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**Kristijan STAKOR**

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

University of Osijek

Lorenza Jägera 9, HR – 31 000 Osijek, Croatia

kstakor@yahoo.co.uk

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## JULIE TAYMOR'S IDEOGRAPHS IN HER ADAPTATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE'S *TITUS* *ANDRONICUS* AND *THE TEMPEST*

### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to show the unique visual style in director Julie Taymor's vividly filmed adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, *The Tempest* and *Titus Andronicus* by concentrating on the visual elements called *ideographs* or *ideograms*. By definition, these *ideographs* are usually symbols that represent a particular idea or a thing rather than a word. I will argue that *ideographs* are also present in her films, *Titus* (1999) and *The Tempest* (2010), and that Taymor's vast theatrical knowledge adds layers of meanings into filmed sequences. Shakespeare's plays, burdened with foul deeds of war, revenge, struggle, and witchcraft almost invite the director not to settle with the ordinary, but to use contrasting colors and costumes from opposing eras, letting her show us his world through her own prism. Therefore, these adaptations are exceptional not only because of Taymor's untypical use of familiar historical elements in production design but also because of her use of nonlinguistic devices in order to both express admiration for and criticize the situations presented in the original text. The paper also argues that Taymor's films should be viewed as cross-cultural and intercultural adaptations, rather than American adaptations, because she uses Eastern theatrical elements and European heritage in order to underline the complexity and extravagant nature of events depicted in the plays.

**Keywords:** Julie Taymor, William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, *Titus Andronicus*, Ideographs, Intercultural Cinema

## Introduction

This paper aims to show and explore the visual style of director Julie Taymor's filmed adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, which is thought to be one of his most brutal plays, and her adaptation of *The Tempest*, which is largely considered to be the last of the romance plays Shakespeare ever wrote.

The revenge centered plot of *Titus* revolves around a single wrong decision General Titus Andronicus makes at the very start of the play, after which the lives of all the Andronici venture into chaos and destruction. The plot of *The Tempest* is also centered on revenge, but its outcome is not as fierce as the outcome of *Titus*. Both of the plays are riddled with unconventional characters and remarkable events, enough for Taymor to have conceived two concepts, which encapsulate the spirit of Shakespeare's dramas in an extraordinary way. However, her adaptations are not extraordinary because of the way she chose to approach the text itself, but because of her<sup>1</sup> exceptional use of very specific visual elements, which she developed into emblematic *ideographs*, sometimes also referred to as *ideograms*, and which underline characters and denote meanings in a distinctive and non-verbal manner. This paper will highlight the origins of these ideographs and examine their most prominent categories by giving examples from Taymor's filmed adaptations. Since she chose to use elements from different cultures, this paper will also discuss the reasoning behind Taymor's decisions and try to provide argumentation for considering both of these productions as intercultural adaptations.

## Adapting *Titus Andronicus* and *The Tempest*

According to Eugene M. Waith and Stephen Orgel, the editors of *The Oxford Shakespeare* versions of the plays, the earliest theatrical production of *Titus*

<sup>1</sup> Although some of the best art directors and costume designers, such as Dante Ferretti, Mila Canonero, Mark Friedberg, and Sandy Powell, have worked on these films, the author of this paper supports the French auteur theory, "in which the director, who oversees all audio and visual elements, is viewed as the major creative force in a motion picture" ("Auteur Theory").

*Andronicus* was “the one on 23 January 1594 by Sussex’s Men, [which] probably took place at the Rose Theatre on the Bankside” (qtd. in Waith 43), and, according to the Revels Accounts for 1611, the play called *The Tempest* “was presented at Whitehall before the kings Maiestie” (Chambers 342).

Yet, when it comes to notable theatrical adaptations of the aforementioned plays, it is safe to say that recent history has seen only several memorable productions of both, which is more than one could say about their filmed counterparts. The two most notable productions of *Titus Andronicus* were the famous Peter Brook’s adaptation at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1955 and Gerald Freedman’s 1967 rendition of the play at the Joseph Papp’s Shakespeare Festival in New York’s Central Park. Brook’s version had character actors like Anthony Quayle and Vivien Leigh play Aaron and Lavinia, along with the great Laurence Olivier who portrayed Titus. The reception was widely positive, and John Courtenay Trewin, a drama critic, thought that “having fixed him [Titus] as a man, Olivier was able to move out into a wider air, to expand him to something far larger than life-size, to fill the stage and theatre with a swell of heroic acting” (qtd. in Waith 55).

Similar praise was received by the spian, John Gielgud for his portrayal of Prospero in productions of *The Tempest* in 1930, and again in 1973. Directed by Harcourt Williams and Peter Hall, but both times at the Old Vic, Gielgud was notably “expressive, intellectual, fastidious . . . and has given great emphasis to the richness and the beauty of the verse” (Orgel 80).

If we, however, turn our attention to films, the situation is rather different. According to the *Internet Movie Database*, prior to Taymor’s versions, there have been only three motion picture adaptations of *Titus Andronicus* and fifteen filmed versions of *The Tempest*, not counting the “made for TV” films, which represent filmed theatrical productions. Although fifteen adaptations does not appear to be a small number, it is dwarfed by the sheer magnitude of adaptations of other “more famous” Shakespeare’s works like *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *The Scottish Play*, which shall not be named here.<sup>2</sup> As of May 2017, the *Internet Movie Database* lists Shakespeare as having a writing credit on 1,251 films with another twenty films in production or waiting to be released.

<sup>2</sup> *The Scottish Play* is, of course, *Macbeth*. The reason for not mentioning the actual name of the play is connected to the ancient belief that real spells were cast by the three witches, and that mentioning the name in the context of the theatre world would result in disaster.

This makes very interesting the reason why Julie Taymor chose to adapt *Titus Andronicus* in 1997, and then *The Tempest* ten years after that. As a director, she was in her prime. The stage production of *The Lion King* “catapulted [her] to the level of someone who can green-light major movie projects and for whom a production budget now means however much money she thinks she needs” (Jones). She herself explained in an interview on the “Charlie Rose show,”<sup>3</sup> given on January 19, 2000, that the reason for adapting *Titus* was because “[Shakespeare] is the greatest writer in the western hemisphere,” and because she thought that the exciting part was “to bring an unknown Shakespeare to a wider audience” (00:01:52 – 00:02:27). She then proceeded to note:

... it is thrilling to take an early Shakespeare that has all of the precursors of later plays: you see Othello, you see Iago, you see Richard III, you see King Lear in this, you see Lady Macbeth and I think that this thing – whether it has been a good play or bad play, or one of his best plays – It has an energy that only a young writer has. (“Julie Taymor Interview on ‘Titus’” 00:02:34 – 00:02:55)

And the way she chose to do it, when looking back at the majority of the Shakespearian adaptations, can only be described as visually unorthodox. One needs to remember that many of the adaptations produced prior to the release of *Titus* in 1999 were either period pieces<sup>4</sup> or productions of an epic scale. Taymor was adamant that, apart from a certain change of character and some small cuts for time, she would not intervene in the original text of the plays, and that she would also not “make a period piece, the 30’s or 40’s, [but that she would rather create] an essence of all of that” (Stanley). To bring that essence to life, she chose to make use of the visual elements, like the *ideographs*, instead.

### Taymor’s Ideographs

When one thinks about the term *ideograph* or *ideogram*, one is usually inclined to link it to the symbolic nature of the element in question, since it can be defined as “a sign or symbol that represents a particular idea or thing rather than

<sup>3</sup> “Charlie Rose has interviewed noteworthy people in fields including politics and government, business and economics, science and technology, media, sports and the arts” since 1991 (“Charlie Rose”).

<sup>4</sup> There were, of course, notable exceptions “like Richard Loncraine and Ian McKellen’s *Richard III* (1996)” (Ebert, “Titus”).

a word (“Ideogram”). However, in his article about Julie Taymor in *The Rutledge Companion to Director’s Shakespeare*, Douglas Lanier assigns a much broader meaning to this term by defining it as “an immediately apprehensible emblematic stage image, a simple movement or gesture that epitomizes the central concept or emotion of a work” (460). Lanier also mentions Taymor’s interview with Richard Schechner, in which she herself defines the *ideograph* as “an essence, an abstraction . . . boiling [an idea] right down to the most essential two, three brush strokes . . . familiar enough to an audience that they’ll believe it. It can operate in a naturalistic world, but heighten that naturalism to the point where it adds another layer” (Schechner 37–38). Lanier goes on to note that “her brush painting metaphor underlines the fundamentally visual nature of the ideograph and its close kinship with Asian artistic traditions” (460). The “traditions” he mentions are all linked to the same visual style where “masks, highly stylized makeup, and costuming are common adjuncts of both dance and theatre” (Brandon et al.). He further claims that “Taymor’s drive to capture the gist of a character’s manner, a narrative moment, or a theme in a single, simple, concentrated stage image is central to her methods for developing a visual style for production and lending it a mythic, iconic quality (Lanier 460). This “iconic quality” is indeed the most prominent feature of her scene settings; however, the true nature of the term *ideograph* in the sense of practicality in her own words represents “a visual style for the show that [she] can use and work in” (Schechner 38).

According to their function and origin, her *ideographs* can be sorted into several major categories: surreal interjections, historical events and personalities, religious symbols, graphic violence, and architecture and world heritage – the latter two also being universal intercultural flagpoles that give these adaptations their cross-cultural features.

It is interesting to note that most of the denominated devices that Taymor uses are indeed nonlinguistic in nature, although some of them undoubtedly do have linguistic origins. All of them, however, add layers of symbolic meaning to the characters or situations she is trying to bring to our attention. *Ideographs* used by her to accomplish this task best are the so called *surreal interjections*. By definition, an interjection is “an ejaculatory utterance usually lacking grammatical connection” (“Interjection”), but this only scratches the surface in explaining what surreal interjections really are. Some scholars consider interjections “a class of words that are syntactically independent of verbs and indicate a feeling or state of mind” (Robins 58), and “since the mind is influenced by the emotions

of pain, joy, fear, and the like . . . the interjection determines the verb or participle, not in a simple fashion, but in relation to the mind, expressing the state of the mind” (Bursill-Hall 269). This is actually how Taymor understands them: as short and extravagant sequences of optical effects that are not directly connected to the flow of the story, yet convey the state of the mind of a character, or give a symbolic foreshadowing of the future. Such is, for example, the magnificent sequence depicting two white tigers, suspended in mid-air, facing the image of Titus’ daughter Lavinia, white and petrified, standing on a Roman colonnade, as if waiting to be devoured. The cold blue color scheme and the general feeling of uneasiness are intertwined with the anticipation of horrifying events that will follow. This whole sequence is hinting at Lavinia’s mutilation and, although tigers are not present in the play at all, it is pretty obvious that Taymor was inspired by several lines of Titus addressing his son Lucius:

Why foolish Lucius, dost thou not perceive  
That Rome is but a wilderness of Tigers?  
Tigers must pray, and Rome affords no prey  
But me and mine. (3.1.53–6)

The same color scheme and the same feeling of anticipation and awe appear in *The Tempest* during Prospera’s<sup>5</sup> betrothal masque for Miranda and Ferdinand. Here the Roman Goddesses, Iris, Ceres, and Juno are summoned by Prospera’s own will:

FERDINAND: This is a most majestic vision, and  
Harmonious charmingly. May I be bold  
To think these spirits?

PROSPERO: Spirits, which by mine art  
I have from their confines call’d to enact  
My present fancies. (*Tmp.* 4.1.118–22)

<sup>5</sup> The only real intervention in the text of the *The Tempest* is the change of the sex of the main protagonist, Duke of Milan, Prospero, to Prospera, the wife of the Duke. In so doing, Taymor changes the chemistry of Prospera’s relationship to her daughter Miranda because she “empathizes with her as Prospero never did. Indeed, all the relationships on the island curiously seem more natural when the character becomes a woman” (Ebert, “The Tempest”).

Taymor envisions them as translucent and illuminous beings cropped up on a star laden sky; the sequence starts when Prospera orders silence and the screen, filled with glittering zodiac signs amidst the faces of the two lovers, transforms into a shining blueprint that shows alchemists' symbols. Again, inspired by the play, she willfully uses this visual element to strengthen the arcane and occult sides of Prospera's character and to give the audience a glimpse of her real power. Here the text of the play is more in sync with the events in the sequence, but the final images are purely of Taymor's design. Such surreal interjections are strategically placed throughout both of her films, almost as if aimed to create a network of surrealistic interludes and optical beacons intended to suppress the reality of the plot and give us a glimpse into Taymor's own mindset.

The sequences mentioned above also prove that Taymor considers art direction to be very important, and that her vast knowledge of historical events must have helped her when she was deciding upon the look of almost every detail on the screen. It is then of no coincidence that both films have interesting costume designs and that she was in good measure inspired by World War II personalities that commanded a great deal of respect and fear. This is why Titus Andronicus wears a contemporary military uniform, dark, caped, and laced with golden buttons, looking more like a newly resurrected version of the allied General George S. Patton than a real general from ancient Rome. Also, in the sequence depicting Saturninus' first public address, after he is proclaimed the next emperor, Taymor sets the scene so that it mirrors the look and feel of filmed public speeches made by the Italian Fascist leader Benito Mussolini. By using this unsettling simile, Taymor is also commenting on the nature of Emperor Saturninus' government style and on the content of his character. The same happens in *The Tempest*, where all of the men belonging to the usurper, Antonio's group, who disembark on Prospera's island, find themselves wearing dark leather suits, typical for the Renaissance age, which happen to be extremely impractical in the sweltering heat and the tropical climate. On the other hand, Prospera, her daughter Miranda, the benign jester Trinculo, and the butler Stephano wear light clothes, which allows them to move freely and without discomfort. With this one clear stroke, Taymor skillfully divides her characters and visually shows the audience who the players are and which side they belong to.

Even more striking is her use of religious symbols. In one of the culminating moments in *Titus*, as Lavinia is led by the two sons of Tamora to meet her doom, an image of a lamb on an altar appears together with a sharp knife. The duality



of meaning and the allusion Taymor makes here is quite clear. In Christianity and Judaism, the lamb usually symbolizes a sacrifice to appease God, in particular during the seven days of Passover when it is a custom to “offer to the Lord an offering made by fire, a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs one year old” (*The Holy Bible*, 28 Num. 16.25). Moreover, this symbol is connected to Titus’ daughter for it clearly hints at her looming fate – her being “like a docile lamb ready to be led to the slaughter” (Jer. 11.19). Still, it was Tamora who first asked Titus that her son not be sacrificed to appease the Gods of Rome, but he did not heed her pleas. Now, the situation has turned, and young Lavinia is the one awaiting her judgement.

Remember, boys I poured forth tears in vain,  
To save your brother from the sacrifice,  
But fierce Andronicus would not relent.  
Therefore away with her, and use her as you will;  
The worse to her, the better loved of me (*Tit.* 2.3.162–66)

Also, in the sequence at the beginning of *The Tempest*, when the sea, commanded by Prospera, is about to destroy the ship carrying Alonso’s and Antonio’s men, and the fire wreaks havoc on deck, there is a clear image of a burning cross standing on the table of the ship’s captain. This strong symbol can be interpreted in many ways, but the original meaning of the image can be traced to Scotland, where the “fiery cross, also known as *Crann Tara*, was used as a declaration of war” (Hargrave 416). This is clearly a foreshadowing of future conflicts and Prospera’s intentions to punish the usurpers of her husband’s throne. Later, when all is over, she demands a report, which Ariel willingly gives:

I flamed amazement: sometime I’d divide,  
And burn in many places; on the topmast,  
The yards and bowsprit, would I flame distinctly,  
Then meet and join. (*Tmp.* 1.2.198–201)

Such depiction of religious symbols is a visually powerful tool and, being perfectly aware of that, Taymor uses this ideograph sparingly and with good measure. That is why those symbols appear in both of the films only once – in most serious moments and denoting life or death situations.



However, the true strength and quality of Taymor’s vision is tested when she shows the violence on screen in a graphic and direct way, so that there can be no doubt as to what she is trying to convey. There is, however, a purpose to that, even if her use of these elements attacks the very industry that finances her projects. In his review of *Titus*, film critic, Roger Ebert is sure that Taymor is serious about her intentions because “she makes it clear in her opening shot – a modern boy waging a food fight with his plastic action figures – that she sees the connection between *Titus Andronicus* and the modern culture of violence in children’s entertainment.” A step further towards complete revelation is made when portraying the event that catalyzes all other events in the play – Lavinia’s mutilation. Shakespeare goes out of his way not to show the actual deed in the play, and only lets the two perpetrators, Chiron and Demetrius, comment on it after the heinous act is done: “She hath no tongue to call, nor hands to wash. / And so let’s leave her to her silent walks” (*Tit.* 2.4.7–8). When Lavinia’s uncle, Marcus finds her in a state of constant shock, he poses a question that, when answered, sets him and his brother, Titus on a path of revenge that seals the fate of almost every leading character of the play:

Speak, gentle niece, what stern ungentle hands  
 Hath lopped, and hewed, and made thy body bare  
 Of her two branches, those sweet ornaments  
 Whose circling shadows, kings have sought to sleep in. . . .  
 (*Tit.* 2.4.16–19)

Clearly, when it comes to describing exactly how Lavinia was mutilated, Shakespeare is direct, but only as far as he needs to be. He does state that her hands had been “lopped off,” and that a “crimson river of warm blood” (*Tit.* 2.4.22) rises and falls between her lips; yet, Taymor’s adaptation presents an unfiltered view of the carnage. Whereas Shakespeare only mentions “branches,” Taymor makes use of them. The first glimpse of Lavinia we have after her mutilation finds her in a marshy wetland, standing on a severed tree stump, among other hewed down trees. At first, there is no reason for alarm because the angle of the shot is wide, and we are far away from her. However, in an instance, everything changes. The next shot reveals a pale young woman suspended in a noiseless cry, blood gushing from her mouth with tree branches pushed into her bloody stubs, as if having long, black, dry fingernails. The image is horrifying, and the savage nature of her wounds is even stronger when we realize how

young and beautiful the girl really is. This, however, presents only a small part of horrible events that take place in this adaptation. In the course of the play, Titus Andronicus loses a hand and has the heads of two of his sons brought to him in transparent jars – after which he decides to take revenge by cutting the throat of Tamora's sons and serving them for her to eat in a freshly baked meat pie. Rather than naming the fourteen characters who die, it is easier to note that only Titus' grandson and one of his four sons manage to survive to see the end credits roll. *The Tempest*, shot ten years later, brings the blood and gore level to a new high when at the end Prospera summons hounds of hell with flaming heads and wide gaping jaws to devour the main antagonists. From this we can deduce that the portrayal of violence was paramount to Taymor since *Titus Andronicus* is about

how great people, or normal people who could be your sister, your brother, your father or your uncle could try very hard to hold unto their values, and somehow via a mistake here or there, or cultural differences get on a path and end up being a violent person. And then it's about the aftermath of violence. And then it is also about violence as entertainment, which I find to be in extraordinary tension between the story about violence and how we enjoy, as a people . . . we enjoy watching violent stories or see violent paintings about the darkest recesses of the human mind." ("Julie Taymor Interview on 'Titus'" 00:07:00 – 00:07:36)

Thereupon, it was the meaning behind that violence, and not the violence itself, that drew Taymor to use these *ideographs* in the first place. In making their violent deeds as visible as possible, the director invites the viewers to question the reasoning behind Prospera's and Titus' form of revenge, thus giving her own critical review of Shakespeare as well. She does not hide their motives, but does overstate the effects of their actions. In the end, it all comes down to the Machiavellian question of ends justifying the means. Her answer can unequivocally be found in her notion that "we [as a people] are so inured to violence, whether it's *Braveheart* or Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan*, [that] we validate war as a vehicle for heroism, [yet,] in *Titus*, there is a reason for the violence (mostly revenge). But there is no heroism" (Stanley).

### Intercultural References

Setting *Titus* in ancient Rome, and *The Tempest* in the city of Milan and in an unnamed remote island, Shakespeare already made his plays intercultural, for

he enriched them with cultures different from his own. However, before talking about *intercultural references*, we must first decide what is meant by the term “culture.” In her book *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, Laura Marks sees culture as “something that travelers bring with them more consistently than nation; it is the stuff that passes through national borders and transforms nations from within” (9). Marks’ theory seems to be correct, for it is Julie Taymor herself who is *the traveler* expanding this notion of *different cultures* when adapting her projects. Her distinct vision, which was highly influenced by spending “a few of her formative years in Bali, Indonesia” (Jones) and then honed by her “forays into opera stage direction and design, from Stravinsky’s *Oedipus Rex* in Matsumoto, Japan to Wagner’s *Flying Dutchman* in Los Angeles to Richard Strauss’s *Salome* in St. Petersburg, Russia” (Stanley), had truly come to expression when deciding upon the visual feel of *Titus* and *The Tempest*. Still, according to Andreas Jacobsson, the term *intercultural* always “seems to be chosen when film scholars turn their attention to films that depict specifically national cultural differences or ethnic differences in specific contexts rather than the differences between cultures in a more general fashion” (56).

Taymor certainly does not concentrate on the ethnic differences just to show diversity of culture, but rather uses “powerful visual images drawn from world folklore and the puppetry and dance of Indonesia, India, Japan and beyond” (Stanley) in order to show specific or universal qualities hidden inside both of these Shakespeare’s plays. This is why Taymor sets the sequence of the return of Titus’ victorious army so as to be a facsimile of the one of the most important Chinese archeological findings, which is now a world heritage site. The sequence starts with a crane shot<sup>6</sup> of a river of soldiers marching back home from war, weary and tired. As the camera zooms in, we find that the helmets, uniforms, weapons, and even the faces of each soldier are covered in dried mud and grey dust, giving them all a unified look of an army of moving statues. The look of the soldiers bears a striking resemblance of Emperor Qin’s Terracotta Army, made and buried in 210 BCE near Lintong District in eastern China. Even the film’s horses and chariots are made to look exactly as those found in the pit with the rest of the Terracotta warriors. Therefore Titus’ warriors receive a new dimension by being enriched with universal qualities of fidelity, bravery,

<sup>6</sup> A crane shot is achieved by a camera mounted on a platform, which is connected to a mechanical arm that can lift the platform up, bring it down, or move it laterally across space (see “Crane Shot”).

and compliance, belonging to ancient warriors who have been silently guarding their master's tomb for many generations. Taymor invokes the same set of qualities in *The Tempest* by giving one of the main protagonists, the creature called Caliban, features resembling an African tribal warrior. The eccentricity of his character is already noted by Shakespeare in the play, but Taymor draws on the images found in most remote African villages to give him this universal feature of simultaneously being a slave and a Massai leader, who draws his energy directly from the island, although he is held prisoner on it:

CALIBAN: . . . and here you sty me  
 In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me  
 The rest o' th' island. (*Tmp.* 1.2.342–44)

A similar notion of intercultural features can be found in her design of the sets and choices of filming sites, which are strongly influenced by the world's architectural landmarks, exceptionally captivating buildings, or unique features in the landscape. Moreover, not all of the architectural set pieces she uses, however famous or brilliantly executed, have positive connotations. This becomes obvious in *Titus* if we take a look at the exterior vista of the Roman court inhabited by the emperor Saturninus. The camera pans over long, neat white corridors with grand square colonnades supporting high ceilings made of sturdy stone, ominously resembling the outside colonnades of the Olympic Stadium in Berlin, made in 1936 and envisioned to glorify the Third Reich. These visuals are *ideographs* connoting strong feelings of anxiety, discomfort, and almost fanatical autocracy interlaced with a certain sense of order, discipline, and inherent pragmatism closely associated with Hitler's favorite architect Albert Speer. The same feelings are present in the sequence right before Titus' brother Marcus exits the Roman Senate, which is a tall, white building made of stone, covered in high arched windows from which black flags were suspended – an image echoing Joseph Goebbels's idea of building decorations in preparation for Hitler's speeches. The building itself is a nod to the Berlin Tempelhof Airport, rebuilt during the 1930s to represent the never completed vision of Germania, the new capital city of the Third Reich.

Conversely, sets built for Taymor's adaptation of *The Tempest* were rather small, and there were just a few of them due to the fact that a large part of the filming was done on secluded islands of Lana'i and Hilo, on the archipelago

of Hawaii. The set that was most complex was the exterior of Prospera's cell, which is constructed in the shape of a white pyramid with the gate on the top and a round half-moon water basin at the bottom, made of fine red dirt. These elements all combined together are made to resemble one of the most powerful alchemist symbols found in the cultures of Egypt and all through Asia – a circle within a square which is surrounded by a triangle. As stated by Taymor in the address at the Lincoln Center during the 2010 New York Film Festival, the colors of red, white, and blue and the alchemist symbols were chosen by her so as to “resonate in a kind of DNA way” (“NYFF – The Tempest – Julie Taymor Press Conference Pt 3” 00:03:16 – 00:03:20). Apart from these colors, the dominating color visible in the sequences shot on location was black, stemming from the solidified volcanic soil the island is made of. In the same address at the Lincoln Center, Taymor described the vast importance of being able to film in such a landscape:

. . . the fire in the circle in the cell that Mark Friedberg designed is fire of the volcano, it is this bubbling anger, the power that is symbolically in the play both on landscape, then also in the design and in the person. I always try to find a kind of ideograph, or abstraction, whenever I do theatre and film. It happened in *Titus* as well . . . every piece of scenery was used to represent the inner landscape . . . so the landscape was profoundly a major player when telling the story. (“NYFF – The Tempest – Julie Taymor Press Conference Pt. 2” 00:06:37 – 00:08:31)

Taymor must have had this notion from the start that by sending the production to remote corners of the earth to film these extraordinary visual images, which are now inseparable from the intrinsic fabric of the film, will bring her unique artistic value unachievable in any other way because “this tradition of cultural mixing, or of cultural hybridity if one prefers, is very much a part of contemporary film-making as well” (Jacobsson 63).

## Conclusion

In essence, it can be said that Julie Taymor's vast knowledge of theatre, and her use of visual elements in order to underline the events of the plot, have made her adaptations of *Titus* and *The Tempest* distinctive and unconventional. She used surreal interjections to foreshadow the future events like the mutilation of Lavinia in *Titus*, or to show the arcane and occult sides of Prospera's charac-

ter in *The Tempest*. She took advantage of historical personalities to emphasize character traits like the leadership abilities of Titus Andronicus and Emperor Saturninus, and the foul nature of the entourage of usurper, Antonio. She willfully displayed religious symbols to disclose Lavinia's acquiescence and expose Prospera's intentions. She also purposefully enhanced the portrayal of gore and violence to force the viewers to question the way the main protagonists wreak their revenge in both of her films. All of these ideographs have designated her work and distinguished her adaptations from the majority of adaptations of other Shakespeare's plays prior to release of *Titus* in 1999.

Furthermore, Taymor's use of architectural landmarks, world heritage, and Eastern cultural elements has added intercultural features to both of her projects. The volcanic landscapes of *The Tempest*, the neat white corridors and colonnades of the Roman Senate in *Titus*, and the complete art direction are a proof that visual themes, or better said *ideographs*, can become as important as actors or as any other part of modern film-making. With her refusal to film period pieces and her decision not to try to adapt the mere text of his plays, but to adapt the whole image of his world, she had opened the door to other filmmakers and surely changed the way William Shakespeare's plays are being adapted today.

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# IDEOGRAFI JULIE TAYMOR U ADAPTACIJAMA SHAKESPEAREOVIH DJELA *TIT ANDRONIK I OLUJA*

## Sažetak

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**Kristijan STAKOR**

Filozofski fakultet

Sveučilišta Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku

Lorenza Jägera 9, HR – 31 000 Osijek

kstakor@yahoo.co.uk

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Cilj je ovoga rada prikazati jedinstven vizualni stil u živopisnim adaptacijama Shakespeareovih djela *Oluja* i *Tit Andronik* redateljice Julie Taymor, usredotočujući se na dominantne vizualne elemente, tzv. ideografe ili ideograme. Ideografi se obično definiraju kao simboli koji predstavljaju određenu ideju ili stvar, prije nego riječ. U radu će se pokazati da su ideografi prisutni u njezinim filmovima *Titus* (1999) i *Oluja* (2010) te da Taymor, zahvaljujući velikom kazališnom znanju, dodaje nove slojeve značenja snimljenim sekvencama. Shakespeareove drame, protkane ratom, osvetom, borbama i magijom, izmiču običnosti i zahtijevaju uporabu kontrastnih boja i kostima iz proteklih razdoblja, čime Taymor prikazuje Shakespeareov svijet kroz vlastitu prizmu. Posebnost adaptacija nije samo netipična uporaba poznatih povijesnih elemenata u dizajnu izgleda filma, već i uporaba nelingvističkih elemenata kojima izražava divljenje, ali i kritiku dostupnu u izvornom tekstu. U radu se ističe i interkulturalna priroda Taymorinih adaptacija, s obzirom na to da – unatoč svome američkom podrijetlu – redateljica često pribjegava uporabi istočnjačkih kazališnih elemenata i europske baštine kojima se koristi da bi naglasila složenost i ekstravagantnu prirodu događaja prikazanih u tim dramama.

**Ključne riječi:** Julie Taymor, William Shakespeare, *Tit Andronik*, *Oluja*, ideografi, interkulturalna kinematografija