a number of factors that justify and explain this boldness. Firstly, if Shakespeare actually feared the witch-hunting of his time, then Julie Taymor had nothing to fear in the globalized and more feminist world of the 21st Century that she was addressing in her movie. Hollywood is as liberal as any modern society can be with regards spiritual belief systems, including the occult, voodoo, juju or witchcraft. There was no immediate threat to the artist that was present in Jacobean England when Shakespeare wrote his play. Secondly, Julie Taymor, just like Shakespeare is a product of a male-centred world where the patriarchal ideology is dominant. The alternative argument for her creation of a filmic matriarchy ironically confirms her assimilation into the male world view where witchcraft is the preserve of female characters. Right from the opening scene, Prospera is animated as a white sorceress who is the “Lord” of the island when she employs witchcraft to cause mayhem in the weather. It can only be reiterated here that the rest of the movie faithfully engages in building this image of Prospera as a witch who unleashes destructive forces over the isle as a means of gaining absolute control over it.

The other female character created by Shakespeare, Sycorax, is the owner of a viciously potent witchcraft, demonstrated by the incarnation of Ariel inside a pine trunk where she had confined him immediately before her death. Prospera uses her white occult to liberate Ariel and thereby demonstrates the power of white sorcery over black witchcraft. Prospera proceeds to appropriate all Sycorax’s spiritual powers by subjugating them to the white occult, which makes her both the new political and spiritual authority on the island. It is argued here that the filmic portrayal of a

matriarchy cannot be separated from witchcraft because witchcraft is the basis of all female authority on the island. The Russian feminist critic, Kristeva (1980), agrees with this view. In her analysis of the primal female condition, she emphasizes the role of witchcraft as the spring from which a woman's political power draws its legitimacy since men are inherently fearful of the mystical powers of the female. She states that, "men are naturally terrified of women because of their wonderful mythic powers,... which is the feminine status" (Qtd. in Guerin, et al 207). Prospera's incessant acts of sorcery together with Sycorax's blatant witchcraft constitute this power.

What Shakespeare portrays as magic in the play effectively becomes the occult in the film since Prospera's destructive powers are comparable to, and in a few cases, even surpass Sycorax's. The most convincing sequence in the film that accurately portrays the white occult is where Prospera engineers harpies from her laboratory, which she deploys to attack Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio. The three men draw their swords to fight Prospera's spirits, but progressively become mad. Ariel later shepherds the mad trio into Prospera's charmed circle where their wits are restored (II.ii.53-109; V.i.65-68). The full account of what happens in this sequence is made in Section 2.9 of this thesis.

Like the play, the movie also creates similar doubts regarding the emerging idea of the supernatural. There is a parallel attempt to portray Prospera's sorcery as Western science in celluloid. When the film is subjected to the Elliottian psychic interpretive model, a situation arises of a screen depiction that is haunted by the Shakespearean ghost in the representation of situations and ideas. It consequently creates possibilities where Prospera can be transformed into a filmic scientist. When the film is subjected to a ventriloquist reading, however, such

possibilities do not arise because what is incarnated on the screen cannot be mistaken for a scientist, but a seasoned white sorceress steeped in the art of the occult.

Michael O'Toole interprets these as artistic re-creations of the historical realities of the European colonization of Africa in the late 19th century that pitched Western science and technology against black magic. If the practices of the imaginary white character (Prospero or Prospera) are measured against those of the black character (Sycorax), then white magic and black witchcraft become mere allusions to the capabilities— cultural and technological— that were available to the European colonialists, on one hand and the African nationalists on the other hand, during the colonization process. When Shakespeare reduces Prospero's white magic to a socially acceptable metaphor for Western education, science and technology, his drama is effectively transformed into an ideological tool for portraying the alleged superiority of the colonialist's methods over those of the colonized. It also vindicates the white character from the curse of mysticism and/or superstition that is normally associated with blacks.

If we transfer Michael O'Toole's analysis of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611) to the film, then we can conclude that Prospera's white occult helps her to subdue all Sycorax's dark forces that haunt the island. She also uses her white occult to wreak vengeance on her own brother (Antonio) and his confederate Alonso, the King of Naples, for deposing her from the Dukedom of Milan. In Shakespeare's original version Alonso was very instrumental in fuelling Antonio's ambition to usurp power since he instigated, and even aided Antonio, in overthrowing Prospero. The movie retains this version, albeit the victim of Alonso's stratagems is a female Prospera. It should be noted here that since this adaptation is not a horror but a romance, viewers are not expected to be terrified by Prospera's occult. They should instead be mesmerized and hypnotized

by the magic of the enactment. It is a spiritual effect that induces a sublime “fear” among them for the female characters that are capable of performing such feats. This is the reaction that Broner was talking about in his accounts when he glorifies “Mother Nature’s” procreative role that is evident in the “vegetation-goddess archetype such as Ceres or Diana-Seles-Hecate” (Qtd. In Guerin et al 207). Broner is voicing his exaltation of the inherent mystery in procreation and like witchcraft, it is only a woman who understands it since it takes place in the sacredness of her body. It is evident from this dearth of scholarship that the word “witch” as we understand it today, has been stripped of its original meaning. The word has been subjected to the patriarchal denigration that has nothing to do with its glorification of womanhood in a matriarchal set up that was invented by Nature itself.

2.9 Cinematic “Special Effects” Portraying Sexism.

Special effects refer to a cocktail of techniques exclusively available to film makers which they use to manipulate images so as to create new realities. Special effects are a category of Elliott’s ventriloquist tricks, used in the enrichment of situations and ideas in the film medium. In this case, special effects are used in portraying the occult in *The Tempest* (2011) whose manifestations are the storm, the masques and Ariel’s metaphysical abilities. Film art is endowed with technical resources for manipulating formal elements, including props, costumes, characters and sounds, in very “unusual” and unfamiliar ways so as to portray sexism. Corrigan and White (2004) state that special effects are pictorial realizations that employ

Such basic manipulations as *slow motion* or *fast motion* to make the action move at unrealistic speeds...color filters that change the tones of the recorded image with different tinted lenses; and *miniature* or *gigantic models*,...and a

process shot, a term that describes many different ways that the image can be set up and manipulated during filming (93).

Special effects often leave audiences speechless because they create unfamiliar illusions of reality. Audiences often question whether their perceptions are real or mere hallucinations. There are no limits to the artistry of special effects in contemporary film-making: computer generated images are used to achieve the unthinkable. There are movies that feature characters who defy gravity by walking on walls or on the ceiling with their heads hanging down. Some movies go further to present more bizarre illusions: characters are shown unaccountably disappearing from the screen or they are shown flying in space and traversing enormous distances within the blink of the eye. In Taymor's adaptation of *The Tempest* (2011), special effects are employed in portraying the supernatural dimensions of Prospera's sorcery as discussed in the next section.

2.9 (a) Cinematic storm incarnated.

When special effects are deployed in a film, there is a noticeable transformation of the literary text into a living celluloid text. Consider the opening scene of Shakespeare's literary text where the following stage directions are used to help the audience to imagine a sea storm, which is magically invoked by Prospero so as to punish the people who had deposed him from the Dukedom of Milan: "On a ship at sea. A tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard." The text offers further explanations in a footnote:

The ship is in great danger. The wind is blowing hard from the sea; on the other side lies the rocky island, and between there is too little room for her to sail past without being driven ashore by the drift (Harrison ed., 1968: 1,475).

The fear created by the storm among the sailors is highlighted in the conversation that follows between the Boatswain and his royal passengers. They are literally terrified by the anarchy in the weather and it all ends badly for Alonso and his men on the ship:

[A confused noise within: "Mercy on us!

– "We split, we split!"– "Farewell my

wife and children!"– "Farewell brother!"

– "We split, we split, we split!"] (I. ii. 63-66).

We can gather even a better picture of the tragedy from Ariel's later account of what actually took place: "I boarded the king's ship. Now on the beak,/ Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,/ I flamed amazement. Sometimes I'd divide,/ And burn in many places; on the topmost,/ The yards and the bowsprit, would I flame distinctly,/ Then meet and join" (I. ii. 196-205).

These Shakespearean descriptions, found in the stage directions and dialogue, help the readers to visualize the scene, but they also helped the film-maker to come up with powerful animations of these events. Through the use of special effects, the incident is not rendered just in the spirit of the Shakespearean storm, but becomes a much more enriched version of events.

Julie Taymor's translation magnifies the Shakespearean words, creating a fearful sequence of a sea storm. Prospera is shown standing on a mountain facing the sea. From her vantage point spreads a breath-taking view: an amazing overhead shot of the sea taken in deep focus shows a glimmering, mighty expanse of water extending into a dazzling infinity, and somewhere at the horizon is an insignificant dot of a ship floating on it. Prospera is absorbed in performing a pagan ritual— her hands are stretched out towards the sea, firmly clutching her magic staff. She is ceremonially clad on the magic gown, whose uncanny flowing effect on the screen, according to

the director, was intended to create an impression of flowing lava. She is screaming at the ship and a close-up shot on her gaping mouth captures this. She looks insane; her starry glittering eyes and sweating grimacing face are highlighted and profiled in detail. Prospera's spooky and primal scream is followed by a sudden flash of lightning and a crack of thunder that strikes Alonso's ship; a panning shot on the ship reveals a scene of absolute mayhem— a stampede of people running, screaming and shouting in fear, superimposed on the roaring noise of the sea. The ship catches fire and disintegrates and Alonso and his men are shown drowning en masse. The roaring of the waves is sustained by the acoustics of the film, transforming it to a saxophone blast and finally, to a crescendo of a classical music piece at its crashing climax. The director deliberately employs sounds for symbolic effect: the anarchy in the sound track reflects the anarchy in the elements. The adaptation thus adds meaning to the scene because of its extra-representational features, namely, moving pictures juxtaposed with a variety of sounds. It is a classic case of Kamilla Elliott's ventriloquist model that "empties the play of its spiritual contents and gives it a new voice" (198). It is an animation of a storm sequence that portrays Prospera's witchcraft, which is colourfully repackaged by film artistry so as to create an enriched visual and audible impact.

It is important to note that at the centre of this filmic animation of the storm is a subtle sexism. It is a female character, Prospera, who has unleashed the elements on her enemies. Prospera's witchcraft is responsible for the mayhem on the screen. This interpretation of the sequence is shaped by a patriarchal ideology that ascribes witchcraft to the female members of society. Julie Taymor's movie has effectively removed spiritual and political power from a male character, Prospero, which it gives to a female character, Prospera. This is a feminist argument of women empowerment; however, it is a belated attempt which can be overturned when viewed from a

patriarchal perspective since it falls into a patriarchal trap. Taymor's radical decision to replace Shakespeare's male magician with a female occultist indirectly consolidates the patriarchal narrative where witchcraft is seen as the preserve of women. Therefore, Taymor plays into the hands of the patriarchy when she chooses witchcraft as a symbol of women empowerment in a male dominated world. Fortunately for the feminists, this sequence proves ineffectual in overturning the director's reconstruction of a female dominated world in celluloid. Although Patriarchy momentarily rears its ugly head, it creates an insignificant dent to Taymor's celluloid matriarchy. The overall impression of Taymor's adaptation of *The Tempest* (2011) remains: it is a female dominated island where the patriarchal ideology is obliterated by witchcraft.

2.9 (b) Cinematic Ariel incarnated

The pictorial drowning of the sailors reveals the central role played by Ariel as the master mind and the architect that was actively involved in its execution. Ariel is the active force behind Prospera's witchcraft, but is also the symbol of this occult and Prospera's front of destruction. Shakespeare's idea of magic is transformed to the occult in the film. The footage of the ship's destruction and the drowning of the sailors are filmic enrichments where viewers are enlisted as witnesses since they see Ariel diligently toiling for Prospera from the time of raising the storm to its conclusion when the ship disintegrates in flames.

Ariel assumes different forms on different occasions. He is shown taking the form of a nymph, flaming dog, harpy, fire, wind, a swarm of insects or just a voice according to the demands of the assignment thrown at him by the "Master." Special effects are central in creating Ariel's fluid transformations as he executes each assignment within the constant setting of the vast incomprehensible sea and the sprawling impenetrable jungle. Prospera uses the occult to

appropriate Ariel's spiritual powers for her own ends. What should not be missed is how Julie Taymor's *The Tempest* (2011) depicts the universal nature of witchcraft because it is practiced across cultures and races. The female characters are portrayed as the custodians of all mythical powers, which they use to terrify their subjects into submission. It is this representation of women as witches in a male dominated world that is sexist. The film's matriarchal point of view where females are dominant is ironically undermined by the image of a female as a witch, which casts a cloud on Taymor's idea of female empowerment through sorcery.

2.9 (c) Cinematic masques incarnated.

Masques are motifs that Shakespeare employs to create a magical effect, fulfilling one of the cardinal features of the romance genre. Masques in celluloid are realized through the employment of special effects. A good illustration of a masque is the animation of the Ferdinand/Miranda nuptials. This masque features a private ceremony arranged by Prospera for the benefit of the two young lovers, but is also a celestial celebration of the betrothal of Miranda to Ferdinand spearheaded by pagan goddesses. It is essentially a female ceremony dominated by the goddesses, which invokes the matriarchal dimension of representation. In Shakespeare's play, this ceremony takes place in front of Prospero's cell (IV.i.1-138). The adaptation restructures and relocates the ceremony to no man's land close to the sea. Miranda and Ferdinand are present as the principal characters: Prospera is there to give away Miranda to her future husband and there is a promise of romance in the atmosphere (IV.i.14). The fact that Prospera is dressed in her magic gown and holding the magic stick means that she is appearing in the role of a priestess, the main celebrant who invokes the spiritual powers to come down and participate in the ceremony. She stares at the sea and repeats her formulaic incantation:

Now come, my Ariel!

Bring a corollary rather than want a spirit. Appear, and pertly!

No tongue! All eyes! Be silent (IV.i.52-54).

Ariel leaps out of the sea in a watery fanfare. Prospera communes briefly with the airy thing before she waves her magic stick ritualistically at the sea. What follows is a dramatic explosion that lights up the screen in a pageant of fireworks. The rest of the shot remains dark— a lighting technique that highlights the display. At the very centre of the display appears a white lady dressed in a snow-white wedding gown and she is shortly joined by the bridegroom himself. The bride and groom are seen fusing before separating again into their two selves. A dove flutters above them before it clones itself into many doves that arrange themselves into two circles—an inner and outer circle— around the couple with their wings touching like arms in a guard of honour. There is a more heightened and more colourful display of fireworks, which is accompanied by a swell of sweet celestial music.

The cinematic masque above is enriched with colour, animation, lighting, music and other sound effects. It is a rendition of a nuptial ceremony in celluloid, which is updated to contemporary Western cultural influences that Hollywood is famous for representing. Modern viewers find these visual and sound effects more appealing than the drab descriptions found in the hypotext. There is magic in this celluloid celebration that is significantly larger than even a real life marriage ceremony. Firstly, the fact that this celebration takes place in the sky elevates it above a human indulgence and makes it a celestial affair. Secondly, the goddesses are shown actively participating in the ceremony, which makes it a spiritual as well as female ceremony. The animation of the goddesses contrasts sharply with the passivity of the three human beings that are present— the bride, the bridegroom and Prospera. As an attribute of the Shakespearean

romance, this masque creates a pervasive magical and dreamlike atmosphere in celluloid. This magic can be attributed to three things: the presence of the goddesses, the acoustics of celestial music and the colourful spectacle of the fireworks. The masque motif becomes the celluloid shorthand for foreshadowing the marriage between Ferdinand and Miranda, which will be the means for mending the twelve-year rift between the two royal houses of Milan and Naples. Prospera deliberately uses her witchcraft to engineer this marriage that will help her regain the Dukedom from her usurping brother, Antonio. It is a vision incubated in Heaven and it is as good as a done deal awaiting fulfillment. Prospera brings the ceremony to an end by waving her magic stick across the sky, effectively terminating the vision. The darkness that had enveloped the frame also clears and normalcy is restored. Lighting becomes a filmic technique for symbolism where the backdrop of darkness represents the occult associated with the presence of pagan goddesses: Eris, Ceres and Juno, who were performing at the ceremony. Besides, this presence of the three pagan goddesses reinforces the sexism in the footage because it portrays even divine female beings as merchants of evil. The return of light provides a contrast and represents the departure of the pagan goddesses, indicating a cleansing of the scene of their evil presence. The dove image establishes a more profound contrast since it is a biblical image of peace and the saving presence of the Christian God. The dove image prophesies the peaceful co-existence that will be established between the royal houses of Milan and Naples after the royal marriage. The darkness and turmoil (or “storm”) that was ushered by the usurpation of political power by Antonio and his confederate, Alonso, will equally come to an end.

All in all, this masque magnifies sexism in celluloid because it engages in a more serious type of patriarchal stereotyping of female characters as perpetrators of the occult. The sequence makes a

daring representation of witchcraft by alleging that even female beings from the other world, goddesses, are equally culpable when it comes to performing witchcraft.

2.9 (d) Cinematic harpies incarnated.

Special effects are used in the creation of the harpies, Shakespeare's monster creatures that are "half birds of prey and half women" (III.ii.53-81). Prospera appears in the film as an alchemist performing a bizarre experiment in her laboratory, which engineers harpies. There is an amazing footage of a well equipped laboratory framed in deep focus, extending far into the background in a spectacular display of scientific equipment and apparatus like beakers, test tubes, decanters, thermometers and Bunsen burners. In the foreground, Prospera is absorbed in boiling chemicals in a huge beaker. Suddenly there is a loud explosion and the beaker disintegrates and vents harpies— a swarm of black creatures led by Ariel. The harpies take to the air and seek out Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian who they attack viciously. The three conspirators, who had deposed Prospera from the Dukedom of Milan twelve years ago, are shown battling Prospera's swarm of harpies with their swords as they progressively become mad. Only Gonzalo is spared because he had secretly supplied provisions which had helped Prospera and her daughter, Miranda, to survive the many days in the high seas before they landed safely on Caliban's island. If any proof is needed to show that Prospera's art is anything but witchcraft, then this induced madness of her enemies is as good as any. It is not useful to counter argue that Prospera later restores their wits and, therefore, cannot be accused of causing harm through witchcraft. This kind of circular reasoning is unconvincing because the madness of the three characters was caused by Prospera's spiritual forces in the first place. It is not sensible to say that no harm was done to them just because Prospera restores their wits later in the film. Prospera is like the medicine-man in the fable who sows diseases in the village paths in the dead of the night, then turns up in the morning

with a cure for the ailments. Prospera, therefore, falls within the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary's* (6th ed.) definition of a witch as “a woman who is believed to have supernatural powers, especially to do evil things” (Hornby: 987).

It is this decision to trump the Shakespearean idea of a male magician by casting a female character as a witch that is disturbing, especially when the film director is also a woman. There are two possible explanations why the director decides to trump the written version. Firstly, is the patriarchal argument that Taymor was acting under the unconscious influence of her nurture in a male-dominated society and was merely expressing the negative imaging of women as witches, an idea that is explained in detail in Section 2.9 (a). The second explanation marries Marxist and Feminist ideologies as applied in literary criticism. According to Scott (1962) Marxist art, including literature and film, is a political tool for countering capitalism. All art is for activism and should be committed to the liberation of the proletariat or working class. The feminist approach to literary criticism, which is an off-shoot of the Marxist approach, advocates for imaginaries that “champion the women’s cause against patriarchy” (209). Jefferson and Robey (1991) believe that women themselves should champion their own cause and they question men’s role in the feminism agenda, urging “the would-be male feminist critic to ask himself whether he as a male is really doing feminism a service by muscling in on the cultural and intellectual space women have created for themselves” (208). This feminist perspective anticipates that Julie Taymor as a woman must have done a great job in the empowerment of women in her adaptation of *The Tempest* (2011). This empowerment of women in celluloid is actually achieved but at the pedestal of patriarchal stereotyping of female characters as witches.

2.10 Literary Props/Costumes Dramatizing Racism/Sexism in *The Tempest* (1611).

Props (short for properties) and costumes normally work together in a dramatic production. Both props, which are purely objects, and costumes (the adornments on characters like the clothes they wear, make-up and other items of ornamentation, including jewels, bangles, scarves, footwear and headgear like hats, caps and fezzes) serve the artistic function of advancing dramatic action. Props and costumes weave into the action naturally because they are the dramatist's tools for creating meaning at the appropriate and particular moments of the unfolding action. Shakespeare puts into the service of his characters a collection of items in the form of props to help them satisfy their needs in the make-believe world of the play, such as Alonso's ship, the buildings (Prospero's cell and laboratory), the apparatus and equipment in the laboratory, Prospero's magic stick, magic books, the logs of firewood (for Ferdinand and Caliban), Stephano's bottle of wine and many more.

2.10 (a) Literary props/costumes dramatizing racism.

At the very opening of the play, Shakespeare presents a ship being tossed at sea. The scene portrays a sea-storm and it also requires more complicated contraptions like lightning and thunder. A prologue sets the scene for the cosmic chaos that is to follow and Miranda calls the ship "A brave vessel,/ Dashed all to pieces" (I.i.6-7). It later becomes clear that it is Prospero's magic playing tricks on everybody's mind because Alonso's ship is never destroyed in the storm. Ariel reports to the Master, thus: "Safely in harbour,/ Is the King's ship— in the deep nook..." (I.ii.227-7). There is not just one ship in the play, but a whole fleet that "upon the Mediterranean flote" (I. ii. 234). The other essential props in this sequence are Prospero's magic stick and magic book.

Prospero reverses the effects of the storm by merely disrobing himself of his costume, namely, the magic gown. He reassures Miranda that “There’s no harm done” (I.ii.13) as he calls on her to help “pluck the magic gown from me” (I.ii.14), which act he reinforces with the next one when he (Prospero) also “Lays down his mantle” (I.ii.24). Prospero later cross-checks with Ariel and confirms that Alonso and his men are unharmed: “Not a hair perished,/ On their sustaining gowns not a blemish...” (I.ii.18-19). Prospero’s books are props that have a special place in the exercise of his power. Caliban reminds Stephano and Trinculo: “Remember/ First to possess his books, for without them/ He’s but a sot.../ Burn but his books” (III.ii.99–104). The books are also a symbol of Prospero’s dangerous desire to withdraw entirely from the world. In order to return to the world where his knowledge means something more than power, Prospero must let go of his magic. That is why at the end of the play, Prospero undertakes to rid himself of all mystical powers: “I’ll break my staff.../ I’ll drown by book” (V.i.54-5).

The question then arises: How do these props and costumes contribute to the racist agenda? The answer lies in the way Shakespeare deploys these props and costumes in the play, especially when he alleges that Sycorax practices witchcraft as opposed to Prospero’s magic and/or Western science. Prospero labels Sycorax as “the foul witch” that had allegedly used her “more potent ministers” to imprison Ariel “inside a cloven pine” (I.ii.256, 274-7). It is argued elsewhere in this thesis that Shakespeare makes a clear distinction between the occult and white magic when he intimates that whereas Prospero uses his art to rid the island of darkness, Sycorax had used her art to cause darkness. In other words, Shakespeare tends to distance Prospero’s props and costumes from being instruments of evil, whereas the props and costumes used by Sycorax inherently serve the occult, and this is the representation that embodies racism.

Firewood is the other prop that is highly loaded with meaning since it symbolizes racism. Firewood makes Caliban a slave who is burdened with gathering that item for the Prospero. The Master is indefatigable in his demands for a constant supply of this item (I. ii. 311-12). For this reason, Caliban is always haunted by the obligation to stock firewood. The first thing that always comes to his mind on being summoned by the Master is whether there is firewood in the store. This is true in the opening scene when he (Caliban) is heard grumbling: "There is wood enough inside" (I.ii.314), but Prospero answers him, "Come forth, I say! There is other business for thee" (I.ii.315). Likewise, on the day when Caliban sights his first white man (Trinculo), the first thing that comes to his mind is his delay to furnish firewood: "Lo, now, lo!/ Here comes a spirit of his, and to torment me/ For bringing in wood slowly" (II.ii.14-15). This thesis associates firewood with racism because Shakespeare makes it the rationale for the enslavement, servitude and oppression a black character by a white Master.

Shakespeare also advances racism when he employs costumes for dehumanizing Caliban as "half fish, half man" (II.ii.25). When Trinculo discovers this "monster of the isle" (II.ii.67), Caliban is actually covered up in a gabardine which helps to hide his deformity from the white man's gaze. The gabardine under which Caliban, and later Trinculo, shelter from the impending storm is a confounding factor. As a covering that hides both Caliban and Trinculo, the gabardine facilitates the creation of a more monstrous black character that, in the perception of Stephano, is "a devil and no monster" (II.ii.100-103). According to Stephano, the monster has two mouths: one on its head, which is actually Caliban's head, and the other on its butt, actually Trinculo's head that is positioned behind Caliban, and this is the mouth which calls out Stephano's name.

The covering on Caliban is only a temporary measure because the white characters are later able to “uncover” the monstrosity of the black character, which they expose to the world. There is racism here because a costume is made to hide the truth and then it is used later as a means for mocking and throwing jibes at Caliban. This scene beautifully contrasts with one where Ariel displays brightly coloured garments on a drying line as a means of diverting the conspirators from their mission to murder Prospero (IV.i.222-55). On this occasion, the white characters (Trinculo and Stephano) behave like asses; they dote on the garments, notwithstanding that Caliban warns them that it is Prospero’s trap aimed at afflicting them later: “We shall lose our time,/ And all be turned to barnacles, or to apes/ With foreheads villainous low” (IV.i.248-50).

Although Trinculo and Stephano are white characters, Shakespeare manages to undermine their profiles right from the beginning when he presents Stephano as a drunkard and a buffoon, while Trinculo is a scatter-brained comedian. When Caliban is made to associate with and even to worship them, Shakespeare is able to sustain a racist image because he portrays the black character as even a greater, if not an incorrigible fool, who enlists two worthless white mercenaries to help him recover his island. This thesis finds a close association between Shakespeare’s use of costumes above and the intention to mock blacks, which is blatantly racist.

2.10 (b) Literary props/costumes dramatizing sexism.

Besides employing props and costumes to portray racism in the preceding section, Shakespeare also employs props and costumes to portray sexism. It is argued that the playwright deploys these props and costumes in ways that are male-centric for they serve as instruments for promoting the patriarchy. Prospero’s “magic gown” (I.ii.14), and his magic stick, or “mantle” (I.ii.24) whose details are found in the preceding section are symbols of male power. Prospero

performs mind-boggling magical acts, such as destroying Alonso's ship, which he follows up with another act of restoration a short while later. He confidently assures Miranda that the ship and its sailors are completely safe: "There's no harm done" (I.ii.13) and Ariel confirms it with another assurance that the King's ship is "Safely in harbour" (I.ii.227). Lastly, the "book of magic" (V.i.55) that is so feared by Caliban completes the three material sources of Prospero's magical powers.

Shakespeare's play is patriarchal in as far as it empowers a male, character, Prospero with magic that he uses to cast spells on the island. Prospero even uses this magic to humiliate women and it particularly helps him to destroy the legacy of a female character, Sycorax. This happens when Shakespeare deploys the prop of the pine tree with its cloven trunk (I.ii.277), portraying it as a prison where Sycorax had incarcerated Ariel before she died. The cloven pine, therefore, becomes a symbolic prop since it portrays the collective defeat of all females. Prospero boasts that he had used his magic to overcome the spell that Sycorax had cast on Ariel for twelve years: "It was mine art,/ When I arrived... that made gape/ The pine and let thee out" (I.ii.291-3).

Prospero goes further to employ his magic in controlling his own daughter, Miranda. For example, on the day of the tempest, he waves his magic stick ritualistically at Miranda and induces her to sleep. He casts this spell on Miranda because he wants to avoid her incessant questioning of him: "Here cease more questions./ Thou art inclined to sleep, 'it's a good dullness,/ And give it way. I know thou canst not choose" (I.ii.185-6). The most insensitive display of male chauvinism, however, is when Prospero prevents Miranda from giving herself sexually to Ferdinand. This incident is tainted with an irony because Prospero is responsible for bringing Miranda and Ferdinand together, yet he censors the daughter from exercising her free

will, which is to become Ferdinand's wife immediately. Prospero puts Ferdinand under arrest, and when Ferdinand attempts to fight back with his sword, Prospero charms him. According to the stage directions: "(Ferdinand) Draws, and is charmed from moving" (II.i.465-6). Prospero humiliates Ferdinand further by compelling him to gather wood, reducing Ferdinand to a slave, just like Caliban. Prospero later justifies his actions, claiming that he was testing Ferdinand's worthiness before allowing him to marry Miranda. After Ferdinand has passed these so-called tests imposed on him by Prospero, Ferdinand is again given additional conditions for marrying Miranda. Further censoring occurs on the day of the nuptials' masque when Prospero prohibits Miranda from having sex with Ferdinand. The two lovers are dying to have sex, but Prospero issues a threat that he flavours with a divine curse: "If thou break her virgin knot before/ All sanctimonious ceremonies.../ No sweet aspersion shall the Heavens let fall/ To make this contract grow; but barren hate/... Therefore take heed...!" (IV.i.15-23).

Prospero is here portrayed as a champion of patriarchy, a system that seeks to control women in all aspects, including their sexuality. A woman is not free to express her love for a man, nor can she freely choose the man she wants to marry since she must first get her father's approval. This brand of sexism explains Prospero's overbearing attitude towards Miranda to the extent that he even chooses a husband for her, which is typical of arranged marriages in a patriarchal setting. All aspects of sexism discussed in this section are grounded in Shakespeare's employment of props and costumes, which become the carriers and embodiments of this Shakespearean idea.

2.10 (c) Cinematic props/costumes portraying racism/sexism

Julie Taymor's cinematic realization of *The Tempest* (2011) is a feminist imaginary that seeks to liberate women from the shackles of male domination. The film brings to life the idea of women

empowerment as an antidote to Shakespeare's sexism against the female characters. Julie Taymor's feminist agenda is promoted through filmic techniques and in this case props and costumes serve as embodiments of women emancipation. It is argued elsewhere in this thesis that the screen depiction of Prospera as a witch overrides her parallel depiction as a scientist who spends long hours in the laboratory performing experiments. For example, the opening scene frames Prospera on top of a hill performing a pagan ritual whose details can be found in Section 2.9 (a) of this thesis. She thereby generates a sea storm, which she uses to destroy Alonso's ship and drown his men. This sea storm is a consequence of a pagan ritual that involves the use of props and costumes as repositories of Prospera's sorcery. Every time she performs witchcraft, the viewers are alerted by certain indicators, such as the bluish-greenish magic gown that she wears and the mysterious magic stick in her hand. These are the fetishes in the pagan ritual and a number of screen sequences show the effectiveness of these props and costumes to unleash destruction. One such sequence is described in Section 2.9 (a) in connection with a sea storm that Prospera invokes so as to wreak havoc on her enemies.

The screen incarnation of the meeting between Miranda and Ferdinand is another sequence depicting Prospera's occult, which is framed in the middle of the jungle. Ferdinand enters the jungle distractedly because he is lured from the sea-shore by Ariel's sweet singing voice accompanied with instrumentals, which Ferdinand thinks are played by celestial beings. Ferdinand is mesmerized by the sounds and he follows blindly. The tracking shot traces his progress and when he enters the forest, Ferdinand is rapt with wonder. A close-up shot reveals rounded eyes as he tries to locate the source of the music. In the very words of the literary text, he asks in a tone full of wonder and spiritual awe: "Where should the music be? In the air or the earth?/ It sounds no more, and, sure, it waits upon/ Some god of the island. Sitting on a bank,/

Weeping again the King my father's wreck,/ this music crept by me upon the waters.../ Thence I have followed it,/ Or it hath drawn me rather, But it is gone./ no it begins again" (I.ii.388-396).

What is imagined from reading Shakespeare's play is rendered acoustically by the film's sound track. Ariel's singing is sweet and the lyrics are full of meaning since it "remembers my (Ferdinand's) drowned father" (I.ii.405). The message is a celestial commemoration of Alonso's death and Ferdinand is compelled to observe: "This is no mortal business" (I.ii.406). The footage of this incident is enriched with visual and oral beauty— a cinematic commentary on the romance sub-plot, imaginatively depicted in a sequence where Ferdinand is lured to his star-crossed meeting with his future wife, Miranda. This meeting is not accidental since it was engineered by Prospera's witchcraft. It should be noted that props and costumes play a central role as instruments of the pagan ritual in this footage. Prospera and Miranda are shown standing on a hillock deep inside the jungle and from their perspective, Ferdinand is framed in a deep-focus high angle shot stumbling below them. He looks exhausted by the long walk, a consequence of following the singing phantom that lured him into the heart of the forest. At this moment, there is a momentary lull in the music so he sits down on a rock with his head bowed down in mourning for his father. This is the posture of him that Miranda first beholds; it makes her to catch her breath in admiration. She inquires of her mother, Prospera: "What is it? A spirit?/ Lord, how it looks about! Believe me, mother,/ It carries a brave form" (I.ii.409-11). In Shakespearean coinage, "brave form" actually means "a fine shape," in other words, Ferdinand is good-looking and handsome. This is the precise point when Miranda falls in love with the man she has neither seen at close quarters, nor spoken to. Mother and daughter approach Ferdinand who is equally smitten by Miranda. He calls her (Miranda) "the goddess/ on whom these airs attend" (I.ii.421-2), meaning it is for her pleasure that the spirits of the island (or airs) play the sweet music. What

follows is the animation of Ferdinand resisting to be arrested by Prospera. This incident is highlighted in the play by Shakespeare's use of stage direction: "Ferdinand draws (his sword), and is charmed from moving" (II.i.465-6). The film translates this statement into a pictorial animation that is visually enriched by performance and action. Ferdinand is shown in the act of pulling out his sword from the scabbard on his hip and Prospera simply points her magic stick at him, which paralyzes him. He is like a man that has been hit by an electric current. He cannot draw his sword and he falls on one knee, his hand still holding on to his hip.

This sequence shows that Taymor's Prospera is a woman of great spiritual power. She uses the occult to control her subjects: she casts a spell on the island and every creature on it, human or spirit, must act according to her command. She overworks Ariel, the spirit that is incarnated as a handsome, naked young man who indefatigably performs innumerable tasks for her, such as causing the storm, burning Alonso's ship, saving Alonso from being killed by Sebastian, hounding the would-be killers of Prospera out of her compound, and much more. This is how the film defies the patriarchy and the sexism in the literary text by recreating a matriarchy, a social organization where female characters are the rulers and the decision-makers. In film, Prospera is portrayed in the image of a hard-core occultist who is invested with powers and authority that mirror the powers and the authority possessed by the male Prospero in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611). It should be remembered that Taymor invests the female character with power through witchcraft, which ironically has the potential to undermine the female status among contemporary audiences whose understanding of witchcraft is negative. This is because in the contemporary world of the film, just like in the Shakespearean world of literature, witchcraft is considered a mark of backwardness and savagery. Julie Taymor's desire to empower women through the incarnation of a female protagonist as a witch, therefore, falls into the patriarchal

trap of female stereotyping. In a way, Taymor's depiction of a witch is a return to the sexist portrayal of women that is found in the hypotext, albeit the Taymorian filmic matriarchy manages to overshadow the Shakespearean literary patriarchy.

2.11 Literary Sound Effects Dramatizing Racism in *The Tempest* (1611).

Shakespeare's play is pervaded by sounds right from the opening scene of the noisy storm, through to the "solemn music" (V.i.56) invoked by Prospero at the closing scene that he uses to cure the madness of his enemies now trapped inside his charmed circle. The sea is crawling with black demons and Caliban indeed affirms that the isle is "full of noises" (III.ii.130), such as the "tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning" (I.i.1-35) that progresses to the sound of a disintegrating ship, which is signaled in part by "a confused noise within" (I.i.64).

It is further argued that much of the noise in the play is musical and much of the music is Ariel's. Ferdinand is led to Miranda by Ariel's singing voice (I.ii.387-407) and Ariel's singing also wakes up Gonzalo just as Antonio and Sebastian are about to kill Alonso (in II.ii.300-305). Moreover, the magical banquet is laid out to the tune of "Solemn and strange music" (III.ii.19-20), and Juno and Ceres sing in the wedding masque (IV.i.106-117). Caliban adds to that list the sound of the "twangling instruments" (III.ii.146) that seem to emanate everywhere and at the most unexpected moments. This "twangling" sounds create a spooky atmosphere of meta-physical forces that pervade the island. There are super-natural presences on the island and Caliban finds this state of nature quite natural. He finds the meta-physical music and sounds particularly soothing, so he counsels the white strangers: "Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises/ Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not" (III.ii.144-45).

This is contrasted with the literary rendition of Ariel's singing where a reader has to imagine the sounds from the words (I.ii.376-404). It is important to remember that music and song have the power to delight and move an audience, and also to teach lessons. Yet it is also unrealistic to imagine that reading the play will induce one to be moved by the music that he cannot hear. Gooch and Thatcher (1991) state that songs and music played out in a stage performance act as a support to the message of the drama and are the frame around meaning, which enhance and magnify the beauty of that meaning in the context of the action (1,505). But it must be remembered that it is Ariel that vents the majority of the songs in the play, which he accompanies with instrumentals. Ariel creates magic through his singing and music, and thus helps in advancing both the themes and the plot. For example, Ariel's music entralls Ferdinand and becomes the means for advancing the romance sub-plot (I.ii.376-86). Another song recalls how King Alonso could possibly be lying dead under the sea and how his organs would be transformed into precious "corals and pearls" (I.ii.398-9), lyrics that make Ferdinand sad.

The question of racism arises when Shakespeare employs Ariel's singing and music as a means for highlighting the power of Western art to entrall at the expense of the black art that is allegedly dull and lacking in rhythm. When Ariel's feats are contrasted with Caliban's attempt to create a song that celebrates his new-found freedom under "a new Master" (II.ii.188), Caliban is a complete aesthetic failure. Trinculo laughs derisively at the attempt and he labels Caliban "a howling monster, a drunken monster" (II.ii.183). It is in this sense that the play becomes covertly racist because Shakespeare uses songs and music to create a contrast between Western art that is full of rhythm, therefore, pleasurable and black art that falls flat on rhythm. Native song is overshadowed by the magic of Ariel's singing whose lyrics capture important themes like the

separation of loved ones, a reference to the separation of Ferdinand and his father; and also the romance and impending marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda that would repair the ancient quarrel between Milan and Naples. Caliban, on the other hand, is foolishly singing in praise of his own enslavement to a new Master, and he does so in a way that is most uninspiring.

2.12 Cinematic Sound Effects Portraying Racism and Sexism.

Cinema realizes sounds acoustically as opposed to the written text where one has to imagine sounds from reading the play, including the important aspect of tone in the dialogue. The sounds in cinema are heard by viewing audiences; moreover, the film director is able to manipulate these sounds into more aesthetically edifying combinations. The film's sound track and all acoustic renditions constitute part of filmic enrichment that is in line with Elliott's ventriloquist concept of adaptation.

Corrigan and White (2004) emphasize that sound "gives an impression of depth to the two dimensional images when they are reproduced in the three dimensional illusion of cinema" (196). They place human speech at the centre of film sound because "what actors say is crucial: speech establishes character motivation and goals and conveys plot information" (184). In the case of movie adaptation, dialogue is rendered acoustically through speech. A mobile and a speaking character draws in viewers to the world of the movie. On the other hand, the person who reads the play is often alienated from it, especially if he doubts some aspects of what he reads.

The analysis on how film uses sound to depict sexism reveals parallels and echoes in the sound effects discussed above in highlighting the stereotypical imaging of female characters as witches. One particular employment of sound acoustics to depict sexism deserves special mention: the

voiceover technique. Corrigan and White (2004) call it “the voice of God...the confident male voice often heard in nature shows, commercials and trailers seen in movie theatres” (186). The literary equivalent of the voiceover would be the omniscient narrator who tells the story as it happened, but there is a big difference between the clarity manifested in movie acoustics and the imagined narrative voice in a written text. Whereas the omniscient narrator is more of a mythical voice that can only be imagined from reading the play, the voiceover is heard by the viewer. The anonymous voice is heard intoning the story outside the film frame. Not only does the movie present the anonymous voice as it relates events, it superimposes screen animations of the events being narrated with this voice.

The viewing audience cannot miss this voice that seemingly explains the unfolding action. In the present case, Prospera’s voice is heard relating to Miranda the story of their life that was sparked off by the death of her husband, the Duke. As Prospera’s voice carries on with the narrative, the events are simultaneously flashed on the screen as they happened. The film artist compresses these events covering twelve years into a montage of episodes, beginning with Prospera’s crowning as the Duchess of Milan, progressing to the days of her scientific studies that were labeled witchcraft, and finally the day of her banishment from Milan together with baby Miranda (I.ii.53-169). Prospera tells this story with passion because the accusation of witchcraft, which is central to the depiction of sexism in the montage, marked the turning point in their life. Prospera does not pause in her narrative, but carries on relating every event in a voice full of feeling seemingly explaining pictures as they flash on the screen. Prospera’s story also becomes the audience’s story because they are made to participate in it through the retelling.

The voiceover communicates effectively filmic sexism by combining the acoustics with the visual pictures in a way that is captivating. The filmic stereotypical imaging of women as witches is illustrated by the accusation that Prospera was a witch disguised as a scientist, an image that is enriched by an amalgamation of techniques: the voiceover, the montage of events, Prospera's painful tone, facial expression, gestures and sound effects. The filmic method, therefore, magnifies the portrayal of sexism over and above what can be discerned and imagined from reading Shakespeare's play.

2.13 Literary "Blocking" Dramatizing Racism in *The Tempest* (1611).

Blocking is a technique that is more relevant to theatre and film making than to literary writing. Blocking is a stage directing and shooting strategy that utilizes the artistic positioning and movement of actors across the stage or frame as a way of communicating visually the relationship between them. Corrigan and White's definition of "Blocking" looks at its two dimensions, the physical and the social:

Blocking refers to the arrangement and movement of actors in relation to each other within the single physical space of the mise-en-scene... "Social blocking" (on the other hand) describes the arrangement of characters or groups according to visual patterns to portray social harmony, tension, or some other visual atmosphere (2004: 56).

Social Blocking is an aspect of the visual interpretation of relationships between the characters by viewers. By looking at the way actors are positioned and move on stage or within the film frame, the viewers will be able to judge whether the actors are friendly or hostile towards each other. The director does not announce this message, but causes the characters to utilize space so

as to indirectly communicate meaning. Since “blocking” is purely a visual a technique that deals with spaces, it is for the stage or film director to decide when to appropriately employ it.

Nevertheless, Shakespeare’s play, *The Tempest* (1611) remains the basis for adapting “blocking” and the director selects the scenes for applying the technique. Act V of *The Tempest* (1611) portrays the re-union between Prospero and his enemies, and the scene lends itself to blocking in adaptation. Shakespeare brings all his characters into the scene— the natives of the isle (Caliban and Ariel) and the aliens, that is, Alonso and his companions in the ship. Everybody is present because Prospero’s magic makes it all possible. Nobody dies in the storm and they are gathered together in the last scene where there is forgiveness and reconciliation. This is a very important scene in as far as it displays one important pillar of the Shakespearean romance, forgiveness and reconciliation. All characters are involved in this exercise, particularly the protagonist (Prospero) and those who had wronged him. Prospero responds to Ariel’s appeal for compassion thus: “Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,/ Yet with my nobler reason ‘gainst my fury/ do I take part. The rarer action is/ In virtue than vengeance” (V.i.25-27).

Prospero initiates the process when he instructs Ariel to immediately seek out Alonso and his companions and to release them from the spell of madness. Ariel is instructed to bring them to the cell. Prospero then demonstrates his seriousness when he rids himself of his magic: “My charms I’ll break, their senses I’ll restore,/ And they shall be themselves” (V.i.31-2). Amidst the swell of solemn music, Ariel ushers in the transgressors into Prospero’s circle where “they stand charmed” (V.i.58-87). Ariel then goes “To the King’s ship” and brings forth “the master, the boatswain and the mariners” (V.i.98-100). The three conspirators, namely, Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo are the last lot that Ariel shepherds into the circle.

It is at this moment when Prospero makes himself known to his enemies and he forgives them for their past wrongs. Alonso in return promises to restore Prospero to his Dukedom. Prospero immediately directs everybody's attention to Caliban, introducing him callously to the general company: "This misshapen knave,/ His mother was a witch, and one so strong/ That could control the moon..." (V.i.268-70). Prospero's remarks are not just insulting, they are also racist. This is reinforced by the stage arrangement where Prospero and the rest of the White characters stand together, antagonistically ranged against Caliban. Caliban becomes their common enemy as he seemingly faces off with the white characters. This positioning of characters on stage constitutes the blocking technique. This scene can only be imaginatively reconstructed mentally from reading the play, a requirement that can be missed by some of the readers

2.14 Cinematic "Blocking" Portraying Racism.

The film director takes up this scene and turns it into a great spectacle for portraying racism against blacks. The footage shows Caliban cowering in the background as Prospera introduces him to the general company (V.i.268-271). Even Stephano and Trinculo who were recently Caliban's allies and co-conspirators desert him and move closer to their fellow white characters. There is great irony in the utilization of space in the shot in this final scene— Prospera is shown standing together with Alonso and his group, the very people who had deposed her from Milan some twelve years ago. These former enemies now form a close-knit group that is ranged against Caliban who has been described as black and deformed who stands alone on one side. This shows that he is being discriminated against by the majority white characters and he is their common enemy on account of his blackness and physical deformity. The movement of white characters across the frame displays a kinship from which Caliban is excluded. Although Prospera is chastising the trio (Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano) for having conspired to kill her,

Caliban now takes all the blame. After all, wasn't he the one who hatched the idea of killing Prospera?

Stephano and Trinculo are now part of the white family and, therefore, have no cause to fear. Prospera's conciliatory attitude embraces all her white enemies for their wrongs, Trinculo and Stephano inclusive, for atrocities committed against her. They simply hang up their heads in shame as the Master talks, but there is no mistaking the closeness between them that is established by the colour bond. Caliban is excluded because he does not look and think like them; he is a deformed black savage who must suffer physical isolation from them. The white characters are brought together in kinship and they stare curiously at Caliban's deformed body. They speak disparagingly about him using the very words in the play. Prospera tells the company pointedly: "This thing of darkness I/ acknowledge mine" (V.i.275), a remark which depersonalizes Caliban and makes him somebody else's property. Alonso points at Caliban and follows the gesture with a racist statement: "This is a strange thing as ever I looked on" (V.i.289); to which Prospera replies: "He is as disproportionate in his manners as in his shape" (V.i.290). The accompanying music is equally dark: its dark texture is achieved through the blending of two sounds: the heavy "dum, dum, dum" of African drums and the blaring notes of a saxophone. The overall effect of these sounds is a discordance of notes that is harsh to the ear, which suitably communicates the unpleasant subject of racism. This music adds depth to the racist remarks being traded by the white characters and it also reinforces the visual effects in the scene. Therefore, the positioning of characters in the footage communicates ideas visually, even without the benefit of the words spoken by the characters. This is how "Blocking" utilizes spaces in the shot and presents a skilled director with an added opportunity to tell their story in another way, and the story that is being told here is the crass racism of whites against blacks.

2.15 Conclusion.

This Chapter discussed the heightened effect of filmic depictions of racism and sexism in *The Tempest* (2011) and how these are achieved in the contemporary medium of filmic representation. When Shakespeare's play is compared with its adaptation, a striking contrast emerges: the footage has magnified the racism and the sexism portrayed in the literary text. This was attributed to the unique manner of communication in which film appropriates technological advantages of cinematography to blow up ideological representations in three-dimensional illusions of reality.

The recording techniques of the film camera which are imposed on the material world of the film to produce memorable sequences exceed the unanimated and "dead" words in Shakespeare's literary text. The film footage brings to life the literary text and "the word is made flesh" (Elliott 161). The magnification of racism and sexism that is achieved by the adaptation was found to be a function of six cinematic techniques. Firstly, the actors and their performance as epitomized by Djimon Hounsou, in the role of Caliban. Hounsou is a Hollywood star who brought his vast acting experience into the film. The film combines Hounsou's "naturalistic" acting style with other features— his grotesque physique (especially his frog-like skin, due to make-up,) his expansive gestures and aggressive, growling voice— to magnify racism on the screen. Caliban on the screen is a product of make-up and his physical deformity is something real because it can be seen. He is a black savage who dominates the screen. The Caliban of the book, on the other hand, is not a living image but a product of every reader's imagination and he can take any form and shape depending on the reader. Secondly, the props and costumes, such as the pine branch where Sycorax had imprisoned Ariel and Prospera's fetishes, namely: the magic gown, magic stick and book which she uses to overcome Sycorax occult— these serve as repositories of both racism and

sexism. These props and costumes are used in the film to blow up the themes of racism and sexism. For example, the imprisonment of Ariel inside the trunk of a pine tree invokes a disturbing image of black witchcraft. When props are integrated with other filmic techniques, such as actors and performance, audible sound (the spooky sound produced by Ariel as he wails for twelve years inside the pine trunk), they provide visual and audible possibilities for the viewer, which can only be imagined from reading the literary text. The effect of this mixture of filmic techniques is to magnify black witchcraft and when Prospera later rescues Caliban from this confinement, it magnifies even further, white sorcery. Thirdly is the filmic natural setting whereby the film was shot on-location in the Caribbean. The magical effect of the Caribbean islands is enhanced by computer generated sea waves and sequences of Ariel flying across the sky at blinding speeds. The filmic material world is natural and is visually presented in Technicolor as the jungle, the sea, imposing mountains and desolate wastelands. Besides all these visual effects, the film footage also presents natural, audible sounds whose effect is magical and which rhyme with the idea of an enchanted island. This visual wasteland that is full of strange noises depicts that Africa constitutes danger to the white characters. Fourthly, are the special effects that are used to mesmerize viewers with seemingly impossible depictions, such as the sequence of Ariel submerged in a pool conversing with the "Master." Another sequence that is equally mesmerizing depicts Prospera raising a sea storm that destroys Alonso's ship. When this living footage in the film is compared with the "dead" descriptions of the book, the filmic version is a more effective presentation of the white occult. It is this white occult that eventually controls Sycorax's black occult, which filmic narrative is racist.

At another level, this seemingly feminist portrayal of Prospera's powers is equally sexist. Although Julie Taymor's film attempts to glorify witchcraft as a tool of domination by female

characters, the attempt falls into the patriarchal sexist stereotypical trap that portrays women as witches. This sexism is compounded by the portrayal of another female character, Sycorax, as a witch who had used the black occult to imprison Ariel inside a pine trunk. The other uniquely filmic technique is "Blocking" that was found to communicate the idea of racism visually in the final sequence, in which all the white characters stand on one side of the shot to hurl insults at Caliban who stands alone on the other side. Lastly, racism and sexism are accentuated by audible sounds. For example, the roaring of the sea waves, the stampede and the shouting of the sailors, the spooky screaming of Prospera as she performs her rituals, the haunting wailing of Ariel inside the pine trunk, the celestial singing of Ariel— these are living sounds that are projected through the film's sound track. When compared to the book's manner of presenting sounds through description, the film emerges as a superior mode of representation and is, therefore, more effective in communicating the gravity of racism and sexism and their debilitating consequence in modern society. In contrast, the words in the book are repositories of "dead" sounds that can only be brought to life in the imagination of the reader. This explains why the racism and sexism that Shakespeare's written texts are meant to communicate also remain dead on the written page.

CHAPTER THREE

Literary and Cinematic Techniques Portraying Racism and Sexism in *Othello*

3.1 Introduction.

Like in the previous chapter on *The Tempest* (1611), the present chapter engages in a parallel analysis of Shakespeare's employment of dramatic techniques in *Othello* (1604) to portray the themes of sexism and racism. This chapter, like the previous one, breaks down the analysis into six sub-headings of dramatic techniques— physical setting, characterization, props and costumes, blocking, stunts/special effects and songs/music plus other sound effects. A discussion of the corresponding filmic techniques for portraying sexism and racism then follows. This discussion focuses on how film techniques function and their effect on the pictorial portrayal of ideas. This analysis of the film techniques is underpinned by Elliott's six adaptation theories that are fully discussed in Chapter One, but focuses on two of them— the psychic and ventriloquist theories. Finally, the conclusion highlights how and why the filmic techniques enrich and magnify representations of racism and sexism in the adaptation of *Othello* (1995) whose consequence is a better and more effective portrayal of ideas. This makes the film medium more effective in communicating the seriousness and the undesirability of racism and sexism in modern society than the written text's attempt to do likewise when communicating racism and sexism in the English society at the time of writing *Othello* in 1604.

3.2 Literary Physical Setting Dramatizing Racism and Sexism.

Shakespeare sets *Othello* (1604) historically in two major locations— the Italian port city of Venice and the Mediterranean island of Cyprus. All events can neatly be divided between these two locations. The opening Act is set in Venice and the rest of the play is set in Cyprus,

beginning with Act 2 up to the final Act 5. Shakespeare employs stage directions to help his audiences to visualize and re-create mentally physical setting. For example, in the first two scenes of Act One, he uses stage directions to make the following bare descriptions: "Scene I. Venice. A street," which later changes to "Scene II. Another street."

The connection between the physical setting and racism as a theme is embedded in the type of relationship that existed between the English and the Italians at that time, considering that Italy was a country that was despised by the English. This cultural arrogance of the English provided Shakespeare with raw material for imaginatively parading racism among his countrymen without necessarily blaming them. Italy becomes the veil and the metaphor for the English home grown racism against blacks that is conveniently staged outside the Elizabethan and the Jacobean English societies. The discussion on how Shakespeare uses characterization is most telling because the Italians that were much despised by the English become agents for despising blacks, which actually magnifies the lowliness of the black characters in the eyes of the English. The Venetian setting also serves wider purposes since it suggests that white racism against blacks was not confined to England, but was widespread throughout continental Europe.

At another level, Shakespeare exploits the English attitude of looking at Italians as uncultured, immoral and inferior people to portray English society's patriarchal prejudices and sexism against women. He presents sexism as a vice of Italians by portraying how they marginalize women, which explains his choice of Venice as the locus where these events are played out. It must be noted here that at that time Venice was reputed to be a brothel city where pleasure girls operated freely and wives cheated on their husbands, which vices Iago points out to Othello: "In Venice they (wives) do let Heaven see the pranks/ They dare not show their husbands. Their best

conscience/ Is to... keep it unknown" (III.iii.202-4). Othello echoes this sentiment when he tells Desdemona: "I took you for that cunning whore of Venice/ That married with Othello" (IV.ii.88-9). Venice was, therefore, a promiscuous city where prostitutes gave men sexual pleasure in exchange for money and other material gains. This idea was exploited by the playwright to denigrate the female characters without necessarily spreading the blame to the male characters, a fact that is clearly contained in Iago's statement above. This art that parades female characters stereotypically as prostitutes is sexist since it reduces them to mere sex objects whose sole function is to satisfy the sexual needs of the male characters.

On the other hand, Cyprus is ironically the setting selected by Shakespeare to undermine white racism against blacks. He creates a situation of an impending war between the Ottomans and the Italians as they struggle for the political control of the island. The Italians, however, are already in control of Cyprus, but the Turks are said to have dispatched a fleet of ships to dislodge them from the island (I.iii.7-8). A discussion is held at night, presided over by the Duke so as to forge an appropriate response to the Turkish aggression and the choice falls on Othello to lead the defense against the invaders. This meeting takes place in the Council Chamber and it is a great irony that this chamber should be the setting for selecting the Moor to spearhead the war against the Turks. It is, therefore, the white Italians themselves who are actively engaged in vindicating the Moor, which translates to the beginnings of the process of debunking the negative images of Othello that have been created by some white characters like Brabantio and Iago. The choice of Othello as the one to defend Cyprus is unanimous (I.iii.48-9); Brabantio's accusations that the Moor had practiced witchcraft to win his daughter's hand in marriage are abandoned. It is in the same Council Chamber that the marriage between Othello and Desdemona is begrudgingly blessed by Brabantio (I.iii.193-195). Shakespeare, therefore, manages to employ the setting of

the Council Chamber to initiate the process of dispelling the Western belief that black characters are inherently inferior to white characters.

When the action shifts to Cyprus, the process of redeeming the black image is carried to a higher level. It is in Cyprus where Othello is credited for defeating the Ottomites when he announces triumphantly: "News, friends. Our wars are done, the Turks are drowned!" (II.i.204). Cyprus is where Othello takes over as the new black governor, replacing Montano (II.i.55). Cyprus is where Othello single-handedly puts down the riots instigated by Iago (II.iii.163-258). Finally, Cyprus is where Othello demonstrates that a black character is the overall decision maker when he dismisses his second-in-command, a white character, Cassio, from the Army for getting involved in a drunken brawl with Montano, the out-going white governor (II.iii.248). Cyprus becomes Shakespeare's setting in which white racism against blacks is defeated, but ironically it also becomes the setting for fronting sexism against female characters when Othello murders his own wife, Desdemona, on the unfounded allegations of infidelity (V, scene ii). When he realizes his mistake later, Othello commits suicide and thereby consolidates the idea of self-sacrifice as a virtue, an act that ennobles him and creates a black hero (V.ii.355). Shakespeare, thus, employs physical setting to advance the two themes of racism and sexism, but also to completely undermine and discredit the stereotypical representations of blacks as inferiors of whites that are found elsewhere in the play.

3.3 Cinematic On-location Filming.

The cinematic equivalent of the literary physical setting discussed above is the natural setting. The film was shot "on-location," which results into greater realism. It is significant that the acknowledgements and the credits segment of the film (also highlighted on the dust cover) states:

“The filming was done entirely on location in several places in Italy – namely, Odeithaiti, Bracciano, Cala Violina and Venice.” This means that the geographical/material dimension of *Othello* is verifiable and can be pinpointed in real places on a map. An interested observer can actually find these places in Italy. For example, the imposing architecture of the Council Chamber, the expansive sea and coastlines, the narrow streets overhang with medieval buildings– all these are real places found in the medieval coastal city of Venice. Corrigan (2004) emphasizes how the realism of on-location shooting reinforces the film’s verisimilitude, but also casts “a historical mise-en-scene that recreates recognizable historical scenes that recall specific location and time in history” (68). The historical realities in the film reflect events as they happened when Shakespeare was writing in the 17th Century, and the natural setting helps in recreating the happenings in the minds of contemporary viewers. It is in this sense that Shakespeare’s spirit is said to pervade the film, especially when Elliott’s psychic adaptation theory is used as the lens for reading the film.

Although there is no claim made anywhere that, “This film is based on real life events,” the director’s decision to shoot *Othello* (1995) on location rather than on artificially constructed studios, reconstructs real life situations as they existed in Shakespeare’s day. The racism against the blacks and the sexism against female characters at that time were social ills that are shared with the modern world of the film because these are truths that are equally inbuilt into the culture of contemporary Western society. Such similarities made it relatively easy for the film director to re-create these social realities in the make-believe world of the film because the raw material was readily available in contemporary society. The natural setting in different places in Italy mentioned above is not divorced from today’s Western world where racism against blacks thrives. Although Italy is very close to Africa, separated by a relatively small Mediterranean sea,

Africans that seek a better life in that country are subjected to constant racism by white Italians. A case in point is Mario Balotelli, an African-Italian football star who plays football in Europe. In spite of the fact he was adopted by Italian foster parents, he has suffered racist insults when he appears on the pitch. Some white fans often make monkey-calls at him as others brandish bananas at him, a gesture suggesting that he is a monkey and he should come for food.

A psychic reading of the film reveals an attempt by the film director to create a black hero “in the spirit” of the written play, albeit the film also adds greater meaning to this attempt. The question as to whether Parker succeeds in capturing this Shakespearean spirit draws mixed feelings as discussed in Section 3.7 in this thesis. The visual images of Venice that are captured in their natural colours— the buildings, the streets, the sea and the coastlines— bring to life what can only be imagined in the play. When these pictorials are subjected to Elliott’s ventriloquist reading, there is an expanded meaning to themes. The footage exaggerates racism because there is a big difference between mentally contriving a physical setting from reading the play and actually seeing it on the screen and witnessing segregation via animation. The viewer is immediately struck by the level of development in terms of physical infrastructure: the buildings and the roads— an image that is completely removed from the Western imaginaries of bushes, forests and the wilderness of Africa where the Moor belongs. The images on the screen present foreign surroundings and physical setting that are emotionally alienating to an untraveled and “raw” black viewer. As soon as the Moor is introduced into the footage, racism becomes a reality on the screen. Othello’s presence in these “alien” surroundings is a picture of something that is physically odd and out of place, something that invokes a feeling of unfamiliarity with the physical setting, but also of loneliness. He is shown struggling to gain acceptance from the overwhelming majority of white characters that bask in the comfort of their natural surroundings

where they were nurtured. Although Oliver Parker's film draws inspiration from Shakespeare's play, it also impregnates the footage with greater meaning. The film's enrichment is a consequence of the unique advantages that are available in the cinematic medium in which a sequence is presented on a canvas of real life surroundings that captures the spectacle in three dimensions and in the acoustics of the sound track. The film facilitates the emergence of racism in a dominant footage of the Moor's lonely presence that is superimposed with that of the solid presence of white characters. In this image, Othello cuts a pathetic image of black insignificance in a sea of whiteness, mainly because the events are played out in their historical natural setting in Southern Europe, in Italy, where blacks were a negligible minority at the time of Shakespeare's dramatization of events in the 17th century.

3.4 Literary Characterization Dramatizing Racism.

The opening scene in the play, *Othello* (1604), presents the dialogue of Roderigo and Iago. Their conversation captures the racist attitude at that time, which Shakespeare faithfully dramatizes. In this scene, Iago confesses that he hates the Moor for having by-passed him when he selected Michael Cassio as his second-in-command, a man that Iago considers to be less experienced in field combat than he is. According to Iago, Cassio has "never set a squadron in the field,/ Nor the division of a battle knows" (I.i.21-2). Therefore, Cassio's claim to soldiering is derived from theories in books that he learnt during training, which Iago contemptuously dismisses as "bookish theoretic" (I.i.24). Iago thinks military theories do not really count for much. Iago communicates his bitterness to Roderigo, which he underlies with racist epithets. The language he employs dehumanizes Othello into a creature that cannot even be allowed to have sexual relations with a white girl, Desdemona, which is evident when he (Iago) shouts on the streets in a

bid to raise Desdemona's father, Brabantio: "...an old black ram/ Is tuppung your white ewe.../ Arise, arise.../ Or else the Devil will make a grandsire of you" (I.i.88-91). Iago illustrates further why he considers a sexual union between Othello and Desdemona a mistake in nature since it is comparable to establishing relationships with demi-beasts: "you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary/ horse, you'll have your nephews neigh to you, you'll/ have coursers for cousins and jennets for germans" (I.i.111-14).

Shakespeare infects other white characters with this mediaeval racism against blacks. A case in point is Brabantio who rallies on to Iago's incitement when he accuses Othello of "having enchanted Desdemona/...in chains of magic" (I.ii.63-65). Brabantio refuses to believe that his little girl willingly fell in love with "the sooty bosom" of Othello (I.ii.70), a direct reference to Othello's dark African complexion that is used as a metaphor of his inferiority.

In the third scene, Brabantio drags Othello before the Duke and the senators where he prefers charges of witchcraft against him or to use his own words: "Desdemona is abused, stol'n from me and corrupted/ By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks" (I.ii.60-1). The Duke gives Othello the opportunity to answer to these charges and Othello outlines the process he used in wooing Desdemona. This process entailed telling stories to her father about his past battle experiences, his near death encounters among foreign tribes, "...the cannibals that each other eat/ The anthropophagi, and men whose heads/ Do grow beneath their shoulders" (I.ii.143-5). These were the stories that moved Desdemona's deep compassion for him, and when he later proposed marriage to her, she willingly accepted.

The portrayal of racism against Othello continues with the change of setting to Cyprus. For example, Shakespeare portrays Othello's lack of rationality when the Moor believes without

question whatever Iago tells him, especially the lie that Cassio and Desdemona are having an affair. Othello sees in Iago “a fellow of exceeding honesty/ And knows all qualities, with a learned spirit/ Of human dealings” (III.iii.258-9), which is simply a misjudgment of Iago. Shakespeare also exposes Othello’s other darker side— a tendency to be violent. For example, when Othello is convinced of Desdemona’s infidelity, he promises: “I’ll tear her to pieces... I’ll chop her to messes!” (III.iii.431; IV.i.211). Othello’s statements deteriorate into frightful sadism when he states: “I would have him (Cassio) nine years a-killing” (IV.i.188). Othello’s cruelty is consummated in Act V, scene ii when he murders Desdemona. According to the stage directions, the scene is set in “A bedchamber in the castle. Desdemona is in bed asleep, a light burning.” This is symbolically set in the night because of its evil nature, and in it Desdemona is made to plead for her life to no avail. In another stage direction, Shakespeare documents Desdemona’s murder by simply stating: “He stifles her” (Act V). When Emilia comes into the room of murder, Shakespeare makes her speak words that portray Othello as less than human. She labels Othello “blacker than the devil” (V.ii.131), “As ignorant as dirt!” (V.ii.164), “this villain” (V.ii.172), “a dull Moor” (V.ii.225), “such a trifle” (V.ii.228), and a “murderous coxcomb” (V.ii.233)

Although Emilia is a mere servant to Othello’s family, Shakespeare makes her to insult and to look down upon her black employer. It is true that Othello has committed a criminal act, but there is a need to separate his criminality from his skin colour, something which Emilia fails to do. However, it should be recognized that Emilia was created by Shakespeare and he is the one who puts these racist epithets into her mouth. Among all the dramatic techniques that Shakespeare uses in the play, characterization is the most effective in portraying racism against blacks. Its dialogue is accessible to the reader and the idea of racism can be discerned from the words that are spoken by the characters since their import is largely denotative.

3.5 (a) Cinematic Characterization: a psychic reading of racism

Like Shakespeare uses characterization above to portray racism, this section discusses the corresponding filmic technique of actors and their performance that is used to render racism against blacks in modern society. It is important to note that Shakespeare did not set to write a historical account of what was happening in the race relations in the Jacobean/Elizabethan English society. Shakespeare rather set out to re-create artistically the strained relations between whites and blacks which also allowed him to create a black hero out of the Moor, only to destroy him completely later.

According to G.B. Harrison (1968) in his "Introduction to *Othello*," Shakespeare got the inspiration to write *Othello* (1604) from Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatombithi* (*Hundred tales*), published in Venice in 1566. Cinthio's tale does not mention Othello by name but simply talks about a Moor who married Disdemona, a varied spelling of Desdemona. In Cinthio's tale, the Moor does not commit suicide; rather, he is tortured by the rulers of Venice for causing the death of Disdemona which he made to look like an accident of the ceiling falling on her. The Moor was condemned to perpetual banishment but before he could flee to exile, he was killed by Disdemona's kinsmen. Shakespeare embellishes appropriates Cinthio's tale and enriches it with his own ideas. For example, Shakespeare adds witchcraft as a perception that was held by the white characters against the Moor, on top of another common black stereotype— that of Othello as an epileptic. Othello's suicide is also Shakespeare's novelty that cannot be found in Cinthio's tale and whereas Othello is damned in Cinthio's tale, he is ennobled in the play. Shakespeare's version manages to create an Aristotelian black hero, and it is his version that dominates Parker's adaptation of *Othello* (1995), albeit it drawing additional inspiration from the *Hecatombithi*.

The film does not simply retain the spirit of Shakespeare's play, but celebrates it in as far as it replicates all the literary characters and their roles. Othello is incarnated as the protagonist who secretly marries Desdemona and is accused of employing witchcraft to win her hand. Iago is animated in the same role of the master of intrigue who concocts a love affair between Cassio and Desdemona because he wants to avenge himself with Othello for having promoted Cassio over him. Roderigo and Emilia are equally realized pictorially as pawns in Iago's game of revenge. The movie ends in a corresponding tragedy of the multiple deaths of Desdemona, Othello, Emilia and Roderigo and in similar Shakespearean circumstances. Similarly, the two literary texts (the *Hecatomithi* and *Othello*) have a great bearing on the portrayal of the theme of racism in Oliver Parker's *Othello* (1995); the film is not just a replication of the theme but a much more enriched rendition of it as discussed in the next section.

3.5 (b) Cinematic Characterization: a ventriloquist reading of racism.

A ventriloquist reading of the film, on the other hand, reveals a fusion of two broad features: firstly, actors and their performance and, secondly, debunking. These two aspects of film artistry contribute towards embellishing, enriching and magnifying the portrayal of racism in Parker's *Othello* (1995). The feature of actors and performance looks at the totality of contributions of all the actors and actresses that brings out the idea of racism. The insults that the white characters direct at the black protagonist are directly borrowed from Shakespeare's play, including Emilia's litany of insults that are listed in the closing paragraphs of Section 3.4. The filmic version embellishes Brabantio's accusations against Othello with theatrics. The sequence is enacted and shot inside the Council Chamber. Brabantio rushes into the chamber on the heels of Othello, closely followed by a band of his kinsmen who had unsuccessfully attempted to arrest Othello in the street of Venice. Brabantio wastes no time; he goes down on his knee and kisses the ring on

the Duke's finger. He rises up and takes a step backwards: a close-up shot shows an expression of great grief on his face. He tries to speak but his voice breaks down as he mourns: "My daughter! Oh, my daughter!" (I.iii.58). Brabantio's grieving is rendered in a montage of panning shots that alternate between him and the Duke. One particularly amazing close-up shot shows the Duke at this moment of shock. The Duke puts his hand across his heart and inquires in a stricken voice: "Dead?" (I.ii.59). In response, Brabantio immediately launches into unsubstantiated accusations, alleging that Othello had employed witchcraft to win his daughter. His tone is hateful and vehement as he makes these wild allegations. Racism is communicated by the tone, the posture, the facial expression and the silence that envelops the council Chamber as the senators listen to his every word. This filmic rendition blows up white racism against blacks specifically because it is rendered in a powerful performance by professional actors.

Othello's rebuttal of Brabantio's wild accusations is a complete antithesis of the cinematic performance by a Hollywood Star: Laurence Fishburne in the role of Othello. Othello stands ramrod in front of the senators like a soldier on parade. Where Brabantio had wept like a child in a voice broken with grief, Othello is calm and collected in his presentation. He tells the story of wooing Desdemona in a firm, self-assured and defiant voice. Film artistry quickly changes into another filmic technique, namely, the voiceover to substantiate and reinforce Othello's narrative. The hidden details of Othello's courtship with Desdemona are played as flashbacks on the screen. Brabantio's version of events is disproved by these images, exposing him as a liar and a racist. Othello concludes his defense with greater defiance: "Send for the lady to the Sagittary,/ And let her speak of me before her father" (I.iii.115-116). Othello counters Brabantio's emotional presentation with a calm presentation and when Desdemona comes, she confirms that she was a willing party in her marriage with Othello. Brabantio is shamed into performing the

ceremony of officially giving Desdemona to Othello in front of the Duke and the senators. This contrast of performance and imaging of the two characters constitutes in its totality the filmic technique of debunking in far as it dispels the negative imaging of Othello as a practitioner of witchcraft. Othello's image, together with that of the whole black race, is redeemed. It means that the stereotyping of blacks as witches is also destroyed. It is in this sense where debunking is tied with the performance of Fishburne in the role of Othello. If Fishburne did not put up a good performance, then, perhaps the negative image that had been created about him by the white characters would have stuck. Thanks to his accumulated acting experience and great performance, he is able to destroy that image and to create a new positive image of himself. Shakespeare's written version, on the other hand, is not blessed with this type of pictorial trickery and is, therefore, a watered down portrayal of white racism against blacks. For this reason, the movie presents a more activist version of racism in contemporary society by magnifying that magnifies the practice. It also recruits viewers to condemn the heinous practice.

The next section examines further, how the film brings to life the theme of white racism against blacks, and presents more sequences of the debunking technique that emphasize the greatness of the Moor, in his deeds and bearing. Such positive portrayals of Othello destroy all stereotypical images of him that are found elsewhere in the film, thus creating a black hero out of him.

3.6 Cinematic actors and performance in *Othello* (1995)

Film scholars have argued that: "It is the actors and their performance that either make or break a film" (Corrigan and White 52). The truth in this assertion is clearly demonstrated in the film *Othello* (1995) by the performance of Laurence Fishburne in the role of the Moor. It is important to note that Hollywood has created a pool of professional actors or stars that are recycled in all

major films. These stars are highly paid and are on great demand by film-makers. Fishburne is one such star whose presence and performance in *Othello* (1995) is so dominant that it reduces all the other actors and actresses into subordinate roles that are merely meant to serve him.

Corrigan and White (2004) also look at the ability of a star to bring into the film “the accumulated history and significance of past performances” (54) that enriches the movie. Laurence Fishburne who is an African-American brings this “accumulated experience” into the movie, *Othello* (1995). Fishburne has had a long acting career in Hollywood that has seen him perform in a number of movies, including, *Boyz n the Hood* (1991)— a film which thrust him to stardom for the very first time. He subsequently went on to win an Emmy for his role as a pilot in *Tribela* (1993), the same year he was nominated for an Oscar for his role as Turner in *What's Love Got to Do with it?* (1993). However, it was his role as Morpheus in the sci-fi classic, *The Matrix* (1999) and its sequel, *The Matrix Revolutions* (2003) that proved to be the most popular with audiences. His other leading roles can be found in *Bad Company* (1995), the same year *Othello* was released, and in *Event Horizon* (1997), *Akeelah and the Bee* (2006), *Hoodlum* (1997), *Mission Impossible III* (2006), *Predators* (2010) and *Once in the Life* (2000)— a film he also directed. Fishburne’s journey to stardom began with minor roles in earlier films like *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Rumble Fish* (1983), *The Cotton Club* (1984) and *Gardens of Stone* (1987). He also featured in *Searching for Bobby Fischer* (1993), *Mystic River* (2003), *Bobby* (2006), *Contagion* (2011) and *21* (2008).

Fishburne manages to bring out the essential aspects of the black character’s self— Othello’s bravery as a soldier, charisma as a general in the Venetian army, nobility in birth, the capacity to trust others completely, and most importantly, his deep love for Desdemona, which drives him to

kill her and to take his own life. Fishburne was clearly cut out for the role of the Moor because he makes a lasting impression in this role of the tragic hero. Fishburne's great performance facilitates the process of creating a positive image of himself, a process that is closely connected to the cinematic technique of debunking. The next section examines debunking in detail, showing how it functions in the movie, particularly how debunking is used to destroy all the negative depictions of the inferiority of the Moor on account of his black skin.

3.7 Cinematic debunking in *Othello* (1995)

It was mentioned earlier that "debunking" is a filmic technique where the central ideas on which the film is built are essentially undermined and destroyed in the same film. Debunking employs contradictions to down play the very ideas that are considered important in the movie. First and foremost, debunking is a function of actors and their performance, which in this case revolves around the protagonist actor, Lawrence Fishburne. The high quality of the film, *Othello* (1995), is partly explained by the high caliber of Fishburne's acting style that is labeled by Corrigan and White as "naturalistic acting" (53). The essence of naturalistic acting is to have the actor fully immersed in his role so as to communicate the fictional character's essential self.

Fishburne's acting prowess is evident throughout the film, but can be illustrated in a few selected sequences. Firstly, is the scene where Othello and his small group of men are waylaid by Brabantio and his kinsmen; they want to arrest Othello because they think that he employed witchcraft to win Desdemona's hand in marriage. The shot depicts the dramatic confrontation of Othello's thin contingent and Brabantio's formidable group, which is marked by shouting, clashing of swords and loud cursing, which sound effects deepen the racist depiction of this scene. Othello reacts with lightning agility and he is shown drawing his long sword in one

smooth movement as his voice booms threateningly, in the very words of the play: "Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them!" (I.ii.60). Othello's threat checks his assailants and brings them to a confused standstill. The shot is dominated by the darkness of the night, a lighting technique for tantalizing the viewing audience as they strain to make out the action. This darkness also symbolizes Othello's alleged evil practice of witchcraft. The confusion within the dark frame is full of uncertainties for it is laden with latent dangers whose eventual outcome could be disastrous. In all these uncertainties, Othello emerges triumphant: his enemies are shown to be ineffectual since the confrontation does not physically threaten the protagonist. The director introduces his own interpretation into this scene to the effect that it is Brabantio and his men who are in great danger of physical harm rather than Othello as was envisaged by the playwright. Brabantio's precarious situation becomes apparent in a close-up shot that reveals the fear in his eyes as the Moor brushes the tip of his enormous sword across Brabantio's throat. Brabantio's accusation of "thou hast enchanted her" (I.ii.63) is cut short and chokes in his throat.

After failing to arrest Othello, Brabantio resorts to insulting him. In the very spirit and words of the literary text, he is heard telling Othello that Desdemona could not have volunteered to embrace his "blackness" in marriage (I.ii.70-1). Othello remains composed and he is shown beating down the swords pointed at him, as he walks bravely through the cordon of his attackers. They follow him with swords drawn, but they are not brave enough to inflict harm on the Moor. When these pictorials are contrasted to written scene, the film outshines the hypotext. The bravery displayed by the film actor is more convincing in the three-dimensional illusion presented by the movie, but which can only be imagined from reading the play. The black protagonist later testifies in his own defense before the Duke and it is a powerful delivery that is devoid of Brabantio's unfair theatrics. He wins the case easily when he convinces the Duke and

the senators that there was no witchcraft involved in his wooing, as outlined in Section 3.4 of this thesis. This impression is created by a pictorial translation of the account given in this section.

Fishburne's acting prowess is perhaps even better demonstrated at the scene of the Cyprus riots. The story of how Iago and Roderigo stage manage these riots is told elsewhere in this thesis. The present concern is to demonstrate how the adaptation enriches Othello's portrayal as a true soldier who is always prepared for battle. It is evident from the pictures on the screen that he just jumped out of bed because he appears in his night gown and he must have also grabbed his sword by reflex. It is in this state that Othello heads directly into the unpredictable dangers of the riot where he discovers a hall full of white characters in various stages of drunken shouting, fighting and running. He bursts into the room wielding his sword as he bellows the very words of the play: "Hold for your lives!" (II.iii.165). Then like the seasoned soldier that he is, he effortlessly plucks off the bleeding Montano sprawling on top of Cassio whom he throws aside; he then confronts the intoxicated Cassio lying helplessly on his back. He rebukes the two men in the very words of the play:

Are we turned Turks, and to ourselves do that

Which Heaven has forbid the Ottomites?

For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl.

He that stirs next to carve for his own rage

Holds his soul light, he dies upon his motion (II.iii.170-74).

Othello's message to the rioters is radical because his words have turned the conventional concept of "barbarian" upside down. Othello calls the white characters "barbarians" because of their involvement in "a barbarous brawl." In other words he has come to "civilize" them, albeit

he is black. The subtle suggestion in this sequence of a night brawl is to depict Othello as Master of the situation, therefore, a black hero who puts down a skirmish. Othello's heroic intervention is not only timely, but is also a means of debunking an earlier attempt to portray him as a mere worker in the pay of his white Masters who had sent him to fight their war in Cyprus. Othello incarnated as Fishburne is depicted as completely in-charge of the situation rather than an unquestioning servant of the white folks.

Kevin Dunn (1996) critically examines this "image of an African as a loyal servant" (154), which is commonly paraded in Western artforms. In the racist Western philosophy, blacks are the inferiors of whites and the black people's natural role is to serve and obey the white race. Othello obviously does not fit this stereotype because it is the white characters that are shown to do his bidding and to pay loyalty to him. He hires and fires them as the need arises. As commander of the Venetian Army, it was up to him to appoint Cassio as his lieutenant and disappoint Iago. This is the origin of Iago's grudge against him. Othello's actions in this scene speak for themselves when he is shown imposing his authority on the white characters and thereby establishing immediate order on the island. Othello goes further to make a public demonstration of this authority by firing and administering corporal punishment on Cassio. He slaps Cassio in front of the Cypriots then strips him of the shoulder-band that symbolizes his lieutenantcy. In the play, Othello simply tells Cassio: "I'll make thee an example" (III.iii.251), which statement is enriched by the film-maker when he translates it into pictures where Othello is made to slap Cassio and to remove the band of rank from Cassio's shoulder. The film version is visually graphic in its depiction of the public humiliation of a white character by a black character because viewing audiences are enlisted as witnesses to the public demotion and humiliation of Cassio. This is the director's own subjective interpretation of the event in the play,

whose filmic version communicates better than the written text. The movie highlights in a more convincing way the significance of this scene by enabling the Moor to overcome the negative accusations of inferiority on account of his skin colour, and this is how debunking works in a movie. It is a scene of black empowerment which must have been particularly poignant when the play was performed in front of a white audience in 17th Century.

Elliott's ventriloquist adaptation model also reads the film's surrounding culture as a source of its enrichment. It is in this sense that Othello's arrival in Cyprus is pictorially rendered as a celebration, showing the big numbers of the islanders that have turned up to welcome him as their new governor. Othello arrives on horse-back and he is wearing breast armor; a long sword dangles on his hip. The islanders are impressed and they clap and cheer in acclaim. He jumps down into the delighted embrace of his Desdemona who had preceded him to the island. The two are shown in a long passionate kiss as the islanders look on quietly. The Islanders exhibit unease and they hang up their heads in shame because they are intruders to a private moment of romantic intimacy between husband and wife. It must be remembered that though the film belongs to the 21st century, the events happened in the 17th century when the English were compelled to observe a strict moral code. A couple kissing passionately in public would not happen in the Elizabethan and Jacobean societies. The fact that Othello was a black man made it even more improbable and even disagreeable then.

However, this open show of erotic passion is recognized by narratologists like Seymour Chatman and Brian McFarlane as "up-dating the hypotext," a method of modifyin~~g~~g a canonical text so as to bring it in tandem with contemporary tastes that are relevant to modern viewers (Qtd. in Leitch 98-103). Public kissing is a representation that belongs more to the 21st Century of the

movie than to the 17th Century of the progenitor text because it could not have been part of Shakespeare's thinking at the time of composing the play. The sequence also illustrates the director's application of ventriloquism that results in an enrichment of the scene. After the long kiss, Othello is heard shouting delightedly in the very words of the play: "Our battles are won, the Turks are drowned!" (II.i.204) and the Islanders cheer wildly some more. The film version juxtaposes the acoustics with the spectacle of hands waving wildly at Othello. When this is compared to the lack of animation and the "non-living" descriptions and dialogue of the written text, the film version becomes an enrichment of the Moor's heroism that is seen and heard. The film renders Othello's heroism through images that make him larger than life, completely undermining the negative images of him created by Iago, Roderigo and Brabantio.

The subsequent sequence runs a montage of organically organized scenes that form part of the festivities to mark the defeat of the Ottomites, beginning with the symbolic burning of an effigy of a turbaned Turk, which event cannot be traced to the progenitor text, but is the director's own innovation aimed at enriching the celluloid scene. The pictorial enactment of this public ritual symbolizes the defeat of the Turkish invaders. The next event in the sequence is a change of the scene and it takes the viewer to an impressive looking, candle-lit hall where Othello sits at the head of the table as the host and charms his guests. There is much happiness in the air and it is marked by uninhibited eating and drinking, singing and dancing. The picture of a black character at the head of the table, presiding of a party thrown by himself to a crowd of white characters, communicates black empowerment than its written account in Shakespeare's play.

The scene changes yet again to the harbour where the camera closes in on a horse cart: it reveals an animation of live sex between Othello and Desdemona on top of a horse cart. This scene

illustrates yet another subjective enrichment of events by the film director that is largely incongruous with the Jacobean/Elizabethan moral code. The whole sequence serves as a means of up-dating the film so that it appeals to the tastes of modern viewing audiences. The women in the Elizabethan society were models of modesty and were not expected to be found drinking wildly in night parties, nor having sex with black men on top of carts at the harbour. The shot is significant because it undermines the stereotypical thinking that blacks are inferior characters that are unfit to be loved by white women, on top of being unschooled in the art of civilized romance. No doubt, the animation of this event is a daring act of racial activism on the screen.

Hollywood is not just the home of the U.S movie industry; it is also a cauldron for Western cultural engineering. It is Hollywood that sets the pace in global trends like fashion, music, food, sports, socializing modes, partying, sex codes, morality and more. The culture that comes out of Hollywood is subsequently dissipated to the rest of the world through the movies and the rest of the world, whether consciously or unconsciously, incorporates aspects of that culture into their own culture. Some incidents in the adaptation of *Othello* (1995) are downright pornographic and such incidents were not permissible in Shakespeare's society then. A man (more so a black man) would not be seen having sex with a white woman (Desdemona) as shown in two scenes— on a cart and on the marital bed. These filmic novelties that cannot be traced to the play are the Elliottian “new spirits” (143) introduced into the text by the film director and they transform the film into a new imaginary that is loosely connected to the progenitor text.

As a strategy of debunking, the adaptation also surpasses the progenitor text in the way it establishes a clear contrast of the black protagonist (Othello) and his white antagonist (Iago). The successful emergence of Othello as a hero is matched by the successful retrogression of Iago into

a villain; it is also a function of another star performance by Kenneth Branagh in the role of Iago. Kenneth Branagh fits the role well because his chubby features and baby-like face would easily inspire trust in any other person, the way it happens in the film when he successfully dupes the Moor into trusting him. Branagh's easy and confident smile makes him appear friendly and trustworthy and this helps him to ensnare his victims. In his scheming moments, Iago is portrayed as intelligent, wily and charmingly deceptive. He is also a great psychologist who understands other characters' strengths and weaknesses. For example, he finds Othello's honest nature and his tendency to trust others as weaknesses that he would exploit to bring Othello down. Iago also knows that Othello's soft spot is his wife Desdemona, but she is also his greatest source of insecurity. She is white and beautiful. She is desired by many white men and Iago thinks that Othello would not stand any chance of retaining her in a fair competition with these white men. Iago, therefore, turns Desdemona into a weapon for avenging himself with Othello and Cassio, both of whom had denied him lieutenantcy in the Venetian Army.

Iago comes across as an accomplished hypocrite who ensnares Othello with the great lie that Cassio is having an affair with Desdemona. In a conversation that takes place in the castle armory, Iago speaks the words of the play: "Look to your wife. Observe her well with Cassio.../ I know our country disposition well/ In Venice they do let Heaven see the pranks/ They dare not show their husbands.../ She did deceive her father, marrying you...!" (III.iii.197-206). A medium shot shows a room full of weapons stacked neatly in racks. Othello and Iago are absorbed in dismantling, cleaning, and re-assembling guns as they also converse. Othello who is in the final stages of re-assembling a gun is shown playfully placing the muzzle over Iago's heart as he speaks the following words gently: "By Heaven, I'll know thy thoughts" (III.iii.161). A

close-up shot registers the mild surprise and fear in Iago's eyes; the shot stays on Iago's shifty blue eyes so as to expose his dishonesty.

It should be remembered that eyes are organs of communication that have for long been considered doors into the human soul. Iago's unsteady eye movements that cannot meet Othello's steady gaze betray him as a liar and a villain. As Iago is heard making these untrue allegations against Cassio, his eyes movements are shifty and wandering. Iago's suggestion that Desdemona is consistently dishonest because she had deceived her own father by marrying Othello strikes home and a close-up shot reveals a momentary confusion on Othello's face; a momentary indecision. Iago seizes the moment to press home his point: he puts on an earnest expression on top of assuming a grave and somber tone as he embarks on convincing Othello to believe him. A close-up shot reveals Iago's talking mouth near Othello's listening ear rattling on even after the sound is cut off. The viewer is treated to this amazing vignette of a talking mouth and a listening ear that goes on and on. The shot is reinforced further by lighting— one half of the vignette is brightly lit, while the other half is enveloped in darkness. This is symbolic of the Iago's double personality where he successfully projects the image of goodness to hide the true villain that he is. With this bi-polar personality, Iago is able to ensnare his victims. For example, he seemingly performs a charitable act of warning Othello about a cheating wife, yet in truth, he is wants to trap and destroy him. The sequence reveals that the Moor has swallowed Iago's bait and Othello is shown leaning his head on the racks, then he looks up and inquires mournfully in a strangled tone and a fixed stare of no one: "Why did I marry?" (II.iii.242). Othello's posture in this shot is loaded with symbolism. The director fashions the scene from his own imagination since there are no stage directions for him to follow in the play. He chooses to frame Othello behind the racks so as to make him look like a prisoner peeping behind the iron bars. By this

time Othello is truly a prisoner of his own conscience since Iago's words have aroused a fiery jealousy in him. Othello is heard lamenting bitterly in the words of the literary text: "Oh, the curse of marriage,/ That we can call these delicate creatures ours,/ And not their appetites...!" (III.iii.268-70). This footage uses the spectacle of a broken Othello and reinforces it with the acoustics of his grieving tone to add more meaning to the suffering of the Moor wrought by a villain, compared to Shakespeare version that is dull and tedious because it is not animated.

The camera stays on Othello and a close-up shot shows that his eyes are turning dull and glassy. His head begins to nod uncontrollably, his mouth smirks from time to time, his breathing becomes labored, until finally he keels over in an epileptic seizure. Lighting plays a major role to create an illusion of Othello's eye-balls flashing like crystals in the darkness of the room in rhythm with the nodding of his head. This shot demonstrates how special effects facilitate the pictorial enactment of an epileptic fit whose equivalent in the play is a mere statement: "Othello falls in a trance" (IV.ii.44). As Othello nods on and his eyes flash rhythmically, Iago enters and remarks pointedly: "Work on,/ My medicine, work!/ Thus credulous fools are caught,/ And unworthy and chaste dames even thus,/ All guiltless, meet reproach!" (IV.i.45-48). People reading Shakespeare's *Othello* (1604) may look up the word "trance" in the dictionary, only to discover that it refers to a state of hypnosis and unawareness. The film director comes with his own subjective interpretation of a trance as an epileptic fit. It means that Shakespeare's text is not replicated but becomes the inspiration for having Othello under an epileptic seizure. Some readers may not even look up the meaning of the word and are left wondering and guessing that a trance is some kind of ailment. The animation of an epileptic attack, however, does not leave the viewing audiences guessing because they are made to experience it visually and emotionally.

It is important to link Othello's epilepsy with Iago's calculated manipulation rather than take it to be an inherent weakness in the black race. Othello's reaction is only to be expected and he should be considered a victim of villainy rather than an epileptic freak. His suffering arouses compassion rather than condemnation. The timing of Othello's epileptic fit arises organically from the unfolding of events. It is Iago who is the author and the immediate cause of this fit because it occurs immediately after he tells Othello that he (Iago) actually saw Cassio and Desdemona having sex (IV.i.29-44). It can be argued that Othello's epileptic fits are caused by extreme distress and cannot be just attributed to jealousy; moreover, jealousy in a husband cannot be a black stereotype, but a natural reaction that cuts across races. Any attempt to label jealousy as a black streak rather than a human weakness, therefore, fails. The attempt to link epilepsy with the black race, a condition that the Christian faith attributes to demons, is equally duplicitous. The bible gives an account of one among many miracles that Jesus performs, when he casts a demon out of a young man who is suffering from epilepsy. The boy's father pleads with Jesus to have compassion on his sick son. The father relates to Jesus the full story of his son's affliction in the following words:

I brought my son to you, because he has an evil spirit in him and cannot talk.

Whenever the spirit attacks him, it throws him to the ground, and he foams at the mouth, grits his teeth, and becomes stiff all over. I asked your disciples to drive the spirit out, but they could not (Mark 9: 17-18).

This account given by the boy's father is a classic description of an epileptic fit. The significant detail in this biblical story is that it does not consider epilepsy to be a medical condition, but a spiritual ailment brought about by demonic attacks. The portrayal of a black character that is afflicted with epilepsy, therefore, fits into the grand plan found in the Western colonialist

discourse, whose aim is to stigmatize blacks as a race possessed by demons. Mercifully, both the literary text and the adaptation make parallel statements that blame the white character (Iago) for authoring these attacks because of his unending mis-representations to Othello that Desdemona is cheating on him. If Othello is to be considered as a character that is possessed by the demon of epilepsy, then Iago should be the personification of this demon. This is how debunking uses the film's own internal procedure to discredit the stereotypical portrayal of epilepsy as an inherent condition in the black protagonist.

Another serious stereotype which the film director picks from the play is the portrayal of Othello as a cruel and violent character. The violent streak that is supposedly ingrained in the Moor pops up at awkward moments in the movie. Firstly, it appears in the disturbing incident in the streets when Othello slides the tip of his enormous sword across Brabantio's throat. The second time it appears is when Othello is shown grasping Iago by the throat and attempting to drown him in the sea. The third time is when Othello publically smacks Cassio on the face in Cyprus following a drunken fight between Cassio and Montano. It also appears in fiery flares of temper when Othello promises in the words of the play: "I'll tear her (Desdemona) to pieces... I'll chop her to messes" (III.iii.431, IV.i.211) and "I would have him (Cassio) nine years a-killing" (IV.i.188). Lastly and more damningly, it appears when Othello brutally murders Desdemona after being convinced of her infidelity.

Just like the other black stereotypes leveled against the Moor, the footage that depicts him as a cruel, ruthless and violent character is extremely graphic. All attempts at debunking this sequence are unconvincing because the extremity with which Othello is portrayed as he murders Desdemona inflicts a dent on the Moor's neroism. It all begins with the picture of a distraught

and inconsolable Othello in mourning after he realized that he had made a grave error in killing Desdemona and this picture of him is deeply touching. He is dazed by what he has done as he sits on the bed bowed down and holding his head in his hands, a picture of a broken giant that can hardly support himself on his feet. His eyes and nose are streaming and his shaky voice is underlined with indescribable sorrow. Immediately Iago is brought before him, Othello throws himself at him but he is immediately held down. In a strangled voice Othello is made to speak the very words of the play: "Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil/ Why he hath thus ensnared by soul and body?" (V.ii.301-2). This sequence climaxes in the animation of Othello as he takes his own life; he plunges the sword inside his own abdomen. Othello's death is equally, if not more graphically painful than the one he had administered on Desdemona. As mentioned earlier, there is a big difference between mentally reconstructing this scene from reading the play and watching its footage. Whereas Shakespeare's play ends tragically with the death of the Moor in far as it arouses fear and pity in the audience because of the enormity of the punishment, its equivalent in cinema produces mixed reactions. The question arises: Why and how does this happen?

The doubt about what drives Othello to kill him-self is planted by the footage of Othello asphyxiating Desdemona with a pillow whose level of brutality can only be described as vindictive or more appropriately, a screen enactment of human sacrifice. The film-maker's footage is racist because it perpetuates the stereotype of blacks as a people who perform human sacrifice. The three-dimensional animation of Desdemona's execution presented by this sequence is a more enriched portrayal of black brutality than the one obtained from reading the literary text. Othello's suicide is consequently made to look like a fitting end for a man who had administered an exceptionally brutal death to an innocent white character, Desdemona. The film

director bears a hand in the destruction of Othello because of the graphic exaggerations he makes with regards Desdemona's killing, notwithstanding that it is conveniently disguised as suicide. A ventriloquist reading of this final footage transforms Parker's *Othello* (1995) into a tool of racism because it magnifies the Shakespearean scene of Desdemona's execution, thus transforming it into a ritual killing, which is completely different from what Shakespeare had set to do when he wrote the tragedy.

3.8 Literary Props Dramatizing Sexism.

The 17th century setting of Shakespeare's play determined the selection of props and costumes that are used for portraying sexism. The words in the play help readers to mentally reconstruct medieval buildings and other items that were commonly in use like "torches" and "tapers" that help the characters to light their way at night (I.ii.142); "weapons," especially swords which, according to the stage directions, "they draw on both sides" (I.ii.60). When the scene changes to the Council Chamber, the Duke and the senators require "chairs and tables" as indicated in the stage directions at the beginning of Act 1, scene iii. When the action shifts to Cyprus, it introduces a profusion of other props. Among these props are the guns that are fired to welcome Desdemona to the island (II.i.54, 93); the trumpets that are blown at ceremonies, such as when Othello lands on the island as its new governor (I.ii.180). Shakespeare employs some of these props purposefully— to establish a connection with male chauvinism and patriarchal sexism which pervade the latter part of the literary text. For example, the taper that is burning inside the bedchamber, lights the way for the Moor to kill Desdemona. The taper resonates with sexism because it aids Othello to perform a heinous act on a female character, just like the sword that Iago uses to stab Emilia (V.ii.236).

The “handkerchief” is probably the most classic item of sexism in the play. Othello gives it to Desdemona on their wedding night as a symbol of his love. So long as she had it, it ensured fidelity between husband and wife. The same handkerchief later turns into an instrument of betrayal after Emilia steals it and gives it to Iago (III.iii.290-99). Othello weaves a myth around this handkerchief after being convinced by Iago that Desdemona had given it away as a gift to Cassio: “That handkerchief did an Egyptian to my mother give.../ ’Twould make her amiable and subdue my father.../ She dying gave it me,/ And bid me, when my fate would have me wive,/ To give it her” (III.iv.55-65). He concludes with a strong warning: “To lose’t or give’t away were such perdition/ As nothing else could match” (III.iv.67-8). As soon as Othello sees the handkerchief in the hands of Cassio, he passes a death sentence on Desdemona and carries it out in Act V.

It is also true that the male characters in the play attach a lot of significance to the handkerchief, which makes it a repository of male chauvinism and sexism. This handkerchief determines whether a female character (Desdemona) lives or dies. At another level, the handkerchief facilitates male intrigue and machinations against the females, and this is was proved when Emilia is incited to steal the same handkerchief from her Mistress. The handkerchief creates division among the females and Emilia’s act of stealing it can be interpreted as an act of betrayal. The women in the play come across as naïve, a group that are seemingly afflicted by a lack of solidarity and sisterhood. The female characters are portrayed as their own enemies that are unknowingly manipulated by males to serve the patriarchal order, to the amusement and glee of, especially, Iago and Roderigo. It is true that the playwright makes good use of props, but this is not the case with costumes. There is a noticeable absence of descriptions of how the characters are dressed. It cannot be discerned in the stage directions or the dialogue or any other technique

deployed by the playwright. Shakespeare leaves the manner of dressing among his characters to the imagination of the reader, or to be gathered from historical accounts outside the play. Shakespeare did not do a good job of employing costumes as a tool for portraying sexism in the play, *Othello* (1604). The Moor's manner of dressing, for example, can only be inferred from his occupation as a General in the Venetian Army. The adaptation, on the other hand, is much more thorough in its use of both props and costumes to communicate the idea of sexism, as well as racism as discussed in the next section.

3.9 Cinematic Props/Costumes Portraying Racism.

In their discussion of how props are used in movies, Corrigan and White (2004) distinguish “instrumental props” from “metaphorical props.” They define instrumental props as “objects displayed and used according to their common function,” whereas metaphorical props are those “objects re-invented or employed for unexpected, even magical purposes” (52). For example, the sword is an instrumental prop of war, whereas the handkerchief is a metaphorical prop of love and betrayal. This is the sense in which these props are employed in the movie that draws its inspiration from Shakespeare's play. It is also true that some props like the wedding ring can have a dual meaning, both instrumental and metaphorical— it is a functional instrument of marriage, and is also a metaphor of marital love and commitment. The same classifications and definitions apply to costumes as either instrumental and/or metaphorical.

3.9 (a) Psychic reading of racism and sexism

Shakespeare's play is recognizable in Oliver Parker's *Othello* (1995) from which it is derived. The residual spirit of the literary text lingers in the movie when the director historicizes the events by invoking the literary context of a powerful Roman Empire ruled by Caesar. An effort

is made by the film-maker to maintain elements of literary form, such as props and costumes. Shakespeare's historical setting, no doubt, implies a specific mode of dressing that suited the time, mainly Roman robes and cassocks. A stage or film production of *Othello* (1604) celebrates the dressing style in the 17th Century English society. The Duke is imperially dressed in a flowing robe of a particular royal colour with a matching head gear; the senators also wear robes, medallions and necklaces. The women, on the other hand, wear long stylish dresses constricted at the waistline and flaring down to their feet, according to the times. These were the dominant fashions during the era of the imperial majesty of the all conquering Roman Empire.

In addition, the costumes establish a hierarchy in the representation that enriches the footage by making some characters superior to others. For example, the ordinary people are framed in a mass and are made to wear less flamboyant attire. Othello is dressed differently in full military attire and he is encased in breast-armor and his hands are covered in thick gloves like those used by gold-smiths. An enormous sword dangles down his hip and his feet are wrapped in fearful looking boots that come up to his knees. These differences in costume contain an incipient racism because they establish a social hierarchy in the world of the film. Othello is made to wear attire that is stifling and uncomfortable whereas the white characters are dressed in loose robes that are comfortable and well ventilated. Othello's attire marks him out as a workman who fights the white man's wars; therefore, a white man's slave. There is a sense in which the film director was guided by historical descriptions of medieval dresses that were prevalent at the time of writing this play and these helped him to re-create the continental European costumes of Shakespeare's days. The props are used meaningfully for invoking the historical context: the wedding ring and the handkerchief symbolize love and marriage between Desdemona and the Moor, as well as betrayal that follows later. The candles are instruments of light in the Council

Chamber, but also metaphors of both domestic warmth and disintegration in Othello's private quarters and many others.

It must be remembered that these props and costumes are not ends in themselves but a means for portraying the themes of racism and sexism that were prevalent during the Elizabethan/Jacobean English society. As mentioned earlier, Othello's manner of dressing brings out racism and the handkerchief that causes a rift between Othello and Desdemona brings out sexism. On the flip side, Othello's stifling and filthy attire is a symbol of his fearlessness, industry and charisma. As a General in the Venetian Army, Othello defeats the Turks without as much as drawing his sword. The stereotypical thinking that equates blackness with cowardice and indolence is thereby dispelled. A psychic reading of the film, therefore, reveals that it is haunted by Shakespeare's spirit and it cannot be mistaken for anything else but a screen version of the play, *Othello* (1604).

3.9 (b) Ventriloquist reading of racism and sexism

At a magnified level of representation, the film brings to life Shakespeare's play in the glitter and the glamour of costumes when it presents a glittering spectacle to viewers. The representations in the play are incarnated in the Duke's and the senators' flowing Roman robes and cassocks that are used to historically cast the costumes to Shakespeare's time and society. The Duke's robe and head gear are of a rich golden hue with bands of blue. The senators' robes are equally flowing, but are of a plain golden colour and as mentioned earlier, golden chains of office hang down their necks. Corrigan and White (2004) emphasize how a historical mise-en-scene can guide the film-maker in carefully selecting costumes that reproduce "as accurately as possible, the clothing and facial features of people living in a specific time and place" (57). The director of *Othello* (1995) pays attention to detail by incarnating the Shakespearean medieval costumes.

In spite of its Hollywood roots, the film director avoids contemporary costumes where a General like Othello would wear army fatigues with matching pips on his shoulders. It is already stated elsewhere that the film-maker's employment of attire that distinguishes the white characters from the black characters is racist. The white characters' comfortable way of dressing contrasts sharply with Othello's regimented attire. There is a big difference between the glamorously robed white characters who are the lords and rulers of the land and the drably dressed black protagonist in army uniform. This difference is reflected in the roles assigned to them in executing the war against the Ottomites. The Duke and his men are involved in planning the war in the comfort of a candle-lit Council Chamber. They are not concerned with the details of its real execution in the trenches of the battle-field where death is a constant companion to the soldier. They leave that to the Moor who is dressed differently. These costumes are not just aesthetically captivating to the viewer, but are ideological repositories that separate the roles of the white characters from those of the black protagonist.

The racial divide is reinforced when Othello appears before the all-white senate to answer charges of employing witchcraft on Desdemona; the camera is pre-occupied with exposing architecture, dress code and props. The uniquely dressed Duke presides over the meeting and he places his finger on a detailed map of Italy, which shows clearly locations like the city of Venice and other towns, ports, physical features and the major sea ways. The map is made to cover the entire screen and on it is shown a landscape that runs from the great sea to the island in dispute (Cyprus). A hand is seen moving models of war ships and placing them around the island to symbolize its besieged status. The meeting quickly decides that Othello is the man to defend the island and there is a sudden cut to the sequence where the Moor is exchanging marriage vows with Desdemona. It is discussed in Section 3.4 that Brabantio later brings accusations against

Othello for having used witchcraft to win Desdemona. The Venetian Senate, however, is not unduly disturbed by this accusation because they entrust Othello with the task of defending Cyprus from the Ottomites and this constitutes the debunking of sequences in the movie which depict the Moor stereotypically as a witch.

The pillow and the bed on which Desdemona meets her death are metaphorical props associated with Othello's brutal murder of Desdemona. This filmic sequence begins with the Moor's entry into the bed chamber in the dead of the night, wrapped up in a sheet except for his face. A close-up shot reveals that he has been crying— his eyes are red and sore. Othello is shown snuffing the candles with his fingers one at a time and he desists from blowing them off. His actions are deliberate, slow and sinister. The sequence is impregnated with an atmosphere of foreboding that foreshadows disaster. Othello is a dark character that comes in the darkness of the night to perform a dark act. Desdemona is in bed, sleeping peacefully, completely unaware that her husband is observing her. She finally wakes up and in the words of the play, Othello inquires in a matter of fact tone:

Have you prayed tonight, Desdemona?

If you bethink yourself of any crime

Unreconciled as yet to Heaven and grace,

Well, do it, and be brief. I will walk by.

I would not kill thy unprepared spirit.

No, Heaven forfend! I would not kill thy soul (V.ii.25-30).

It dawns on Desdemona that Othello is about to kill her. She reacts instinctively by getting away from him; she cowers at the far end of the bed, but Othello is determined to get hold of her. The

sound of their breathing is heavy as he chases her around the room. The tracking shot follows them around the room and at one moment, a close-up shot on Desdemona's face reveals terror written all over her expression. She is breathing hard because she realizes that she has a very short time to live. She tries one last trick by falling on the Moor's chest forcing him to an embrace, but Othello simply shoves her off and snarls: "Down strumpet!" (V.ii.79). She breaks free from his grasp and using the very words of the play she begs in a fearful voice: "Kill me tomorrow, let me live tonight!" (V.ii.80) before Othello grabs her. With one hand, Othello pins Desdemona on the bed and with the other hand, he gets hold of the pillow which he uses to smother her. He leans on the pillow with all his weight as Desdemona kicks wildly for breath; she tries to tear him off but the soldier is too strong for her. By and by, she gurgles, her legs fall on the bed and she becomes still and lifeless. Yet Othello continues leaning on the pillow as if he wants to ensure that she is completely dead.

Shakespeare does not mention a pillow in his play; the playwright uses a brief stage direction in Act V to indicate how Desdemona meets her death, thus: "He (Othello) stifles her." The film director expands and magnifies this statement into an animation that is enriched by cinematic innovations. For example, it has already been stated that in her desperation Desdemona falls on Othello's chest. This is her last ditch attempt to soften the Moor's heart, a womanly trick to employ her sexuality to overcome the man. It would have worked with some other man, but not Othello. He shoves her roughly off his chest and a close-up shot reveals Othello's grim face and resolute jaw. Othello is portrayed as an impenetrable character who does not respond to his wife's romantic appeal. When these innovations are given a ventriloquist reading, they present an enlarged image of black brutality and inhumanity. The degree of celluloid racism is similarly enlarged since it reflects the magnified stereotypical portrayal of Othello's bestiality.

Consequently, the incarnation of Desdemona's murder casts the Moor in the image of a ruthless executioner, perhaps, if not a ritual murderer. The level of his aggression and ruthlessness towards his wife fulfills and rationalizes the Western stereotype of black violence.

This black image has been explored by Clara Henderson (2001) where Africans are represented as a people who take pleasure in "attacking others" (101). She observes that such depictions are aimed at shocking a white audience. This image of a people "enmeshed in their own violence" (106) is echoed by Barenstein (1994: 321) who finds this alleged black cruelty aptly illustrated in a caption of the 1930's film, *The Blonde Captive*, showing a near-naked picture of Ann Darrow, the white heroine, being dragged along the ground by a fierce looking black male holding a spear in the other hand. Therefore, this graphic portrayal of the inhumanity with which the black protagonist executes Desdemona is consistent with both Henderson's and Barenstein's expressions of the alleged inherent cruelty among blacks. The graphic portrayal of Desdemona's execution by Othello suggests subtly that he was carrying out a ritual murder. Patrick Brantlinger (1985) alleges that ritual murder or human sacrifice is an attribute of the black man's culture "that keeps the African population in a state of callous barbarity" (174). For this reason, the sequence of Desdemona's murder described above becomes racist because it rationalizes the idea that human sacrifice is accepted in black culture as a way for cleansing society of sacrileges like adultery, which Desdemona is accused of.

The parallel idea of sexism is also invoked by a ventriloquist reading of the graphic footage of Desdemona's execution described above. Just like in Shakespeare's play, the handkerchief in the film is a special a prop because it is an instrument of sexism, the visible proof of Desdemona's alleged infidelity. The handkerchief is also a plotting tool, which the film maker employs to

bring together the different strands of the filmic tragedy. The viewers are able to follow the twists and turns in the action by focusing on this handkerchief, right from the opening scene of the secret marriage ceremony between Othello and Desdemona, right through the intrigues of Iago, up to the closing sequence when Othello smothers Desdemona on the marital bed. On the flip side, the same handkerchief is also central in filmic debunking. This happens when viewers connect Othello's brutal act of murdering Desdemona with Iago's evil scheming against Othello as discussed in Section 3.8 of this thesis. The viewers are able to follow Iago's intrigues from the time he plants this handkerchief on Cassio to the inevitable tragic end. Lastly, the handkerchief is a tool for character revelation and development, in which Othello's darker side is seemingly brought to the fore, much as it is also useful in debunking the prejudiced portrayal of Othello in the film.

3.10 Literary "Blocking" in *Othello* (1604).

It was stated in Section 2.14 that blocking is a directorial technique of stage and film production that shapes a director's vision of viewing. For example, blocking is best illustrated in the play in the scene where the Moor appears before the Duke to answer charges of enchanting Desdemona (I.iii.48-170). This hearing takes place inside the Council Chamber; the black protagonist is made to stand before the Venetian senators and the reader has to mentally reconstruct the scene. The reader has to imagine Othello standing like a man on trial, facing the white characters that sit on the other side. This arrangement successfully creates the impression that there is hostility towards the black character (Othello) when he is made to stand alone on one side against the cohesive mass of white characters. The positioning of the Moor pitches him against an all-white jury that will decide whether he is guilty or not of transgressing social norms. The accusation and allegation that Othello is a witch is quite surprising, considering that the whites require his

services to defend Cyprus against the Turkish invaders. It is a great irony that the white folk find the black protagonist good enough when it comes to securing their sovereignty over Cyprus, but not so good when it comes to marrying one of their daughters. This is evidence of white racism perpetrated by Brabantio and his followers.

3.11 Cinematic “Blocking” Portraying Racism.

The film is clearer than the written play in its appropriation of the blocking technique as a tool for revealing the racial divide. Celluloid blocking embellishes and enriches the selected Shakespearean scenes and is illustrated by three sequences in the film that are inspired by the hypotext. The first sequence is outlined in the previous section, which positions Othello as the lone black opponent to a compact group of white senators who sit in session inside the Council Chamber. From the senators view point, the camera highlights Othello’s isolation by framing his lone figure on one side. This shot successfully creates the impression that the whites are united in their hostility towards the black character as they stare at him like a museum piece. This perception is not accurate because it is only Brabantio and his followers who are against Othello.

The second time blocking features in the movie is a pure innovation of the director when he picks a few hints from the literary text which he pictorially enriches. In one particular scene, Iago is engaged in a soliloquy as he contemplates the most appropriate way to cause division in Othello’s family. The film director proceeds to project Iago’s mental processes onto a chess board as he plans the best way to ensnare Othello. Iago uses this chess board as an instrument of contemplation. He selects and arranges three pieces on the chess board: a white Queen (representing Desdemona), a black King (representing Othello) and in their midst he places a white horse (representing himself, Iago), directly confronting the black King. Iago is

symbolically playing the three pieces against each other and manages to create a visual impression of the struggles and antagonisms between Othello, Desdemona and himself (Iago). He speaks the very words in the literary text as he makes the following running commentary:

How, how? – Let's see. –

After some time, to abuse Othello's ear

That he (Cassio) is too familiar with his wife...

The Moor is of a free and open nature

That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,

And will as tenderly be led by the nose

As asses are (I.iii.400-8).

There is no scene with a chess board anywhere in Shakespeare's *Othello* (1604); it is a filmic innovation that portrays Iago's plots and conspiracies against the black protagonist. In other words, the scene practically illustrates Elliott's ventriloquist mode of adaptation, an enriched footage in which the written text has been "emptied of its spirit and has been filled with a new filmic spirit" (198).

The third instance of filmic blocking is equally an inspiration rather than a replication of another scene in the hypotext. It also features a chess board, but this time round Iago arranges only two pieces on the board, a white Queen and a black King, as he comments in the very words of the play: "This is the night/ That either makes or fordoes me quite" (V.ii.128-9). Iago proceeds to play the white Queen against the black King before he abruptly knocks the two pieces into a pool of water where they sink quickly to the bottom, generating great bubbles in the process. The gesture is accompanied by an abrupt explosion of film acoustics, featuring a classical music

piece whose loudness and harsh notes come as a surprise. Just like in the previous scene, Iago's symbolic gesture of drowning the two pieces foreshadows the destruction of Othello and Desdemona. Iago comes across as a character that is determined to destroy Othello and he is prepared to take down Desdemona as collateral damage. When we contrast these sequences with their corresponding representations in the written text, a picture emerges of adaptation as an artform that utilizes innovations to communicate. Some of these innovations, like Iago's innovation with the chess board are truly captivating in their employment of symbolism to describe Iago's degree of vengeance towards black characters. The incipient racism by whites against blacks is better communicated by these filmic innovations than any attempts by the written text to capture this idea in words. Since chess is a game of the intellect, Iago act of pitching the three chess board pieces against each other is his attempt to projects his intellectual game-plan on the situation, which is to engage himself (as the white horse) in a duel of wits with the black King (Othello) and the white Queen (Desdemona). Iago foresees himself winning in such a combat.

3.12 Cinematic Stunts and Special Effects in *Othello* (1995).

Film-makers often incorporate stunts into their productions for "special effects," which effectively create enlarged depictions of situations and ideologies. Special effects are comprehensively discussed in Section 2.9 of this thesis. Stunts are a sub-genre of special effects and they involve any performance in a motion picture that is risky and inherently dangerous, such as car crashes, falls from great heights, drags (for example, behind a horse), gunshots, explosions and simulations of death. Stunts are most often performed by trained professionals. The descriptions below show how cinematic stunts are effective in magnifying Iago's racism is magnified by pictorials of his determination to get at the Moor.

The last scene of the film, *Othello* (1995) makes ample use of stunts to present the gory and frightening sequence of multiple murders. The sequence features Roderigo attempting to kill Cassio on Iago's instructions, but he only manages to injure him with his rapier and it is the more agile Cassio who instead inflicts a life-threatening stab on Roderigo. As Roderigo rolls on the street screaming in pain, Iago who is hiding nearby emerges and is shown plunging a sword inside Roderigo's abdomen and using his other hand to cover Roderigo's mouth to stop him from screaming. Roderigo jerks in pain and dies. Sometime later, Iago is again shown stabbing his own wife, Emilia, in the chest at the moment when Emilia is about to disclose to the gathered company how she had stolen and given Desdemona's handkerchief to Iago. In Iago's twisted thinking, both Roderigo and Emilia are key witnesses against him and he had to get rid of them. Iago's victims simulate great pain and suffering before succumbing to death. The footage of Desdemona's murder employs an amazing and graphic stunt in which her executioner, Othello, is portrayed as brutal and inhuman. A detailed description of the entire sequence that ends in the stunt of her death is found in Section 3.9 of this thesis. When Othello realizes that he has been duped into killing his own wife, he is shown making a violent lunge at Iago as he slashes at his tormentor's stomach with a stabbing sword that leaves Iago critically injured. Othello is subdued and a close-up shot shows Iago's face that has turned white with pain as he holds on to his bleeding belly. Iago is wobbling and can hardly keep on his feet. Othello secures himself another stabbing sword which he carefully conceals behind him. He makes a short lamentation of his follies then turns the sword on himself, which he plunges deep into his own abdomen. What follows is a classic stunt of the Moor struggling to climb on the bed where Desdemona lies; he plants a dying kiss on her lips as he falls dead besides her. Blood flows freely in this sequence and the faces of the victims are shown contorted in the pangs of a painful death. These gory

pictorial enactments seem so authentic with blood-letting that they appear to be real. Nobody actually gets wounded, let alone killed in these stunts. These illusions of reality are part of special effects which are so absorbing because of their inherent capacity to magnify representations. In the same way, Iago's degree of revenge can only be equated to the magnitude of his ill-feelings towards Othello and his willingness to sacrifice other characters so as to get at Othello. The employment of stunts is evidence of ventriloquism, manifesting as enrichments of the depictions of racism. Othello is incarnated in the image of a brutal executioner and a beast who engages in the ritual murder of Desdemona, a depiction that is compounded by the purity of Desdemona. Even at the moment a painful death, she momentarily comes out of a coma and declares her love for Othello, before she relapses permanently into death. Such a depiction creates a sharp contrast between the beastly actions of the Moor and the meek response of Desdemona whose effect is to demonize the black protagonist. It is this sharp contrast that is covertly racist.

3.13 Cinematic Sexism in *Othello* (1995).

Compared to Julie Taymor's romanticization of matriarchy in *The Tempest* (2011), Oliver Parker's *Othello* (1995) is by contrast a glorification of patriarchy. The female characters in *The Tempest* (2011) are influential and dominant while male characters are pushed to the periphery. This is not the case in *Othello* (1995) where male characters dominate the action. The film focuses on two male characters, Othello and Iago, who literally fight over Desdemona's body. Othello, the protagonist in the film, declares in the very words of play: "Desdemona must die, else she will betray more men" (V.ii.6). Two female characters are particularly caught in the masculine conflicts and violence— Desdemona and her attendant, Emilia. Chapter One of this thesis outlines how the Moor came to marry a white girl (Desdemona) behind her father's back.

As discussed earlier, Desdemona's father, Brabantio, is a racist who believes that the Moor must have enchanted her into accepting his hand in marriage (II.ii.68).

Brabantio's reaction to this marriage illustrates one of the cardinal principles of the patriarchal system which renders a woman incapable of taking major decisions like getting married before she first seeks her father's permission. This fact is underscored by G.B. Harrison (1968) in his "Introduction to the *Tragedy of Othello*," where he states that such unpermitted marriages were incongruous with the societal norms in the Elizabethan/Jacobean England:

Like other fathers in Shakespeare's plays he (Brabantio) is angry that she (Desdemona) should have chosen to wed Othello without first asking his leave...The notion that anyone was free to marry at fancy was not generally held. It was utterly inconceivable that a girl of Desdemona's rank should run off in the night with a stranger, however distinguished (1058).

Whereas girls in a patriarchal society are incapable of choosing suitors, the sons on the other hand are free to marry girls of their own choice. This difference demonstrates how the patriarchal ideology belittles the females and dis-empowers them from making independent decisions. This disenfranchisement of women is comprehensively examined by the French feminist critic, Helene Cixous (1988), when she analyses the evolution of "women's inferiority in a patriarchal setting" (240). Cixous focuses on the pseudo-scientific theories of patriarchal England in which "the Victorian anthropologists believed that the frontal lobes of the man's brain were heavier and more developed than the female lobes, and thus that women were inferior in intelligence" (Qtd. in Showalter 344). Cixous argues that the roots of women denigration can be traced to classical society where female denigration was pioneered by male philosophers, one of whom was the

renowned Greek philosopher, Aristotle, who had declared that “the female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities... We should regard female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness” (Qtd. in Showalter 534). It is an argument that feminist scholars find offensive and which they find to constitute the patriarchal grand plan of marginalizing women. All the above prejudices are embedded in Parker’s portrayal of female characters in the adaptation of *Othello* (1995), especially in his characterization of Desdemona and Emilia.

In one particularly edifying scene, for instance, Desdemona is incarnated a fool as she pleads with Othello to readmit Cassio into his favour. Othello is inflamed into anger by Desdemona’s incessant pleading because Iago had alerted him to watch out for any tell-tale sign of a love affair between her and Cassio. The harder she pleads for Cassio, the more aggressive Othello becomes, yet the foolish woman keeps on pleading. Othello is eventually shown storming out of the room in a fit of fury. It is at this precise moment when Iago is shown entering the same room and he makes a great show of surprise to find a rattled, red-eyed and weeping Desdemona. Iago’s perfect timing is not accidental since he is the author of this domestic brawl. He puts on a great act of consoling Desdemona using the very words in the play: “Do not weep, do not weep; Alas the day!” (IV.ii.124). Desdemona, on the other hand, looks like a broken doll; she is bewildered, helpless and totally lost— a heart-wrenching picture of a woman whose very survival depends on her husband. She runs desperately across the room into the embrace of her tormentor (Iago) and inquires unsuspectingly:

Oh good Iago,

What shall I do to win my lord again?

Good friend, go to him, for, by this light of Heaven

I know not how I lost him (IV.ii.148-51).

There is dramatic irony in this footage because it emphasizes the naivety and foolishness of Desdemona who turns to the very author of her suffering for rescue. Throughout the animation of this scene, Parker manages to convey a stereotypical image of a female character as a simpleton that cannot logically work out the cause of her affliction. The viewer is helped to find a great disconnect between Desdemona's good looks — there are amazing vignettes in the film that highlight her blonde hair, full breasts and plump body— and her brains because her conceptualization of the situation remains elementary. The incident is well crafted, but the viewers cannot miss the stereotypical depiction of a female character as someone that lacks intelligence.

Finally, it was stated earlier that Shakespeare did not set to write a historical account of the race and gender relations in the Jacobean/Elizabethan society, but to compose drama based on these realities for the entertainment of theatre-goers. The film adaptation attempts to follow the footsteps of the hypotext in creating a black hero who manages, through the forcefulness of acting, to dispel the stereotypical thinking that blacks are violent ritual murderers and savages, and as such are the inferiors of the whites. The ventriloquist reading of the adaptation reveals that the movie is an enrichment of the depictions of racism and sexism since it exploits the extra-representational features of communication, such as moving pictures, audible dialogue, architecture, performance, acoustics in the sound track, and more. It should be remembered that through the process of filmic debunking, the movie makes an attempt at undermining the Moor's image as a witch and a violent ritual murderer when he (Othello) makes the ultimate sacrifice of taking his own life. There are two ways of interpreting Othello's suicide in celluloid. Firstly, it is an act of heroism that reflects the Aristotelian tragedy that was earlier explained in this thesis. This interpretation is in line with Shakespeare's play, *Othello* (1604), which was well crafted to

display the Aristotelian tenets of a good tragedy. Secondly, Othello's suicide in celluloid under a ventriloquist reading is a magnification of stereotypical depictions of Othello's excesses, especially his brutal murder of his own wife. When he kills himself later, it is difficult to read it as an act of repentance or atonement for killing Desdemona; rather it is an external act of the film director to destroy a black character for killing a white girl. This is the most plausible interpretation that flows from the pictorial realization of Parker's *Othello* (1995), especially the final sequence in which the Moor asphyxiates Desdemona. The film director (Oliver Parker) is complicit in the destruction of the black protagonist. He takes sides with a few white characters, and it makes him an active participant in perpetrating racism in cinema.

3.13 (a) Phallocentricism in *Othello*

Phallocentricism refers to patriarchal society's preoccupation with the male phallus, the penis, which is glorified as an instrument of power that men use to control women. The patriarchal ideology elevates the male phallus above the female sexual organ and represents it as superior. There is constant derision in the phallocentric narrative against the vagina as an organ that is inferior, shameful and dirty. Men have even coined expressions that graphically describe women as victims of the sexual act. For example, the male sexual activity is referred to mechanically as "screwing, drilling, shafting, chopping, banging and hammering," among others. These words are overtly masochistic because they portray the man as the "Master" of the act and a woman as the undignified victim that things are done to. Surprisingly, there are women who have succumbed to these male jibes and are convinced that the female sexual organ, the vagina, is inherently inferior. It is not uncommon to discover women who consider menstruation a curse and every time they go through this natural process, they keep away from work claiming to be sick. Female students have been known to drop out of school because of menstruation and

counselors have made it big business to provide services to women who are traumatized by menstruation. It is important to remember that menstruation can only be traumatizing to a woman who is ideologically disoriented and has been completely assimilated into the male view point.

In patriarchal societies, women are considered as men's sex objects, a phenomenon of the objectification of female characters by male characters. The French feminist critic De Beauvoir emphasizes how

A woman is conditioned to think of herself in relation to a man. And she is simply what man decrees; that she is called "sex" by him is meant she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him, she is sex – absolutely sex, no less (Quoted in Selden 1988: 534).

De Beauvoir thereby examines the severest form of gender stereotyping which transforms a woman into the corporeal representation of man's lewd desires. This idea is depicted in the movie through the incarnation of Othello having epileptic fits, a condition that is triggered by the nightmare of Cassio and Desdemona having sex on the marital bed. Othello, therefore, is not different from his counterpart, Roderigo, another male character who is shown weeping because he cannot get Desdemona out of his mind. Both Othello and Roderigo appear to have something in common— their uncontrollable lust for Desdemona's body. Othello's infatuation drives him into murder when he turns into Desdemona's executioner just because he hallucinates over her being sexually consumed. It is in this respect that the film becomes phallogentric because the male characters are pre-occupied with sexually possessing Desdemona. Phallogentricism in the

movie is a reflection of sexism whose magnified version is revealed by a ventriloquist reading of Parker's adaptation of *Othello* (1995) that is discussed in the next section.

3.13 (b) Cinematic Patriarchism and Phallocentricism in *Othello* (1995)

The film parades phallocentricism in sexually explicit sequences that portray Desdemona as a sex object of the male characters. Parker's motion picture portrays male sexual lust for women in melodramatic footages that expose the male sexual weakness, where men display great insecurity with regards their spouses or even lovers. Modern society that is reflected in Parker's 20th century movie shows a similar a pre-occupation by men to control and direct female sexuality. This male urge is sublimated into male aggression towards a female character, Desdemona, who is suspected to be in an extra-marital relationship and towards a male character, Cassio, who is perceived to be her lover. The screen incarnation of the Moor violently executing Desdemona exhibits this male aggression. Parker's movie re-cycles and magnifies the patriarchal view that the male phallus is superior to the female sexual organ. The two major contenders to Desdemona's love, Othello and Roderigo, are obsessed with the idea of sleeping with her and their actions are driven by the selfish need to gain exclusive sexual possession of her.

It can be asserted that the unbridled jealousy, pain and distress suffered by Othello and Roderigo arising from their infatuation with Desdemona's body, should be regarded as proof that the patriarchal setting that is incarnated in the adaptation reduces the female character, Desdemona, to a mere sexual organ which the men fight over. The phallocentric sub-text in the film mocks and exaggerates men's innate weakness when confronted with female sexuality, which makes them prone to manipulation. This is seen to happen to both Othello and Roderigo. Iago is able to drive Othello to murder Desdemona by merely raising a suspicion that she is

having an affair with Cassio. Iago also capitalizes on Roderigo's lust for Desdemona to steal from him jewels that were meant to be gifts to Desdemona. Iago manages to instigate Roderigo to assassinate Cassio by suggesting that Cassio's death would clear the way for him to "enjoy" Desdemona. The consequences of Iago's manipulation of other male characters are tragic. Othello kills his own wife and on realizing that he had been tricked, commits suicide. Roderigo is killed by Iago himself out of fear that Roderigo would reveal Iago's evil deeds to others. Only Cassio remains the last man standing in Desdemona's love web because he narrowly survives Roderigo's attempt to assassinate him.

There are scenes in the movie that are graphically phallocentric when subjected to a ventriloquist reading. The movie enriches such sequences with patriarchal influences to a degree that is ridiculous. Firstly, the scene that follows Othello's arrival in Cyprus takes place in the castle (II.i.203-14), but the adaptation relocates a part of its sequence to the harbour. In this sequence, Othello and Desdemona are shown having sex on a cart after the welcome party that takes place inside the great hall. Desdemona is heard screaming and it is quite difficult to tell whether she is enjoying the act or she is in pain. What cannot be missed, however, is the dominant position of Othello on top of her. There is no sex scene in the play, so what is depicted in this animation of love-making is an innovation by the film-maker.

This sex scene aptly serves the patriarchal agenda of sexism. A close-up shot shows Iago and Roderigo under the cart, eavesdropping on the sexual act. The cart is rocking violently in rhythm with Desdemona's screaming. The two secret observers are heard communicating in whispers. Roderigo is in great agony and the manifestations of his lust for Desdemona are his bloodshot eyes and fast breathing as the adrenaline works through him. Iago rubs it in as he whispers

urgently: "First, I must tell thee this: Desdemona is directly in love with Cassio!" (II.i.221). Roderigo looks fiercely above at the rocking cart and refuses to believe him. Roderigo's breathing accelerates with the rocking of the cart and he gets so emotionally worked up that Iago has to calm him down first. Roderigo's reaction openly mocks his sexual weakness, which is exploited by Iago to drive him into committing irrational actions later, such as the attempted murder of Cassio all in the name of "enjoying" Desdemona's body. Roderigo pays the ultimate prize because of his infatuation with Desdemona's body when he is killed by Iago

Another phallogentric sequence that is enriched by the movie is an incarnation of a private moment of intimacy between Othello and Desdemona inside their candle lit apartment in Cyprus. This scene does not exist in Shakespeare's play, but constitutes yet another innovation by the film-maker. Othello is shown holding Desdemona effortlessly in his arms as they move round the room blowing off candles. After the last candle goes off, Othello is shown laughing hysterically as he whirls her stupendously round the room. He finally sets her down and they are shown kissing passionately. Othello begins to undress, unbuckling his belt, discarding the trousers, all the while singing a ditty, his eyes fixed unwaveringly on her. In the mean time she is shown moving backwards, away from him, undoing the hasp behind her dress, which she discards on the floor. Her naked body is seen through the mosquito net climbing the bed where she lies on her back waiting for Othello to join her, which he does shortly. What follows is the confused twinkling of the lights, the unsteady movement of the camera and the tangling of limbs as Desdemona screams in sexual ecstasy or pain. The footage thus portrays the ecstatic love making between husband and wife. Othello is again positioned on top of Desdemona, seemingly the Master of the act who pins down the woman helplessly under him. Her cries sound more like someone in pain than someone who is enjoying the act. Nonetheless, an observant viewer cannot

miss the powerful effect of Desdemona's sexuality on Othello considering his level of wild excitement in anticipation of making love to her. Lastly, phallogocentrism is at the heart of Othello's dream where Cassio and Desdemona are incarnated having sex on the marital bed. Othello's murderous posture in the dream as he moves towards the bed with his dagger drawn is symptomatic of a sick and deluded mind that is pre-occupied with controlling Desdemona's body. Othello is mocked in a footage that portrays him as someone under the spell of Desdemona's sexuality, seemingly haunted by delusions that do not exist in reality.

The phallogocentric scenes that are incarnated in Parker's movie are sexist. Such scenes would have all been censured by the Jacobean and the Elizabethan societies in which Shakespeare wrote. These scenes would not pass the Film Censorship Board for being sexually explicit. The fact that the movie, *Othello* (1995), is a historical production where such scenes ought to be deleted because of being out of spirit with the literary text means that there are other considerations that are brought to bear, especially box-office collections. Hollywood films cost millions of dollars to make and this investment must be recouped from the sales.

3.14 Conclusion.

This chapter focused on white racism against blacks, on the one hand and patriarchal sexism against females, on the other hand, as depicted in Shakespeare's *Othello* (1604) and its adaptation by Oliver Parker (1995). There is, however, a big divide in the way these ideas are represented in film and in the written text. It was argued that when the movies are subjected to a ventriloquist reading, a more enriched rendition of racism is revealed, especially its depictions of the Moor as an epileptic and a cruel, brutal husband who murders his wife. The scene where the Moor executes Desdemona employs techniques that leave a lasting impression on the viewer

than Shakespeare's techniques in the book. For example, the director employs animation to bring to life the goriness of Desdemona's execution. Animation is coupled with other techniques, such as stunts, lighting, star performance, props, colour and audible sounds (that include dialogue and the tone employed in the dialogue). Moreover, the scene is framed in the darkness of the night and the only source of light in the bed-chamber is candles, and these are also extinguished by Othello. The effect of this lighting technique, which is actually the absence of light, highlights and symbolizes the evil nature of the Moor. This darkness, therefore, communicates racism more effectively than the "dead" words of the written text. In the same way the animation of Othello as he struggles with Desdemona before he asphyxiates her with a pillow, brings to life the dead words of the text. The pillow, the candles, the bed and especially, the handkerchief (as the primary proof of Desdemona's infidelity) are props that infuse the scene with a greater sense of realism because the viewer can see them, just like he can see the two struggling characters. The fact that Laurence Fishburne (in the role of Othello) is a Hollywood star makes the acting even more graphic and accentuates the racism and sexism in the depiction. The actor emerges as a ruthless, brutal and unforgiving husband who cannot listen to the pleas of his wife to be spared. The incident is made to look like ritual murder or human sacrifice, and it is argued that this subject has consistently pre-occupied Western scholarship for generations. The sounds of the struggle are not just imagined by the viewer, they are heard in the animation of the two actors breathing heavily due their passions: Othello's passion is to get hold of her and kill her; Desdemona's passion is to fight for her survival. The viewer can hear her anguished tone as she cries, screams, sobs and pleads for mercy, but to no avail. The other scene that is graphically racist is the depiction of Othello's epileptic seizure that employs animation and special effects to depict the alleged possession of the Moor by a demon, which is fully described in section 3.7 of

this thesis. These are the enrichments by the film medium that magnify the racist representation of the Moor and which make it a more effective medium of representation than the literary text.

In the same way, the film was found to make a magnification of sexism than the written play when it deploys filmic techniques for portraying stereotypical images of intellectual and physical inferiority of female characters. The ritual murder of Desdemona by Othello has already been described above and all the associated techniques and arguments that go with it also apply to sexism. The other representation of sexism was found to be phallocentrism in the film, a glorification of the male phallus at the expense of the female sexual organ, the vagina, which is denigrated as an organ that is dirty and inferior. The film employs animation of love-making to portray a woman's inferior position during the act since it is the man who is always on top of Desdemona. The lighting is also effective because all the three scenes that depict these intimate moments are framed in the darkness of the night. One scene takes place on top of a horse cart and the other two scenes take place in the bed-chamber. In one of these bed-chamber incidents, the film director dramatizes Othello's state of mind. He is haunted by the image of Cassio and Desdemona cheating on the marital bed. The film pictorially realizes this incident and proves itself to be superior even in intangible representations of mere dreams. The second incident is a happy one where Othello is having an intimate moment with Desdemona after the welcome celebrations in Cyprus. In all these incidents, Desdemona wriggles and cries under the weight of the male characters. The animation combines with lighting and the audible sounds to accentuate sexism in as far as the female character is depicted as the victim of masochism.

Lastly, the depiction of Othello's suicide was found not to ennoble him in the way it was envisaged by Shakespeare; rather, it becomes the rationale for the film director to destroy a black

character who has transgressed the Western moral standards. This conclusion is true when this scene is juxtaposed to an earlier scene of Desdemona's execution by Othello that is enriched with filmic spirits. The graphic nature of the murder of Desdemona that is fully described in the closing paragraphs of section 3.7 significantly undermines Othello's image. It is a case of racism in directorship. Othello's filmic suicide has nothing to do with repentance or atonement for killing Desdemona as was envisaged by Shakespeare, which made him a literary black hero, but is a filmic destruction of him for killing a white girl. Oliver Parker does not create a black hero in his film; he instead destroys the black protagonist in an unprofessional fit of revenge.

CHAPTER FOUR

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Introduction.

This study was designed to compare the literary and the cinematic portrayal of racism and sexism in Shakespeare's literary plays— *Othello* (1995) and *The Tempest* (2011)— and their selected adaptations into film, focusing on the techniques employed by each of the two media. This comparison is underpinned by Elliott's two adaptation theories, namely: the "psychic" theory and the "ventriloquist" theory. Elliott (2003) states that, "the majority of adaptation criticism favours the book over the film" (174). In other words, the majority of scholars find fault with film adaptations for being inaccurate representations of their literary sources. This thesis makes a contrary argument to the effect that film has "unique semiotic advantages" (144) over written texts, which makes it a more effective and superior mode of representation. The movie's greater appeal lies in its ability to portray three-dimensional illusions that are nearer to reality than "dead" representations signified by words in a written text. The film brings to life the dead representations of the written text, or to use Elliott's expression: "The word is made flesh...and the characters are reverently brought to life" (161). This happens precisely because the film tends to magnify and accentuate depictions, a function of its impressionistic techniques that are embedded in features like moving pictures, star actors and their performance styles, props and costumes (presented in Technicolour), on-location filming that captures the natural conditions of real settings as opposed to artificially constructed studio sets and settings and sound acoustics projected as audible sounds through the film's sound track. It is true that the critics of the film medium normally miss the enrichments which the film brings to adaptation because they concentrate on the omissions and the compressions that film employs. In the process these critics

tend to miss the big picture of film as a superior and more effective medium of representation. Such critics forget that the film medium must compress the literary detail into a pictorial realization that is suitable for the entertainment of viewers within limited time duration. A detailed analysis follows of how and why a ventriloquist reading of filmic techniques explains why there are magnifications in representations of racism and sexism in celluloid.

4.2 Summary of Findings.

Kamilla Elliott's six "unofficial theories of adaptation" (157-174) were the spectacles that were used for reading the transpositions into film of *Othello* (1995) and *The Tempest* (2011). Although the study is underpinned by Elliott's "psychic" and "ventriloquist" models, the remaining four models— "incarnation," "genetic," "De (Re)-composition" and "trumping"— were occasionally deployed in interpreting some sequences in the film. The focus was to make a comparative analysis of Shakespeare's dramatic techniques with their film equivalents; it consequently led to an ideological comparison of the representation of the Shakespearean medieval social realities of racism and sexism with their modern incarnations in Hollywood renditions.

A consistent pre-occupation with two motifs was found to haunt Western imaginaries, namely: the black stereotype motif and the patriarchal chauvinistic motif. Shakespeare reproduces these two motifs in *Othello* (1604) and *The Tempest* (1611). It is important to note that Shakespeare was inspired to write both *Othello* (1604) and *The Tempest* (1611) by the social realities of racism and sexism that were evident in the Jacobean and Elizabethan societies in which he wrote, societies bedeviled with prejudice against blacks and women. Similar prejudices exist in the contemporary world and these are re-enacted in motion pictures made in Hollywood. Film adaptations of the selected Shakespearean plays were found to engage in "up-dating" the

historical social realities of the 17th Century into modern Western liberal ideals which are spiced with declamations of freedom and equality that are dearly cherished throughout the Western world. There is, therefore, a qualitative difference in the presentation of racism and sexism in the two media that reflect the differences of social and cultural influences that exist between the 17th century Elizabethan/Jacobean society and the 20th/21st centuries American, Hollywood society.

A comparative analysis of the literary and screen techniques of representation noted that the film medium caused a qualitative magnification of racism in the adaptations of both Parker's *Othello* (1995) and Taymor's *The Tempest* (2011). These differences were found to be a function of techniques that were underpinned by Elliott's adaptation theories, especially the "ventriloquist" theory that reads a film adaptation as an enrichment and embellishment of its literary source. The "psychic" theory also played a significant influence since it reads adaptation as being "in spirit" with its source rather than reproducing "the letter" of the written text (Elliott 139). A close examination of the two concepts reveals that there is no big difference between an enrichment of an adaptation and not following the letter of the written text. They are just two ways of saying the same thing, because a film that does not follow the letter of the written text is significantly different from its source on account of the enrichments from without. These additions are a function of the techniques of the film medium that are mentioned in the opening paragraph to this chapter.

One of the most poignant filmic techniques that contributed to the enrichment of the adaptation of *The Tempest* (2011) was found to be the casting of Djimon Hounsou as the lead actor in the role of the black character, Caliban, who is portrayed as physically, intellectually, culturally and morally deformed and deprived. Hounsou is himself a black man born in Benin, West Africa,

and his portrayal of Caliban is edifying. This is largely because the film director selected a Hollywood star whose vast acting experience (outlined in Section 2.4 of this thesis) helps him to bring out the essential elements of Shakespeare's character. Hounsou brings to life Shakespeare's character through his wild gestures, growling voice, aggressive attitude towards the Master, primitive eating methods, hearty curses directed at the Master, and above all, his grotesque physical appearance. The character on the screen is a product of make-up that creates a ghoulish look on the actor. Although Caliban's physical appearance and mannerisms are inspired by the Shakespearean image of "half fish, half man," Caliban on the screen is qualitatively different because he is given a puffed-up rough-skinned imitation of an over-grown frog rather than a human-fish. This image is enhanced by artificial webbing between his fingers and toes; white painting on one half of his face; and a blue coloring of his right eye. It is an image that is "in spirit" with the literary text rather than a replication of it, which is in line with a psychic interpretation of the film text.

On the other hand, a ventriloquist reading of the filmic technique of "casting" reveals that the film-maker uses Caliban's characterization to achieve a much more enriched depiction of black savagery. The animation of Caliban as he stalks, glares, growls and stomps at his white oppressors, creates an enlarged filmic illusion of his beastliness and backwardness. Having a Hollywood star, Djimon Hounsou, in the role of Caliban contributes to the magnification of black savagery, which produces a proportionate magnification of racism in celluloid.

The greater potency and effectiveness of the film was also found to be a function of audible sounds. The viewers are treated to sounds that tie up with the occult e.g. the weird croaking of Ariel inside the pine branch on account of being confined there by Sycorax, the primeval scream

of Prospera when she raises the storm, the roaring of the waves caused by Prospera's sea storm, the pitiable wailing of Caliban as he gives a liturgy of Prospera's injustices, the fearful barking of the spiritual dogs which Prospera invokes to hunt down Caliban and his co-conspirators, Trinculo and Stephano who want to kill her, the hissing of harpies as they hover above their victims, Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian whom they drive mad. If the afore-mentioned sounds are harsh, the sound track is also pervaded by more pleasant sounds: the sweet and lulling singing of Ariel as he leads Ferdinand to his star-crossed meeting with Miranda. There is also the celestial singing of the pagan goddesses during the wedding masque that was invoked by Prospera in a ritual, which is also soft and pleasant. It was found that the sound track enriches the film's haunted atmosphere that beautifully blends with the Sycorax's black occult and Prospera's white sorcery. This enhances Julie Taymor's feminist agenda, but it also ironically magnifies sexism on the screen because the viewers begin to associate witchcraft and the occult with female characters. When this is contrasted with what happens in the written text, it becomes clear that sexism is better communicated in adaptation because it brings to life sounds which remain dead on the written page.

The film was also found to exploit props and costumes in communicating racism and sexism in ways that dwarf their effectiveness in the written text. Whereas these techniques are presented in Technicolor and in three-dimensional realities on the screen, their descriptions on the written page remain dull and unimpressive. The visual effect of Prospera's fetish gown and stick as she performs pagan rituals with them connects beautifully with sexism because it portrays a female character as a witch. On the other hand, it is very difficult for a reader to bring to life in his imagination this image of a performing witch, resplendent in her paraphernalia of costumes and props. Even if the reader possesses a fertile imagination, it cannot match the power of the screen

which presents props and costumes and performance in more vivid ways. It was also found that firewood is a three-dimensional reality on the screen and the visual impact of this prop is to communicate vividly to the viewer the idea of racism, especially when this item is associated with Caliban's star performance. He is presented trudging along the frame on account of being weighed by a bundle of firewood on his shoulder. He is heard lamenting about Prospera's injustices and he curses her vehemently in her absence. As if in protest, he throws down the offensive bundle as he mourns pitifully. The ability of these filmic sequences to communicate racism outweighs the word descriptions of corresponding events and actions that are "dead" on the written page. It requires the film to bring them to life and to seemingly magnify the themes.

The other technique that was found to be greatly effective in accentuating filmic racism is the "Blocking" technique which employs movement of actors across spaces in the frame, a technique that can be better appreciated on stage and on the screen. It was found that the closing sequence in the film effectively brings out the isolation of Caliban when Prospera and her former enemies position themselves on one side of the frame and Caliban cuts a lonely figure on the other side. Moreover, the white characters accompany this visual isolation of Caliban with disparaging remarks about him. The technique works best in combination with audible dialogue and actor performance. On the screen, Caliban is made to look warily at his oppressors without uttering a word. They stare at him and he stares back at them in what appears to be a duel between black and white. When Prospera finally pronounces that he is free to go, a close-up shot shows that his eyes are glistening with tears (perhaps, of joy) and he immediately walks out on them. The white oppressors had eventually granted him his independence and he never utters a word to them; he remains defiant to the end and his final act of walking out on them looks like an insult. The book does not present the reader with these theatrics of Caliban's last moments in captivity, the reason

why the film communicates these final moments of racism better than the book. Lastly, and perhaps more importantly, is the filmic technique of “special effects” i.e. the technique of technologically manipulating pictures and sounds so as produce a heightened effect. The wonders of modern technology have infiltrated the art of film-making and they are evident in the making of natural phenomena like sea-waves, lightning and thunder in *The Tempest* (2011). Film-making today does not require the live recording of natural phenomena; they can be computer-generated in a magnified form. This computer animation also makes it possible to generate images of Ariel flying through the sky at stupendous speeds and a ship disintegrating in a ball of fire at sea. Animation is equally important in producing illusions of the drowned sailors rising out of the sea, dry and unscathed. The written text cannot match this power of filmic representation and as such its version of racism and sexism does not communicate the seriousness of these practices in 17th century England. The Hollywood version is more effective in communicating to the viewer the seriousness of these prejudices in modern society.

4.3 Conclusion.

This study makes an important finding that the two media— the literary and the cinematic— are artforms that employ different techniques and strategies of representation. A comparison of the techniques that are employed by the two artforms to represent ideas reveals that a ventriloquist reading of any film adaptation shows a magnification of ideas mainly because filmic techniques enrich and embellish representations. These enrichments are unique, inherent and inalienable from the filmic artform. The filmic enrichment arise naturally because they inhere and cannot be separated from filmic techniques, such as: moving pictures, three-dimensional props and costumes, natural settings (or on-location filming), star actors made in Hollywood, audible sound acoustics projected by the sound-track, special effects, and more. Kamilla Elliott explains in her

“ventriloquist” theory of adaptation that the secret of the ideological magnification in adaptation, resides in the fact that adaptation is a hybrid of the written text and pure film. An adaptation, therefore, benefits from these two systems of representation and the result is a magnification of themes. The two adaptations by Julie Taymor (2011) and Oliver Parker (1995) enjoy the benefits of Shakespeare’s literary texts and also the film medium. This is why racism and sexism is magnified in the adaptations of *Othello* (1995) and *The Tempest* (2011). Consequently these two adaptations are able to communicate more effectively the seriousness of racism and sexism in modern society than a similar attempt by Shakespeare to communicate the seriousness of these ills in the 17th century Elizabethan/Jacobean society.

4.4 Recommendations.

Elliott’s closely related “psychic” and “ventriloquist” adaptation models as tools of interpreting adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays help in explaining the magnification of ideas in celluloid. However, when a number of adaptations of selected Shakespearean plays are subjected to the same analysis, differences of portrayal will emerge. There is a need, therefore, for a comprehensive analysis of filmic techniques by different directors in their adaptations of the two plays in this study so as to understand their choices of filmic techniques as they portray the two ideas of racism and sexism in adaptation.

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