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Miranda Unchained: The Evolution of Feminine Freedom in Screen Representations of *The Tempest*

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the portrayal of female characters analogous to Miranda from William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in four audiovisual adaptations: the short black-and-white film *The Tempest* (Stow, 1908), the film *Forbidden Planet* (Wilcox, 1956), the episode "Requiem for Methuselah" from the TV series *Star Trek* (Bixby & Golden, 1969), and the Ikea TV commercial "Beds" (Cabral, 2014). Using gender theory alongside a semi-neo-historicist approach, my analysis contrasts the representation of these characters with the status of women's rights in the corresponding historical periods. This study evaluates whether these portrayals reflect or challenge contemporaneous gender norms and societal roles and traces the broader evolution of gender equality and feminine freedom in the Western world from the 20th century to today. The findings suggest a generally positive trajectory, although often more progressive than that of the four productions' historical realities.

KEYWORDS: Feminism; Adaptation; Intermediality; New Historicism; Gender theory, William Shakespeare; *Forbidden Planet*; *Star Trek*; Ikea; Advertising.

1. INTRODUCTION

Reportedly the last play premiered by William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (1611) has been a constant source of critical controversy regarding power relations. Gender theory has been particularly incisive, with critics denouncing the lack of voice that women like Sycorax and Claribel suffer in the text and the traditional assessment of Miranda's character as the stereotype of a docile woman, subjected to the impositions of patriarchy despite having been

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the object of attempted rape and used as marital currency (Boğosyan, 2012, p. 55, p. 74; Leininger, 1983; Loomba, 1989, p. 153; Mora-Rioja, 2017, pp. 13–16; Thompson, 1991). Her solitary upbringing on the island where the story takes place contributes to her submissiveness, as her only human references are her father, Prospero, and the slave, Caliban. Devoid of female role models, her world is confined to the teachings of her male parent. Nevertheless, a number of scholars have questioned Miranda's passivity by highlighting sparks of rebellion and individuality in the character's behaviour (Boğosyan, 2012, p. 66; Kunat, 2014; Slights, 2001; V. M. Vaughan & A. T. Vaughan, 2001, p. 27).

As our appraisal of the play has evolved with time (V. M. Vaughan & A. T. Vaughan, 2001, p. 24), a series of adaptations and appropriations over recent decades has altered Miranda's character and aligned it with contemporaneous notions of femininity. Derek Jarman's 1979 *The Tempest* portrayed a bold Miranda that mocked and abused Caliban. For her 2010 homonymous feature, director Julie Taymor decided to change Prospero's gender, so that the patriarchal hierarchy between the magician and his daughter became a relationship between women; Declan Donnellan's stage production of the play in 2011 introduced a defiant Miranda, one that physically threatened her father; and in David Farr's theatre version (2012) she became the focaliser of the story, thus fostering doubts about her progenitor's behaviour, as she beheld the tempest from the start (Lindley, 2013, Dramatic Design section, paras. 14, 17). The existence of these productions supports Kidnie's notion that "a play, for all that it carries the rhetorical and ideological force of an enduring stability, is not an object at all, but rather a dynamic process that evolves over time in response to the needs and sensibilities of its users" (2009, p. 2).

This paper analyses the evolution of feminine freedom in the Western world –mostly focusing on the image of Miranda– in four British and American representations of *The Tempest* belonging to different audiovisual disciplines: the short black-and-white film *The Tempest* (Stow, 1908), the film *Forbidden Planet* (Wilcox, 1956), the episode "Requiem for Methuselah" from the TV series *Star Trek* (Bixby & Golden, 1969), and the Ikea TV commercial "Beds" (Cabral, 2014). Said productions are analysed using a semi-neo-historicist approach by contrasting the representation of women projected by each cultural product with the status of women's rights in the corresponding historical period. The main objectives are to analyse whether the featured screen representations accurately reflect contemporaneous gender norms and societal roles, and to assess how these portrayals trace the evolution of gender equality and feminine freedom in the Western world from the 20th century to the present.

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2. *THE TEMPEST* (STOW, 1908)

Worldwide, women have been historically treated as second-class citizens under the grip of patriarchy. In the West, Millett finds an initial advance in women's rights in the subversive rationalism of the Age of Enlightenment, fuelled by the disruptive force of the French Revolution (1969, p. 65). The 19th century beheld a significant improvement, powered by women's suffrage and other feminist movements. However, said tendency was intimately coupled with a contrary force that leaned towards the perpetuation of male control. Universities across America and England started to admit women as early as 1837, and a woman's school of medicine was created in London in 1874. Three years earlier, Alabama had become the first American state that forbid men to beat their families, with other states granting women the right to vote throughout the last decades of the century. New Zealand gave women full suffrage in 1893 –albeit excluding indigenous women (Millett, 1969, p. 75; Smithsonian, 2019, pp. 207, 305). Nevertheless, the raise in salaries occasioned by the Industrial Revolution that led to the expansion of the middle class in Western countries allowed many families to manage with only the husband's source of income. Supported by the conservative approach of Victorian morals, this situation enforced the traditional notion of women as obedient, servile beings whose place was in the private sphere of the family household, as the existence of contemporaneous books on home chores aimed at women attests (Smithsonian, 2019, p. 148, p. 162). Those who still decided or needed to work did so under harsh conditions and received salaries significantly lower than those of their male counterparts; they risked sexual harassment and abuse (Smithsonian, 2019, p. 149, p. 159). The 1900s saw further advancements in women's rights: the Women's Trade Union League was founded in the USA in 1903, and universal voting rights were granted in Finland (1906) –where women have been able to run for office since 1907– and Australia (1908) (Smithsonian, 2019, p. 147, pp. 206–207, p. 308).

It was in this climate that cinema was born, and the first short black-and-white films based on Shakespeare plays were shot. Percy Stow, co-founder of the British Clarendon Film Company, directed a twelve-minute version of *The Tempest* in 1908. Constrained by the absence of sound, he committed approximately half of the running time to describing the events previous to those in the Shakespearean text. The intertitle "Prospero seeks refuge on an island" sees the magus in dark garments holding his infant daughter. After showing how he meets Caliban and Ariel for the first time, the film uses a prolepsis to move the action ten years forward, when "Ariel protects Miranda from Caliban". Now an attractive adolescent with long, blonde hair, she is stalked by the slave, who is immediately detained by Ariel's magic intervention. Throughout the film, she is immaculately dressed in bright white, supporting Hopkins's appraisal of the character as "virginal and innocent", with the "sole function […] to look pretty" (2008, p. 40, p. 143), and D. W. Griffith's claim that contemporaneous film audiences did not want realism but "a gun and a girl" (as cited in Smithsonian, 2019, p. 230).

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Most of her screen time finds her surrounded by nature, usually in a forest whose beauty is only disrupted by Caliban's appearance. The idyllic landscape behind her contrasts with threatening nature, represented by the rocks that give access to the beach where the tempest takes place. Miranda is overprotected to the point of blindness, as even Ariel is invisible to her (Buchanan, 2005, p. 28). The events narrated by Shakespeare start almost five minutes into the film, with Ferdinand safely arriving onshore. From that moment on, the motion picture –which removes several characters from its hypotext to condense the play time-wise– focuses on the relationship between Miranda and the prince, thus on her situation as political currency, as evidenced by the intertitle "Ariel is sent to bring Ferdinand to Miranda". The prince first finds her picking flowers, the shine of her milky clothes contrasting with the darker elements in the frame as a reflection of her unstained virtue. The young couple falls in love at first sight, to the delight of Prospero, who –as noticed by Hopkins (2008, p. 40)– raises his hands to heaven: the marital agreement is on its way and will surely bring him profit. The wizard then puts Ferdinand "to log shifting". Reinforcing Miranda's appraisal as a means for her progenitor to regain political power, McCombe has noted that "[t]he main thread of the film's narrative does depict a father's anxiety and the suitor's subsequent trials in his daughter's courtship" (2005, p. 147). The tone of this version is optimistic and playful. Caliban's rape attempt is but a clumsy invasion of Miranda's personal space; Ferdinand's trials are softer than perceived in Shakespeare's text; and it is relatively easy for Prospero to regain the Neapolitan nobles' respect. At the end, everyone save Caliban leaves the island in peace in the ship the magician produces.

The Miranda depicted in this film fulfils male contemporary beliefs about women. She is passive and mostly contemplative. She is found either picking flowers, being saved from Caliban's intrusion by Ariel, following her father's lead, or falling blindly in love with Ferdinand. While the men on the island are active and take decisions, Miranda is, as Cixous would have it, kept "in the 'dark'—that dark which people have been trying to make [women] accept as their attribute" (1975, p. 876). At a time in British history when "marriage was portrayed as women's true destiny and the only respectable path to motherhood" and "[i]t was assumed that a mother had a duty to the nation to look after the health and wellbeing of herself and her family", thus "a mother who undertook paid work was undermining her own and her family's health" (Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 2001, p. 5, p. 91), Miranda unquestioningly accepts the role her father has devised for her as the future wife of Prince Ferdinand. In fact, she displays a higher degree of naivety and submission than that of her Shakespearean counterpart. When she meets the prince, it takes her only eight seconds of screen time once they start talking to each other until she willingly kisses him. Her attitude becomes servile when she helps Ferdinand shift logs, an action lauded in the background by Prospero. Because bourgeois Victorian families had established a trend that kept women out of waged labour, at the start of the century "jobs for women were constricted more than at any time before or

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since" (Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 2001, pp. 165–167). In this regard, the film's portrayal of Miranda is consistent with the contemporaneous situation of women in the United Kingdom.

Soon after the film was released, Cicely Hamilton published *Marriage as a Trade* (1909), where she denounced the harsh life conditions of unmarried women. A lustrum later, the First World War marked a turning point for the role of women in Western societies. As their male counterparts joined the battlefront, the workforce incorporated a notable number of women otherwise committed solely to domestic chores. Others changed their professional sector to a focus on weapons and ammunition manufacturing. "By 1918, virtually all women in unoccupied France were in paid employment" (Smithsonian, 2019, p. 199, p. 203). Until the war erupted, only four countries (New Zealand, Australia, Finland, and Norway) and some American states had given females the right to vote. Suffrage was later granted to women in Denmark and Iceland (1915); Russia, Austria, Germany, and Canada –"excluding indigenous women and those in Quebec"– (1918); the Netherlands, Belgium, Ukraine, Luxembourg, Sweden, and Belarus (1919); the USA –only for white women– (1920); Lithuania, Sweden, Armenia, and Azerbaijan –the first Muslim country to do so– (1921); the United Kingdom (1928); Spain (1931); France (1944); and Italy (1946) (Smithsonian, 2019: 207–209, 213). In 1923, women were granted equal rights when filing for divorce in the UK, and in 1928, they were allowed to participate in the Olympic Games (Smithsonian, 2019, p. 223). Quoting Cixous, the obedient woman personified in Stow's Miranda was slowly becoming "the woman of yesterday" (1975, p. 892).

3. *FORBIDDEN PLANET* (WILCOX, 1956)

As films became longer and sound and colour the norm, the filmic medium offered a vast array of possibilities for adaptation, allowing for fast changes of scenery and framing. A text like *The Tempest*, full of music, replete with magical happenings, and focusing its unity of place on such an enclosed space as an island, welcomes a deep rethinking in terms of setting, both physical and temporal. The 1956 movie *Forbidden Planet* (Wilcox) takes the Shakespearean text to a new location –outer space– and genre –science fiction. Howard finds this a perfect match: "For once the superimposed film genre fits exactly because *The Tempest* itself was proto-science-fiction, a response to the utopian possibility of literally finding/founding new worlds in America, of using accumulated human knowledge to start anew" (2007, p. 315). The film's plot runs parallel to that of the play. As a scientific expedition arrives on the planet Altair IV (the island) in the 23rd century, philologist Edward Morbius (Prospero) discovers the advanced technology of the Krell, a now-extinct civilisation. When his partners resolve to return to Earth, only he and his wife oppose their decision. The whole crew save the couple mysteriously perish due to a "dark, terrible, incomprehensible force". The following months

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behold the birth of Altaira (Miranda) and the death of her mother due to natural causes. After they spend nineteen years stranded on the planet with the company of only a few domesticated animals and their mechanical servant, Robby the Robot (Ariel), an Earth spaceship arrives on a rescue mission, landing despite Morbius's warning. The presence of the all-male crew on the planet exposes Altaira to society for the first time. Her falling in love with commander J. J. Adams (Ferdinand) triggers a strange succession of assassinations among the crew, whose motives are revealed from the middle of the film on. When Lt. Ostrow lies dying after furtively trying the "plastic educator" –a mental machine devised by the Krell that had previously doubled Morbius's intelligence quotient– his last words warn Adams about "monsters from the id": as the apparatus can transform thought into matter, it was the Krell's subconscious ideas that destroyed them. Consequently, it was Morbius's "elementary basis of the subconscious mind" that killed the scientists who wanted to leave the planet, but not his wife; and it was his id that was now murdering the Earth's ship's crew members that came near his dear Altaira. When the latter decides to leave the planet with her beloved Adams, the situation becomes ungovernable. As the only way to repress the uncontrollable power stemming from Morbius's subconscious mind is through its total dismantling, he decides to destroy Altair IV with himself on it, but leaving his daughter and the remaining crew enough time for departure.

Initially, the portrayal of Altaira is consistent with that of her Shakespearean counterpart. A submissive daughter, she first addresses Morbius with a sweet and respectful "Father", and admits to having liberty to leave the planet but no plans to do so: "I have you and Robby and all my friends". This supposed liberty appears feigned, as the philologist projects a patronising attitude when she is not around: "I suppose one day I shall be obliged to make the trip to Earth with her for the sake of her natural development". Altaira's surroundings are either hostile – the planet has rocky soil and a dark sky– or artificial –her living habitat is generated by alien technology; even the animals are fake. Unbeknownst to her, she lives imprisoned and tricked into false happiness. When Morbius's mind generates a three-dimensional image of Altaira in the "plastic educator" the Krell used to instruct their young, to the astonishment of Adams and Ostrow, he explains that "my daughter is alive in my brain from microsecond to microsecond while I manipulate". Lerer (2000) points to incestuous desires in this scene that, according to V. M. Vaughan & A. T. Vaughan, have their counterpart in the play (1999, pp. 24–25). Nevertheless, Morbius might not be as powerful at "manipulating" as he thinks. Unlike Prospero, the philologist reasons with his daughter using the power of logic, and, as he educated her on "poetry, mathematics, logic, physics, geology", she can hold her ground in a discussion and show initiative. Although Morbius expressly warns her not to join him and the crew members for lunch, she wittily replies: "But, father, lunch is over. I'm sure you never said a word about not coming in for coffee". Furthermore, when disobeying the paternal order not to approach the ship, she also finds justification: "He did tell me not to go near the ship. After all, this isn't very near". Altaira is as ignorant of society as Miranda, but she is a

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freethinker. Her father's reaction to her behaviour is consistent with Millett's observation that, for women, "any display of serious intelligence tends to be out of place" (1969, p. 58). When she learns the truth about the mysterious murders among the crew, her paternal address lacks affection, and her decision to leave the planet severs family ties: "Morbius, you wanted me to make a choice. Now you've chosen for me". Her final emancipation makes her a far more independent character than her Shakespearean counterpart and sets her apart from the "good girls" that actors like Doris Day, Debbie Reynolds, Audrey Hepburn, and Grace Kelly were playing on the big screen at the time of the film's production (Smithsonian, 2019, p. 230). A product of her time, Altaira represents the rebellious spirit of the late 1950s, as the rise of economic prosperity and consumerist society after the postwar era led American youth to find inspiration in films like *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) or *The Graduate* (1967) and, consequently, disregard their parents' lifestyles (Purdy, 2009, p. 21, p. 30).

Nevertheless, family life was key to the establishment of the consumer middle class, and since many of the American women who had held jobs during World War II were either out of employment or working for lower wages in the 1950s, patriarchy renewed its grip (Purdy, 2009, pp. 21–23). This notion is exemplified in *Forbidden Planet* by not limiting male dominance to the father-daughter relationship. After having been in space for more than a year, the crew of the spaceship feel a strong appeal for young, beautiful Altaira. When first beholding her, Lt. Ostrow tells Morbius that "right from here, the view looks just like heaven", and Lt. Farman tricks her into kissing –as "it stimulates the whole system"– while Commander Adams develops a mixed strain of compassion and jealousy. His finding her with Farman while she wears a miniskirt triggers a patronising attitude toward her: "Well, look at yourself. You can't run around like that in front of men. […] So for Pete's sake go home and put on something that'll... Anything". These events align Altaira's portrayal with Millett's view of women as "almost universally defenceless both by [their] physical and emotional training" (1969, p. 44). Although in terms of gender equality a vast distance had been covered since the Renaissance, the 1950s was still too early for American society to face the notion of total female independence with no prospect of creating a nuclear family. Adams's portrayal as a prototypical male movie hero demands that he ends up collecting his prize in the form of a love relationship, especially since he has saved Altaira from becoming the prize of the whole crew. By giving her a means to escape Morbius's patriarchy, Adams threatens to install a patriarchy of his own. Altaira's ultimate behaviour is thus consistent with a contemporary poll according to which "most teenage girls planned to be married by the age of 22 and expected to have four children" (Purdy, 2009, p. 27). Millett considers the family as "[p]atriarchy's chief institution", one that features prototypical roles and "rules its citizens through its family heads", thus severing women's "formal relation to the state" (1969, p. 33). Were the relationship between the film's Miranda and Ferdinand to end in marriage, Altaira would move from one prototypical family to another, with Morbius and Adams as respective family heads. Nevertheless, family is simply one of the elements that suggest the existence of patriarchal

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structures in the film. The male-driven hierarchical organisation of the spaceship reflects Millett's statement that "the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political office, and finance—in short, every avenue of power within the society, including the coercive force of the police, is entirely in male hands" (1969, p. 25). Altaira is, thus, not only embedded within patriarchal structures, but also surrounded by a wider patriarchal framework.

4. "REQUIEM FOR METHUSELAH" (BIXBY & GOLDEN, 1969)

Barely a decade after *Forbidden Planet* was released, the American TV series *Star Trek* (1966-1969) first aired. Praised for its liberal humanist view, it represents an idealised future where the multicultural crew of the Earth spaceship *Enterprise* travels through space discovering new civilisations and encountering challenges of various kinds. While the series is a paragon of diversity in terms of race and citizenship, commentators have expressed mixed feelings about its portrayal of women. For some, the representation of women in the series speaks poorly of its take on gender –whether through the female crew members wearing miniskirts throughout its three seasons, their lack of decision-making roles, their depiction in some episodes as sexual commodities, or the characterisation of the hero Captain Kirk as a womaniser who engages in a new love affair in virtually every episode (Booker, 2018, p. xxi, p. 81, p. 89). Nevertheless, the series depicts women as autonomous, independent professionals, including African communications officer Lt. Uhura –played by African American actor Nichelle Nichols– and "numerous female guest stars playing roles from ambassadors, queens, and priestesses to scientists, engineers, and commanders" (Gonzalez, 2022, p. 36; Vettel-Becker, 2014, p. 145). The series was contemporaneous with the sexual liberation era for American women, supported by the approval of oral contraception in 1960 and the end of the post-war baby boom. Helen Gurley Brown's bestseller *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962) encouraged women to gain financial independence and practice sex outside of marriage, and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) challenged the traditional idea of the American housewife (Heath & Carlisle, 2020, 6; Smithsonian, 2019, p. 277). In 1964, gender discrimination legally became a violation of civil rights in the USA (Felder, 2020, Chapter 14). Two thirds of new employees in the 1960s were female, the first American Women's Liberation conference took place in Chicago in 1967 –the year when Muriel Siebert became the first woman to own a seat on the New York Stock Exchange– and two women served in the Senate between 1965 and 1969 (Heath & Carlisle, 2020, p. 9; Smithsonian, 2019, p. 273; Vettel-Becker, 2014, p. 157). Vettel-Becker remarks on the fact that females aboard the *Enterprise* "do not cook, clean, raise offspring, or get married. They are professional women devoted to their careers who also delight in their femininity" (2014, p. 145) and goes further to signal the miniskirt not as an instrument for what Girard defines as "visual imprisonment" (2021, p. 389), but as a symbol

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of women's modernity and "liberation from the domestic sphere" (Vettel-Becker, 2014, p. 150).

Moreover, it seems that series creator Gene Roddenberry was more progressive regarding gender equality than the company executives and even some women themselves. The first pilot episode he pitched to NBC, "The Cage" (Roddenberry & Butler, 1986), included the female character of Number One, second in command to the captain of the ship. She was professional and assertive and wore clothes like those of the men; thus, she was not subjected to visual hypersexualisation (Girard, 2021, p. 387). The test screenings showed that not only men but also women hated the character, whom they found "pushy", "annoying", and "trying so hard to fit in with the men" (Roddenberry, as cited in Gross & Altman, 2016, Uncaged section, para. 108; Shatner, 1993, p. 65). For the series, actor Majel Barrett was recast as the more traditionally feminine Nurse Chapel, and her commanding traits were absorbed by the male alien character of Mr. Spock. Roddenberry's original vision of gender equality would not be available to the general public until 1986, when "The Cage" was first released on VHS (Girard, 2021, p. 388).

One of the last episodes in *Star Trek*'s final season, "Requiem for Methuselah" is inspired not only by *The Tempest* but also by *Forbidden Planet*, which acts as intermediate source. As a fever epidemic has spread aboard *Enterprise*, bridge members Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, and Dr. McCoy beam down to the planet Holberg 917-G (the island) in search of a mineral substance with which to prepare an antidote. Upon reaching the planet's surface, they make contact with Flint (Prospero) and his robot M-4, which, in his master's words, "serves as butler, housekeeper, gardener, and guardian", thus taking on the role of Ariel with a strong influence in terms of character design from *Forbidden Planet*'s Robby the Robot. Flint is an old man who apparently lives alone in a mansion on the planet with a series of formidable historical objects from Earth, including –in cyclical fashion– a Shakespeare First Folio. Reluctant to help them at first, he finally lets the away party into his abode, instructing M-4 to gather the coveted mineral, and eventually introducing the men to Rayna Kapec (Miranda), whom he presents as the daughter of certain now-deceased collaborators of his. Rayna is young, attractive, and intelligent. Like her big-screen counterpart Altaira, she has been instructed by her protector on culture and the sciences, possessing "the equivalent of 17 university degrees in the sciences and arts". The presence of such a woman brings out masculinist behaviours in the men around her. The old man claims to have "shielded" her from such "selfish, brutal" men as the *Enterprise* crew members, while Dr. McCoy highlights her physical appeal above her intelligence: "I must admit, you're the farthest thing from a bookworm I've ever seen". Playing the part of Ferdinand, Kirk falls in love with her, and their ensuing affair is oddly encouraged by Flint, who suggests that they dance together. A curious role reversal occurs when Rayna teaches Kirk how to play billiards. Instead of the typical image of a man surrounding a woman's body with his arms to instruct her on how to hold the pool cue, it is Flint's ward that softly caresses the captain's hand while she tutors him on how

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to manipulate the stick. Eventually they kiss and Rayna reacts with coldness. As the story progresses and the crew members wonder about the true identity of Flint and Rayna, Kirk develops a sort of animosity against his host –"I don't like the way he orders her around". The second time he kisses her, Rayna reacts positively and appears to enjoy the moment. From that point on, Flint and Kirk fight for the woman's love, something that apparently does not agree with the hermit's encouragement of the young couple's romantic advancements, as the captain comments: "It does appear to defy the male logic". Greven remarks that in *Star Trek* it is usually the women who fall in love with Kirk, yet in "Requiem for Methuselah" it is the captain that "assumes a feminized role — a vulnerable, wracked submission to unmanning Love" (2009, p. 26).

The truth behind the story is unveiled at the end of the episode: Flint is an immortal being, born in Mesopotamia six thousand years ago. Tired of burying his wives throughout the centuries, he designed and implemented an android: a woman, in Spock's words, "as brilliant, as immortal, as yourself. Your mate for all time", or, as Booker has it, "a very realistic sexbot" (2018, p. 170). By claiming that Rayna is "designed by my heart" and "my handiwork, my property […] what I desire", Flint represents the darkest side of toxic masculinity: total ownership over an enslaved female body and mind. Such enslavement extends to the denial of knowledge as, when asked whether she is aware she is not human, his answer is: "she will never know". The only reason he supported Rayna's closeness to Kirk was that the captain's physical appeal could stir a romantic response in the android, something that the hermit had failed at so far. When Kirk tells him "you knew I could bring her emotions alive", Flint's answer is a commanding "I shall take what is mine when she comes to me". This attitude perpetuates the aforementioned incestuous desires Dr. Morbius has for his daughter Altaira in *Forbidden Planet* (Gonzalez, 2022, p. 42) and aligns entirely with Cixous' concern about such masculinist attitudes: "Let's leave it to the worriers, to masculine anxiety and its obsession with how to dominate the way things work—knowing 'how it works' in order to 'make it work'" (1975, p. 887). Rayna's physical environment highlights her own artificiality. In the episode she always appears within the confines of the mansion, thus avoiding any contact with nature. Only the men are seen in the open air.

As Flint and Kirk compete over her, Rayna enters the room and discovers the secret of her identity. In a final reversal consistent with the liberal humanist view of the show, the woman-android reclaims her independence: "Stop. I choose where I want to go. What I want to do. I choose". When Flint tries to call her to order, she replies "No. Do not order me. No one can order me". The scene seemingly represents hope for women's independence, but, in a tragic final twist, she malfunctions, thus "dying". Addressing the two male contenders, Spock provides a rather simplistic explanation: "There was not enough time for her to adjust to the awful power and contradictions of her new-found emotions. She could not bear to hurt either of you. The joys of love made her human and the agonies of love destroyed her". By telling

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the tragedy of Rayna Kapec, this episode should raise awareness of the ordeal of women who are mistreated, lied to, commanded, and even led to death. However, the end of the film focuses on Captain Kirk's grief, thus victimising him and showing empathy with men who are unable to fulfil their love aspirations. Millett claims that, for men, intelligence is a male trait, while ignorance and passivity are female virtues (1969, p. 26). By allowing Rayna the possibility of knowing, she becomes active and in control of her life. As Greven, paraphrasing Harold Bloom, has it, her death is "into freedom" and away from the impositions of patriarchal society (2009, p. 28). Whichever the cause, the episode sends a message that male control is inevitable and female autonomy almost unattainable, thus reflecting contemporaneous tensions in 1960s America.

The 1970s saw further advancements in Western women's rights: in 1970, around 50,000 participated in the Women's Strike for Equality in New York; female teams could use football stadiums in England from 1971; in 1973 all wives –not only teachers– were allowed to work in Ireland; abortion was decriminalised in the USA in 1973 and in France in 1975 (Smithsonian, 2019, p. 162, p. 286, p. 273). The Civil Rights movement and increasing protests against the Vietnam War helped create a radical climate where active feminism could thrive. However, the ascent of liberal politics and consumerism in the 1980s and 1990s contributed to a progressive decline of active support for these social movements, thus slowing advancements in women's rights (Smithsonian, 2019, p. 275) and mirroring Rayna Kapec's suffocated cry for independence.

5. "BEDS" (CABRAL, 2014)

As the name of William Shakespeare has gained cultural currency throughout the centuries, its identification with inspired creation, academic prestige, and high-quality standards has been appropriated by marketing campaigns in the hope of associating their products and brands with the revered image of the Bard. The presence of Shakespeare in advertising validates Lanier's remark that "popular appropriation of Shakespeare is opportunistic" (2002, p. 54), since "(re)producers of Shakespeare engage […] with the protocols – formal and ideological – of genres and media that have little to do with the Shakespearean text" (2014, p. 23), thus redefining it "as a conceptual tool" (Kidnie, 2009, p. 134). The resulting "Shakespeare industry" allows companies "to turn cultural capital into real capital through commodification" (Hodgson, 2001, p. 1). Lanier identifies three modes of commercial allusion to Shakespeare: one in which advertisers "suggest how their products transcend the mass-cultural norm", another in which the image of the product benefits from the contraposition of traditionalism

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and novelty, and a third type, which uses tangential allusions aimed at "educated hipsters" (2012, p. 499). The work under scrutiny belongs to the last category.

In July 2014, the advertising agency Mother released "Beds", a ninety-second TV commercial directed by Juan Cabral for the Swedish furniture company Ikea. The decades prior to the spot's release had seen further progress towards gender equality. Not only Denmark and the United Kingdom, but also Asian countries like Sri Lanka, India, and Bangladesh had had female Prime Ministers; women had gained the right to compete in all disciplines at the 2012 London Olympic Games; and the US military had allowed the participation of women in combat in 2013 (Smithsonian, 2019, p. 286, p. 294, pp. 308–309). Aimed at the British market, "Beds" promoted the release of a new line of UK standard-sized beds, mattresses, and linen. Trying to reinforce the idea of a pleasant sleep, and under the motto "There's no bed like home", the commercial shows a young woman sleeping in a bed suspended up above others in the sky. As she wakes up, she lets herself fall down from bed to bed until she finally reaches the calm of her home bed, while a voice-over speaks Prospero's "We are such stuff / As dreams are made on" monologue (4.1.148–158). The montage matches images with words. As she starts her downward journey, the voice-over invites her to go to sleep, as time for leisure is over –"Our revels now are ended" (4.1.148). The dreamy situation is paralleled by the drowsiness suggested by the monologue, deliberately confusing the real with the imagined to highlight the pleasantness of sleep –"These our actors, / As I foretold you, were all spirits and / Are melted into air, into thin air" (4.1.148–50). The verse "And like the baseless fabric of this vision" (4.1.151) is timed with the woman playfully bouncing on a mattress –made of the fabric of this commercial vision. The subsequent frames momentarily abandon her to focus on the advertised product. "The cloud-capped towers" (4.1.152) reveals an array of beds before a clouded background, a sofa-bed illustrates "the gorgeous palaces" (4.1.152), and a luxurious half-tester bed stands for "The solemn temples" (4.1.153). The words "the great globe itself" (4.1.153) are uttered over the image of a rocket being launched, thus crafting a spatial reference to Earth –the globe– from the sky. The following sequence focuses on the young woman's earthly possessions and surroundings, as a dog, an air mattress, and a sleeping child appear. The voice-over encourages her to forget about reality: "Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve, / And like this insubstantial pageant faded, / Leave not a rack behind" (4.1.154–156). Later in her fall, she reaches the proximity of an urban environment. The dreamy quality of the images turns nightmarish for a second, as she hangs from the leg of a bed, casting a scared glance at the ground beneath her. The young woman in the commercial resembles Miranda: the only female in the overall story, she is surrounded by the Shakespearean text and, at this point in the filmic narrative, her frightened gaze at the complex structure of a city mirrors her Shakespearean counterpart's ignorance of society. But this Miranda is not, as Cixous would put it, "ashamed of her strength" (1975, p. 876). At last, she deliberately allows herself to fall, landing on her own bed within the safe confines of her

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bedroom, peacefully sleeping next to a man that plays the part of her Ferdinand. The voice-over brings closure to the journey: "We are such stuff / As dreams are made on, and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep" (4.1.156–158).

Within the spectrum of adaptation, "Beds" can be termed a Shakespearean appropriation of the rhizomatic type, as proposed by Lanier based on Deleuze and Guattari's initial formulation of the concept. The commercial extends Shakespeare to the realm of advertising, treating it "less [as] a root than a node that might be situated in relation to other adaptational rhizomes" (Lanier, 2014, p. 29), thus enforcing a "movement [that] involves a double process of deterritorialization (a destructuring of each original) and reterritorialization (the drive to create a new stability or order)" (Lanier, 2014, p. 27). Rather than being a one-directional Shakespeare production, "Beds" is an audiovisual product belonging to "the cultural formation that goes by the name 'Shakespeare'" (Lanier, 2014, p. 33). Using such a highbrow reference in an advertisement for such a popular company is not as risky a movement as it may look a priori, as the visual appeal of the spot fulfils its commercial purpose even if the Shakespearean reference is not understood. Its visual effects, cinematic quality, and irresolute music create tension and defer the story's resolution. Prospero's monologue is a witty addition that metaphorically narrates the action while rewarding those who successfully identify it.

Nevertheless, gender is the central element of the piece. The spot revolves around the fresh image of a beautiful young woman. As she keeps falling, the loose nightdress she wears reveals her legs and knickers. This characterisation highlights her sexuality and switches the focus from the advertised object –the beds– to the actor, thus commodifying her and, by extension, objectifying women. In this regard, the commercial aligns with Dyer's three-decade-old analysis of ads where "gender is routinely portrayed according to traditional cultural stereotypes: women are shown as very feminine, as 'sex objects', as housewives, mothers, homemakers" (1982, p. 78). To counter such an approach, the advertisement projects the image of a free, independent female homemaker. At the start, she is surrounded by the natural landscape of the open sky. When she lets herself drop down over the city, she transmits confidence and bravery, traits appealing to a female audience. The end of the commercial finds her in a comfortable environment of her own design, thus highlighting her freedom of choice. Following this line of thought and confronting previous tendencies in the advertising industry (Dyer, 1982, p. 86), the agency chose a woman to read Prospero's monologue. The voice-over would sound patronising if a man uttered it, but the voice of actor Prunella Scales suggests female bonding, as she speaks with an advising, not commanding, tone. Projecting the image of a modern, liberated woman speaks to potential female purchasers, while her physical appeal captures the attention of a broader audience. The choice seems smart in commercial terms, as statistically, women make furniture purchase decisions more often than men, at least within married couples (Traqline, 2022, para. 7). Nevertheless, director Juan Cabral highlights the "visual poetry" in his "creative journey" and states that "[t]here were no statistics involved with any of the decisions. […] No algorithms or anything" (personal communication, October

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28, 2024). The commercial ends with the young woman placidly sleeping in her bed next to a man, their stereotypical gender roles reversed, as she has been the active one throughout the length of the spot. It is unclear whether this scene is aimed at emphasising the concept of couple cohabitation or if the presence of a second person was simply necessary to demonstrate the breadth of Ikea's king-sized beds. Nonetheless, the man's dark skin colour suggests that the agency is consciously playing the race card, thus evidencing that the demographics of target consumers are key in the world of advertising.

A decade since the release of "Beds", further events have brought women's rights closer to those of men. Over 70 countries have had female heads of state; 2017 beheld the emergence of the #MeToo movement, which raises awareness about sexual harassment against women; and the presence of women in the American Congress has increased by 25 percent (Felder, 2020, Chapter 10; Smithsonian, 2019, p. 209, p. 299). Nevertheless, full gender equality is still more than elusive. Women account for a little above a quarter of the members of national parliaments that accept them and account for only five percent of CEOs of Fortune 500 businesses (Smithsonian, 2019, p. 241; United Nations, 2024, p. 19). Unlike the previously analysed films, the commercial does not engage in colonial conquest, but it portrays a young woman conquering her independence in regard to finances and decision-making. Although women's emancipation in the West is on the rise, the image of female freedom portrayed in "Beds" remains elusive for most women.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The audiovisual products under scrutiny reveal a positive evolution in regard to women's freedom exemplified in their creators' treatment of characters analogous to Miranda, as she journeys from obedience and lack of representation –Stow's *The Tempest*– to rebellion –*Forbidden Planet*– unfulfilled wishes for individuality –"Requiem for Methuselah"– and, finally, apparent independence –"Beds". This progression signals accurate contemporary depictions of women's rights in the West in the silent film and the *Star Trek* episode but might be excessively optimistic when compared to factual information on gender balance at the time *Forbidden Planet* and "Beds" were released, as neither the rebellious spirit of the 1950s nor the full economic and decision-making freedom portrayed in the commercial were ever completely realised. Something worth remarking on is the absence of Caliban's rape attempt in all four products. The character is only present in Stow's short film, where the rape scene is downplayed to Caliban softly touching Miranda's left shoulder. It seems that the main creators behind the adaptations –all of them male, save for the TV commercial's producer Nicky Barnes– are scandalised at portraying physical violence, but comfortable with depicting the

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social constraints to which Miranda is subjected, and which constitute a form of social violence.

Regarding the rights of women today, the progress made so far does not invite optimism. According to the most recent United Nation's *Sustainable Development Goals Report*, although women represent 40 percent of the workforce globally, only 27.5 percent hold management positions: "at current rates, parity will require another 176 years. Women carry an unfair burden of unpaid domestic and care work, spending 2.5 times more hours a day on it than men" (2024, pp. 18–19). Not only is development slow, but steps back are being taken in the West, as violence against women increased during the Covid-19 pandemic, and abortion has been recriminalized in thirteen US states (McCann & Walker, 2023, para. 1; United Nations, 2023, p. 23). These events prove that, as much as the independent traits bestowed on filmic Mirandas are more than welcome as a wish for equality and progress, these traits are harder to find in their real-life counterparts, who still face a tough struggle for equal rights.

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NOTES

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