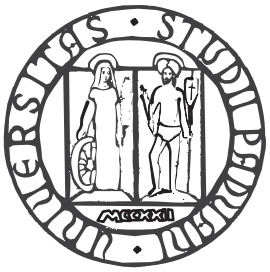

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PADOVA

FACOLTÀ DI LETTERE E FILOSOFIA
DIPARTIMENTO DI LINGUE
E LETTERATURE ANGLO-GERMANICHE E SLAVE

Tesi di laurea in Lingue e Letterature straniere

THE REPRESENTATION OF DEATH IN *TITUS ANDRONICUS*

Relatore:

Prof.ssa ALESSANDRA PETRINA

Laureanda:

CINZIA RUSSO
Matr. N. 379647/LL

Anno Accademico 2010-2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of contents

Foreword

The present work has been inspired by Shakespeare's earliest and goriest tragedy, *Titus Andronicus*. The play, hugely successful in its own time and applauded by the audience, has generally been considered a mere theatre of horrors for the crude and sensational violence present in it, of whom "gentle Shakespeare" could not have been the author, according to many scholars. The more I read the play, instead, the more I found myself in disagreement with this general idea. After being intrigued by the tightly knotted plot and by the passionate intensity of the characters, I could not but come to the conclusion that *Titus* needs to be taken seriously, as it has much more to show than lurid acts either implied or presented on the stage. *Titus* communicates. *Titus* mirrors humanity. This is what I attempt to highlight in the present study.

Titus is not an easy matter to deal with, as there are few reliable allusions concerning it. So, in order to understand the play as well as possible, I have considered its context first. If the date of composition is still uncertain, the play is no doubt enriched with classical influences, particularly with that of Ovid and Seneca which, as I have illustrated in the second chapter, help us to penetrate the motives of such grotesque violence. The third chapter deals with violence too. It is called "Misogynist violence", but it has nothing to do with misogyny. In fact, after an analysis of the two prominent women of the play, Lavinia and Tamora, what I spotlight is that they play is set in a female and not in a patriarchal society as it appears to be. While the two women subtly determine the sequence of events, Titus reveals an unexpectedly delicate soul instead. Other unexpected aspects of *Titus*'s characters come to light in the fourth chapter where I focus on their tragic ends. If the representation of death has so far been treated as death of the soul, of the values, of the system, it is not intended metaphorically this time. The staging of *Titus*, in fact, constitutes the core of the appendix. It represents the natural completion of the previous part of the work. An analysis of the mise-en-scène of the play's spectacles of death, furthermore, helps us to discover how *Titus*'s

overwhelming impact has been revived on the stage and what has changed over the years. When my interest in *Titus* rose, many years ago, I did not know what it felt like to see such ceremony of appalling acts live. Some months ago, instead, I had the chance to see one of the most amazing performances of the play by the Catalan company known as La Fura dels Baus. Their powerful show, as will be explained, renders *Titus* an unforgettable experience to me.

As for the bibliography, I have had the luck to find much of the material I needed in the library of the Dipartimento di Lingue e Letterature Anglo-Germaniche e Slave, Università degli Studi di Padova, in the London College Library and in the Trinity College Library in Dublin.

There are some persons whom I would like to thank in a very special way: they are Pep Gatell, producer of “A Taste of Titus Andronicus” and all his crew for their time and for the chance he has given to me to improve my study on *Titus*. I am grateful to my parents and to my friends for their love and patience. To these persons, to whom I owe so much, this work is dedicated.

CHAPTER I

THE CONTEXT OF *TITUS ANDRONICUS*

Littered with death and the annihilation of others, *Titus Andronicus* is by far the bloodiest of Shakespeare's plays, a grisly ceremony of appalling acts. Each gruesome act, however, serves to clarify and sometimes spur the motives of the play's memorable characters and gives coherence to a very tightly knotted plot. The structure of the play utilizes well-defined heroes and villains. Revenge is their key motivating factor. The fusion of all these elements moulds a peculiar plot and, as D. J. Palmer observes, "the extremities of horror and suffering in *Titus Andronicus* seem to stretch the capacities of art to give them adequate embodiment and expression".[1] But just for this impressive depiction of violence *Titus Andronicus* "is still regarded by many as a bad play of dubious authorship"[2], a bloodthirsty play which cannot be attributed to Shakespeare's hand. T.S. Eliot states the detractors' case directly, saying that the play is

> one of the stupidest and most uninspired plays ever written, a play in which it is incredible that Shakespeare had any hand at all, a play in which the best passages would be too highly honoured by the signature of Peele.[3]

Samuel Taylor Coleridge suggests that it is "obviously intended to excite vulgar audiences by its scenes of blood and horror"[4] whilst Edward Ravenscroft, the first of many critics to doubt that Shakespeare was the sole or chief author, declares to have been

> told by some anciently conversant with the Stage, that it was not Originally his, but brought by a private Authour to be Acted, and he only gave some Master-touches to one or two of the Principal Parts or Characters; this I am apt to believe, because 'tis the most incorrect and indigested piece in all his Works; It seems rather a heap of Rubbish then a Structure.[5]

It was commonly believed that "gentle Shakespeare" could not have been the author of such lurid themes, and many critics treated the question of authenticity as an aesthetic one, assuming that style,

---

[1] Palmer, D. J., "The Unspeakable in Pursuit of the Uneatable: Language and Action in *Titus Andronicus*", *The Critical Quarterly*, 14, 1972, p. 320.
[2] Hughes, Alan, ed., *Titus Andronicus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, foreword, p. I. This is the edition I use throughout my work.
[3] Eliot, T.S., *Selected Essays*, London: Faber & Faber, 1932, "Seneca in Elizabethan Translation", p. 82.
[4] Middleton Raysor, Thomas, ed., *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Shakespearean Criticism*, London: Dent, 1960, II, p. 27.
[5] Quoted in Bullough, Geoffrey, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, VI, pp. 4-5.

diction or versification, for instance, could reveal personal inimitable characteristics thanks to which the author could be easily recognizable. To clarify the point in Pope's words,

> If I may judge from all the distinguishing marks of his style, and his manner of thinking and writing, I make no doubt to declare that those wretched plays [that were added in the second issue of the Third Folio] cannot be admitted as his. And I should conjecture of some of the others, (particularly *Love's Labour Lost*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Titus Andronicus*) that only some characters, single scenes, or perhaps a few particular passages, were of his hand. It is very probable what occasion'd some Plays to be supposed *Shakespeare's* was only this; that they were pieces produced by unknown authors, or fitted up for the Theatre while it was under his administration: and no owner claiming them, they were adjudged to him.[6]

It might not seem trivial to remark that Shakespeare was about thirty in 1594 when *Titus Andronicus* was staged, as his crude style has sometimes been justified as pure immaturity, typical of a young man. This is not what is maintained by Emma Smith, instead, who declares that:

> this sensational revenge tragedy is marked by the brashness and bravura of a younger poet, showing off both his knowledge of classical authors and his mastery of a crowd-pleasing popular genre.[7]

As has been seen so far, Shakespeare's goriest play "is not everyone's favourite play"[8] and it is not even an easy matter to deal with, as there are few reliable allusions concerning it. In fact *Titus Andronicus* needs to be discussed starting from its date of composition, which is still uncertain.

1 . The dating of the play

It is a diary that keeps the earliest certain reference to *Titus Andronicus*, the *Diary* of Philip Henslowe, an account-book which registers the shares of the actors' receipts. Philip Henslowe, the entrepreneur personally and financially associated with Edward Alleyn and the Admiral's Men, proprietor of the Rose and the Fortune playhouses, regularly recorded advance payments to playwrights. The playwright presented to the acting company a 'plot', or scene-by-scene layout of a potential play; if the company approved, they would offer the playwright a down payment, and

[6] Quoted in Metz, G. Harold, *Shakespeare's Earliest Tragedy: Studies in Titus Andronicus*, London: Associated University Presses, 1996, p. 19.
[7] Kahn, Coppélia, "Gender and Sexuality: Critical Extracts. The Daughter's Seduction in *Titus Andronicus*, or, Writing is the Best Revenge" in Smith, Emma, ed., *Shakespeare's Tragedies*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, p. 192.
[8] Hughes, p. xi.

might make following part payments as he completed parts of the play. This practice gave the acting company a chance to contribute to the development of each script, almost from the beginning. Every play was realized and executed as a collective capital enterprise.[9]

According to the *Diary*, the Earl of Sussex's Men played a season from 26 December 1593 to 6 February 1594, probably at the Rose, and on 23 January the play performed was "titus & ondronicus"; on the margin Henslowe wrote "ne", which usually stands for "new". We know, in fact, that some of the plays Henslowe marked "ne" were not new, so he may have meant something different: for instance, that the play was newly revised, as may have been the case with *Titus*.[10] On the same date, both "a booke intituled a Noble Roman Historye of Tytus Andronicus" and "the ballad thereof" were entered for copyright in the Stationers' Register by John Danter, who printed *The Most Lamentable Romaine Tragedie of Titus Andronicus* in 1594. During Shakespeare's lifetime, eighteen of his plays were published in quartos, while *Othello* appeared in 1622. Following A. W. Pollard's analysis, it has generally been thought that over half of those quartos are "bad" ones, as their texts result extremely corrupt after their reconstruction from memory by a member, or members, of their cast.[11] Of the eight plays known to have been published by Danter, only one is a really "bad" quarto which he may have printed illegitimately. Perhaps because this was *Romeo and Juliet*, his reputation among modern scholars is worse than he deserves.[12] We cannot be certain whether Danter's "booke" was Shakespeare's play, or an early version of the prose *History of Titus Andronicus*. If it was the former, this was the first of Shakespeare's plays to be registered for publication. Among his works, only *Venus and Adonis* was recorded earlier, on 18 April 1593.[13]

[9] Taylor, Gary "Shakespeare Plays on Renaissance Stages" in Wells, Stanley, Stanton, Sarah, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 2.
[10] This interpretation is controversial; see Foakes, R.A., Rickert, R.T., eds., *Henslowe's Diary*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961, pp. xxvi-xxx. (Hughes, p. 1, note 2).
[11] Drabble, Margaret, *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 370.
[12] Hughes, p. 1, note 4.
[13] Hughes, p. 1.

The real evidence we get is the existence of specific records attesting the performances of *Titus Andronicus* in the public playhouses,[14] therefore even if the Stationers' Register entry should refer to the prose *History*, we can consider the date of Q to be correct.[15] Consequently, we may assume that Shakespeare composed *Titus Andronicus* by January 1594. Detractors, as we have already seen, cannot believe that Shakespeare was already capable of creating such a play by that date, as in the same period he was on the point of writing *Romeo and Juliet* and he had already written *Richard III*, popular plays with which *Titus* definitely clashes. So some have suggested that it is not by Shakespeare at all or that it is his incomplete revision of another man's play – others have suggested an earlier date.[16] Evidence for the latter is confirmed by Ben Jonson's comment in the induction to his *Bartholomew Fair* in 1614 to the effect that some playgoers have old-fashioned tastes:

> He that will swear *Jeronimo*, or *Andronicus* are the best plays yet, shall pass unexpected at here, as a man whose judgement shows it is constant, and hath stood still these five and twenty, or thirty years.[17]

If the citation were to be taken literally, it would set the time of composition for the two plays[18] ranging from 1584 to 1589 – Jonson classed *Andronicus* with *The Spanish Tragedy*, which was probably written about 1589. Perhaps Jonson's satirical declaration should not be taken too literally, but it must have been generally accurate because his little joke certainly assumes that his audience knew that these two popular plays were comparatively old. If the earlier date were referred to *The Spanish Tragedy (Jeronimo)* and the later to *Titus*, the range of conceivable dates of *Titus* would be hence approximately from 1589 to 1593.[19]

There are other details that serve to fix an early limit to the date of composition beside Jonson's assertion. For instance the title page of the first quarto (1594) states that *Titus* was "Plaide

---

[14] Henslowe's only reference to the suburban playhouse at Newington Butts records a short season by 'my Lord Admeralle men & my Lorde Chamberlen men' from 3 June to 13 June 1594. There were performances of 'andronicous' on 5 and 12 June. Hughes, p. 1.
[15] Hughes, p. 1.
[16] Hughes, p. 3.
[17] Quoted in Waith, Eugene M., ed., *The Oxford Shakespeare: Titus Andronicus*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, "Introduction", p. 1.
[18] The first play to which Ben Jonson refers is *The Spanish Tragedy: or, Hieronimo is Mad Again* by Thomas Kyd (1558-94).
[19] Metz, p. 190.

by the Right Honourable Earle of *Darbie*, Earle of *Pembrooke*, and Earle of *Sussex* their Seruants"[20] but, according to what has been said before, Sussex's men are listed by Henslowe as the company that performed the play on 23 January 1594 - the earliest of three performances that season, the following were on 28 January and 6 February - while there is no record of a presentation by Pembroke's Men. The reference to the Earl of Pembroke's Men may push the history of the play, or some form of it, back a little as we have no documentation of this company before the autumn of 1592, and the last we hear of them for several years is a vivid vignette of Elizabethan theatrical life.[21] Disorganization reigned in the London playhouses in the years from 1592 to 1594 because of the plague: theatrical seasons were interrupted, transient companies merged, others collapsed in total ruin. The troupes were dispersed, most of them touring in the provinces and losing their principal writers. A letter that Henslowe wrote on 28 September 1593 to his son-in-law Edward Alleyn, is witness to the harsh reality that Pembroke's Men had to face. In fact, according to the letter, they were back in London and in a process of dissolution – they were pawning their costumes – because they had been unable to earn enough to reimburse their expenses while on a provincial tour.[22] Assuming that both Henslowe and the Q title page are accurate, Pembroke's Men could not have played *Titus Andronicus* after the last week in August 1593. Then, if we accept the sequence of acting companies on the title page of the first quarto, the Earl of Derby's Men – or Lord Strange's under a new name, which they cannot have adopted before their patron succeeded to the title on 25 September 1593 – would have acted *Titus* before Pembroke's, certainly in 1592 and perhaps earlier.[23]

Another item of evidence on the date is an apparent reference to *Titus Andronicus* in an anonymous play called *A Knack to Know a Knave*, which was registered on 7 January 1594, but

[20] The entire title page of the First Quarto is: 'The Most Lamentable Romaine Tragedie of Titus Andronicus: As it was Plaide by the Right Honourable the Earle of *Darbie*, Earle of *Pembrooke*, and Earle of *Sussex* their Seruants'. Metz, p. 16.
[21] Hughes, p. 3.
[22] Foakes, Rickert, 21, 280. See note 2 in Metz, p. 190.
[23] Metz, pp. 190-91.

entered in Henslowe *Diary* as "ne[w]" when Strange's men played it on 10 June 1592. Earl Osric greets King Edgar, who has come to visit the Earl without having been invited, saying

My gratious Lord, as welcome shall you be
To me, my Daughter, and my Sonne in Law,
As Titus was unto the Roman Senators,
When he had made a conquest on the Goths;
That in requitall of his service don,
Did offer him the imperiall Diademe:
As they in Titus, we in your Grace still fynd
The perfect figure of a Princelie mind.[24]

These lines have much in common with *Titus* as they tell of Titus's welcome by the Senators, his conquest of the Goths, the offer of the imperial crown and the description of Titus as "the perfect figure of a princely mind". However, there are three versions of the story of Titus Andronicus, the prose *History of Titus Andronicus*, the ballad entitled *The Lamentable and Tragical History of Titus Andronicus*, and the play. Only in the latter is Titus welcomed by Tribunes and Senators after a conquest of the Goths and offered the imperial throne. In neither of the other extant versions of the story – the prose *History* and the ballad – is Titus welcomed, except by the Emperor; is a contender for the throne; or is offered the crown.[25] The hypothesis that the author of *A Knack* was referring to the play is strengthened when *Titus* is portrayed as the "perfect figure of a princely mind" in accordance with the Elizabethan view of the strict virtues of Rome, precisely the way a sixteenth-century Englishman would have described Shakespeare's hero, as T.J.B. Spencer points out.[26]

There are contrasting theories on the extract from *A Knack to Know a Knave*. Unlike those who have questioned the identification or have been inhibited by the corrupt quality of the text of *A Knack*, Metz assumes that

there is certainly nothing about this passage to cause doubts concerning its authenticity. It is unequivocal, shows no signs of corruption, and can be accepted at face value even though elements of the rest of the play may be suspect.[27]

Hughes, instead, thinks it possible that *A Knack* refers to Shakespeare's lost source, or even to "tittus and vespasia".[28] We do not know much about the latter as it is lost[29], but thanks to Henslowe we

[24] Quoted in Metz, p. 191.
[25] Metz, p. 191.
[26] Quoted in Metz, p. 191.
[27] Metz, p. 191.

know that it was in Strange's repertory in 1592 and that it was acted only four days before the first performance of *A Knack to Know a Knave*.

Some scholars have speculated that the anonymous author of *A Knack* may have referred to *Titus and Vespasian*, and that it may have been an earlier version of *Titus Andronicus* written either by Shakespeare or by another dramatist or collaborator and later revised by Shakespeare to produce the text we have. In support of this hypothesis, they adduce such data as traces of revision in *Titus*, Henslowe's designation of the performance of *Titus Andronicus* on 23 January 1594 as newly revised - "ne" -, similarities mostly in the first act of *Titus* to the style of George Peele[30], the numerous parallels between *Lucrece* and *Titus*, and the renaming of Lucius as Vespasian in the German *Tragoedia von Tito Andronico*. But each of these items of evidence is susceptible of an interpretation that does not require us to assume *Titus and Vespasian* to be the predecessor of *Titus Andronicus*. Even though there is evidence of revision, these changes in the text can hardly be cited in support of an assertion that *Titus and Vespasian* is a predecessor text to *Titus Andronicus* since no text of that play is extant.[31] Henslowe's "ne" has been shown by Foakes and Rickert to be applied by him when plays were not newly composed. The Peelean diction of act 1 may be explained as an imitation by a younger playwright of the style of an established dramatist. The links to the poems, especially *Lucrece*, could be traceable to similarity in subject and to a common "classical" setting. The use of Vespasian in the German text is probably a result of natural association in a play whose hero is named Titus, both having been Flavian emperors. The manifest conclusion is that the allusion in *A Knack to Know a Knave* is a reference to Shakespeare's play substantially in its extant form and that *Titus Andronicus* must have been staged before the first performance of *A Knack* on 10 June 1592.[32] Summing up with Chambers' words: "the allusion in *Knack to Know a Knave*…

---

[28] Hughes, p. 4.
[29] We know only the title and the fact that it was performed ten times between 11 April 1592, when Henslowe marked it "ne", and 25 January 1593. Metz, p. 191.
[30] George Peele is believed by many scholars to be the principal author of *Titus Andronicus*, as is shown in the following pages.
[31] Metz, p. 192.
[32] Metz, p. 192.

points to a knowledge of Titus and the Goths… in 1592, and no such combination is known outside *Titus Andronicus*."[33]

J.C. Maxwell draws attention to the anonymous *Troublesome Raign of John King of England*[34] which shares words and images with *Titus Andronicus*:

How, what, when, and where, have I bestowd a day
That tended not to some notorius ill.[35]

Maxwell believes that this "can hardly be independent of Aaron's"[36]

Even now I curse the day – and yet I think
Few come within the compass of my curse –
Wherein I did not some notorius ill …

(V. i. 125-27)

Coincidences and common sources are both difficult to exclude, the latter especially when we think of much Elizabethan literature we have lost. Even when a parallel is as clear as such things may be, we often cannot know which author wrote first, or how much time separated first writing from imitation. For instance the word "palliament" is used twice in extant Renaissance literature: at *Titus* I.i.182 and in George Peele's poem, *The Honour of the Garter* (line 92), which can be dated with precision to May – June 1593. Dover Wilson uses this coincidence to argue that Peele not only wrote both passages, but did so at very nearly the same time, considering the play the earlier of the two because he thinks the word is better suited to its context there than in the poem.[37] Wilson, then, attributes *Titus Andronicus* to the author of *The Honour of The Garter*, assuming that Shakespeare was revising Peele's play while completing *Lucrece*. Wilson's belief is that Act I is entirely by Peele but this attestation of *Titus Andronicus*' paternity according to Hughes, cancels itself out also because, since the play shows signs of revision, a parallel may belong to either a first draft or a revised version.[38] As for the analogy between *Titus* and the anonymous *Troublesome Raign* illustrated above, Maxwell warns us that we cannot know who is the borrower, but leans towards the

[33] Quoted in Metz, p. 192.
[34] Published in 1591 but probably performed several years earlier. Hughes, p. 5.
[35] Sider, J. W., ed., *The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England*, 1979, 5. 85-6. See note 2 in Hughes, p. 5.
[36] Quoted in Metz, pp. 192-193.
[37] See Hughes, p. 5.
[38] Hughes, p. 5.

author of *The Troublesome Raign* because he is "a shameless borrower" and Aaron uses it more felicitously than King John.[39] However, if *The Troublesome Raign*, printed in 1591, contains borrowings from *Titus Andronicus*, we may think that Shakespeare's play was already extant in that year.[40] Recent archaeology has been employed to date the stagecraft in *Titus Andronicus*. For example, Aaron buries gold under a "tree" (II.iii.2), perhaps one of the stage columns which may have been an innovative feature of the Rose after its renovation (*c.* 1592). Like a verbal parallel, however, this stage business could as easily date from a revision as from the original draft.[41]

In the end, even though evidence regarding the date of composition is not scanty, we can only conjecture. According to Metz the date of composition that fits with the facts we have is 1589. He does not believe that *Titus* was his first play, although it may have been his first non-collaborative effort at drama.[42] Hughes, instead, suggests that young Shakespeare wrote a crude draft of *Titus Andronicus* before turning into a dramatist – even as early as 1588, when he may still have been living in Stratford; that he went to London searching for someone that would produce it, but nobody would and that, having established himself to Robert Greene's dissatisfaction in 1592, he revised it and offered it either to Strange's or Pembroke's Men. They may have performed it in the provinces. But by the summer of 1593 the latter company, being bankrupt and currently in possession of the play, sold it to Sussex's Men, who played it at the Rose in early 1594, and subsequently sold the copy to Danter when the plague closed the playhouses. The scene of Titus's mad banquet, which appears only in the First Folio, was added later.[43] Stanley Wells does not choose a specific date in his introduction to *Titus* in the Oxford Complete *Works*, but the disposition of the plays is chronological, and *Titus* is fifth following *Two Gentlemen of Verona, Taming of The*

[39] Hughes, p. 5.
[40] For other evidence regarding the date of composition see Metz, pp. 190-97.
[41] Hughes, p. 6.
[42] Metz, p. 197.
[43] Hughes, p. 6.

Shrew, and 2 and 3 *Henry VI*. Wells also states that the play "combines sensational incident with high flown rhetoric of a kind that was fashionable around 1590".[44]

2 . Sources and influences of *Titus Andronicus*

The setting of *Titus Andronicus* is the decline of the Roman Empire, but the events are fictional, so the source was also fiction. It is improbable that Shakespeare invented the story; actually his only original plots are found in comedy – *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Livy, Plutarch and Holinshed are at the bottom of his tragedies and history plays, though he turned even to old plays like *King Leir* or *The Troublesome Raigne of John King of England*. Although Shakespeare preferred English sources, he may have been capable to read Italian and could certainly read French. Renaissance Italy was very interested in the history of the later Roman Empire, and Italian translations of virtually all the significant Greek sources were available. A *novella* by Cinthio, either in the original Italian or in the French translation by Gabriel Chappuys, is the main source of *Othello*, just as Bandello's *Novelle* or Belleforest's French translation, is considered a probable source of *Much Ado About Nothing*. Thus, a *novella* in Italian or French as a possible source is not to be ruled out, though no such work is known.[45]

> The source of *Titus Andronicus* – presumably some obscure pseudo-historical romance – has hitherto escaped the most painstaking search of scholars. However, I am now able to point to an Early English rendering of that source in a unique chapbook entitled: 'The History of Titus Andronicus, The Renowned Roman General'… To this work is appended the well-known ballad headed: 'The Lamentable and Tragical History of Titus Andronicus'… The prose story [is] told as veracious history…The appended ballad, mainly based on the prose history even to the extent of verbal borrowings, shows unmistakable familiarity with the play, which it follows in important variations.[46]

This is what J.Q. Adams reveals in 1936 in his Introduction to the facsimile of the only surviving copy of the first quarto that is now in the Folger Library, Washington. He announces so the

[44] Wells, Stanley, Taylor Gary, eds., "Titus Andronicus", in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, p. 125.
[45] Hughes, pp. 7-8.
[46] This is what is stated by J. Q. Adams quoted in Metz, p. 151.

discovery of a volume including a short prose *History of Titus Andronicus*, *the Renowned Roman General*, and a 120-line ballad entitled *The Lamentable and Tragical History of Titus Andronicus*, unaware of the fact that someone else already knew of their existence. The nineteenth-century Shakespearean scholar J.O. Halliwell-Phillipps, in fact, reported that he owned a version of this history "an excessively rare chap-book in my possession entitled, 'The History of Titus Andronicus, the Renowned Roman General…Newly Translated from the Italian copy printed at Rome', 12 mo. Northampton, n.d."[47]. He also mentioned that the ballad was in the chapbook and that it "was often reprinted"[48]. It is known, in fact, that the ballad was printed with some variants by Richard Johnson in his *Golden Garden of Princely Pleasures and Delicate Delights* published in 1620, a collection of mainly historical ballads which contained 'A Lamentable Song of the death of King Leare and his three Daughters' apparently based on Shakespeare's tragedy. The Titus ballad was also printed in a broadside by Edward Wright and later included in Percy's *Reliques* (No. XIII) and in the Roxburghe and Shirburn volumes of ballads[49]. It was then certainly old and it could be possible that Johnson just reprinted a ballad that was old enough to be Shakespeare's source. Instead an early edition of the *History* is unknown, but it has to be noticed that while spelling and punctuation conform to eighteenth-century practice the diction is archaic. This means that the assertion printed on the title page, 'Newly Translated from the Italian Copy printed at Rome', was not true at the time of publication.[50] Probably, the publisher simply reprinted that line along with the rest of the text. In that case, the old edition was perhaps the *first* in English, but adapted or translated from an Italian source. It is possible that Shakespeare had used it instead of the original as an English version was available, a guess which the aforementioned verbal parallels tend to reinforce.[51]

[47] The copy of the chapbook that Halliwell-Phillipps had is probably the one that is now in the Folger Library. On its flyleaf is the following note, said in the Folger catalog to be by Halliwell-Phillipps, presumably in his own hand: "The only copy I ever saw. It is probably the chap-book version of the prose tale of Titus Andronicus, which was popular in Shakespeare's time, but of which no [such early] copy is now known to exist". *Folger Shakespeare Library: Catalog of the Shakespeare Collection*, Boston: Hall, 1972, p. 626, see note 2 in Metz, pp. 280-281.
[48] Quoted in Metz, p. 150.
[49] Bullough, p. 11.
[50] Hughes, p. 7.
[51] Hughes, p. 10.

The prose *History of Titus Andronicus* has been judged late medieval pseudo-history.[52] This medieval origin may be noticed in some allusions concerning a demand for combat against accusers and a competition of jousting. At the beginning of the tale we are informed that the events occur at the time of Theodosius, but according to Bullough there is little analogy between the events described in the tale and the actual historical events of the reign of Theodosius the Great[53] (A.D. 379-95) or of his grandson Theodosius II (A.D. 401-50). However, Bullough believes that there is some affinity between the *History*, its characters and historical people and happenings related to late Roman history. Andronicus Comnenus, for instance, was an Emperor in Byzantium (1183-85), a despot whose right hand was cut off before being executed by the people who rebelled against him. Furthermore Bullough suggests that the Titus of the prose history "has something in common with Stilicho (early fifth century), who kept the barbarians at bay for many years and in the end was barbarously treated by the Emperor (Honorius) and others whom he had protected".[54] Bullough conjectures that the tale may basically derive "from some semi-fictitious chronicle". So the *History* seems to be a mixture of sensational historical events put together from different sources.[55] This is evident also when we analyse the final part of it, noticing a similarity with Ovid's story of Philomela as told in *Metamorphoses* and with Seneca's revenge tragedy *Thyestes*, but noting that some important elements have been modified to serve the needs of the author's own tale. For instance, in the *History*, there are two ravishers who are encouraged by a wicked Moor, and Lavinia not only has her tongue cut off, as happens to Philomela, but also her hands. Furthermore, Lavinia is freed by her aggressors and not by a member of her family after confinement, and she reveals the names of her persecutors by writing them on the sand, not by weaving them as Philomela does.[56] The scene of the vengeful banquet in which a parent, cheated, has to eat the flesh of its own progeny certainly

[52] Metz, p. 151.
[53] Son of the Roman General who in Britain drove back the Caledonians and created the province of Valentia between Hadrian's Wall and the Forth and Clyde, he was made Gratian's colleague and Emperor of the East in A.D. 379. By this time the Roman Empire had long passed its height, and barbarian invaders, and especially the Goths, were roaming about the Eastern Empire – not so far, however, in Italy. Bullough, p. 8.
[54] Bullough, pp. 9-10.
[55] Bullough, quoted in Metz, p. 151.
[56] Metz, p. 151.

appears in Ovid's tale, but the too many differences make scholars believe that the source of the *History* may have been the fairly analogous episode in Seneca's play.[57] The villainous Moor does not figure in either of these recognizable sources of the *History*, but it could derive from the Italian original, if it existed, as Bullough writes:

> similar characters appear in Italian and French stories emphasizing the eroticism and cruelty of Moors, and versions were published in England in story and ballad form. In Bandello's *Novelle* (1554), there is a story of a cruel Moor that exhibits some affinities with the prose tale.[58]

So the *History*, according to Ralph M. Sargent, the first who efficiently analysed the prose tale and related it to *Titus*, "presents a whole which has a consistency of its own, a consistency which is not the same as the play's".[59]

The ballad is constituted by thirty stanzas, in form of rhymed quatrains, and observes the ballad tradition: an example is the military setting. The ghost of Titus narrates the story introducing the ten years' war against the Goths and ends telling of his own suicide at the Thyestean banquet. The ballad shows significant omissions: for instance the early part of the prose tale, which describes the lifting of the siege of Rome as told in chapters 1 and 2, excluding only the capture of the Queen of the Goths. We can also notice the absence of the political component of Act 5 of the play, and of Lavinia's solitary wanderings in the forest in tears for the loss of her betrothed, which in the *History* led to her downfall. So, we could say that when the same incident appears in both the tale and the play, the ballad sometimes coincides with the *History* and sometimes with the play. It is clear that the correspondences of the ballad to the *History* and the play are odd. Nevertheless, there must be some connection. Since the entire story is fiction, all versions must be linked to each other.[60] Sargent concludes that the *History* was the original form of the story, which Shakespeare reshaped in his play, and that the ballad, third in order, generally conforms to the *History* with a single marginal difference from the play. According to his theory, the alteration consists in a transposition in the ballad of the *History*'s chain of events in the plot against Bassianus and Lavinia, so that the rape of

[57] Metz, p. 152.
[58] Quoted in Metz, p. 152. According to Bullough there is no evidence that Bandello's novel is connected directly to *Titus*. See Metz, p. 281, note 7.
[59] Quoted in Hughes, p. 7.
[60] Hughes, pp. 7-8.

Lavinia takes place after Bassianus's murder but before the execution of Titus's sons, which is how the play continues. In the prose tale the sons are executed before the rape.[61] Sargent notes that the result could have been accomplished modifying the disposition of three quatrains. In fact, if those that appear as twenty-first, twenty-second and twenty-third were placed between stanzas twelve and thirteen, this would make the ballad sequence correspond with that in the prose tale, thus avoiding any other alteration. Hence, the opposite adaptation could have occurred, ordering them in their existing position, which has the effect of making events in the ballad agree with the play. This is what Sargent believes as evidence of some influence of the play on the ballad. In the end he assumes that

> the editor or printer of this edition had only to rearrange the pertinent stanzas in order to make the episodes proceed as in the play. At the conclusion of the ballad, where conformity with the play could not be achieved without rewriting the stanzas, the deaths occur exactly in the manner of the prose history, not as in the play. The status of the ballad is thus clear. Except for the relocation of some three quatrains in the present version it owes nothing to Shakespeare's play. The ballad is no more than a metrical compression of the prose history.[62]

Even though Sargent's hypothesis is a compelling one, there are some instances in which the ballad conforms to *Titus Andronicus* when the play contrasts with the prose story. Sargent says that the very killings at the Thyestean feast occur both in the ballad and in the *History*, and so it is, but they are quite different versions and are closer to the play than to the prose tale. In fact, in the *History*, Titus's friends kill both the Emperor and the Empress and then set the Moor "in the Ground to the middle alive, smeered him over with Honey, and so between the stinging of Bees and wasps and starving, he miserably ended his wretched Days". Titus kills Lavinia at her request to avoid the sufferings they expect and falls on his sword. In the ballad, instead, Titus is the executioner, killing Lavinia first, then the Empress, the Emperor, and himself; after his death the Moor ("Alive they set him half into the Ground"). In the play, then, Titus stabs Lavinia and then the Empress, but the Emperor kills Titus and is in turn killed by Lucius. Aaron, the Moor, is then by Lucius's order "set…breast-deep in earth".[63]

[61] Metz, p. 153.
[62] Quoted in Metz, p. 153.
[63] Metz, p. 153.

It can be noticed that Sargent's theory is much too sweeping as not only the order of the deaths, but also the agent by whom they are accomplished varies. Even the punishment of the Moor is nearer to that in the play, as he is half-buried and left to starve, but not smeared with honey. There are other resemblances in which the ballad follows the play. In the *History* there is no explicit allusion to the story of Philomela, and in fact the only literary reference in connection with the rape of Lavinia is to the Biblical story of Suzanna and the elders. The Moor in the *History* counsels the Empress's sons "to make all sure … by cutting out her Tongue to hinder her telling Tales, and her Hands off to prevent her writing a Discovery".[64] Some trace of the Philomela story is perceived in the fifteenth stanza:

Then both her Hands they basely cut off quite,
Whereby their Wickedness she could not write,
Nor with her Needle on her Sampler sow
The bloody Workers of her dismal Woe.[65]

In the prose *History*, then, there is no reference to a sampler and this specific term, used for the weaving Philomela did to reveal Tereus's crime to Procne in Golding's *Metamorphosis*, does not appear. It occurs instead in *Titus*, when Marcus discovers the ravished and mutilated Lavinia:

Fair Philomela, why, she but lost her tongue,
And in a tedious sampler sew'd her mind:

(XII.iv.38-39)

It could be possible that who wrote the ballad took it from the play.[66] A probable influence of the play on the ballad can be seen also when the word "staff" is used in both writings to indicate the means by which Lavinia writes in sand the names of her tormentors. The term "wand" appears in the *History* instead. So Adam's conclusion that the ballad "shows unmistakable familiarity with the play" is amply justified.[67]

Though many scholars believe they have found Shakespeare's source in the ballad and many others in the *History*, the latter, in a sixteenth-century form, has been accepted as the principal

[64] Metz, p. 154.
[65] Metz, p. 154.
[66] Metz, p. 154.
[67] Quoted in Metz, p. 151.

source of the play.[68] As a matter of fact, the setting, the principal narrative elements of the story, all of the most important characters and some of the minor ones, are already present in the *History*. Even the combination of the Ovidian story of Philomela with Thyestean elements had already been digested by the writer of the *History*. This means that Shakespeare recognized these elements, moulded them to his theatrical needs, embellished them with emblematic verse and several classical references, and turned them from narrative into drama.[69] Bullough, however, is one of the scholars who are not in agreement with the accepted view, and conceives the *History* as a "Probable Source" and in his evaluation says "it may well represent a major source". He believes that "the dramatist alters the prose story considerably, to increase its sensational qualities, its political implications, and its characterization".[70] Stanley Wells, moreover, notes that the story is fictitious, and

> whether Shakespeare invented it is an open question: the same tale is told in both a ballad and chap-book which survive only in eighteenth-century versions but which could derive from pre-Shakespearian originals. Even if Shakespeare knew these works they could have supplied only a skeletal narrative. The play "owe[s] much" to Ovid and "something" to Seneca.[71]

Whether the *History* might have been *Titus*'s only source or not, there is no reason to argue that Shakespeare searched elsewhere for details. Possible secondary sources, in fact, might be the story of Philomela in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and Seneca's *Thyestes*. As a copy of the former actually is present in the action of *Titus Andronicus* (IV.i) and Lavinia's story mirrors Philomel's, Ovid was probably more important. Perhaps Shakespeare knew these works so well that he did not need to consult them while he was writing, but Ovid was more vivid in his memory.[72]

Before Adam's revelation of his finding of the prose *History*, many scholars studied *Titus* to identify its origins, which they considered to be mainly in classical literature.[73] The classical component of *Titus Andronicus*, in fact, is so broad that it could not have been originated from the *History* alone. In supplementing the prose source, as Bullough tells us, the dramatist went directly to Seneca and Ovid, so the relationship between the Emperor and Lavinia's lover is changed in order to

[68] Metz, p. 156.
[69] Metz, p. 156.
[70] Bullough, p. 15.
[71] Quoted in Metz, p. 157.
[72] Hughes, p. 10.
[73] Metz, see note 17, p. 282.

introduce a Senecan as well as a political theme. The antagonism of Saturninus and Bassianus recalls faintly the rivalry between the brothers in Seneca's *Thebans* which originated from Euripides' *Phoenissae* and reappeared during the Renaissance in Dolce's *Giocasta* and in *Gorboduc* (1562).[74] The fierce piety of Titus in sacrificing Alarbus, then, was not only created to make him a strict old Roman, but also to add another Senecan motif, taken from the *Troades*, where Hecuba's daughter Polixena and Andromache's son Astyanax must be sacrificed to the shade of Achilles. Probably Titus's petition to Pluto to send Revenge from Hell (IV.iii.13-17; 37-8) may come from the prose story, but Titus's language shows familiarity with the Senecan underworld, for instance, in *Thyestes* where Megaera sends out the shade of Tantalus to afflict the house of Pelops.[75] *Thyestes* shows other correspondences with *Titus Andronicus* especially when Atreus avenges himself on his brother Thyestes by killing his sons and serving them up at a feast of reconciliation. Furthermore Tamora's description of the "barren detested vale" (II.iii.93), in which her sons murder Bassianus and ravish Lavinia, may derive from the dark wood in *Thyestes* where Atreus kills his brother's children. Some verbal similarities from Seneca's *Phaedra* are reshaped in *Titus*. For instance, the words of Phaedra declaring that she will crazily follow Hippolytus over Styx and through rivers of fire ("Per Styga, per amnes igneos amens sequar" (Act VI, line 1180)), are reflected in those used by Demetrius who, lusting after Lavinia, says that until he can possess her "Per Stygia per manes vehor" (I am borne through Stygian regions among ghosts") (II.i.135).

One of the most recognizable Senecan features of the play, though modified by the Machiavellian love of trickery and the Elizabethan passion for disguising, is the plan of Tamora in V.ii, to mock and win over Titus by disguising herself as Revenge and her sons as Rape and Murder. Whilst Tamora's language in this scene (28-40) and that of Titus (44-59) follow the Elizabethan Senecan tradition of *Jocasta* and *Locrine*, Maxwell has pointed out that the personification of Rape – called Rapine at ll. 59 and 83 – may have been suggested by the story of Tereus and Philomene in

[74] Bullough, p. 26.
[75] Bullough, p. 26.

Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, which is told by the master to his student as an example of Ravine, which is a vice "in the lignage of Avarice".[76]

For whan him faileth paiement,
Raviné maketh non other skille,
But taketh by strength al that he wille.
So ben there in the same wise
Lovers, as I the shall devise,
That whan nought elles may availe,
Anone with strengthe they assaile
And get of love the sesine
Whan they se time, by ravine.[77]

(Bk. V.)

Tereus is called a "raviner", but there is nothing else in Gower's narrative to mark it as a source for *Titus Andronicus*.[78]

In the following examples we can perceive a strong influence of Ovid instead. The rape of Philomela is told by Marcus when he has found Lavinia:

But, sure, some Tereus hath deflowred thee,
And, lest thou shouldst detect him, cut thy tongue

and having revealed how Philomela "in a tedious sampler sew'd her mind" he goes on:

But, lovely niece, that mean is cut from thee;
A craftier Tereus hast thou met withal,
And he hath cut those pretty fingers off,
That could have better sew'd than Philomel.

(II.iv.26-43)

The narration in the prose tale of Lavinia's confession is elaborated and postponed when Lavinia runs after the little boy Lucius who, thinking that, like Hecuba of Troy in *Metamorphoses*, she has run "mad for sorrow"[79], flies from her with his books under his arm. From this episode we find out that she used to read poetry and Cicero's prose to him. She takes up Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and twists it in her wrecked arms, trying to turn the pages, until it opens at "the tragic tale of Philomel", whose rape took place, like hers "in the ruthless, vast and gloomy woods" (IV.i.53). Titus wonders if the rapist was the Emperor:

[76] Quoted in Bullough, p. 29.
[77] Bullough, p. 29.
[78] Bullough, p. 29.
[79] (IV.i.21) Hecuba of Troy after taking her revenge went mad. She, in fact, avenged the murder of her last son Polydoros by scratching out the eyes of his murderer, the Thracian king Polymnestor (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, xiii). See note 136-8 in Hughes, p. 58.

Or slunk not Saturnine, as Tarquin erst,
That left the camp to sin in Lucrece's bed?

(IV.i.63-64)

But Lavinia brings to light the truth, writing with her staff "Stuprum, Chiron, Demetrius". Marcus makes them all swear vengeance

as, with the woeful fere
And father of that chaste dishonoured dame,
Lord Junius Brutus swore for Lucrece's rape…

(IV.i.89-91)

Probably these allusions to the rape of Lucrece have been extracted from Ovid's *Fasti*, which Shakespeare used for his poem on the subject.[80]

As in Ovid, Lavinia helps her father in his vengeance, carrying his hand in her mouth - "Bear thou my hand, sweet wench, between thy teeth", Titus to Lavinia, (III.i.281) – and holding the bowl to catch the murderers' blood - "Whiles that Lavinia 'tween her stumps doth hold/The basin that receives your guilty blood", Titus to Lavinia, (V.ii.182-83) -, but she figures at the feast only to be killed. It seems that Shakespeare treated his play as a Senecan drama with a strong Ovidian flavour[81], as the Senecan qualities are found in the incidents rather than in the style, which owes more to Ovid. Both influences, anyhow, were fused to make *Titus Andronicus* a tragedy in which balance and rhetoric are cardinal.[82]

The classical traces that weave *Titus*'s plot can be recognized even from the names of several characters. Robert Adger Law, in fact, identifies the source of Lavinia's name as Virgil's *Aeneid*, and also assumes that the names of Titus, Marcus, Lucius, Martius, Quintus, Caius, Aemilies, Publius, and Sempronius, come from *The Life of Scipio Africanus* in North's translation of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. [83]

Violence and its incessant pursuit constitute *Titus*'s leitmotif, and Shakespeare certainly followed the example of Thomas Kyd in *The Spanish Tragedy* when he decided to write a play of horror and revenge. He emulated the personal revenge single-mindedly pursued by Hieronimo,

[80] Bullough, p. 28.
[81] Bullough, p. 23.
[82] Bullough, p. 29.
[83] Quoted in Metz, p. 161.

determined to revenge the murder of his son. Nearly mad with grief, Hieronimo pretended to be insane in order to achieve his ends. A similar condition is to be found in *Titus* where revenge personified does occur in the action, but only as a bit of make-believe, one of Tamora's tricks. Of course, the complex figure of Hieronimo reminds us of Titus. Like Hieronimo, Titus is subject to frantic imaginings "but his vengeance is terrifyingly sane.. He may be deceived by the gods but he knows Tamora … In writing of a Rome from which the gods have departed, Shakespeare has written a play from which the gods have departed".[84] As Bacon says "revenge is a kind of wild justice"[85], but this will be the topic of another section.

[84] Philip Edwards, "Thrusting Elysium into Hell: The Originality of *The Spanish Tragedy"*, *Elizabethan Theatre XI*, Port Credit: Meany, 1990, pp. 117-32. Quoted in Metz, p. 174.
[85] Morris, Brian, "Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama" in Ricks, Christopher, ed., *The Penguin History of Literature: English Drama to 1710*, first published by Sphere Books, 1971, London: Penguin Books, 1993, p. 62.

CHAPTER II

VIOLENCE IN *TITUS ANDRONICUS*

1 . Classical influences in *Titus Andronicus*

In *Titus Andronicus* there are over a dozen lurid acts either implied or presented on the stage, but it is not so much the quantity of violent acts as the severity of these acts to strike us. The refinement which blossoms from classical allusions soon fades away when we see Lavinia wandering about the stage, handless, stained from head to toe in blood with much of the flow emanating from her mouth. The "pruning" goes on and we shiver when Aaron lops off Titus's left hand and when the same returns accompanied by a messenger along with the heads of Titus's sons. The purpose of these and many other gruesome occurrences is fertile ground for criticism still today. Edward Capell and August William Schlegel, for instance, assert that "Shakespeare could not have been serious: the play was a youthful attempt to thrill the injudicious groundlings by outdoing the sensations of Kyd and Marlowe",[1] while Richard F. Brucher argues that "Shakespeare deliberately made some violence comic in order to thwart conventional moral expectations".[2] An analysis of Shakespeare's classical influences, particularly Ovid and Seneca, could help us to penetrate the motives of such grotesque violence.

As we have seen in the previous section, Ovid was fresh in Shakespeare's mind and palpable in *Titus*'s plot. Typical of Ovid was his interest in the transforming power of intense states of emotion rather than in pointing a moral. The theme of metamorphosis, which gives Ovid's most important work its title, is a crucial part of the meaning as Eugene Waith points out:

> in the moments of greatest emotional stress, Ovid's characters seem to lose not only individuality but even humanity as if sheer intensity of feeling made them indistinguishable from other forms of life. Often a physical transformation

[1] Quoted in Hughes, Alan, ed., *Titus Andronicus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 33.
[2] Quoted in Hughes, p. 34.

completes the suggestion. Thus, in the depiction of these legendary figures individuality is built up only to be obliterated by an impersonal force working from within. Character and personality miraculously give way to naked, abstract emotion.[3]

Waith also assumes that "it is perceptible that episodes of great violence lend themselves well to the depiction of character under emotional stress" [4]. In fact outrage is the best mover in the story of Philomela, compelling the protagonists to that final crisis in which they lose themselves completely. Like Ovid's, Shakespeare's characters are caught by emotions which rise steadily to the point of annihilating their normal personalities. Titus, for instance, originally the model of absolute Roman integrity, hurt by the horrors inflicted on him and his family, becomes a most bloody and savage executioner. In a study of the tragic design of *Titus Andronicus*, Irving Ribner notes that "in Shakespeare's unpalatable material Titus is the first of Shakespeare's heroic figures whose very virtues are the sources of their sins".[5] It seems to me, in fact, that Shakespeare chose the "Eternal City", its history and culture as setting for *Titus*, just to have the public or the reader seduced by such a golden majestic world, which turns out to be instead a damned fake. The "Pius" Titus that embodies all the Roman virtues – soldierly, severe, self-controlled, self-disciplined as G.K. Hunter tells us[6] -, reveals himself in the end to be a man devoured by pure emotion, with no more rules to guide him, vanished all of a sudden. Our blood freezes when Titus cold-bloodedly murders his son Mutius preserving instead, proudly, his honour and the imperial power. We, then, cannot forget the sweet words addressed by Titus to his daughter Lavinia at the opening of the play:

Kind Rome, that hast thus lovingly reserved
The cordial of mine age to glad my heart!
Lavinia, live, outlive thy father's days
And fame's eternal date, for virtue's praise!

(I.i.165-168)

But Titus blows this tender effect out when at the end of the play he rids himself of the "crimson river of warm blood", as Marcus describes her (II.iv.22) – his chopped, but still daughter Lavinia. He kills her because "with thy shame thy father's sorrow die" (V.iii.46). So Titus's devoted love to

[3] Waith, Eugene M., "The Metamorphosis of Violence in Titus Andronicus", *Shakespeare Survey*, 10, 1957, pp. 41-42.
[4] Waith, p. 42.
[5] Quoted in Metz, G. Harold, *Shakespeare's Earliest Tragedy: Studies in Titus Andronicus*, London: Associated University Presses, 1996, p. 55.
[6] Quoted in Kahn, Coppélia, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women*, London: Routledge, 1997, p. 13.

the person that before being raped and mutilated represented "Rome's rich ornament" (I.i.52) to him, all of a sudden disappears. It seems to me that this happens when there is no longer something to be proud of and when, then, Titus needs to nurse his pride. Like the mythical Rome defaced by the Goths, Titus's soul is devastated by shame and numb emptiness; not even a reverberation of the love displayed to his family has room in it now. Besides, when Titus murders Mutius he declares to his son Lucius that he has done so because "my sons would never so dishonour me" (I.i.295) and justifies the killing of Lavinia to Saturninus giving emphasis to the words "a thousand times more cause" as reported below:

Killed her for whom my tears have made me blind.
I am as woeful as Virginius was,
And have a thousand times more cause than he
To do this outrage; and it now is done.

(V.iii.48-51)

We are no longer charmed by the myth of Rome, since, as Hunter states, "the family ties of the Andronici suggest the strength of the family unit as the basis of social order, and particularly that of Rome, demonstrating loyalty, mutual support, and above all *pietas*"[7]. I would say that the myth of the family unit ends up in a very "selective" feast in *Titus* as the following words attest:

And now prepare your throats, Lavinia, come,
Receive the blood, and when that they are dead
Let me go grind their bones to powder small,
And with this hateful liquor temper it,
And in that paste let their vile heads be baked.
Come, come, be every one officious
To make this banquet, which I wish may prove
More stern and bloody than the Centaurs' feast.
He cuts their throats

(V.ii.196-203)

When Titus alludes to the "Centaurs' feast", he remembers the wedding of Pirithous the Lapith which ended in a battle between human and Centaur guests in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*[8]. The violent slaughter is in itself a potent means of portraying the senseless fury which has transformed both men

[7] Hunter, G.K., *Dramatic Identities and Cultural Tradition: Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1978, p. 325.
[8] Hughes, p. 136.

and centaurs.[9] As Hunter points out, "Shakespeare was never again to pursue the image of man's bestiality with the single-mindedness he showed in *Titus*", which is "deeply indebted to Ovid's sense of human mutability, the frailty of man's happiness and of his capacity for reason".[10] The Titus we get to know at the beginning of the tragedy is a loyal warrior and in love with his family, but he is tricked, as John Wilders points out, by the conflict between social and familial order and the anarchy which results when the loyalties which bind societies together are broken[11]. Titus's mind is pierced by the idea of revenging himself on those who have miserably mutilated his daughter and the idea turns into action when Chiron and Demetrius, the main ingredients of Titus's banquet, are finally in Titus's grasp. Revenge, even though barbarously achieved, constitutes now an act of catharsis. If Titus is finally set free from that choking sorrow that gnawed him, now, like the Nilus that "disdaineth bounds" (III.i.71), the frenzy that ravishes Titus's mind has swept away all the virtuous and irreproachable aspects that characterized the "Pius" man we knew, sparing the raging beast. I agree with Ribner when he says that "there is a controlling idea of tragedy behind *Titus Andronicus*, a conception of how evil operates in the world and may cause the destruction of a virtuous man by his own moral choice".[12] I think that *Titus* is the tragedy not only of a virtuous man, but of each man. Its violence, then, is not comic at all.

If Shakespeare recalls Ovid in order to provoke in his characters and audience mental disorder and overpowering emotions, he tries to render them shockingly tragic contemplating Seneca. Seneca's peculiarity, in fact, is the employment of the bloody and the horrible upon the stage, and his tragedies have so earned the reputation of "Tragedies of Blood". Characters such as Medea are regularly bent on murder and chaos, and Seneca is charmed by such myths of violence, as his use of the gory stories of *Thyestes*, *Oedipus* and *Hercules Furens* demonstrates. Such plays usually end with a barbaric bloodbath of revenge, assassination and destruction.[13] What is

[9] Waith, p. 42.
[10] Hunter, p. 321.
[11] Wilders, John, *New Prefaces to Shakespeare*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988, pp. 43-44.
[12] Quoted in Metz, p. 55.
[13] Motto, Anna Lydia, Clark, John R., *Senecan Tragedy*, Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1988, p. 70.

furthermore noteworthy in Seneca, is the tendency to dismember his victims. One thinks of Astyanax's broken body after his fall in *Troades*, of Hippolytus torn to bits in *Phaedra* and, just as in *Titus*, of the dissected children served up at a feast in *Thyestes*. Seneca's stage is haunted by ghosts, apparitions, monsters, dragons, curses, black magic, and madness itself. His most remarkable characters are creatures hysterical and driven, pathologically, by an unblessed and almost unrestricted emotion – hatred, lust, envy, or vengefulness; such are his Medea, Phaedra, Atreus, Juno, Clytaemnestra, and Pyrrhus.[14] Phaedra's love for Hippolytus, for instance, is exemplary of irrational lust and passion, elevated to madness and frenzy.[15] Medea, instead, repeatedly appeals to underworld deities, to torches and to fires. Seneca's plays are intense representations of violent emotional moods and the characters simply do not present themselves as equally excellent and blameworthy, they instead nurture in the audience a sense of unpleasantness and disapproval, emotions of shock, revulsion, dismay. Two words only can exemplify this leaving us astonishingly silent: "Die raging". In the *Agamemnon*, this is what Clytaemnestra wishes to Cassandra who desires to die.

It was such fearful drama that influenced much of Elizabethan and Jacobean performance – Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, John Marston's *Malcontent*, John Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* and *White Devil*, and Shakespeare's art[16] -, as classical tragedy had acquired an impressive prestige in England because of the great value conferred to classical learning, of which tragedy was supposed to be the supreme manifestation. Knowing little of the Greeks, the Elizabethans came to regard Seneca as the most tragic and perfect of ancient writers. Senecan tragedy was important in the Continent and read freely in the English schools and universities where his plays were acted, as were Latin imitations. Seneca's ways of dealing with awful situations were suitable to the Elizabethan temperament. Elizabethans, in fact, were getting rid of their provincialism, setting up an empire and introspection had become their national feature,

[14] Motto, Clark, p. 71.
[15] Motto, Clark, p. 79.
[16] Motto, Clark, p. 91.

acceptably fed by the elaborate Senecan philosophy.[17] The English taste was also attracted by Seneca's stress on sensationalism and on physical horrors to provoke emotion, as blood and disgust on the stage could not be objectionable to the spectators at brutal executions. I think, then, that the Elizabethans appreciated in *Titus* the dumb show acted out by Lavinia and also the moment in which Titus asks Aaron to chop his hand off:

O gracious emperor! O gentle Aaron!
Did ever raven sing so like a lark
That gives sweet tidings to the sun's uprise?
With all my heart I'll send the emperor my hand.
Good Aaron, wilt thou help to chop it off?

(III.i.157-161)

The aforementioned words recall the Senecan taste for dismemberment and underline Shakespeare's ability to turn such a nefarious act into a delicate and almost a daily, fashionable one.

The Elizabethans, furthermore, accepted ghosts as a fact and forewarnings were ordinary affairs, as with Ben Jonson's on the death of his son.[18] In *Titus*, for instance, an echo to the Fury which opens *Thyestes* - hot from the underworld, exulting in blood and in the destruction of the Tantalid house as Robert Miola describes her[19]-, can be recognized when Tamora impersonates Revenge introducing herself to Titus with the following words:

I am Revenge, sent from th' infernal kingdom
To ease the gnawing vulture of thy mind,
By working wreakful vengeance on thy foes.
Come down and welcome me to this world's light.

(V.ii.30-33)

Titus, in fact, addresses the disguised Tamora just as Fury, when he receives her,

Welcome, dread Fury, to my woeful house;
Rapine and Murder, you are welcome too.

(V.ii.82-83)

Shakespeare, as a man of his time, would have been fascinated by Senecan characters, which exercise dreadful and ghastly powers of evil mighty enough to restore the universe they violate, to

[17] Bowers, Fredson Thayer, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587-1642*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940, pp. 74-75.
[18] Bowers, p. 75.
[19] Miola, Robert S., *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 23.

mould his early sense of tragedy and the tragic hero.[20] If some critics believe that Shakespeare could not have been serious, making deliberately some violence comic as previously noted, I would say that we should recognize, instead, how human those errors and horrors are.

2 . Body of violence

Titus Andronicus is, as Derek Cohen describes it, "a play which embraces violence as way of life, an exploration of the sensation of physical pain and the sensation of inflicting physical pain".[21] Within this context, among all the blood-letting, mutilation, cannibalism and butchery unique to *Titus*, I set out here to consider its most dramatic action, the disturbing spectacle of the mutilated Lavinia whose physical pain is stretched to the utmost. The words pronounced by Marcus put us in the picture:

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,
And might not gain so great a happiness
As half thy love? Why dost not speak to me?
Alas, a crimson river of warm blood,
Like to a bubbling fountain stirred with wind,
Doth rise and fall between thy rosèd lips,
Coming and going with thy honey breath.
But sure some Tereus hath deflowered thee,
And, lest thou shouldst detect him, cut thy tongue.
Ah, now thou turn'st away thy face for shame,
And notwithstanding all this loss of blood,
As from a conduit with three issuing spouts,
Yet do thy cheeks look red as Titan's face,
Blushing to be encountered with a cloud.

(II.iv.16-32)

As Albert H. Tricomi points out,

For all the severed heads, for all the poignance of Lavinia's mutilated beauty, the one horror the dramatist could not depict upon the stage was the fact of Lavinia's violated chastity, which loss was to Titus the worst violation of all,

that more dear
Than hands or tongue, her spotless chastity

(V.ii.175-76)

[20] Miola, pp. 16-17.
[21] Cohen, Derek, *Shakespeare's Culture of Violence*, Basingstoke, London: The Macmillan Press, 1993, p. 92.

In overcoming this necessary limitation, however, Shakespeare chooses to identify Lavinia's violation with the violation of Rome and of all civilized value.[22]

At a glance, in fact, Lavinia's violation can be seen as the greedy, wild achievement of the lusted, chaste body desired by Chiron and Demetrius, but there is another side of the picture, as Leonard Tennenhouse notes,

Lavinia's body provides the setting for political rivalry among the various families with competing claims to power over Rome. For one of them to possess her is for that family to display its power over the rest – nothing more nor less than that. By the same token, to wound Lavinia is to wound oneself, as if dismembering her body were dismembering a body of which one were a part, and thus to cut oneself off from that body.[23]

At the beginning of the play, we see Lavinia opposing her father's authority to confer her on Saturninus; she gives her hand instead to Bassanius, a man she had earlier consented to marry. After only three scenes we recognize her as a "gang-rape" victim and as Sid Ray states,

Such a violent fate visually reinforces the sense that the underlying struggle for dominance in *Titus*, whether it be the struggle for Rome or the struggle for Lavinia, is played out through "maimed" rituals of consent. When Titus attempts to "give his daughter's hand in marriage" to Saturninus, his action both ignores Lavinia's desire to be Bassanius's wife and flouts the prior betrothal agreement. Titus's disregard for his daughter's betrothal contract parallels his disregard for the people's right to political consent. Playing the role of tyrannical father in both private and public realms, Titus chooses the emperor of Rome without heeding the voice of its subjects.[24]

"Rome's royal mistress" (I.i.241), then, before being deprived of her body, had already been dispossessed of her mind, of her thoughts and feelings. This time Lavinia has been betrayed by someone very close to her, who has disintegrated the persona and not the graceful body which envelops her. Her tongue has always been an ornament to her which gains importance only when it is bubbling blood, instead, to fill up her "rosèd lips", to constitute Lavinia's new and incomprehensible voice. Titus, therefore, is Lavinia's first enemy, who kills at first her innermost being. As J. P. Sommerville writes,

It was widely accepted that power over a family was in the hands of the father. But the father's power was often regarded as non-political, since it did not include the power to execute his wife or children. By claiming that fathers had at first possessed the right to inflict the death penalty upon members of their families, a number of authors tried to show that the earliest political societies were not self-governing democracies, but monarchies ruled over by a father and king.[25]

---

[22] Tricomi, Albert H., "The Aesthetics of Mutilation in 'Titus Andronicus'", *Shakespeare Survey*, 27, 1974, p. 17.
[23] Tennenhouse Leonard, "Violence Done to Women on the Renaissance Stage", in Armstrong Nancy, Tennenhouse Leonard, eds., *The Violence of Representation: Literature and the History of Violence*, London: Routledge, 1989, pp. 83-84.
[24] Ray, Sid, "'Rape, I fear, was root of thy annoy': The Politics of Consent in *Titus Andronicus*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 49, 1998, p. 31.
[25] Quoted in Ray, p. 34.

Titus is a father and an absolute ruler with the right to inflict capital punishment on his family.[26] As already seen, Titus has put Rome before his family and he becomes the first to break the family unit and consequently the social order. Lavinia's raped and martyred body is the consequence of Titus's choice of Rome's emperor and his choice of husband for Lavinia. As Sid Ray observes,

> Chiron and Demetrius as sons of the empress and newly empowered step-sons of the emperor, have broad claims to power. They project their political ambitions onto Lavinia's body, desiring her because they recognize her as the emblem of imperial power. Aaron, after all, lewdly encourages Chiron and Demetrius to "revel in Lavinia's treasury" (II.i.131).[27]

I agree with Sid Ray when he states that "Shakespeare dramatizes the horror of rape and political tyranny through the visual horror of Lavinia's disfigured body".[28]

3 . The quotidian violence in *Titus Andronicus*

For its senseless, gruesome occurrences, *Titus Andronicus* has been compared by Dover Wilson to a "broken-down cart, laden with bleeding corpses from an Elizabethan scaffold"[29]. I would say that the comparison fits in as it depicts a cruel, ordinary reality. During Elizabeth's reign, in fact, 6160 victims were hanged at Tyburn, and though this represents a fairly smaller amount than those hanged during Henry VIII's reign, Elizabethans were certainly quite accustomed to the spectacle of the hanged body and to the disembowelled and quartered corpse.[30] The famous Triple Tree, the first Londoner permanent structure for hangings, was constructed at Tyburn in 1671, during the same decade in which the first public theatre was also built. At Tyburn, seats were available for those who could pay and rooms could be also hired in houses fronting the spectacle. The majority of spectators, anyway, stood in a semi-circle around the event, while hawkers sold fruits and pies, and ballads and pamphlets detailing the various crimes committed by the man being

[26] Ray, p. 34.
[27] Ray, p. 35.
[28] Ray, p. 36.
[29] Wilson, Dover, ed., *Titus Andronicus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948, p. xii.
[30] Smith, Molly, "The Theater and the Scaffold: Death as Spectacle in The Spanish Tragedy", *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 32, 1992, p. 217.

hanged - typically a criminal of the lower classes; executions were reserved instead for the upper classes and important criminals. In Elizabethan society, the public executions for treason or heresy were frequent, rituals of horror in which the crowd took a very active role. Accounts of the death of Roderigo Lopez (1594) report people's bitter hostility and desire to prolong the agony of a man who was probably innocent. The crowd, in the case of Father Henry Garnet of Gunpowder Plot fame (1606), called successfully for him to be left hanging until dead.[31] Thus, hangings were performed on scaffolds just like tragedies were staged in the public theatres. It is notable how theatre and public punishments granted entertainment to the upper and lower classes, and how both events were generally well attended.[32] The close association between theatre and public punishment envelops the great age of drama in England, which culminates with the public execution of King Charles I, in 1649.

Astonishingly, some critics see a foreign world on the stage, a scandalous and shameful one, not recognizing, instead, that realism is the main character of the show. In this regard, precious are the comments of Molly Smith concerning the idea critics had of one of *Titus*'s probable sources, Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*:

> traditional criticism regards Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* as important primarily for its historical position at the head of the revenge tradition. Its violence has frequently been attributed to Senecan models, and its dramatic deaths, including the spectacular *coup de théâtre* in the closing scene, analyzed primarily for their influence on Shakespeare's dramaturgy. And yet, though the Senecan influence has been well documented, critics have paid little attention to contemporary cultural practices such as public executions and hangings at Tyburn to explain the play's particular dismembered corpse. No other play of the Renaissance stage dwells on the spectacle of hanging as Kyd's does, and the Senecan influence will not in itself account for the spectacular on-stage hangings and near-hangings in the play.[33]

Molly Smith also notes that,

> Kyd's merger of the spectacles of punishment and enacted tragedy was perhaps inevitable in light of the remarkable similarities in the format and ends of these popular events in early modern England. Indeed, the stage and the scaffold seem to have been closely related historically.[34]

This dark side of the golden age of England, which Shakespeare knew well as a man, was not rejected by the Elizabethans. They, on the contrary, longed to see the bloody free shows of public

[31] Loftus Ranald, Margaret, *Shakespeare and His Social Context: Essays in Osmotic Knowledge and Literary Interpretation*, New York: AMS Press, 1987, p. xiii.
[32] Smith, p. 218.
[33] Smith, p. 217.
[34] Smith, p. 218.

executions, so they should not have been much disturbed by the gratuitous torment showed in *Titus*. I agree with Jan Kott who maintains that "Shakespeare is like the world, or life itself. Every historical period finds in him what it is looking for and what it wants to see".[35]

[35] Quoted in Hughes, pp. 37-38.

CHAPTER III

MISOGYNIST VIOLENCE

1 . Lavinia's language

Titus's gracious daughter, "Rome's rich ornament" (I.i.52), is merely remembered for her inhuman, bleeding figure wandering about the stage and this image is stuck in the audience's mind. In this section I would like to go back to what comes before her violation, to observe some aspects of the character of Lavinia which may have been undervalued.

Lavinia lives in a patriarchal society where she is recognized for her chastity, virtue, innocence, for being a dutiful daughter but, actually, she is not considered for her personality, her humanity. Lavinia represents the ideal of Rome and the very possession men lust for, before being deformed of course. Derek Cohen affirms that "as a character with a voice, as she is initially, Lavinia is no more nor less interesting and potent than any other character in the drama".[1] Though little space is dedicated to Lavinia in the scenes preceding the rape, I think it sufficient to detect, instead, more than an anonymous character. It is noteworthy, so, to realize that the sweet and innocent Lavinia has an unexpected side of her personality to show, which emerges in the presence of the other female character of the play, Tamora, the Queen of Goths. Lavinia, for instance, exhibits a surprising teasing wit when she upbraids Tamora for her "raven-coloured love" (II.iii.83):

Under your patience, gentle empress,
'Tis thought you have a goodly gift in horning
And to be doubted that your Moor and you
Are singled forth to try thy experiments.
Jove shield your husband from his hounds today!
'Tis pity they should take him for a stag.

(II.iii.66-71)

[1] Cohen, Derek, *Shakespeare's Culture of Violence*, Basingstoke, London: The Macmillan Press, 1993, pp. 80-81.

The awfully nice Lavinia is not sweet at all to Tamora. Lavinia is then unmasking her true nature, or is she getting rid of her envy towards Tamora? We should not forget, in fact, that Tamora has become the Empress of Rome by Saturninus's choice, replacing the very Lavinia, Saturninus's first wish, as the following words attest,

Lavinia will I make my empress,
Rome's royal mistress, mistress of my heart,
And in the sacred Pantheon her espouse.

(I.i.240-242)

Lavinia should have been "Rome's royal mistress" and mistress of Saturninus's heart, but what she ends up being instead, very quickly, is a "changing piece" as the same Emperor declares (I.i.309); just a worthless coin to grant to the one who "flourished for her with his sword" (I.i.310). How could Lavinia feel at the sound of those nasty words? Family honour, nobility, grace, romantic love: she does not represent them any longer in the eyes of her possessors. She really undergoes the debasement of her persona and the consequent glorification of Tamora. Lavinia is a pawn in her father's hands first and in those of the egomaniac Emperor later. As already noted, when Titus endeavours to give Lavinia's hand in marriage to Saturninus, he completely ignores his daughter's desire to be Bassanius's wife and disregards the previous betrothal agreement. As Sid Ray affirms, "as "Rome's royal mistress" (I.i.241), Lavinia personifies the state, which implies that her consent ought to go to the man chosen as Rome's emperor".[2] While Lavinia does not have a right to choose the man to love, as her father did so in her place, Saturninus can "choose anew" his lover instead (I.i.262) and his new appetite is shown in the following words:

Thou com'st not to be made a scorn in Rome.
Princely shall be thy usage every way.
Rest on my word and let not discontent
Daunt all your hopes. Madam, he comforts you
Can make you greater than the Queen of Goths –
Lavinia, you are not displeased with this?

(I.i.265-270)

Lavinia's strength has to be found in her cold-bloodedly reaction to Saturninus's cynical demand:

Not I, my lord, sith true nobility
Warrants these words in princely courtesy.

[2] Ray, Sid, "'Rape, I fear, was root of thy annoy': The Politics of Consent in *Titus Andronicus*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 49, 1998, p. 31.

(I.i.271-272)

I would say that Lavinia had to answer politely in order to answer the requirements of the community, the net in which she is trapped. When she replies to Saturninus "Not I" in fact, she speaks as if alienated from her person, she has no choice but to agree with the Emperor's ultimate decision. The lack of expression, the very paucity of emotional needs can be synonymous with an impersonal character, but Lavinia speaks the language of the male-dominated society that she has to respect instead. She lives satisfying someone else's desires, putting aside her own. As Cohen has observed, Lavinia is "a character with a voice initially" and her real feelings, along with her opinions, seem to be voiced only in front of Tamora. We see Lavinia awakening from her state of inertia, she uncovers the repressed side choked by the masculine characters and by him who "needs her not", as Saturninus declares (I.i.299). Lavinia, in fact, pleads with Tamora not to let Chiron and Demetrius rape her, but kill her instead. What follows is part of Lavinia's gentle plea:

'Tis present death I beg, and one thing more
That womanhood denies my tongue to tell.
O keep me from their worse-than-killing lust
And tumble me into some loathsome pit
Where never man's eye may behold my body;
Do this, and be a charitable murderer.

(II.iii.173-178)

When Lavinia says "keep me from their worse-than-killing lust", she actually hopes not to be violated by Tamora's sons, because she knows well what the consequences of the unmentionable act would be in the Roman patriarchal system that surrounds her: to die, for the cause of woman's virginity. Lavinia prefers to be killed rather than be hit by the infamous, unbearable shame that would irreparably, of course, dishonour her family and she begs Tamora to be spared to the bitter end. *Pietas,* in fact, is enacted by Lavinia that seeks mutual support just in the hated enemy. But Tamora refuses to listen to her supplication and Lavinia replies: "No grace, no womanhood? Ah beastly creature, The blot and enemy to our general name!" (II.iii.182-184). The sweetest and most innocent character of the play turns out to be a poisonous one. I would say that these are the memorable words that testify Lavinia's presence in the play before she is remembered only for her shocking appearance. It is surprising how Lavinia replies aggressively to Tamora, while we have

never noticed such nasty behaviour towards the men she has been related to, even when they have cheated her. Lavinia, thus, demonstrates an energetic temperament and demonstrates to be, I would say, sly. If earlier in the play she defines Tamora as "Semiramis, nay, barbarous Tamora, for no name fits thy nature but thy own" (II.iii.118-119), a few moments after Lavinia begs Tamora to turn herself into a "charitable murderer" (II.iii.178) and mentions womanhood. Lavinia seeks a different approach towards Tamora, an alliance between two women, the only one possible in the male law of order. But Tamora seems to have killed her natural femininity off. We should not forget, in fact, that her immunity to pity is the result of a deep-rooted grief, the killing of her sons. Tamora's refusal to listen to Lavinia is a direct consequence of Titus's refusal to listen to her.

It is noteworthy to realize that the so-called innocent Lavinia can be astonishingly cunning. She, in fact, searches for womanhood only when she senses the ruination of her life and her apparent mildness towards Tamora is due to the fact that the "Semiramis" is the only one that can avoid this happening. Lavinia, instead, is jealous of Tamora and of her role in society. Calling her "Semiramis", in fact, she compares Tamora to the African Queen noted in legend for her beauty and sensuousness. For her characteristics Tamora has conquered the man Lavinia was destined to. Tamora's femininity, so, triumphs over "Rome's rich ornament" (I.i.52) in the male-dominated world. Lavinia has potential and her greatness is much more than threshing her stumps in the air, as is demonstrated in the next section.

2 . A body called Lavinia

"Lavinia" is simply a name given to a beautiful body reduced first to a dummy and, at the end of the play, to a corpse. Lavinia, in fact, does not impress the audience with the "delightful engine of her thoughts that blabbed them with such pleasing eloquence" (III.i.82-83) but, on the contrary, with her silence. Tamora's sons literally pillage "Lavinia's treasury" (II.i.131) and even

though her body lacks hands and tongue, it keeps communicating. It scratches letters on the earth and gives voice to Lavinia's "fresh tears" (III.i.111), the only evident element of her internal, indescribable pain. Lavinia's silence, I would say, makes a noise. As Coppélia Kahn observes, "the polluted Lavinia, neither maid nor wife nor simply widow, passes from a state of liminality and passivity to an active role as communicator of her own meaning".[3] Unfortunately, nobody can understand the real meaning of Lavinia's tears in the patriarchal world that surrounds her, but her grief leads us stunningly to discover a reality which throws a new light upon her Roman father. Titus, in fact, turns out to be a tender *pater familias* when he asserts:

It was my dear, and he that wounded her
Hath hurt me more than had he killed me dead;
For now I stand as one upon a rock,
Environed with a wilderness of sea.

(III.i.91-94)

The revelation makes it clear that the wrecking of Lavinia represents that of Titus too. Titus is so consumed by sorrow in seeing the tragedy of his dear daughter, that dying would not afflict him so much. The Roman warrior is not as invincible as he is convinced to be and he reveals an unexpected side of himself, a feminine one I would say, as the following words also attest:

When heaven doth weep, doth not the earth o'erflow?
If the winds rage, doth not the sea wax mad,
Threat'ning the welkin with his big-swoll'n face?
And wilt thou have a reason for this coil?
I am the sea. Hark how her sighs doth flow!
She is the weeping welkin, I the earth;
Then must my sea be movèd with her sighs;
Then must my earth with her continual tears
Become a deluge, overflowed and drowned;
For why my bowels cannot hide her woes
But like a drunkard must I vomit them.

(III.i.220-230)

Titus empathizes with Lavinia in her suffering and shows us an unexpectedly delicate soul: he is not as strong as we are used to know him. He is in agony and sympathizes with Lavinia's sufferings so deeply to arrive at the point of having his hands "chopped off" too, earlier in the play:

Give me a sword, I'll chop off my hands too,

[3] Kahn, Koppélia, "Gender and Sexuality: Critical Extracts; The Daughter's Seduction in *Titus Andronicus*, or, Writing is the Best Revenge", in Smith, Emma, ed., *Shakespeare's Tragedies*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2004, p. 203.

For they have fought for Rome and all in vain.

(III.i.72-73)

"My hands have fought for Rome and all in vain" is the declaration of a loser. For the first time Titus acknowledges that all his life, all his battles and victories have been meaningless in front of his beloved daughter's inhuman condition of suffering that has brought "Rome's best champion" to his knees. It is only the rape of Lavinia that turns Titus from a valorous warrior to a barbarous avenger. He is the rape victim as well. Giving vent to his grief, the Roman father keeps amazing us by declaring "I understand her signs" (III.i.143). In this regard, I agree with Coppélia Kahn when she says that "as he reads them, those signs have nothing to do with her, and in the rhetoric of his grief he eclipses both her and his other kin".[4] The disparity between Lavinia and her father's suffering is evident if we read the following words pronounced by Titus:

[*Kneels*] O here I lift this one hand up to heaven
And bow this feeble ruin to the earth;
If any power pities wretched tears,
To that I call. What, wouldst thou kneel with me?
Do then, dear heart, for heaven shall hear our prayers.

(III.i.205-209)

As Coppélia Kahn writes,

> Lavinia does respond to her father's pain, to some extent bearing out his projections: she kneels with him (208). But his every reference to her wounds and her gestures is nonetheless both ambiguous and ironic, because the wounds are both metaphor and metonymy for the hidden, adjacent wound of rape, of which, in his egocentric grief, he remains ignorant. Furthermore, as responsive to Titus as Lavinia is, all her gestures may be construed as in some way self-referential, too. When she seeks to kneel with her father, for instance, her reasons for prayer can't be the same as his. She wears her rue with a difference.[5]

In fact, Lavinia and Titus kneel together and seek comfort praying but while we can hear Titus's mournful litany before being interrupted by the entrance of a messenger, we do not know what Lavinia's real hopes are. Probably, Lavinia's only wish is that of ending her life as she is condemned to live like a corpse, to survive her nullified identity remembering her lost reputation for beauty and worth. But how could she succeed in killing herself? She cannot even beg someone to do so as she cannot express herself in any way. Her desire, then, could be that of revenging herself on Chiron and Demetrius who have rendered her that shameful figure we know, but her stumps

[4] Kahn, p. 204.
[5] Kahn, p. 204.

would not do any harm. At this point of the play the male protagonists still do not know that Lavinia has been raped and who committed the gory violence, so the only thing she can do is to resist despair and hope for male hands to avenge her, as it actually happens at the end of the tragedy. The Andronici, for that matter, have always fought for their rights, believing in the family unity, so they cannot dismiss her, although they do little to help the bleeding Lavinia.

Lavinia's desperation grows worse when she makes the rape known as she attends to the various reactions of the community. Marcus, for instance, addresses Titus as "father of that chaste dishonoured dame" (IV.i.90), and we cannot but note how fundamental is the value of chastity in Roman patriarchal society. Was it so important to add the word "chaste" to the dishonoured Lavinia? She had already denounced the crime to everybody, so what was the point of such emphasis on that word that seems to detach the father from the daughter? Marcus is so bound to the laws and values of Roman society that he needs to stress the fact that, since Lavinia has been raped, she is already sentenced to death for the cause of woman's chastity. Marcus could also avoid the expression "that dame", that literally deprives Lavinia of her identity in a society where the family is the essential unit of social structure. Marcus then adds:

> Lord Junius Brutus swore for Lucrece's rape,
> That we will prosecute by good advice
> Mortal revenge against these traitorous Goths,
> And see their blood or die with this reproach.
>
> (IV.i. 91-94)

Marcus mentions "Lucrece's rape", this means that he has clear in his mind what happened to Lucrece, the Roman beautiful and chaste wife raped by Sextus Tarquinius, the young son of the last Roman King, Tarquinius Superbus, as Livy told in his *Historiae*, and Ovid poetically interpreted in his *Fasti*. Marcus keeps alive his classical and Roman past in the present and symbolizes, so, Roman *integritas*. Invoking "Lucrece's rape", he sees a congruence with Lavinia's story and swears revenge on the enemies that have blemished not only a woman, but also the Roman social order. Lucrece, in fact, lives in a society very similar to that of *Titus*, where the family is the fundamental element of the social system and, as Robert S. Miola points out, ""honour", "shame", "fame" – the

opinions of others – constitute the only frame of reference by which one can judge actions in Lucrece's world, the world of Rome".[6] After the rape Lucrece fears to be cut out from the family and the society that till then praised her for the feminine virtues essential to the existence of the city, and she ponders suicide in order not to stain her family's and the city's honour; she hopes, then, to be exonerated from being judged as a fallen woman. The rape has already killed her soul and she decides to escape the dirty prison of her body and that of human opinion by committing suicide. As Miola writes:

> The suicide is an exercise of *pietas*, the quintessentially Roman and Vergilian subordination of self to the obligations of family and city. It transforms Lucrece into a symbol of constancy and honour, thereby winning the fame that to her mind is an acquittal and a glorious reward.[7]

As already noted, Lavinia cannot commit suicide. She is trapped in her polluted body and, unlike Lucrece, pollutes the Andronici and Rome. She is destined to experience what Lucrece was afraid of. Lavinia is at the centre of public opinion, she cannot escape it. In this regard, it is noteworthy what Derek Cohen observes:

> The mutilations are adjunctive to the rape. They are equivalent to the violences done to the men, sadistic and pragmatic, but nonsexual. They are mere evidences of brutality while rape is evidence of a brutal violation that affects not just the victim, and not just her family and friends, but the society as a whole. […] Lavinia has been made into an object of proven dishonour. By being raped she has acquired a moral taint. It is probably not remarkable, but it is shocking, that no single character in the play – none of her brothers, her uncle, her father – propose that she remains innocent despite her rape, an omission that implicates them in a collaboration with the dominant ethic which declares rape to be soilure and inseparable in effect from infidelity. No fact more powerfully than this insists on Lavinia's status as an object. For a man to bring down such an evaluation upon himself by his family and his society he needs to commit a heinous crime, like treason. A woman has only to be known to have been raped and her integrity is destroyed.[8]

The horror of Lavinia's condition is unimaginable, but Titus is sure that he can understand her intense experience of sorrow when he affirms "I can interpret all her martyred signs" (III.ii.36). The curious thing is that later in the play he says, "Rape, I fear, was root of thy annoy" (IV.i.49) and this, as Alan Hughes observes, reveals a contradiction in Titus's mind.[9] Titus, in fact, can actually interpret Lavinia's martyred signs only when, perusing Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, Lavinia stops and stares at the lines concerning the tragic tale of Philomel and not before that moment. It is therefore evident that Titus does not understand Lavinia without Ovid's help. Even though the contradiction

[6] Miola, Robert S., *Shakespeare's Rome*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 37.
[7] Miola, p. 39.
[8] Cohen, pp. 81-82.
[9] Hughes, Alan, ed., *Titus Andronicus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 106.

shows us a far more emotional Titus, the truth is that he cannot take the hint thoroughly, he cannot even image how deep Lavinia's wounds are. Titus compares Lavinia's condition to that of Philomel, but Lavinia is for real, not the character of a tragic tale – "This is the tragic tale of Philomel And treats of Tereus' treason and his rape" (IV.i.47-48). Lavinia is alive, but she does not seem so. Men have robbed her of her body and soul. Her "status as an object" is evident when Demetrius's mouth utters what follows:

She is a woman, therefore may be wooed;
She is a woman, therefore may be won.

(II.i.83-84)

The values that secure the Andronici together need to be maintained and, in order to forget the outrage done to Lavinia and particularly to his own ego, Titus, as Lynda Boose affirms, "sacrifices his daughter to the perceived demands of the patriarchy and thus affirms his membership in it".[10] I think this to be true only if we take a male point of view into account, that of patriarchal society. Starting from this concept, I think that the "Pius" Titus we get to know at the beginning of the play, cannot bear the idea that his only virtuous and beautiful daughter has become, instead, a shameful dame to everybody. Humiliated as a father, Titus, would never admit defeat as a man. Half mad, he puts his tears aside and gets rid of Lavinia, his unbearable torment, by killing her. Thanks to Lavinia's murder, Titus purges himself of his previous paranoia and regains his self-esteem. Just as if wakening up after an upsetting nightmare, Titus has obliterated all memories of the soulless act and does not feel responsible for his own behaviour. This is made clear, in fact, when Tamora asks Titus "Why hast thou slain thine only daughter thus?" (V.iii.54) and he answers with the following words:

Not I, 'twas Chiron and Demetrius;
They ravished her and cut away her tongue,
And they, 'twas they that did her all this wrong.

(V.iii.55-57)

Titus has weighed the risks of continuing to live with the symbol of his own vulnerability in front of his eyes, and eliminating this irritating sight called Lavinia would avoid writhing forever in agony.

[10] Quoted in Kahn, p. 194.

Then, "The good Andronicus, Patron of virtue, Rome's best champion, Successful in the battles that he fights" (I.i.64-66), cannot behave inconsistently just now, being unjust with himself, losing the power he personifies because of his "enforced, stained, and deflowered" (V.iii.38) daughter. The "Pius" Titus, therefore, chooses the easiest way, that of cowardice, which, thought it does not figure among the traditional values which depict the traditional concept of *romanitas*, saves his own right-minded person, forfeiting his daughter's miserable one. Lavinia is therefore turned into a scapegoat in order to reconstitute the patriarchal social order that she has stained.

No doubt, Lavinia has been crushed by men's power. She can only be a quarry in Roman society, but, actually, she has power over the patriarchal system that corners her, and this is the other viewpoint. In fact, as previously observed, what strikes us the most is to see Titus, the symbol of *Romanitas*, transformed amazingly into that of fragility, and this metamorphosis derives from the crime perpetrated against his dearest daughter. Showing his powerful authority, Titus first shocks us when he slays his son Mutius and then touches us when, desolated, he describes himself as "one upon a rock, environed with a wilderness of sea". If we go through the various crimes against Titus we acknowledge that only the rape and mutilation of his daughter sets him in the pivotal position of revenger. The passivity of the disfigured and mute Lavinia is only apparent, she determines facts. It is the very Lavinia, in fact, that makes the rape known, as she knows the direct consequences of turning upside-down the social order balanced by patriarchal relations. In this way, she allows herself the fastest way to die and end not only her sufferings, but even those of her family. Titus, in fact, moving from sorrow to anger, searches the way to the "revenge's cave" (III.i.269) and Lavinia can assist to the macabre end of Chirus and Demetrius before being executed. This is what in her unspoken prayers she may have been craving for and the Roman *pater familias*, through revenge, may have accomplished it at least in the audience's eyes. Titus's right hand then kills Lavinia and this does not represent a misogynist act of violence, but the way to free his deflowered daughter from her shameful position, as he himself says "Die, die, Lavinia, and thy shame with thee, And with thy shame thy father's sorrow die" (V.iii.45-46).

3 . Tamora's theme

The society chosen by Shakespeare to develop *Titus*'s theme is "but a wilderness of tigers" (III.i.54) and only two prominent women live its violent and male-dominated chaos, Lavinia and Tamora. As Douglas E. Green observes,

> The pressures of Shakespeare's characterization of Titus, of creating this tragic protagonist, are evident in the Others […] who surround the revenge play's central Self. In the case of Tamora and Lavinia gender both marks and is marked by Shakespeare's first experiment in revenge tragedy. It is largely through and on the female characters that Titus is constructed and his tragedy inscribed.[11]

If we have first considered the so-called weaker character named Lavinia, now we can turn our attention to her antithesis, to the "lascivious Goth" (II.iii.110), the devilish woman, Tamora. I set out here to analyze how the other leading female character of the play serves in the construction of Titus, remembering that, as Cohen remarks, "the two are functional, stereotypical opposites, standing on opposing margins of this man's world of love, death, and honour".[12]

The first idea that comes to my mind thinking of Tamora is that of a monstrous enemy that Romans fear, but there is another side of the queen of Goths I need to take into consideration, the one we get to know at the opening of the play when she shows herself as a "gracious mother" (II.iii.89) and not only as a "beastly creature" (II.iii.182). Aaron's depiction of Tamora reminds me of Titus when he says "Upon her wit doth earthly honour wait, And virtue stoops and trembles at her frown" (II.i.10-11). Both Tamora and Titus, so, prize glory and honour above life itself but the former, unlike the latter, puts her family first when there is a risk of losing it. Tamora, in fact, kneeling, desperately implores Titus to spare her son Alarbus, saying:

> Stay, Roman brethren; gracious conqueror,
> Victorious Titus, rue the tears I shed,
> A mother's tears in passion for her son;
> And if thy sons were ever dear to thee,
> O think my son to be as dear to me.
> Sufficeth not that we are brought to Rome
> To beautify thy triumphs and return
> Captive to thee and to thy Roman yoke;
> But must my sons be slaughtered in the streets
> For valiant doings in their country's cause?

---

[11] Green, Douglas E., "Interpreting 'Her Martyr'd Signs': Gender and Tragedy in *Titus Andronicus*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 40, 1989, p. 319.
[12] Cohen, p. 86.

O if to fight for king and commonweal
Were piety in thine, it is in these;
Andronicus, stain not thy tomb with blood.

(I.i.104-116)

This is the occasion in which Tamora recognizes her captivity as the manifestation of Titus's power, shown once again with these formal words that cannot but paralyze her:

Patient yourself, madam, and pardon me.
These are their brethren whom your Goths beheld
Alive and dead, and for their brethren slain
Religiously they ask a sacrifice;
To this your son is marked, and die he must,
T'appease their groaning shadows that are gone.

(I.i.121-126)

As Robert Miola points out,

> Tamora's brave sons are dear to her, just as Titus's are dear to him. And just as Titus's sons hope to grant their brothers eternal rest, so Tamora's sons hope to preserve Alarbus from mortal harm. Tamora challenges Roman *pietas* to encompass those brothers outside the immediate family, to recognize the human identity that transcends national disputes.[13]

Even Tamora has been silenced by the chocking power of men. She is a loser in front of Titus and her persona, at this point of the play, has fainted. The aforementioned words bring to light a tender side of Tamora which soon disappears when later in the play she exposes her subtle power saying aside to Saturninus "My lord, be rul'd by me, be won at last, Dissemble all your griefs and discontents" (I.i.442-443), or when she reveals her intention to "find a day to massacre them all" (I.i.450). The cruel Tamora, in this early part of the tragedy, is won by her female side, but her masculine, barbaric self does find the way to avenge her son's murder. Tamora's devilish nature, in fact, is evident when, at Lavinia's request for mercy "Be not obdùrate, open thy deaf ears" (II.iii.160) she replies,

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.

(II.iii.163-167)

Violence and horror are Tamora's language and the first body she wants to eliminate is not that of Titus, the responsible of her son's death, but that of Lavinia. Tamora engineers and attacks the valorous warrior aiming at his graceful daughter, his sweetest thing, and does this by means of her

[13] Miola, p. 48.

very sons, Chiron and Demetrius. Tamora uses male bodies to set up her revenge, Lavinia's massacre. She hides her tricky mind behind her sons' lusting flesh; only men, besides, can be responsible for raping a woman. As previously seen, Lavinia's existence is determined by her father's errors and the same Titus turns out to be the very victim of his errors and, I would say, of the female characters that subtly determine the sequence of events. Titus, so, has created little by little throughout the play a Fury called Tamora, who declares "Know thou sad man, I am not Tamora; She is thine enemy, and I thy friend. I am Revenge" (V.ii.28-30).

CHAPTER IV

REFLECTIONS UPON TRAGIC ENDS

The appalling inhumanity of *Titus Andronicus* cannot but set a livid and frozen atmosphere whenever it is performed, leaving the audience horrified by that sheer chamber of horrors into which the stage has been transformed. According to Samuel Johnson "the barbarity of the spectacles, and the general massacre which are here exhibited, can scarcely be conceived tolerable to any audience"[1], while H.B. Charlton maintains that the play is "deficient in all the deeper reaches of the art of tragic drama" and that

> *Titus* is melodrama, the crudest of Shakespeare's tragedies, magnificent only in this, that its language is always adequate to its own dramatic and theatrical demands, crude or low, spectacular or sentimental, as on varying occasion they may be. But as drama it can never disguise its own quality. It is a rudimentary type of tragedy.[2]

Curiously, this "rudimentary type of tragedy" was hugely successful in its own time and applauded by the audience. According to Alan Hughes,

> the play was popular, perhaps because it suited public taste that season particularly well, or possibly because it was new: that may be what Henslowe meant when he wrote "ne" beside the title in his *Diary*.[3]

So, theatres were filled up with people notwithstanding the endless bloodshed on the stage and despite the fact that similar revolting spectacles could have been seen by Englishmen even for free at Tyburn, as previously noted. The fact is, I would say, that the audience cannot evade the passionate intensity of *Titus*'s enigmatic and memorable characters and, obviously, their evil schemes which really wrap the spectator up. I set out here to highlight the characters' tragic ends which steadily run through Shakespeare's stage, and what stands behind them in order to discard, hopefully, the general idea that the play is only a triumph of gratuitous violence.

---

[1] Quoted in Bate, Jonathan, ed., The Arden Shakespeare *Titus Andronicus*, London: Routledge, 1995, p. 33.
[2] Quoted in Metz, G. Harold, *Shakespeare's Earliest Tragedy: Studies in Titus Andronicus*, London: Associated University Presses, 1996, p. 51.
[3] Hughes, Alan, ed., *Titus Andronicus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 13.

1 . Cathartic death

What is evident from the beginning of *Titus*, is that some characters take part in its tragic development despite being already dead. The play opens, in fact, with a parade of multiple deaths in an arresting scene of mourning. The corpses belong to Titus's sons killed in battle, but Titus's tears seem not to be synonymous with pain or grief. Titus returns triumphant to Rome and after following the coffins of his dead sons to the family monument he says,

Hail, Rome, victorious in thy mourning weeds!
Lo, as the bark that hath discharged his fraught
Returns with precious lading to the bay
From whence at first she weighed her anchorage,
Cometh Andronicus, bound with laurel boughs,
To re-salute his country with his tears,
Tears of true joy for his return to Rome.
Thou great defender of this Capitol,
Stand gracious to the rites that we intend.

(I.i.70-78)

The victory over the Goths is the most important thing that "Rome's best champion" (I.i.65) could aspire to, no matter who dies. Matter-of-factly, the loss of his sons inflates Titus's pride because "the bark returns with precious lading to the bay", that is to say, his dead sons are brought back in return for the honour gained. Their burial, therefore, is the true enactment of those values of piety and order for which Titus stands. As Molly Easo Smith remarks,

> Titus's ceremonious speech emphasizes the ritual of death as a combination of public mourning and celebration, in this case because these deaths occurred as a result of encounters between Roman conquerors and barbarous Goths.[4]

Titus's bereavement for his sons, so, is merely a ritual sacrifice which epitomizes Roman civilization. The family tomb of the Andronici represents the defining precept of the patrilineal Roman family; it welds together the living and the dead in a single community and they both need each other in order to reach pacification. This is made clear later on in Titus's solemn speech:

Titus, unkind and careless of thine own,
Why suffer'st thou thy sons, unburied yet,
To hover on the dreadful shore of Styx?
Make way to lay them by their brethren.
They open the tomb
There greet in silence, as the dead are wont,

[4] Smith Easo, Molly, "Spectacles of Torment in *Titus Andronicus*", *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 36, 1996, p. 318.

And sleep in peace, slain in your country's wars.
O sacred receptàcle of my joys,
Sweet cell of virtue and nobility,
How many sons hast thou of mine in store,
That thou wilt never render to me more!

(I.i.86-95)

In fact, without the execution of dictated rituals, the dead would carry on hovering "on the dreadful shore of Styx" (I.i.88) and the living would be "disturbed with prodigies on earth" (I.i.101). Titus, so, makes the classical past revive again and again, denoting his Roman *integritas*. The Styx, in fact, in Roman mythology, was the river in the Underworld on whose banks the souls of the unburied dead were trapped. Only burial allowed them to cross the Styx into Hades. Thus, the 500-year-old tomb that Titus calls "sacred receptàcle of my joys, sweet cell of virtue and nobility" grants continuity to Roman civilization, to Titus's family name and honour. Tears are worthless, therefore, for those that now "sleep in peace", because their death is meaningful: they have saved the sacred Capitol from the Goths, their father from failure, and they have defended Roman ideology. The funeral rites are performed persistently and human sacrifice is also included. Lucius, Titus's eldest son, when his dead brothers are on the point of being buried, demands the life of

the proudest prisoner of the Goths,
That we may hew his limbs, and on a pile
Ad manes fratrum sacrifice his flesh
Before this earthy prison of their bones,
That so the shadows be not unappeased,
Nor we disturbed with prodigies on earth.

(I.i.96-101)

The sacrifice, for Titus's sons who have been killed in the conflict, is a totally just request from the Roman point of view, but not from that of the Goths, of course, that are made scapegoats. It is at this moment of the action that the revenge theme is encouraged and developed. In fact, if Titus wants to sacrifice "the noblest that survives, The eldest son of this distressèd queen" (I.i.102-103), this is not a public ritual of celebration to the Goths, but a murder and, if no compromise is possible, revenge is needed. Tamora, the queen of the enemies, the aliens, "the others" in the scene, discovers how fake is that *communitas* known to be strictly based on the family unit when she appeals for correspondence with the Romans as a parent:

Stay, Roman brethren; gracious conqueror,
Victorious Titus, rue the tears I shed,
A mother's tears in passion for her son:
And if thy sons were ever dear to thee,
O think my son to be as dear to me.

(I.i.104-108)

The barbaric and violent Tamora seems defenceless when she, kneeling, begs Titus for piety, but the Romans do not hesitate to carry out the inhuman reprisal and Lucius cries,

Away with him, and make a fire straight,
And with our swords upon a pile of wood
Let's hew his limbs till they be clean consumed.

(I.i.127-129)

2 . The case of Lucius

It is Lucius who acts the role of the revenger in this opening scene. It is he, in fact, who first activates revenge against Tamora by demanding a sacrificial prisoner from the Goths to reconcile the spirits of his killed brothers. He, furthermore, arranges the sacrifice of Alarbus and reappears with evidence of his deed announcing, accurately, the successful operation:

See, lord and father, how we have performed
Our Roman rites: Alarbus' limbs are lopped,
And entrails feed the sacrificing fire
Whose smoke like incense doth perfume the sky.
Remaineth nought but to inter our brethren,
And with loud larums welcome them to Rome.

(I.i.142-147)

It all seems sadistically cruel, but to the Andronici this is simply what makes them rest "in peace and honour" (I.i.156), granting the continuity of their history. The sacrifice of Alarbus throws a new light upon Roman ideology based on traditional virtue: if on the one hand it perpetuates the tie between the dead and the living and fulfils the family unit, on the other hand these same principles constitute the mere disintegration of another family unit. Atrocity is to Tamora and the Goths what piety is to Titus and the Romans. As Molly Smith points out,

deaths in *Titus* invariably expose the inefficacy of law and monarchical authority rather than its omniscience and accuracy. Alarbus's burning, for example, takes place in a "headless" Rome where combatants are still arguing about succession to the emperorship. In its enactment as a vacuous ritual performed by the Andronici themselves before the

issue of succession to the throne has been decided, Alarbus's death and mutilation graphically illustrate the nature of all subsequent deaths in the play as enactments of private revenge conducted without royal or legal approval. Public death, in other words, becomes in *Titus*, not an illustration of monarchical power, but an exposition of its hollowness.[5]

A kind of private revenge is what later on in the scene Titus takes on his son Mutius, killing him "in wrongful quarrel" (I.i.293), according to Lucius. Titus is so obsessively preoccupied with family and personal honour that he becomes, in contrast, the murderer of his son, striking him to death yelling "Barr'st me my way in Rome?" (I.i.291). Mutius has betrayed his father's creed resisting him and death is the penalty for this because, as Titus smugly replies to Lucius, "my sons would never so dishonour me" (I.i.295). To serve Rome dutifully, every hindrance must be removed and the audience has to accept this shocking, paternal sacrifice. So, the family monument of the Andronici is not only the receptacle of Roman honour and familial piety, but also an anticipation of that "detested, dark, blood-drinking pit" (II.iii.224) which will swallow many lives later in the play.

By starting the play with the sacrifice of human life, which is of paramount importance to purify, unify and restore the Roman community, Shakespeare plunges the audience into a world whose image corresponds less and less to that of civilized humanity as we know it but, paradoxically, to its opposite. If at the beginning of the play the juxtaposition between civilization and barbarity, Roman and barbarous, order and disorder seems well-defined, it steadily turns out to be a confusing, nonsensical idea. Marcus, in fact, begging Titus to bury Mutius in the family tomb says, "Thou art a Roman, be not barbarous" (I.i.378), to stress the fact that no clear distinction is to be found between the two races in the circumstances. But the play is filled with moments in which "gentleness", as Gordon Zeeveld states, "has been blotted out by a Roman revenge comparable in its ferocity to that of the most barbarous of races"[6] and, unmistakably, a party to this is Lucius, who starts the cycle of revenge in the play and, therefore, the debasement of Roman, civilized greatness.

Interestingly, Lucius appears memorably on stage in three out of five acts and precisely in the first, the third and the last. His presence in the plot is intermittent but overwhelming. Lucius fills and empties the stage as well as the spectator's heart, that is bewildered by his queer conduct. In

[5] Smith, p. 320.
[6] Quoted in Metz, p. 72.

fact, if it is Lucius's pagan cruelty that strikes the audience in the first act, it is his significant sensitivity that impresses them later on in the play. Merciless when demanding Tamora's son to be ritualistically sacrificed, Lucius shows himself tender and compassionate, instead, when defending his sister's right to marry her "lawful promised love" Bassanius, rather than being obliged to marriage with nasty Saturninus. Lucius sets his face against it and replies vehemently to his father Titus who wants Lavinia "restored to the emperor" (I.i.296): "Dead if you will, but not to be his wife, That is another's lawful promised love" (I.i.297-298). Lucius goes against paternal authority, the pivot of the Andronici, astonished by his father's behaviour towards his brother Mutius first and his sister Lavinia later. Lucius, formerly the bloodthirsty man, then unfolds positive features, such as brotherly love and familial pity which seem to have been forgotten by "pius" Titus (I.i.23) instead.

It is the same Titus, in fact, this time, who kills another of his remaining sons. He also wants to deny Mutius a decent burial making him decay away from the "sacred receptacle of his joys", in order not to have someone stain the family honour and to erase the memories of that miserable son forever. But it is Lucius who avoids this, reminding Titus of his role with these words: "Dear father, soul and substance of us all" (I.i.374). There is a sort of antagonism at this point of the plot between Titus and his son Lucius and the manifest complicity present during Aaron's sacrifice is left behind now. They are distant, but the most striking thing is that they have been kept separate by their very blood and that the values of Rome, oriented essentially towards the family, appear definitely to be falling apart. Lucius, then, is not a cruel savage when it is his family which suffers pain.

This is particularly evident later on in the third act, where horror and dismay inflame the Andronici. A cause of this is Aaron, Tamora's lover, who wilfully deceives the family announcing,

Titus Andronicus, my lord the emperor
Sends thee this word, that if thou love thy sons,
Let Marcus, Lucius or thyself, old Titus,
Or any one of you, chop off your hand
And send it to the king; he for the same
Will send thee hither both thy sons alive
And that shall be the ransom for their fault.

(III.i.150-156)

Titus does not hesitate to carry out the supposed will of the emperor, in order to save the lives of his sons Martius and Quintus, charged with homicide, and a macabre debate immediately starts between Lucius and Marcus when Titus invites Aaron to help him to chop his hand off. Both the son and the brother want to sacrifice their hands instead, but Lucius resolves that the hand shall be his own, saying to his father,

Stay father, for that noble hand of thine
That hath thrown down so many enemies
Shall not be sent; my hand will serve the turn,
My youth can better spare my blood than you,
And therefore mine shall save my brothers' lives.

(III.i.162-166)

In these few lines Lucius' Roman piety is deeply manifested and the audience cannot be but surprised by this excess of sensitivity that reveals an unexpected side of the pitiless man known so far. No doubt, Lucius generates emotions when on stage and the spectators cannot but catch the terror and the pity raised by the same Lucius. The aim of tragedy, according to Aristotele, is to stir terror and pity in the audience and this is fully achieved now with Lucius – Shakespeare took into account Seneca's tragedy to develop the theme of terror, as previously noted.

What is remarkable, then, is not only Lucius's passionate attachment and protectiveness towards his family, but also his inclination for martyrdom, as he wants to sacrifice his blood sparing that of his father, taking care thus of those hands "that have thrown down so many enemies" (III.i.163) and that have constituted the strength of the Andronici. Marcus, for instance, offers his hand as well, but not immediately as Lucius does - as a matter of fact, Marcus admits that his hand "hath been but idle" (III.i.171). Lucius, anyhow, keeps insisting that his hand shall be immolated and says to Titus,

Sweet father, if I shall be thought thy son
Let me redeem my brothers both from death.

(III.i.179-180)

Lucius needs to rescue his brothers from death in order to be still thought Titus's son and a pillar of the Andronici. This is a mission that Lucius needs to fulfil in order to liberate Quintus, Martius and also himself, - this is clear when he says that he wants his "hand to serve the turn" (III.i.164) -

manifesting his Roman identity thoroughly. The aforementioned words, perhaps, could also mean that Lucius wants his hand cut off in order to participate to the torment of rejection and embarrassment which his sister Lavinia is so humiliatingly subjected to. But, as already noted, the time for redemption has not yet come, nor that which "requites Lavinia's wrongs" (III.i.295), as it will be Titus who has his hand mutilated in the end. Shakespeare chooses a period of exile for Lucius instead; he leaves the family and the audience with the following words:

Farewell, Andronicus, my noble father,
The woefullest man that ever lived in Rome!
Farewell proud Rome till Lucius come again;
He loves his pledges dearer than his life.
Farewell Lavinia my noble sister,
O would thou wert as thou tofore hast been;
But now nor Lucius nor Lavinia lives
But in oblivion and hateful griefs.
If Lucius live he will requite your wrongs
And make proud Saturnine and his empress
Beg at the gates like Tarquin and his queen.
Now will I to the Goths and raise a power
To be revenged on Rome and Saturnine.

(III.i.287-299)

Bitterness, pity, but also pride and affection are what Lucius's speech exudes. Lucius speaks eloquently of his desperation for the appalling reality that has marred his family and, as a valorous Roman, his only concern now is that of transforming that awful situation into one of great value, that is to say, his revenge on Saturninus and Rome. Lucius wants to restore the Roman past which has lulled him having "proud Saturnine and his empress beg at the gates like Tarquin and his queen" (III.i.296-297) and, awakening the classical past in the present, he expresses his Roman *integritas*.

Persistence is a characteristic of the Andronici and, at the end of the play, Lucius will succeed in achieving what he was craving for before being banished, but when Lucius leaves the stage saying "now will I to the Goths and raise a power" (III.i.298), the audience cannot be but disoriented once again. He wants, in fact, his barbarous enemies allied to re-establish order in Rome, which has been transformed into a "wilderness of tigers" by the same Goths, as Titus says to Lucius:

Why, foolish Lucius, dost thou not perceive

That Rome is but a wilderness of tigers?
Tigers must prey, and Rome affords no prey
But me and mine; how happy art thou then
From these devourers to be banishèd!

(III.i.53-57)

Lucius, then, wants to come back to his city with a Gothic army in order to demolish that wild, hybrid system created by the "devourers", the same Goths, and hunt the incorporated aliens Tamora and his lover Aaron, the "ravenous tigers" (V.iii.5), (V.iii.194), as he calls them separately. Driven by the need for revenge, his cruel nature will flourish again, as is evident in the next lines. Lucius, in act V, returns victorious – he, in fact, announced that he loved his pledges more than his life (III.ii.290) - and this is what he says when Aaron and his baby son are brought to him:

First hang the child, that he may see it sprawl,
A sight to vex the father's soul withal.
Get me a ladder.

(V.i.51-53)

When I first read the aforementioned words, I had the impression that Lucius had not "changed from an impetuous bloodthirsty youth to a man capable of wise leadership" as Robert S. Miola asserts[7]. He actually is a charismatic and wise leader of people, but also the same bloodthirsty youth who fiercely initiated the sacrifice of Alarbus, as he decides to have Aaron's son executed first, in order to have the desolated Aaron see the pathetic end of his innocent son, considered anyway guilty of being a bastard. Lucius's tongue is really poisonous. Lucius supplies the play with images of sadistic cruelty, as the word "sprawl"[8] suggests.

I agree with Miola, instead, when he writes that,

> Lucius provides a clear contrast to Titus. Instead of searching the skies for a banished goddess, he turns to the Gothic warriors outside the city and organizes an invasion. […] Lucius, unlike his father, embarks on a direct and purposeful course of action to combat the evil in the city.[9]

Lucius has the power to humanize and destroy the one who, in the play, seems to have completely eluded emotional reliance on others: Aaron. When Lucius captures him, Aaron is no longer that Machiavellian plotter known so far; on the contrary, Aaron reveals each detail of his

[7] Miola, Robert S., *Shakespeare's Rome*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 69.
[8] Sprawl: contort in death agony. Hughes, p. 125.
[9] Miola, pp. 68-69.

villainies and continues to do so as long as he has breath in his body. Aaron knows that his game is at an end now and so decides to confess his part in the destruction of the Andronici in exchange for his child's life. Tamora implored Titus to spare the life of her son Alarbus and now Aaron beseeches Lucius to do the same. Their inhumanity dies out when dealing with filial affection. And this time Lucius behaves consistently as he saves the baby, respecting the oath made with Aaron who, instead, though he admits his shameful acts, must die. But Lucius does not reach full satisfaction in having Aaron die "so sweet a death as hanging presently" (V.1.145) and engineers a slow, miserable agony for the Moor. This is, in fact, what he orders to Aemilius:

Set him breast-deep in earth and famish him;
There let him stand and rave and cry for food.
If anyone relieves or pities him,
For the offence he dies; this is our doom.
Some stay to see him fastened in the earth.

(V.iii.178-182)

Lucius achieves vengeance and his idea of justice corresponds to that of inflicting pain and torment with conscious enthusiasm. Tamora, then, is not spared by atrocious doom:

As for that ravenous tiger, Tamora,
No funeral rite, nor man in mourning weed,
No mournful bell shall ring her burial;
But throw her forth to beasts and birds to prey.
Her life was beastly and devoid of pity,
And being dead, let birds on her take pity.

(V.iii.194-199)

The audience, at the closing of the play, cannot but agree with Lucius when in seeing his father murdered by Saturninus he says:

Can the son's eye behold his father bleed?
There's meed for meed, death for a deadly deed.

(V.iii.64-65)

Lucius then kills Saturninus and, curiously, no words describe his death. Lucius needs to fill up the void created by Titus's death taking revenge in the most brutal way on those who have maimed and killed his family later on in the play. As H. Bellyse Baildon affirms, "Shakespeare aimed obviously, not at whitewashing his villains, as a modern author might do…but at humanising them, which

is…quite another thing".[10] Both civility and barbarity are part of human flawed nature, no matter their race. As John Wilders points out,

> though the actual events depicted in the tragedy are violently sensational, Shakespeare's expression of the feelings they arouse is not. He gives moving expression to emotions which in real life might be felt but could not be articulated and the play is full of the poetry of grief.[11]

3 . Aaron's strategy to keep his baby alive

A tree, a ladder and a fruit are the components of one of the innumerable breathtaking moments in *Titus* and, wryly, the picture is all but bucolic once again. It deals, in fact, with the executions of both Aaron and "his fruit of bastardy" (V.i.48), who will ornament the tree indicated by Lucius[12] with their dangling bodies. As has already been seen, however, Lucius's intention of hanging them is soon supplanted by a much more miserable decree for Aaron, but what I want to take into account now are the words "get me a ladder" (V.i.53) spoken by Lucius before changing his mind, which are definitely worth mentioning.

The Goths, as requested, bring a ladder and force Aaron to climb it, but actually, as Hughes affirms, "there is nothing in the text to show exactly when the ladder should be brought, or when Aaron mounts it"[13]. Interestingly, then, Hughes points out that

> most editors have emended, assigning this to Lucius rather than Aaron. It seems improbable that Aaron should call for a ladder for his own hanging, but the possibility remains that quarto and First Folio editions are right, and this gesture is intended as another instance of his villainous bravado.[14]

In this regard, Eugene Waith maintains, succinctly, that Aaron has no reason to want a ladder[15], while Daryl W. Palmer, on the contrary, thinks that

---

[10] Quoted in Metz, p. 46.
[11] Wilders, John, *New Prefaces to Shakespeare*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988, p. 46.
[12] Hughes states that probably no property tree was needed, but one of the fixed columns on the stage of the playhouse would have served. Hughes, p. 125.
[13] Hughes, p. 125.
[14] Hughes, p. 125.
[15] Quoted in Palmer, Daryl-W., "Histories of Violence and the Writer's Hand: Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*", in Bergeron, David M., ed., *Reading and Writing in Shakespeare*, Newark: University of Delaware Press, Associated University Presses, 1996, p. 108.

readers and writers have underestimated the element of performance in Shakespeare's march toward a finale. We need to remember that the playwright has already given Aaron the same space of soliloquy offered to his tragic hero. From the second act onward, we have seen how Aaron delights in his own speech, how he revels in his capacity for playing his own advantage amid a potentially hostile audience. Confronted with the uncomfortable tree, the performer might well demand a ladder, the only portable scaffold available in the present company. The soldiers might be expected to offer the ladder as a more convenient means of execution, and the man who promised to "climb" in the second act might be expected to assume the position of the mountebank and promise his spectators a "wondrous show".[16]

I definitely believe that the Quarto and First Folio are right and I disagree completely with Hughes and Waith. I do think that it is Aaron who tells Lucius "get me a ladder" and not vice versa, considering it another scheming manoeuvre by Aaron. Practice makes perfect and Aaron, the genius of chicanery, might actually have said to Lucius:

Get me a ladder. Lucius, save the child
And bear it from me to the empress.
If thou do this, I'll show thee wondrous things
That highly may advantage thee to hear.
If thou wilt not, befall what may befall,
I'll speak no more but 'Vengeance rot you all!'

(V.i.52-57)

It seems to me, in fact, that Aaron's tricky mind foresees, once again, the psychological moment to get what he wants, that is to say, in this case, saving the life of his baby. The meaning of the words "get me a ladder" changes completely if it is Aaron who speaks as, I would say, one – Lucius in the first instance - may perceive: "go on, I am ready to die. I do not hesitate to climb the ladder that will take me to surrender and disappear. Kill me, but not my child". Speaking those words Aaron plays a trick on Lucius and, knowing that it will be his son who is executed first, chooses the right time to have the attention switched to himself instead. Further, Aaron says to Lucius that he is willing to reveal "wondrous things that highly may advantage thee to hear" hoping, in my opinion, to have Lucius change his mind and his son reprieved. The decision to confess his misdeeds in that precise moment is not casual at all and, in fact, his strategy works well as Lucius lets the newborn live in the end, as we know. But Lucius helps Aaron's ploy reconsidering his decision to execute father and son, giving Aaron a chance to change his destiny. He, in fact, says to Aaron:

Say on, and if it please me which thou speak'st
Thy child shall live, and I will see it nourished.

(V.i.59-60)

[16] Palmer, p. 108.

Lucius shows himself inconsistent now, as he is ready to listen to and trust the person that he has called "the incarnate devil" (V.i.40) beforehand. He wants, naively, to hear something which "pleases him" from the mouth of the "wall-eyed slave" (V.i.44), as he calls the Moor later. Lucius, thus, is no longer focusing his attention on the man that needs to be executed, but on the man that has something entertaining to say. The following words, in fact, belong to a performer - Aaron is very good at it, as we know:

And if it please thee? Why assure thee, Lucius,
'Twill vex thy soul to hear what I shall speak,
For I must talk of murders, rapes, and massacres,
Acts of black night, abominable deeds,
Complots of mischief, treason, villainies
Ruthful to hear yet piteously performed;
And this shall all be buried in my death
Unless thou swear to me my child shall live.

(V.i.61-68)

I totally agree with Palmer when he points out that "Aaron has much to gain here. He means to trade his performance for his son's life".[17]

In the emended editions, instead, where it is Lucius who asks for a ladder, Aaron has no time to invent a pretext; he must climb the ladder. This reminds us of the typical Elizabethan hanging, characterized by an eloquent and long speech that the victim was used to give on the scaffold. According to Pieter Spierenburg, the scaffold speech is a particularly Elizabethan custom: "from Tudor times on the authorities actively encouraged the condemned to address himself to the public with a moralistic story, explaining how he had sinned and deserved his punishment".[18] Most times, instead, the victim questioned the efficacy of royal power, law and justice to the spectators that were craving for his spectacular execution. In *Titus*, curiously, of all the characters destined to die tragically, only Aaron is accorded a death speech which, according to the custom, is lengthy. This is part of it, from the ladder:

Even now I curse the day – and yet I think
Few come within the compass of my curse –
Wherein I did not some notorius ill;
As kill a man or else devise his death,
Ravish a maid or plot the way to do it,

[17] Palmer, p. 109.
[18] Quoted in Smith, p. 324.

Accuse some innocent and forswear myself,
Set deadly enmity between two friends,
Make poor men's cattle break their necks,
Set fire on barns and haystacks in the night
And bid the owners quench them with their tears.
Oft have I digged up dead men from their graves
And set them upright at their dear friends' door,
Even when their sorrows almost was forgot,
And on their skins, as on the bark of trees,
Have with my knife carved in Roman letters,
'Let not your sorrow die, though I am dead.'
Tut, I have done a thousand dreadful things
As willingly as one would kill a fly,
And nothing grieves me heartily indeed
But that I cannot do ten thousand more.

(V.i.123-144)

Aaron proudly talks of the cruel acts that have filled up and delighted his life, explaining that there is nothing more exciting and pleasant to him than his victims' humiliation or pain. Not a single word among those spoken, so, expresses regret and there is no will to repent of his sins at all in the little time that is left to the Moor. So, Aaron refuses to collaborate with the authorities - the Romans in this case - by revelling in his shocking crimes and misanthropy. It is at this point that Lucius, disgusted by Aaron's horrific revelations, changes Aaron's sentence into a more appalling one and orders to "bring down the devil" (V.i.145) from the ladder - used, therefore, as a temporary scaffold. But the villain keeps speaking unceasingly and vents his spleen on Lucius:

If there be devils would I were a devil,
To live and burn in everlasting fire,
So I might have your company in hell
But to torment you with my bitter tongue.

(V.i.147-150)

As Molly Smith notes:

> Aaron's own preference for a punishment whereby he retains his ability to rail at the Andronici adds an ironic dimension to Lucius's sentence. Thus, though the concluding scene demonstrates the Andronici's victory over Aaron, it also deconstructs the validity of Lucius's sentence as a decisive enactment of power.[19]

To die in torment is what Lucius has decreed for Aaron, but the decision sets the latter up. Aaron, in fact, starts another challenge by tormenting Lucius and the Andronici, instead, with "his bitter tongue". His baby is spared from death now, he has reached his goal and he can return to be the man of diabolical cunning known so far. Aaron's quick excursion into fatherhood is thoroughly cancelled by his litany of mischievous, inhuman deeds. Shakespeare has decided to give the villain

[19] Smith, p. 326.

a strong humanity showing him to be a loving father, naturally eager to sacrifice himself to save his little baby and this almost unexpected side of Aaron cannot but raise sympathy in the audience, even though only for a short while.

At the end of the play the audience is left with the dreadful image of Aaron as a head that never stops talking. Planted on the floor, he says his last words:

Ah, why should wrath be mute and fury dumb?
I am no baby, I, that with base prayers
I should repent the evils I have done;
Ten thousand worse than ever yet I did
Would I perform, if I might have my will.
If one good deed in all my life I did,
I do repent it from my very soul.

(V.iii.183-189)

Now, at the conclusion of the tragic action, Aaron can no doubt be considered as a mere case of motiveless wickedness. I think, however, that there is something more to disclose about him, but this will be the subject-matter of the next section.

4 . Aaron's identity

Curiously, there is no clear reference to Aaron's native country or to his background throughout the play. Aaron seems to have no past, no roots. His sense of identity is set up in the play by the conceptions Romans have of him, primarily associated to his blackness. Romans, in fact, relate many aspects of Aaron's character with his dark complexion and they end up creating a bias towards a certain type of personality. This is evident in the various made-to-measure expressions used by the Romans to refer to the Moor: "swarthy Cimmerian", for instance, is how Bassianus describes Aaron when, along with Lavinia, he taunts Tamora in the second act. Bassianus's harsh words do not come accidentally and he typifies Aaron as a Cimmerian[20]

[20] The term may derive from Homer's Odyssey (Book XI): "she came then to the ultimate bounds of the deep-flowing Ocean,/where the Kimmerian people are found, their country and city/shrouded about by the mist and the clouds, so that

comparing him, so, to the people who live in darkness near the realm of the dead (*Odyssey* XI) and that are, proverbially, dark-skinned.[21] "Barbarous Moor" (II.iii.78) and "raven-coloured love" (II.iii.83), then, are other designations given to Aaron by Bassianus and Lavinia respectively soon afterwards, while it will be the same Titus who refers to Aaron as the "raven" later on in the third act (III.i.158). The metaphorical language used by the Andronici, so, expresses always something negative about the Moor. They seem to consider, in fact, only the outer shell of Aaron, associating his black skin to dark worries tending, so, to undervalue him. In this regard, I cannot but take into account the discussion which takes place between Marcus and Titus at the end of the third act, which speaks for itself. The talking point is Marcus's killing of a fly – struck by a knife in a dish - and this is what Titus says to his brother:

Out on thee, murderer! Thou kill'st my heart.
Mine eyes are cloyed with view of tyranny;
A deed of death done on the innocent
Becomes not Titus' brother. Get thee gone;
I see thou art not for my company.

(III.ii.54-58)

Marcus replies that he has "but killed a fly" (III.ii.59) and Titus continues:

'But'? How if that fly had a father and mother?
How would he hang his slender gilded wings
And buzz lamenting doings in the air!
Poor harmless fly,
That with his pretty buzzing melody
Came here to make us merry, and thou hast killed him.

(III.ii.60-65)

This is what comes out of Marcus's mouth instead:

Pardon me, sir; it was a black ill-favoured fly
Like to the empress' Moor; therefore I killed him.

(III.ii.66-67)

Marcus's response seems to reassure Titus, that in fact says:

O O O!
Then pardon me for reprehending thee
For thou hast done a charitable deed.
Give me thy knife; I will insult on him,
Flattering myself as if it were the Moor
Come hither purposely to poison me.
There's for thyself, and that's for Tamora.

---

never does shining…" Homer, *The Odyssey*, translated by Rodney Merrill, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002, p. 220.

[21] Hughes, p. 81.

Ah, sirrah!
Yet I think we are not brought so low
But that between us we can kill a fly
That comes in likeness of a coal-black Moor.

(III.ii.68-78)

At this stage of the dramatic action, the spectator could expect anything but this ridiculous conversation, which reveals also a frightening side: the sight of Titus stabbing at the plate again and again in fury, when Marcus says that the fly is nothing but Aaron.

As Emily C. Bartels observes, "Aaron is the one character in this play whose malignant differentness is consistently recognized and easily categorized by all, including himself and his allies".[22] Considering Aaron as the stereotyped villain in *Titus*, however, is not entirely correct. Certainly, there is no apparent justification for all his base acts and plots, but the Moor cannot be considered merely the troublemaker of the play. As J. A. Bryant Jr. points out in fact, "Shakespeare saw his villains as ordinary people deflected by some accident of birth or society from the normal paths of human intercourse".[23] Aaron, then, would have metamorphosed into a villain, moulded, presumably, by harsh experiences that have turned him into the "flamboyant, callous, shamelessly cynical, and "artist in villainy" designated by Eldred Jones.[24] Aaron is a foreigner in the civilized Roman world, but he seems to belong to it much more than one could expect. As Geraldo de Sousa affirms, in fact,

> with apparently no memories, Aaron turns to Latin literature and mythology in order to grasp the significance of his blackness. […] Aaron believes that texts encapsulate the heinous side of the Roman character. […] From Roman texts, Aaron discovers the dark side of the Roman character, through which he forges his own identity. He concludes that the Romans are 'furious', 'impatient', and jealous. Behind their facade of civility, Aaron discovers that the Romans perpetrate horrifying crimes, especially those committed beyond the borders of Rome and in spaces hidden from public view, such as the hunting grounds outside the city. He thus decides to claim this as his space, a place of darkness and villainy.[25]

Aaron has approached and enriched himself with Roman culture. He has discovered Ovid and Livy in the first instance[26], assimilating their stories so well that some of their essential elements have

[22] Bartels, Emily C., "Making More of the Moor: Aaron, Othello, and Renaissance Refashionings of Race", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 41, 1990, p. 442.
[23] Quoted in Metz, p. 86.
[24] Quoted in Metz, p. 58.
[25] De Sousa, Geraldo U., *Shakesepare's Cross-Cultural Encounters*, Houndmills, Basingstoke and London: Macmillian Press, 1999, p. 108, p. 111.
[26] *The Rape of Lucrece*, which Aaron seems to remember well, draws on the story described in both Ovid's *Fasti* and Livy's *History of Rome*.

been readopted in his base acts. So, Aaron starts to despise the civilized Roman system when he experiences its hollowness. He knows, therefore, the awful occurrences of Lucrece, who was raped by Tarquin and that of Philomel, raped by Tereus. This is evident when he, orchestrating his deplorable campaign of persuasion in order to have Chiron and Demetrius "revelling in Lavinia's treasury" (II.i.131), says to them: "Lucrece was not more chaste, Than this Lavinia, Bassianus' love" (II.i.108-109), recognizing that Lavinia resembles Lucrece in her virtue. Rape, murder and mutilation seem to rule Aaron's *modus vivendi*, inspired, no doubt, by Roman books. This is, in fact, what he says to Tamora later in the play:

This is the day of doom for Bassianus;
His Philomel must lose her tongue today,
Thy sons make pillage of her chastity,
And wash their hands in Bassianus' blood.

(II.iii.42-45)

But Aaron modifies the classical myth adding a barbarous part to it: he decides to chop Lavinia's hands off preventing her, so, from using them to reveal who has raped her as Philomel did, instead, weaving the name of her ravisher into a tapestry. Aaron, so, seizes Roman culture and revives it at his pleasure. He violates, so, the Roman classical past. Marcus, in fact, soon realizes that Lavinia's fate is worse than that of Philomel when he says,

A craftier Tereus, cousin, hast thou met,
And he hath cut those pretty fingers off
That could have better sewed than Philomel.

(II.iv.41-43)

As de Sousa affirms,

> Although Aaron cannot, on his own, bring the Roman empire down, he terrorizes the Romans, focusing his revenge on representative Romans, especially Lavinia and Titus, whose bodies he seeks to ravage, rape, mutilate, and above all render unable to write. He even chops off Titus's hand, the source of the violence and destruction with which Rome writes its violent history.[27]

In fact, it is when Aaron gets Titus's hand that Titus's strength starts to fade away. Not only his soul is torn to pieces for the pain inflicted on Lavinia and his other two sons, but also his body, whose noble hand, as Lucius indicates, "hath thrown down so many enemies" (III.i.163). Titus is totally

[27] De Sousa, pp. 110-111.

sucked into events that he cannot dominate and so his degeneration starts. The audience, then, can truly realize that Aaron is assuming two different roles at the same time when he says to Titus:

I go, Andronicus; and for thy hand
Look by and by to have thy sons with thee.
[*Aside*] Their heads, I mean. O how this villainy
Doth fat me with the very thoughts of it!
Let fools do good, and fair men call for grace;
Aaron will have his soul black like his face.

(III.i.199-204)

In the first two lines, in fact, Aaron talks to Titus as a friend, reassuring him that he will have his sons back, while just a few seconds later he cannot contain himself for the excitement of having carried out another of his cheating plots. Aaron assumes different roles in the play and this is the only way for him to leave a mark of his identity, which the civilized Romans have never really accepted.

The only allusion to Aaron's origins occurs when he looks for a white child that could replace his newborn baby, the fruit of the secret relationship with the queen of the Goths. He in fact says:

Not far, one Muliteus, my countryman,
His wife but yesternight was brought to bed;
His child is like her, fair as you are.
Go pack with him, and give the mother gold,
And tell them both the circumstance of all,
And how by this their child shall be advanced,
And be receivèd for the emperor's heir,
And substituted in the place of mine
To calm this tempest whirling in the court,
And let the emperor dandle him for his own.

(IV.ii.153-162)

With regard to the term "Muliteus", George Steevens conjectured that it is an error for "Muly", a common Moorish name in Elizabethan literature, but Maxwell acknowledges that a classicised version might have recommended itself to Shakespeare in this context.[28] Whatever the case may be, what is certain is that Aaron, for the first time, reveals something of himself and, in doing so, appears spontaneous. He gives an account of what has happened to one of his compatriots showing to have contacts in Rome apart from the unhealthy ones set up with the Goths and the Andronici. For the first time, so, the audience discovers Aaron as a social animal. Aaron, instead, notes how

[28] Quoted in Hughes, note 153, p. 114.

hypocritical men are. His blackness, in fact, seems a great weight on him only because the baby born from his inter-racial relation has not taken the colour of the mother, as happened to his lucky countryman instead. Aaron needs, therefore, to "calm the tempest whirling in the court" as soon as possible, getting rid, thus, of that lovely but "thick-lipped slave" of his (IV.II.176). He underlines, later on in the play, the baby's misfortune in being born black-skinned with the following words:

Peace, tawny slave, half me and half thy dam,
Did not thy hue bewray whose brat thou art,
Had nature lent thee but thy mother's look,
Villain, thou mightst have been an emperor.
But where the bull and cow are both milk-white
They never do beget a coal-black calf.

(V.i.27-32)

But the innocent creature would have been "a fruit of bastardy" (V.i.48) all the same, even if endowed with pale skin. In that case, probably, Tamora would have kept the baby in order to hide her "shame and stately Rome's disgrace" (IV.ii.60), which, instead, it was no longer possible to keep secret. Obviously, if fair-skinned, "the fruit of bastardy" would have been considered the son of the emperor.

In the second scene of act IV another character appears on stage: a nurse, with the dark-skinned child. Their lives depend on one another: the nurse, in fact, will lose her life soon after the baby is born. Obviously, if he had been fair-skinned, she probably would have not died so soon. It is Aaron who kills her. He cannot stand the fact that she, along with a midwife and Tamora, "shall live to betray this guilt of ours, A long-tongued babbling gossip" (IV.ii.150-151), as he explains to Demetrius. Aaron faces reality and he absolutely wants to keep his little baby alive, notwithstanding Tamora's will, as the nurse makes known when showing the baby to Aaron:

Here is the babe as loathsome as a toad
Amongst the fair-faced breeders of our clime;
The empress sends it thee, thy stamp, thy seal,
And bids thee christen it with thy dagger's point.

(IV.ii.67-70)

For the first time, the audience sees Aaron as a different man, a father. In fact, when Chiron and Demetrius discover that Aaron has "done" their mother (IV.ii.76) and wish for the baby's death, Aaron says to them:

Fie, treacherous hue that will betray with blushing
The close enacts and counsels of thy heart!
Here's a young lad framed of another leer;
Look how the black slave smiles upon the father,
As who should say, 'Old lad, I am thine own.'
He is your brother, lords, sensibly fed
Of that self blood that first gave life to you,
And from your womb where you imprisoned were
He is enfranchisèd and come to light.
Nay, he is your brother by the surer side
Although my seal be stampèd in his face.

(IV.ii.117-127)

Furthermore, when Demetrius asks Aaron, "Wilt thou betray thy noble mistress thus?" (IV.ii.106), this is what he replies:

My mistress is my mistress, this myself,
The vigour and the picture of my youth;
This before all the world do I prefer,
This maugre all the world will I keep safe
Or some of you shall smoke for it in Rome.

(IV.ii.107-111)

What is important for Aaron now is his "black slave" smiling at him. He has completely obliterated what was in his mind at the beginning of the play. The audience, so, discovers that Aaron has actually found the way to "shine in pearl and gold" thanks to fatherhood. Aaron accepts his little creature and fights to have him by his side, even though everybody and Tamora in the first instance, have refused the little "devil" (IV.ii.64). Aaron is able to love and, astonishingly, does so genuinely and tenderly, more than any other character in *Titus*. Aaron's various masks cease to exist in front of his child. He, in fact, starts to confess his crimes only after hearing Lucius swearing on his god that he would keep his son alive. There is no longer any need for Aaron to act. His son will not betray him. "Father" will be the only label that the little "black slave" will give to Aaron. Thanks to his little "treasure" (IV.ii.174) the Moor understands that,

Coal-black is better than another hue
In that it scorns to bear another hue.

(IV.ii.99-100)

Aaron, so, is just a foil character spotlighting the other characters' weakness and masks. The valorous Titus, the sage Marcus and the villain Aaron are human beings. *Titus* mirrors simply humanity.

CHAPTER V

THE STAGING OF *TITUS ANDRONICUS*

Titus's shocking power endures. After more than four hundred years from its first performance, in fact, "one of the stupidest and most uninspired plays ever written"[1], still attracts large crowds when presented on the modern stage. In recent years, successful productions have brought Shakespeare's gruesome early tragedy to a vigorous revival, displaying how stageworthy the play can be. Douglas Hodge, an actor who played the role of Titus at the new Globe in 2006, talks about the visceral emotions experienced while performing it:

> At one point, I came out underneath the stage, inside the audience. And that does involve them in an emotional and a much more muscular way, and when you therefore move into moments of grief, suffering, or violence it is even more effective. Then as soon as you move into the soliloquy, you realize that you actually have to involve the audience in your moral dilemma, and take them with you on the journey that you are going through, and the decisions you are making. Often in modern theatres, you never have that kind of connection. So if it goes even further than that, and you chop off your hand for the sake of your daughter, the audience are very complicit in the act of doing it, and of course it is a much more emotive experience for them.[2]

Hodge's account is extremely significant, not only because it is the feedback of a latter-day Titus, but because, performing at the reconstructed open-air Globe, it plunges us into a reality fairly close to that of Shakespeare. In this chapter, I attempt an analysis of the mise-en-scène of *Titus*'s spectacles of death, to discover how *Titus*'s overwhelming impact has been revived on the stage and what has changed over the years.

1 . Traces of *Titus* in Shakespeare's time

A drawing made around 1595 provides historical evidence about *Titus Andronicus*. What is accurately represented in pen-and-ink, in fact, undoubtedly seems to be an illustration of a scene

[1] See chapter 1, p. 1 of the present thesis for T. S. Eliot's full statement. Eliot, T.S., *Selected Essays*, London: Faber & Faber, 1932, "Seneca in Elizabethan Translation", p. 82.
[2] Mackeith, Ag, ed., *Discovering Shakespeare's Globe*, London: Shakespeare's Globe, 2009, p. 56.

from *Titus*[3]. Furthermore, this valuable record can be regarded as the only contemporary illustration of a Shakespearean play. It consists of a single folio sheet and below the drawing, in a fine Elizabethan hand, is the heading "Enter Tamora pleadinge for her sonnes going to execution"; this is followed by forty lines of dialogue attributed to Tamora, Titus and Aaron. It ends with a speech heading for Alarbus, but there is no speech. Tamora's lines are a good transcription of her plea for her son's life, but Titus replies,

Patient your selfe madame for dy hee must
Aaron do you likewise prepare your selfe
And now at last repent your wicked life

The first line contracts the equivalent speech in the play:

Patient yourself, madam, and pardon me.
These are their brethren whom your Goths beheld
Alive and dead, and for their brethren slain
Religiously they ask a sacrifice;
To this your son is marked, and die he must…
(I.i.121-125)

The rest is invented in order to justify an immediate transition to Aaron's vindictive boast in Act 5:

Lucius Art thou not sorry for these heinous deeds?
Aaron Ay, that I had not done a thousand more.
Even now I curse the day – and yet I think
Few come within the compass of my curse –
Wherein I did not some notorius ill…
(V.i. 123-27)

The first two lines of his speech are slightly altered to disguise the join.[4]

This document, which is known as the Longleat manuscript, is unreliable as concerns the story and casts doubt on authorship and date of composition. However, near the bottom of the page someone has written "Henricus Peacham, Anno m° q° [q?] q^{to}" and it is generally agreed that the enigmatic signs should be interpreted as a date, either 1594 or 1595, and "Henricus" identified with Henry Peacham, author of *The Compleat Gentleman* (1622).[5] There is no evidence that he ever saw *Titus* on stage (beyond the possibility that seeing it was what led him to read it), but the drawing may still be described as an early "production".[6] Thus, "the first illustration to "Shakespeare", as

[3] Hughes, Alan, ed., *Titus Andronicus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 15.
[4] Hughes, p. 15.
[5] Hughes, p. 20.
[6] Bate, Jonathan, ed., *Titus Andronicus*, London: Routledge, 1995, p. 41.

E.K. Chambers calls the Longleat manuscript[7], is fraught with difficulties and various are the attempts to solve its questions, for which there are no universally accepted answers.

I set forth here my views on the document and Hughes's opinion will be the starting point of my reflections:

> if the artist meant to represent a performance, it is hard to see why he telescoped two moments at opposite ends of the play. […] The Longleat sketch is the work of a comparatively sophisticated realist who gives the viewer no clue that the picture is to be regarded as anything but a literal representation of a single scene. […] The artist has misrepresented the play's action. Unless we can arrive at a plausible hypothesis to explain why he would have done so deliberately, we must conclude that he did by mistake. That can only mean that if he had ever seen a performance of *Titus Andronicus*, he remembered it inaccurately.[8]

I think that Hughes's view is not thoroughly consistent as, if "it is hard to see why the author telescoped two opposite ends of the play", this obviously means that the drawing cannot be "a literal representation of a single scene" as he concludes, but a fusion of different moments of the play. If the drawing, however, was the representation of a single scene, the only possibility considered by Hughes could be the moment[9] in the first act where Tamora desperately begs Titus to spare the life of his son Alarbus, chosen by the Andronici to execute their "*ad manes fratrum* sacrifice" (I.i.98), even though there are noticeable discrepancies between it and the drawing. Two of Titus's sons, in fact, do not appear in the picture and while Tamora's sons are shown on their knees, it seems not to be so in the play, as Hughes notes: "Tamora certainly kneels here. There is less evidence that her sons should kneel"[10]. It is Tamora herself, in fact, who gives evidence that she was kneeling while beseeching Titus later on in the play, with the following words referred to the Andronici: "And make them know what 'tis to let a queen / kneel in the streets and beg for grace in vain" (I.i.454-455). Aaron too is present in the scene where Tamora has her son sacrificed but, curiously, if he never speaks during the first act in the play, his attitude is definitely eloquent in the picture instead. The Goths, on the contrary, seem to keep still without uttering a word in the drawing, but this is not what happens in *Titus*. Obviously, they were outraged by the Andronici's decision of executing Alarbus and, as one can imagine, they could not accept it in silence.

[7] Quoted in Hughes, p. 15.
[8] Hughes, pp. 17, 20.
[9] The first act is not divided into scenes.
[10] Hughes, note 104, p. 57.

Probably the artist, then, representing one single scene as Hughes believes, referred to the moment in the play which occurs after the stage direction "Exeunt Titus' sons with Alarbus" (I.i.129) as John Dover Wilson claims:

> what the artist depicts is not the stage situation at the beginning of Tamora's supplication, but the tableau twenty-five lines later, immediately after Titus has refused her prayer and his sons have carried away the doomed Alarbus. At the outset of her speech Tamora has three sons with her: there are only two in the picture; what has happened to the third? At the outset of her speech again, Titus has *four* sons with him, to say nothing of attendant soldiers; […] where have the sons gone to? Surely the stage-direction of the Quarto at I.i.129, "Exit Titus sonnes with Alarbus", provides the answer to both questions.[11]

Even though this idea could explain why Alarbus and two of Titus's sons are not part of the drawing, it remains difficult to understand why Aaron is represented brandishing his sword as a sign of remonstrance and the Goths are absolutely silent, as this does not coincide with what occurs in the play as previously noted. It seems rather strange to me that the author distorted just the opening of the play, the moment in which one is eager to discover what will be displayed and, therefore, is more attentive. I do not agree with Hughes's theory. That "the artist has misrepresented the play's action" because he "remembered it inaccurately" seems too weak a hypothesis to me. I would say, instead, that the drawing needs to be interpreted differently as it cannot represent a literal image of the play as seen in both cases.

While Hughes finds it "hard to see why the craftsman telescoped two moments at opposite ends of the play"[12], there are a number of critics, instead, who take a completely different point of view of the matter. John Munro, for instance, as Hughes points out, "interprets it as a picture in the archaic manner he calls "comprehensive", in which separate incidents in an action are depicted in a single composition"[13], rejecting the supposed discrepancy between the picture and the extracts from the play and Wilson's notion that the two parts of the manuscript were executed at different times.[14] Eugene Waith, who supports him with some examples, explains that:

> not only are there many examples from classical times to the seventeenth century of this style of illustration, but it was used specifically in the wood-cuts adorning plays in print. The famous title-page of the 1615 edition of *The Spanish Tragedy* shows on the left side Hieronymo discovering Horatio, hanging in the arbour, and on the right side the

[11] Wilson, J. Dover, "'Titus Andronicus' on the stage in 1595", *Shakespeare Survey*, I, 1948, pp. 19-20.
[12] Hughes, p. 17.
[13] Hughes, p. 17.
[14] Quoted in Metz, G. Harold, *Shakespeare's Earliest Tragedy: Studies in Titus Andronicus*, London: Associated University Presses, 1996, p. 236.

immediately preceding action of Lorenzo stifling Belimperia's outcries. Words issuing from their mouths in balloons identify the precise moments depicted, which, in the play, are separated by the exit of Lorenzo, dragging Belimperia with him. The woodcut following the title-page of William Sampson's *The Vow Breaker* (1630) shows four figures speaking lines (some of them slightly altered) from the third and fourth acts of the play. When a late edition of *The Witch of Edmonton* was published in 1658 it was similarly provided with a woodcut depicting three characters who are speaking lines from two acts of the play. Although the *Titus Andronicus* drawing is a more unified composition than either of the last two woodcuts, the speeches written below it show that it, too, combines episodes from two widely separated points in the play.[15]

Waith's conflation is made up by Tamora's plea to Titus and Aaron's unrepentant answer to Lucius and his point of view is supported by the fact that Aaron is placed "in a slightly different plane from the rest of the figures" just to give "a visual clue to the separation between the two episodes".[16] Furthermore he thinks that Aaron is pointing to Demetrius and Chiron because "when he speaks the lines chosen by the artist, he has just finished boasting that he instructed the princes to rape and mutilate Lavinia"[17] (V.i.98-102). Even though Waith's point of view is the most valuable among those taken into account so far, he does not explain why Alarbus and Titus's sons do not figure in the drawing at the moment of Tamora's plea.

Even G. Harold Metz points out that the technique adopted in the Longleat drawing is "in the convention of simultaneous representation – Munro's comprehensive method" asserting that "he is undoubtedly right in his identification of it."[18] According to him, four events from the play are present in the drawing:

The first is Tamora's plea addressed to Titus (I.i.104-20) […]. Chiron and Demetrius also kneel in petition to Titus. The second is Wilson's "tableau" (I.i.130-42) of Gothic disappointment and resentment, which follows immediately on Titus's decision to grant to his sons the sacrifice of Alarbus. Lucius, Quintus, Martius, and Mutius have taken Alarbus offstage to the place of sacrifice. Marcus does not participate. Aaron personifies the indignation of the Gothic queen and princes. His sword is extraneous to the tableau. He is pointing to Tamora and her two remaining sons to emphasize the urgency of their prayer for mercy. […] The third event represented in the drawing is Titus' refusal of the imperial crown. […] The fourth was correctly identified by Munro. It is Aaron's defiant recital of his crimes to Lucius after his capture by a Goth with his infant son. The sword is a property intended to characterize and enhance his truculent attitude. He is, in this incident, pointing at it to emphasize the advice he gave to Chiron and Demetrius on the "trimming" of Lavinia (V.i.92-96).[19]

I really believe that Metz's interpretation contains some shrewd insights, but I do not find it satisfactory. I completely disagree with Metz, in fact, when he affirms that Aaron "personifies the indignation of the Gothic queen and princes" and that he is "pointing to Tamora and her two

[15] Waith, Eugene M., ed., *Titus Andronicus*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, pp. 22-23.
[16] Waith, p. 23.
[17] Waith, p. 23.
[18] Metz, p. 243.
[19] Metz, pp. 244-245.

remaining sons to emphasize the urgency of their prayer for mercy". As Levin Richard points out, then, referring to the fourth event in which Aaron's interpretation seems to be more compelling to me, "nor is it clear how we can visualize a single figure operating in two separate events, which is not the usual meaning of "simultaneous representation""[20].

The term "visualize" used by Levin, helps me to introduce my reading of the picture which is really close to that of Jonathan Bate, who believes that "the illustration may offer an emblematic reading of the whole play. To read it from left to right is like reading the play from first act to fifth".[21] Bate's interpretation of the drawing is very interesting and illuminating to me and its most noteworthy passages are found below:

> one begins with two Roman soldiers, who represent Titus' victory in war and service to the state; they may be thought of as members of his ceremonial entrance procession. One then sees the figure of Titus himself. He is wearing the laurel bough […] and the sword which he later hands over to Saturninus. […] He carries a decorated ceremonial spear or staff, symbol of his 'triumph'. At the base of it, lying on the ground, is the 'sceptre to control the world', the token of the empery, which he has rejected at 1.1.202[22]. The centre of the illustration is a foursquare confrontation between him and the enemy against whom he is pitted throughout the play. They are represented as opposites: male against female, laurel against crown, plain Roman garb against the flowing dress of the exotic Goth. The long spear or staff divides the picture down the middle, Romans one side, Goths the other, just as the play as a whole begins from these two opposed nations. […] The two youths behind Tamora become emblems of all the play's sons: they are simultaneously a kind of doubled Alarbus on the way to execution, Chiron and Demetrius pleading together with their mother for their brother's life, and Titus' two middle sons, Quintus and Martius, whose death is the *quid pro quo* for that of Alarbus (and for whom Titus later kneels in supplication, echoing Tamora here). Aaron is instrumental in their execution, and so it is that the eye then moves to him. He points to his sword, which is raised (whereas that of Titus is sheathed) to indicate the deaths he has instigated; there may also be a recollection of the moment when he draws his sword to defend his baby. As the soldiers, symbol of Roman authority, stand at one side of the picture, so Aaron, double outsider, both Goth and coal-black Moor, stands on the opposite margin, just as he stands silently on the margin watching the vicissitudes of the opening 500 lines of the play. He stands defiantly, but at the end of the play he will pass into the hands of the Roman guards.[23]

So far, different points of view have been taken into account regarding the Longleat manuscript, but I do think that the latter might be the most probable of the scenarios, notwithstanding what Richard Levin asserts: "once we take the high symbolic road, it is hard to know when to stop"[24]. I believe that the "high symbolic road", instead, might be the only one possible to reach an acceptable interpretation of the drawing. In fact, the more I look at those seven figures and objects present in the sketch, the more they remind me of other characters and moments of the play, as will be shown thereafter.

---

[20] Levin Richard, "The Longleat Manuscript and *Titus Andronicus*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 53, 2002, p. 331.
[21] Bate, p. 41.
[22] At 1.1.199 in Hughes's edition.
[23] Bate, pp. 41-43.
[24] Levin, p. 332.

The "tall ceremonial spear" constitutes the drawing's key element, in my opinion. It is intended to split the drawing into two halves which, taken separately, call up different moments of the play. The author of the drawing undoubtedly remembered well the various reversals present in the play and, particularly, that he who makes people kneel will later be made to kneel. The idea of power, authority and honour, therefore, is given by the three figures present on the left side of the drawing, while complete and utter helplessness is what the kneeling figures show on the right side in contrast. The two juxtaposed parts created by the spear, so, spotlight the sharp contrasts which frame the play, such as the power of the Romans and the submissiveness of the Goths when one of Tamora's sons has to be sacrificed. This seems the only possible interpretation of the sketch to many, but the same figures, symbolically, stand for something or someone else instead in my opinion. At first sight, the kneeling woman seems to be no other than Tamora, but Lavinia is not excluded. In the first act, in fact, after Alarbus's sacrifice, Lavinia welcomes his father to Rome with the following words:

And at thy feet I kneel, with tears of joy
Shed on this earth for thy return to Rome.
O bless me here with thy victorious hand,
Whose fortunes Rome's best citizens applaud.

(I.i.161-164)

Lavinia kneels in front of her triumphant father and the words "O bless me with thy victorious hand" underline Titus's elevation and power which, in the drawing, can be discerned by the laurel boughs, emblem of victory, and by the two figures behind him that can be "members of his ceremonial entrance procession", as Bate points out. Titus's posture, then, needs to be noted also. He, in fact, holds out his victorious right hand away from his body as to command something and not only the execution of Tamora's eldest son, as already noted. What Titus's gesture reminds me of this time, is the moment of the play when he denies burial to his son Mutius in the family tomb after killing him, as he makes clear yelling:

Traitors away! He rests not in this tomb.
This monument five hundred years hath stood,
Which I have sumptuously re-edified.
Here none but soldiers and Rome's servitors
Repose in fame; none basely slain in brawls.

Bury him where you can, he comes not here.

(I.i.349-353)

Not only Mutius, but Titus's other sons too are turned into "traitors" by "Rome's best champion" (I.i.65), as they do not accept and support their father's conduct this time. Even Marcus begs Titus "to pardon Mutius and to bury him" (I.i.363), but Titus indignantly replies:

Marcus, even thou hast struck upon my crest
And with these boys mine honour thou hast wounded.
My foes do I repute you every one,
So trouble me no more, but get you gone.

(I.i.362-365)

I believe that the drawing might represent Titus's reaction and, precisely, the moment in which he talks to his brother Marcus. The drawing, in this case, might function like a cracked mirror, representing not only Titus's disfigurement, but also the disintegration of the Andronici. The left side of the drawing might be intended to show Titus, the embodiment of pride and power, when he orders to his "foes" to go away from him. The "traitors", instead, might be represented by the two male kneeling figures on the right side; they are Quintus and Martius and, simultaneously, Marcus and Lucius, as they all kneel in the plot when they beg Titus to bury Mutius in the family tomb, remembering that he "died in honour and Lavinia's cause" (I.i.377). The drawing, so, divided by the tall spear into two parts, might evoke the coming apart of the myth of the family unit and another figure in the drawing might purposely represent this: the kneeling crowned woman. She might be Lavinia and, simultaneously, Rome itself. As has already been seen in the second chapter of the present work, Titus has put Rome before his family and his choice of Rome's emperor and of Lavinia's consort, prompts "Rome's royal mistress" (I.i.241) to escape with the man she really loves opposing her father's authority. This determines the killing of Mutius, who has tried to protect Lavinia against his father's will, the collapse of the Andronici and, consequently, of the social order. The ceremonial spear, this time, might stand for the "staff of honour" (I.i.198) which Titus declares to prefer to the "sceptre to control the world" (I.i.199) that he refuses. Titus's choice might be symbolized by the sceptre in the drawing to me. It lies, in fact, on the ground at the base of the spear, just in the space which divides Titus from the crowned person – representing both Lavinia

and Rome - with the extremities turned to each figure as to indicate a connection between them. With regard to the object that lies on the ground, which I have identified with a sceptre, an artist (not identified) who examined three reproductions of the drawing, assures Thomas Marc Parrott that

> the object is not lying on the ground, represented by a line clearly drawn across the sketch, but apparently fixed to, or penetrated by, the staff. In that case it is more probably a base on which the "staff of honour" could rest when not in the hand of the bearer.[25]

This would mean that the author really wanted to create an accurate picture because, since the supposed Titus is represented while holding the "staff of honour", the base to support it was not necessary. Whatever the case may be, what is placed at the base of the spear indicates Titus's choice, the "staff of honour".

As has been already noted, Titus's choices determine what happens to his family later on in the play. Chiron and Demetrius, in fact, sons of the empress, have become step-sons of the emperor now and are greedy for power. Lavinia, or "Rome's royal mistress" (I.i.241), becomes the emblem of royal power to them and so starts the struggle to gain her and, at the same time, the power over Rome. It will be Aaron, then, who incites wantonly the sons of the empress saying "serve your lust shadowed from heaven's eye/And revel in Lavinia's treasury" (II.i.130-131) and there is no need to remember what they ended up doing on the girl. The pitch darkness that distinguishes Aaron in the drawing, so, is intentionally accentuated to emphasize the evil he incarnates in my view. Who made the drawing, then, depicted Aaron at the extreme right side of it, holding the sword over the heads of the two kneeling men, just to display that he is the mastermind behind many horrible acts perpetrated in the play and that he has accomplished his machinations just "shadowed from heaven's eye". Tamora's sons, in fact, carry out perfectly his instructions and it will be Aaron himself to confess so to Lucius in the last act, "that bloody mind I think they learned of me" (V.i.101). In the drawing, furthermore, Aaron indicates the sharpest part of the sword and this, I would say, might be a metaphor for the infliction of pain, for the deaths he has instigated, such as that of Bassianus and of Titus's two middle sons, Quintus and Martius. But, considering the

[25] Thomas Marc Parrott, "Further Observations on *Titus Andronicus*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 1, 1950, p. 27.

kneeling figures on the right side of the drawing, the same gesture could also reflect Titus's banquet where Tamora's sons have become the main course, as Titus reveals before stabbing the empress:

> There they are, both bakèd in this pie,
> Whereof their mother daintily hath fed,
> Eating the flesh that she herself hath bred,
> 'Tis true, 'tis true, witness my knife's sharp point.
>
> (V.iii.59-62)

At the closing of the play, then, Aaron, in the hands of the Romans and doomed, exultantly relishes his role of master in villainy. This is what his gesture could imply this time in my view, also because the choice of the artist to represent him left-handed cannot but make me think of his devilish nature.

The three figures on the left side of the drawing remind me of another moment of the tragedy which occurs at its ending. If the three men are identified with Lucius, the new emperor of Rome, holding the spear, and the other behind him with two soldiers, it might recall the moment in which Lucius proclaims to the Romans: "may I govern so/To heal Rome's harms and wipe away her woe" (V.iii.146-147). This interpretation can be possible taking into account Lucius's posture as, with his right hand, he seems to communicate that he wants to "wipe away" what has made Rome a "wilderness of tigers" (III.i.54) which, in the drawing, is easily recognizable in the figures represented on the right side of it, as has been previously observed.

So the seven figures, their gestures and the objects depicted in the drawing, might unequivocally recollect moments of the play from the first to the last act. The drawing is a kind of epitome of the whole tragedy and needs to be interpreted emblematically, as Bate affirms. It seemed strange to me, in fact, that the author had decided to leave Lavinia out as, whether he had seen or read the play, he could not have skipped her striking presence. With regard to Bate's reading of the two youths considered simultaneously "a kind of doubled Alarbus on the way to execution" I would say, instead, that the two kneeling figures are just Chiron and Demetrius spared from the sacrifice, still trembling "under Titus' threat'ning look" (I.i.134), but hopeful that "the self-same gods that armed the Queen of Troy" (I.i.136), will "favour Tamora, the Queen of Goths" (I.i.139) "to quit the

bloody wrongs upon her foes" (I.i.141), as Demetrius says. It is their eloquent posture, along with that of the crowned figure identified with Tamora, that makes me visualize Alarbus on the way to execution. However, I cannot but acknowledge what Bate points out:

> what is most telling about the illustration is its emblematic quality, which exactly fits the way in which the characters in the play so often seem to become emblems, to be frozen into postures that are the very picture of supplication, grief or violent revenge.[26]

Unlike what Levin maintains, therefore, it is just "the emblematic quality" proper of the illustration that indicates the symbolic road to follow to interpret the drawing appropriately.

With regard to the forty lines of dialogue below the drawing, John Dover Wilson believes that "the drawing was executed by one man and the forty lines added some time after by another man who was attempting to provide an explanatory text for a picture he failed to understand".[27] The same assumption is then made by Thomas Marc Parrott who, accepting Wilson's theory, affirms that:

> we must go all the way with him and take it that the appended text in the manuscript was written later by a scribe who was not too well acquainted with the play, but transcribed from a printed text lines that he thought would explain the picture that had come into his hands.[28]

Hughes raises objections to what Wilson maintains, explaining that:

> there is no visible sign that drawing and text are by different hands or of different periods. And it is difficult to explain why an artist with a whole sheet of paper before him would draw his picture across the top and leave the rest blank, unless he meant to fill the space with something else – such as dialogue.[29]

I totally agree with Hughes and I think that the drawing and the text were produced by the same person, taking also into account that "the ink looks much alike in both", as the same Wilson observes.[30] "Henricus Peacham" is what appears just in the lower left margin and this, I would say, is a curious place to put a signature since the drawing occupies the upper part of the sheet. This makes me conjecture, so, that the text was already there when the signature was added to the document. It is known for certain that Peacham was both artist and author in later life. In 1606, for instance, he published *The Art of Drawing with the Pen* for the instruction of 'the young learner' in

[26] Bate, p. 43.
[27] Wilson, p. 19.
[28] Parrott, p. 27.
[29] Hughes, p. 20.
[30] Wilson, p. 19.

'an accomplishment required in a Schollar or Gentleman' where, regarding the kind of figure-drawing found in the Longleat manuscript, in which all the characters are seen in profile, he writes: "the half face of all other is most easy, insomuch that if you will, you may draw it only with one line, never removing your hand".[31] This is what Hughes remarks on the young Peacham's artistry:

if the shading were removed from a Roman profile illustrating *The Art of Drawing*, its other techniques would be seen to resemble those of the Longleat drawing. There is a striking similarity between the eyes of the bust and the figure of Titus, and their scarves are treated in much the same manner.[32]

Peacham, then, was the author of several collections of emblems, such as *Minerva Britanna* printed in 1612 and, as Waith informs us, "those which survive in manuscript are, however, more useful in judging his technique in drawing".[33] Waith furnishes us with further interesting information regarding them:

three of these, done between 1603 and 1610, were based on the 1603 edition of *Basilicon Doron* by James I. The earliest, in the Bodleian Library (MS Rawlinson Poetry 146), was dedicated to Prince Henry; the other two, in the British Library (MS Harleian 68_{55}, art. $_{13}$, and MS Royal $_{12}$ A lxvi), were dedicated, respectively, to the King and to the Prince. A later collection, *Emblemata Varia* (*c*. 1621), is in the Folger Library. Though several distinguished scholars have thought it unlikely that the artist who drew these emblems could have done the drawing of *Titus Andronicus*, my examination of the manuscripts in the Bodleian Library and the British library has given me no reason to be sceptical. The emblems, belonging to a tradition in which human figures are used to symbolize ideas, are bound to differ from sketches of actors on a stage.[34]

Waith, however, states that "since Peacham's writing in the emblem manuscripts is in an Italian hand it is difficult to compare with the secretary hand of the text of *Titus Andronicus* beneath the drawing"[35], but Peter Croft, Librarian of King's College Library, Cambridge, does not exclude that Peacham was again the writer. He thinks, in fact, that:

he used the Longleat manuscript as an exercise in "writing fair" in the secretary script as the emblem books were exercises in fair writing in the italic style. […] The probabilities are in favour of the signature on the Longleat MS being in the same hand as those in the two emblem books (the two in the British Library). […] The italic 'Anno' in the date looks as though it is in the same hand as the text and also in the same hand as the signature.[36]

Croft's assumption consolidates my opinion that Peacham was the author of both the drawing and the text which, however, presents some alterations. Bate, for instance, notes that:

at the beginning of Aaron's line "I have done a thousand dreadfull thinges", he has "Tut", the reading of the second and third quartos (1600, 1611), not "But", the reading of the first quarto (1594). This strongly suggests that the transcription was not made in 1595, when only the first quarto would have been available. Furthermore, is another line of the

[31] Waith, p. 24.
[32] Hughes, p. 20.
[33] Waith, p. 24.
[34] Waith, p. 24.
[35] Waith, pp. 24-25.
[36] Quoted in Waith, p. 25.

transcription, the spelling "haystackes" reproduces Q3 and is close to Q2's "haystakes", whereas Q1 has "haystalks". Consultation of Q3 supports 1614-15, dates which fit well with Peacham's other writings. But, then, the fifth line of Tamora's speech is "Oh thinke my sonnes to bee as deare to mee", which corresponds to the first folio of 1623, whereas all the quartos have a singular "sonne". […] That two sons are mentioned in the heading and shown bound and kneeling in the drawing raises the possibility that an error in F determined the content of the illustration. On the other hand, the many references to sons, together with the absence of Alarbus from the entry direction in the quartos, may have caused Peacham's confusion. I do not see any way in which the Latin date could be, say, 1625, so my best guess is a date between 1604 and 1615 and Q2 or Q3 as copy-text.[37]

Regarding the change from "But" to "Tut", from "haystalks" to "haystackes", I totally agree with Waith who observes that,

it is conceivable that some copies of Q1 had this reading as the result of a press correction, or alternatively that both Peacham and the Q2 compositor misread the "B", which is somewhat smudged in the one surviving copy of Q1. […] The Q1 reading is either a dialectical variant or a printer's error which any transcriber might well alter to the standard form; in Q2 it became "haystakes", and then "haystackes" in Q3 and F1.[38]

I do not share his point of view about the change from "sonne" to "sonnes", instead, and particularly his comment on the invented stage direction, as he explains that:

it is difficult to see how anyone who had watched the performance could have supposed that more that one of Tamora's sons was executed, and indeed, in the last line of the speech, Peacham correctly copies "my first borne sonne", and then, after Aaron's speech, adds the son's name, "Alarbus". Confusion in copying Tamora's speech might have arisen from a misreading of "sonne": in line 106, where the colon could be taken for a broken "s". Seeing the plural form in the next line might then have mislead a copyist into "correcting" the singular form in line 108, as the Folio compositor also did. But only if the recollection of what happened on stage was indistinct could this confusion have resulted in devising a stage direction about "sonnes going to execution".[39]

Waith affirms that "it is difficult to see how anyone who had watched the performance could have supposed that more than one of Tamora's sons was executed", but this is what actually happens in the play, so in my opinion, the invented stage direction might refer to Alarbus, executed just at the beginning of the action, and even to Chiron and Demetrius, who end up in their mother's belly towards the end of it. The choice to adopt the term "sonnes" and not "sonne" in the stage direction, in my opinion, might have been purposely made by the author to confer a symbolic component on the text too. If we look at the script accurately, in fact, we can see that "sonnes" is always used by Tamora when she speaks to Titus and this contrasts with what occurs in the play as the singular form is sometimes found in the equivalent lines instead. The singular form is used by Tamora only once in the script, at the end of her speech, just as happens in the play. The discrepancy on the use of "sonnes" between the manuscript and the play, then, makes me think that it is worthless trying to

[37] Bate, pp. 40-41.
[38] Waith, pp. 25-26.
[39] Waith, p. 26.

understand from what text Peacham made his transcription. It seems to me, in fact, that the repetition of "sonnes" is intentionally created to indicate the execution of all three Tamora's sons and not just that of Alarbus. Consistently with my interpretation of the drawing, so, I think that the script needs to be interpreted symbolically too. The revenge theme in *Titus* begins to unfold just with the sacrifice of Alarbus and, at the end of the play, Titus takes his revenge on the Goths at the feast. These moments can be recollected just by the words "sonne" and "sonnes" present in Tamora's speech in the manuscript and, consequently, even the sequence of events that leads up to the finale comes to mind. It can be noticed, in fact, that after Tamora's speech, Titus not only replies to her saying that Alarbus has to be executed, but speaks to Aaron too, suggesting: "do you likewise prepare your self /And now at last repent your wicked life" (ll. 18-19 of the manuscript), which is Lucius's part in the play. Alarbus and Aaron's executions seem to happen at the same time, but we know, instead, that the first opens and the latter closes the play. The term "likewise" might have been used to give the impression that these moments were taking place simultaneously and summon up the whole play. As Bate interestingly points out,

> the text's conflation of passages from the first and last acts suggests that the drawing is a composite representation, analogous to the woodcut on the title-page of the 1615 edition of *The Spanish Tragedy* which juxtaposes two key moments in the play.[40]

The script, furthermore, to me, could also be a way to animate certain figures of the drawing, a way to make them "come alive", three-dimensional. The drawing shows the moment in which Tamora implores Titus to save her son /sons and the text "makes her speak". Aaron too seems lifelike when reading his poisonous death speech in the text. Alarbus, instead, does not speak a word in the play, but the manuscript ends just with the speech prefix "Alarbus". Even in this case, I do not believe that the author made a mistake, but I think that the empty space after it communicates something: it comments on the speechless horror of Aaron's long, unrepentant death speech evoking, so, the play's barbaric violence and human weakness. The text and the drawing, so, must be the product of the same mind to my view, composed more or less at the same time - the text is surely an addition

[40] Bate, p. 41.

to the drawing - so I reject Dover Wilson's idea that the lines were copied years later from the Folio.

Many questions remain, however, about the signs that follow the word Anno, m° q° g [or q?] q^{to}, and Waith's analysis is quite satisfactory in my view:

> the first and second parts of the date presumably stand for *millesimo quingentesimo* and the last for *quinto*. If the final letter were for *quarto* there would probably be one of various possible symbols for "r" in addition to the "to". Since a date in the 1590s is most probable, one would expect for the third letter an "n" for *nonogesimo*. A "g" is unknown as a numerical symbol, and another "q" (as it has sometimes been read) makes no sense. It is possible that the writer, intending to make an "n", inadvertently repeated the "q". The most satisfactory interpretation of the letters is "1595". (According to the legal calendar then in use in England, in which the starting-point of the year was 25 March, 1595 would have included what would now be thought of as 1 January to 24 March 1596).[41]

The problem with the interpretation of the date, so, is constituted by the penultimate sign, which cannot be considered a "g", as it is not known as a numerical symbol. Bate, instead, thinks that,

> the "g" is intended to stand for *gentesimo*: if *quingentesimo* is 500, *gentesimo* is 100 (i.e. a variant spelling of *centesimo*). If the final letter indicates 5, then, on the analogy of MDCV, the date would be 1605. But the last letter and its superscripts could also indicate *quarto* (4), *quarto decimo* (14) or *quinto decimo* (15); 1604, 1614 and 1615 are therefore alternative possibilities.[42]

It might be possible, then, that the last letter needs to be interpreted simply as *quarto* or *quinto*, even because the date would otherwise have five numbers considering *quarto decimo* for instance. Three signs out of four present a superscript which indicates that they are ordinal numbers, all but the penultimate one. I conjecture that it is a cardinal number instead, just number nine. Its writing, in fact, can resemble that of the letter "q" and, if it was so, under "Henricus Peacham" there would be the date "Anno 1595". But, as it is tricky to deal with this Roman date, I do not exclude the probability that "the writer, intending to make an "n", inadvertently repeated the "q"", as Professor Clarence Miller suggested to Waith.[43]

Confirmation of this date, however, is given by G. Harold Metz who declares:

> I discovered a watermark in the manuscript that had apparently not been noticed previously. It is in the form most common in early watermarks, a pot or a tankard, and it occurs almost exactly in the center of the first of the two leaves that constitute the manuscript. Vertically, the top of the watermark is located immediately below the "s" in "Victorious" (line 4 of the cento), and the wider bottom rests just above the end of "Andronicus" and the beginning of "staine" (line 15). It is approximately 44 mm. in height and 21 mm. in width at the widest part. Horizontally the mark is very slightly to the right of center. […] It is one of the larger sizes of pot with a crown. […] While there are no readily identifiable

[41] Waith, p. 23.
[42] Bate, p. 40.
[43] Waith, p. 23.

initials, immediately above the chasing is a mark that may possibly be a majuscule M. There is no countermark in the second leaf.[44]

Metz compared the watermark in the Longleat manuscript with other exemplars of the pot type, assuming that dating the manuscript could also have revealed the date of the play, but the analysis was not that satisfactory as he affirms:

but when I compared the watermark and its individual features with the hundreds of pot or tankard renderings in print in the Beazeley manuscript in the British Library, I found none that were exactly like the one in the Longleat manuscript. […] Students of watermarks will not find this surprising. Philip Gaskell says that "no two paper moulds of the hand press period were ever precisely identical" and that "the range of variant forms [of common watermarks] was enormous. It may be of incidental interest that the watermarks in the paper on which Shakespeare's will was written have similar, but by no means identical, pot marks.[45]

Metz, so, has discovered that no recorded watermark is identical, that a few are very close, but also that "similarity in the design of the watermarks does not automatically imply closeness in date of origin, though it usually does. Furthermore it is well known that evidence from watermarks cannot establish a date with precision".[46] His research leads him to conclude in the end what follows:

after making all due allowances, and taking into account the absence of a countermark which tends to indicate an early date, it seems reasonably safe to conclude that the paper on which the sketch was drawn and the cento written can be dated in the last decade of the sixteenth century, thus lending significant support to the date of 1594 or 1595 noted in Latin in the manuscript.[47]

This date appears on another page of the folded sheet, where someone has written in a relatively modern hand "Henrye Peachams Hande 1595", but this may be a forgery by John Payne Collier, as Waith observes[48]. Joseph Quincy Adams, in fact, regarding the several pencil annotations present in the document, says:

that these annotations were made by John Payne Collier seems highly likely; every letter and almost every complete word finds an exact counterpart in numerous specimens of Collier's correspondence that I have examined. Further, the ink endorsement added on the spare page, "Henrye Peachams Hande 1595", may also have been the work of Collier; at least, each letter is identical in its formation with corresponding letters in certain Collier forgeries now in the Folger Shakespeare Library.[49]

Metz also commented on the pencilled annotations and his point of view is different from that of Adams. He in fact maintains that,

[44] Metz, G. Harold, "*Titus Andronicus*: A Watermark in the Longleat Manuscript", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36, 1985, p. 450.
[45] Metz, p. 452.
[46] Metz, p. 453.
[47] Metz, p. 453.
[48] Waith, p. 23.
[49] Quoted in Metz, p. 450.

concerning the note on the spare page (leaf 2[a]) of the manuscript, Adams may be right; but he is certainly wrong in attributing the pencil notes to Collier. They are clearly in the hand of Canon John Edward Jackson (1805-91), who was librarian to the Marquess and who arranged and indexed the Portland papers during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Numerous examples of his handwriting are preserved at Longleat House.[50]

The only recorded performance of *Titus* in 1595/6 was the one on 1st January 1596 in Sir John Harington's country house but, since the document seems to have been realized earlier, I do not think that this performance could have inspired the author. Peacham, as Hughes suggests, "as an undergraduate at Cambridge whose home was in London, could have seen one of Henslowe's summer tours (1594) or an otherwise unrecorded performance of *Titus Andronicus*"[51].

2 . The Longleat manuscript as a reflection on the Shakespearean theatre

The only undeniable truth about the Longleat manuscript is that it illustrates how a contemporary of Shakespeare, with some experience of actual performance, visualized the play. Furthermore, it supplies us with valuable evidence about costumes. Titus wears the laurel crown, the tunic, the toga and sandals, while the attendant soldiers on the left wear contemporary armour. The other figures wear a modern dress too. As Bate affirms, "there could be no better precedent for modern productions which are determinedly eclectic in their dress, combining ancient and modern".[52] At the time of Shakespeare, in actual fact, the players did not often wear costumes in the modern sense. Shakespeare's company, in fact, used normal clothes, not things made specially for a production, even though some of the lower class actors wore clothes and colours that should only be worn by lords and ladies, or even kings. Fashion was really important and people in different places on the social scale dressed in clothes appropriate to their social class; there were even laws about what colours the clothes could be, depending on one's place in society. Almost every account of going to a play by a traveller, in fact, mentions how splendidly the actors were dressed and Thomas

[50] Metz, pp. 450-451.
[51] Hughes, p. 21.
[52] Bate, p. 43.

Platter, one of these visitors, even found out how they got such splendid clothes. Nobles gave their old clothes to their servants, who sold them to the players.[53] The circulation of rich apparel, however, was more complex than Platter realised. In fact, as Gary Taylor points out,

> the early modern economy of England depended upon the production and distribution of worked cloth; increasingly, the London cloth trade created and satisfied a demand for sartorial novelty, for the changing fashions satirised in plays like Middleton's *Your Five Gallants* (which begins in a pawnshop). […] Clothing was so important to the actors because it so quickly and efficiently established recognisable social identities: gender, status, occupation, wealth.[54]

Furthermore, from Henslowe, the Revels Office, and contemporary German accounts of English tours, it is known that the players cared much for magnificence and that historical or geographical accuracy did not bother them. Hamlet, for instance, wore doublet and hose and Cleopatra dressed like a wealthy Elizabethan lady.[55] This could explain better the mixture of modern dress and some special costumes - probably for the leading actors - present in the Longleat drawing. Historical accuracy, so, is not to be found in it.

Another interesting aspect of the Longleat drawing is that all seven actors are depicted in profile. As Hughes states,

> the stage grouping is entirely lateral, an awkward arrangement on the thrust stage of the public playhouses, but appropriate enough on an improvised stage in the great hall of a manor or college, where the players would probably use the dais at one end of the room or the screens at the other. Perhaps Peacham's experience of theatre was obtained at touring performances in spaces of this kind. The picture shows that while the actors' torsos are "cheated" towards the audience, their faces are turned inward towards each other. This implies that they did not follow the convention of tragic acting used in French classical and restoration theatres, in which each speaker in turn stepped out and delivered a *tirade* straight to the audience.[56]

Since there were no actresses in Shakespeare's company, but boys who played female roles, I agree with Hughes when, observing Tamora's depiction, he believes that the figure represents a man: "the nose is large, the mouth is thin, and if Tamora were to stand, "she" would tower over both Titus and Aaron"[57]. Aaron is easily recognizable on the drawing from the pitch blackness of his skin and, thinking of Shakespeare's company, I would like to note that Shakespeare wrote for white actors painted black. Apparently, nobody specialised in black characters. Any actor in fact could play

[53] Mackeith, p. 28.
[54] Taylor, Gary, "Shakespeare Plays on Renaissance Stages", in Wells, Stanley, Stanton, Sarah, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 13.
[55] Styan, J. L., *Shakespeare's Stagecraft*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967, p. 34.
[56] Hughes, p. 22.
[57] Hughes, p. 22.

them, as anyone could paint his face black. Blackface roles, then, were apparently written for different actors: that of Aaron, for instance, for some sharer other than Burbage.[58] Aaron's make-up, however, prevented him from appearing in any other part, as it usual happened when actors were able to leave the stage long enough to change costume.[59]

There is one more striking feature to highlight in the Longleat drawing: the complete absence of background. *Titus* is the only Elizabethan play of which we have record of a private performance, which also proves that the tragedy was put on in the provinces as well as in London. It was performed by London actors in the household of Sir John Harington, at Burley-on-the-Hill in Rutland, on 1st January 1596, and this is what Anthony Bacon's French secretary, Jacques Petit, wrote about the performance: "the spectacle has more value than the subject"[60]. As Gary Taylor points out,

> in Shakespeare and Peele's play "the spectacle" was provided entirely by actors. One man's costume illustrates the grandeur that was Rome; one man's skin colour displays the exoticism of a far-flung empire; "others as many as can be" (according to the stage direction at I.i.69) carry as many halberds and swords as possible, dozens representing legions. […] Actors did not have to compete with scenery; actors *were* scenery.[61]

It is wrong, in fact, to look for evidence in Elizabethan plays of "scenery". As Michael Hattaway observes in fact,

> The *Oxford English Dictionary* does not record the word in its modern theatrical sense until 1774, and when Dryden used the word in 1695 he was using it in the sense of the Italian *scenario* or, as Dr Johnson defines it, "The disposition and consecution of the scenes of a play". Neither is it correct on the other hand to think of Elizabethan dramatists writing for an unadorned and unworthy scaffold, and expecting all that is visual in their plays to be conjured up in their audience's minds by verbal imagery alone. […] We can begin by examining the use of properties, and indeed properties, things used by players, give us a useful concept to set against the concept of scenery, physical devices used to give an impression of a specific location, a notion which is un-Elizabethan. A lot of the visual devices were portable: crowns, swords, scutcheons, and targets are often to be found in stage directions. […] Larger non-portable properties were also important.[62]

It was the actor, along with his costume, so, who filled the fairly empty platform, without the support of variable lighting, sets and any equivalent to the modern curtain. This means that large properties, such as beds or scaffolds for executions, for instance, had to be carried on the stage and then removed when no longer suitable. But also the few and commonplace properties - stools,

---

[58] Taylor, p. 11.
[59] Hughes, pp. 162-163.
[60] Gustav Ungerer, "An Unrecorded Elizabethan Performance of *Titus Andronicus*", *Shakespeare Studies*, 14, 1961, p. 102.
[61] Taylor, pp. 14 -15.
[62] Hattaway, Michael, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre, Plays in Performance*, London: Routledge, 1982, pp. 34, 36.

dishes for the banquets, ladders, bows, arrows, etc. - which could be found in any yeoman's cottage, were set and taken away by the actors. Corpses as well were carried off. As a matter of fact, Chiron and Demetrius are required to exit with the dead Nurse by the stage direction in the second scene of the fourth act (IV.ii.173). As Hughes points out, "in *Titus Andronicus* the main stage is a neutral space transformed, in the spectator's imagination, into a forest (II.iii) or the interior of Titus's house (V.iii) as dialogue or action suggests".[63] So, another essential ingredient in the staging and stage conventions of the age of Shakespeare was the spectator's imaginative participation. If nowadays we are accustomed to many effects and scenic aids which create the scenery, an Elizabethan playgoer, instead, referred to it in his lines, so that the audience could visualize the scenery needed for that particular moment of the action. In *Titus*, for instance, in the second scene of the second act, the stage direction calls for Titus, Lucius, Quintus and Martius, with hounds and horns, and Marcus to enter. It is Titus who opens the scene with the following words:

The hunt is up, the morn is bright and grey,
The fields are fragrant, and the woods are green.
Uncouple here, and let us make a bay,
And wake the emperor and his lovely bride,
And rouse the prince, and ring a hunter's peal
That all the court may echo with the noise.

(II.ii.1-6)

Titus, so, lets the audience understand that the hunt is taking place, revealing the place and also the precise moment of the day in which it occurs. The colour of early morning light, in fact, was sometimes described as "grey" without connotations of cloud.[64] With regard to the "hounds", then, as Hughes suggests, "even if real ones were used, it is difficult to imagine how they could have been induced to "yellow" on cue. A cry of players in the tiring-house, imitating a cry of hounds, is more probable".[65] Hunting scenes were often accompanied by horn notes and, probably, by green costumes and apt weapons. The actor, therefore, as Styan explains,

has to do more than play in character: he has also to play as if he were a chorus, setting and lighting the stage and prompting a response to it. Any character may be called upon to report the place and the time, and even a major character may find himself made the excuse for a word-picture. This convention has the effect of bringing together the action on the stage, the thoughts of the character and the spirit of the scene, ensuring that the final image is received as

[63] Hughes, p. 158.
[64] Hughes, p. 77.
[65] Hughes, p. 77.

it was conceived – as a whole. Shakespeare practices this technique from his earliest plays. *Titus Andronicus*, II, iii, is a scene depicting the adulterous love of Tamora, the revengeful murder of Bassianus and the rape of Lavinia, but these horrors are prepared with simple irony by Titus's incongruous woodland sketch.[66]

Unfortunately, Jacques Petit supplies us with scanty information about the performance and of that memorable night we learn that professional players from London were engaged for an evening performance, which, as Ungerer observes, "being modelled on court practices, must have begun about ten o'clock and dragged on into the small hours of the next morning".[67] It is hard to assign the Burley performance to a precise company involved in the stage history of *Titus*, even though the Lord Chamberlain's is the most probable since, as Ungerer notes, "their inclusion in the title-page of the Second Quarto of 1600 might well mean that they had taken over the rights in *Titus Andronicus* after the performances of June 1594"[68]. Whatever the company may be, however, Petit seemed to have somehow been impressed by their performance. This is Ungerer's compelling point of view on Petit's comment:

It may be that Petit himself found *Titus Andronicus* boring because he was not able to follow the English dialogue and because it lacked classical form and that consequently his attention was directed more towards the actors than towards the dramatist's words. On the other hand, we recall that the only contemporary drawing which illustrates a play by Shakespeare is the sketch executed by Henry Peacham in 1595. Do the facts that Peacham chose this play as the subject of his design and that Petit emphasized the quality of "la monstre" serve to suggest that special attention was given by the actors to the production of this tragic drama?[69]

Obviously, no definite answer exists to Ungerer's question, but I think the second point to be more probable. *Titus*, as Bate acknowledges, "was one of the dramatist's most inventive plays, a complex and self-conscious improvisation upon classical sources, most notably the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid"[70]; it should have been, so, an attractive and challenging novelty for the actors to perform. If Petit missed the quality of its verse, I think that he could not have misunderstood and got bored when the climactic banquet took place. The stage direction which anticipates the feast, in fact ("Hoboyes. A table brought in. Trumpets sounding, enter Titus like a cook, placing the dishes, and Lavinia with a veil over her face […]" (V.iii.25)) seems to introduce simply a formal dinner with a

[66] Styan, p. 38.
[67] Ungerer, p. 105.
[68] Ungerer, p. 106.
[69] Ungerer, p. 107.
[70] Bate, p. 3.

dutiful host and nobody – at the table or in the audience - would expect to participate to a cannibal and murderous banquet instead.

3 . *Titus*' s stage history: from the Restoration to Peter Brook's production in 1955

> In the original Elizabethan production actors were usually just given their lines, with their cue for each speech. That must have been very hard for the boy playing Lavinia. We rehearse for six weeks and we feel we don't have enough time. Back then, people didn't have very long at all – perhaps a day or so. I wonder how good it was. They must have been like stories that were told. They must have been reacting a lot – being in the moment. In a scene like the book scene when Lavinia is driving the action, she would have to know what they say before they say it, because it is their actions which make them say what they say. The boy must have known what they were going to say.[71]

This valuable inside information is given by a latter-day Lavinia, Laura Rees, who played in Lucy Bailey's production at the new Globe in London, in 2006. It is very interesting to observe how things have changed since Shakespeare's day, so let us discover more about *Titus*'s stage history before considering some present-day productions.

As we have already seen, surviving evidence regarding the tragedy of *Titus Andronicus* is to be found among Henslowe's notes in his Diary, where it was registered as "new" on 23 January 1594 at the Rose, in the Longleat Manuscript and in Anthony Bacon's French secretary comment, witness to the performance. It is evident that the tragedy made an overwhelming impact when it appeared in the early 1590s and this can also be attested by the number of quarto printings – three between 1594 and 1611 before its canonization in the definitive Folio of 1623 –, a clear sign of its popularity. But there is no trace of any performance of *Titus* between Jonson's joke in 1614[72] and the closing of the playhouses in 1642. Obviously, this does not mean that none took place. Immediately after the Restoration *Titus* is on the boards again. Hughes presents us with some evidence concerning this period:

> after 1642, few new plays were written, but old ones seem to have been eagerly read, and when playing resumed in 1660, these were the players' only stock until some new plays could be written. The right to perform the old repertoire was vital, and Sir William Davenant of the new Duke's Company found himself at a great disadvantage because

[71] http://globe-education.org/communities/lavinia/bulletins/rehearsal-notes-5 , "Watershed Moments", pp. 2-3.
[72] See p. 4 in the first chapter of the present thesis "The Context of *Titus Andronicus*".

practically the entire stock had been inherited by Thomas Killigrew, who held the patent of the King's Company. In December, the Lord Chamberlain transferred to Davenant the right to perform nine of Shakespeare's plays, on condition of his "reforming" and "making them fitt" for his company. The balance of the Shakespeare canon, including *Titus Andronicus*, remained with the King's Company: in January 1668 the Lord Chamberlain listed it amongst 21 Shakespeare plays in "A Catalogue of part of His Ma[tes] Servants Playes as they were formerly acted at the Blackfryers & now allowed of to his Ma[tes] Servants at y[e] New Theatre". Ownership did not necessarily imply performance, however. Listing 36 plays in the company's active repertoire at this period, John Downes names only five by Shakespeare; last of all is *Titus Andronicus*.[73]

Considering *Titus*'s theatrical history, one cannot ignore Edward Ravenscroft's adaptation, *Titus Andronicus; or, the rape of Lavinia* published in 1687. Ravenscroft affirms that if you

Compare the Old Play with this you'l finde that none in all that Authors Works ever receiv'd greater Alterations or Additions, the Language not only refin'd, but many Scenes entirely New: Besides most of the principal Characters heighten'd, and the Plot much encreas'd.[74]

Even though Ravenscroft declares that his adaptation is "confirmed a Stock-Play"[75], it presents, however, some limitations. What is important to notice in the first instance, is that Ravenscroft altered *Titus Andronicus* to suit the theatre of his day; "if he had not", as Hughes points out, "it would never have been performed at all. Such stage vitality as the tragedy enjoyed between 1678 and our century, it chiefly owed to him".[76] Not only the audience had changed since Shakespeare's time, being smaller, differently composed and with new tastes, but also the Restoration playhouse. It presented, in fact, a proscenium arch and pictorial scenery which imposed new conventions. So, it was impossible to conceive the scenic neutrality in the Elizabethan manner, as every scene had to be clearly and specifically located now.[77] Then, for instance, as Hughes observes,

under the fluid stage conventions which prevailed in the Elizabethan playhouse, actors in a new scene probably entered before their predecessors were fairly off the stage. Thus, entrances were much more important than exits. But in a scenic theatre the stage must be cleared before the set can be changed. Before turning his attention to the arrival of actors in a new scene, the spectator watches the old ones depart. As a result, actors insist on "strong" exits, particularly at the end of an act, because now there will be an interval during which a dramatic exit will have time to make a lasting impression. Ravenscroft cut and rearranged to provide what was needed. Act I ends as Bassianus abducts Lavinia and Titus pursues, Act 2 as Chiron and Demetrius set out to rape Lavinia, Act 3 as Marcus leads the mutilated girl away to show her father, and Act 4 with Lucius's exile. In each case the audience asks, "What will happen next?" and is left in suspense through the interval. That question usually concerns Lavinia: she is in the new subtitle, and is generally more prominent than in Shakespeare. After all, this theatre had actresses.[78]

Lucius's young son too was worked up to make the part suitable for an actress; Elizabethan practice, then, was completely reversed. Re-named "Junius", he has also acquired a more active part

[73] Hughes, p. 23.
[74] Quoted in Hughes, pp. 23-24.
[75] Quoted in Hughes, p. 23.
[76] Hughes, p. 24.
[77] Hughes, p. 24.
[78] Hughes, pp. 24-25.

in the plot. He, in fact, uses a bold stratagem to tempt Chiron and Demetrius to enter Titus's garden, where they will be murdered. But the most striking change is Aaron's role: with more lines, he becomes the star part. As Hughes explains,

his captivity and torture are made a prominent feature of the climactic banquet. A screen is withdrawn and Tamora is shown her paramour on the rack, where he remains to the end, when flames engulf him. By surviving to the end he becomes the arch-villain, because he gets the last word, and his enemies settle with him last. […] Aaron's child is not born during the action of the play, but brought to him by a Gothic woman, whom he murders. It is her husband's revenge to capture the Moor and bring him to justice: it all makes simple, direct sense.[79]

The "fly" and the "archery" scenes are not present in Ravenscroft's adaptation, maybe because the scenery was expensive and change could be awkward as Hughes suggests, but the Clown was cut because Restoration audiences were unaccustomed to comic scenes in tragedy. Ravenscroft tried also to humanise some of the characters' motives: if Shakespeare's Titus barbarously permits Lucius to sacrifice Alarbus to the spirits of his dead brothers, in Ravenscroft's version Titus's sons have made him swear revenge because Tamora once murdered their captive brother.[80] But Ravenscroft goes against classical precepts having Titus's hand chopped off on stage; violence, then, is not spared at all in the fifth act. As Hughes relates,

The last scene uses the resources of the new scenery and machines for sensation. Fire and the rack are not the only embellishments: a curtain is drawn aside to show Tamora "*the heads and hands of* Dem. *and* Chir. *hanging up against the wall. Their bodys in Chairs in bloody Linnen*". At the end, Tamora stabs the baby: "She has out-done me in my own Art", Aaron cries; "Kill'd her own Child". And then, sublimely evil, supremely funny: "Give it me – I'le eat it".[81]

In the concluding scene Aaron is sentenced by Lucius to be "burnt and Rack'd to death" and, as already seen, the play ends as the flames leap about the Moor. I do not agree with Hazelton Spencer who considers this "infinitely better … as tragedy-of-blood technique" than Shakespeare's ending.[82]

Curiously, "shortly after the trend toward a return to Shakespeare's text set in, Ravenscroft's adaptation faded from the stage and *Titus Andronicus* entered upon its long night".[83] Metz tells us more about *Titus*'s following stage records:

Subsequent to the 1724 performances at Lincoln's Inn Fields, it was next produced in 1839 in a version by the American actor N. H. Bannister, who, according to a Philadelphia reviewer, "turned this work of Shakespeare into a beautiful play". Unfortunately, we do not know how this was accomplished, since the adapted text has not come down

[79] Hughes, p. 25.
[80] Hughes, pp. 24-25.
[81] Hughes, p. 26.
[82] Quoted in Metz, G. Harold, "Stage History of *Titus Andronicus*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 28, 1977, p. 157.
[83] Metz, p. 157.

to us. It was presented four times at the Walnut Street Theatre on 30 and 31 January and 1 and 2 February 1839, the first production of *Titus* in the New World.
The celebrated American Negro actor, Ira Aldridge, who had earned the pseudonym "African Roscius", took up the tragedy of the Andronici in 1849. Aldridge, who had been acting in Britain since 1825, developed a popular repertoire centered about *Othello* […]. By the middle forties, being in need of new parts, Aldridge decided to try *Titus Andronicus*. In collaboration with C. A. Somerset […], he produced a version of *Titus* in which he acted the part of Aaron from 1849 to 1860. Although this adaptation has not survived, comments in the press provide evidence that it was a radical departure from Shakespeare's play. In April 1857 when Aldridge played Aaron at the Britannia, Hoxton, *The Era* commented: […] the deflowerment of Lavinia, cutting out her tongue, chopping off her hands, and the numerous decapitations and gross language which occur in the original are totally omitted and a play not only presentable but actually attractive is the result. Aaron is elevated into a noble and lofty character. Tamora, […] is a chaste though decidedly strong-minded female, and her connection with the Moor appears to be of a legitimate description; her sons Chiron and Demetrius are dutiful children, obeying the behests of their mother …[84]

"Mr. Aldridge", as the *Brighton Herald* reviewer said when he appeared in Brighton in October 1859, "has constructed a melodrama "of intense interest" of which Aaron is the hero"[85], which critics found "really powerful" or "the weak invention of the modern dramatic cobbler" according to taste.[86] The last recorded performance of Aldridge as Aaron took place in Glasgow on 7 November 1860. What followed was another gap of 63 years.

In 1923 begins a new chapter in the stage history of *Titus* with a production by Robert Atkins who, together with Lilian Baylis, wanted the Old Vic to be the first theatre to "complete the set", and after *Titus* only *Troilus and Cressida* was left.[87] Metz imparts some valuable information about this first twentieth-century production:

although the production ran for only nine performances, it was well received and much discussed, some of the comments indicating a degree of surprise that it could be staged in a manner which was less than harrowing to a modern audience. Gordon Crosse tells us: "… the play proved thoroughly enjoyable in spite of the horrors, which were by no means glossed over. The audience took them very well until near the end when they refused to take them seriously any longer. There was a murmur of amusement when Titus overpowered Chiron and Demetrius with one arm, and at the end some of us fairly broke down and laughed when the deaths of Tamora, Titus, and Saturninus followed each other within about five seconds, as in a burlesque melodrama…" […] The part of Aaron dominated the action, as it has with so many other productions since 1923.[88]

In fact, Doris Westwood, who served as a prompter at the Old Vic, let us know that

the honours of the evening went to Mr. Hayes as Aaron the Moor… I believe the venom, the cruelty and wickedness he put into the part, his rendering of the horrible lines, his inhuman laughter and yet, at a certain moment, the sudden great tenderness he showed for the safety of his infant son, made the whole performance one of exceptional brilliance.[89]

With this production, so, as Harcourt Williams in Old Vic Saga records, "[…] the Old Vic had in ten years [1914-1923] given the whole cycle of the Shakespearean plays. This achievement had

[84] Metz, pp. 157-159.
[85] Quoted in Metz, p. 159.
[86] Quoted in Hughes, p. 29.
[87] Hughes, p. 31.
[88] Metz, p. 159.
[89] Quoted in Metz, pp. 159-160.

never been equalled or attempted by any other theatre".[90] What followed was a decided lull until 1951, broken only by two performances given by Yale University students in New Haven on 14 and 15 April 1924.

In 1951 *Titus Andronicus* was revived again with the presentation of an abridgement by Peter Myers and Kenneth Tynan as part of a Season of Grand Guignol in the Irving Theatre. Its peculiarities were to last only thirty minutes and that Aaron's part was omitted. Something different, therefore, from the previous performances in which Aaron seemed to be the only key-element and star of the play. The result was successful and *The Daily Telegraph* reviewer commented that "this version … made one thing clear: horrors are preferable when accompanied by Shakespearean verse"[91].

The "Andronican" activity went on with the Marlowe Society at Cambridge, with two performances in March 1953 which were judged by *The Times* in this way:

> The Marlowe Society's treatment of [*Titus Andronicus*] gives us perhaps a hint of how [a modern production] might be managed … […] They act the play bravely and violently, and find amidst the brutalities more than one note of beauty and pathos we should be sorry to miss.[92]

At about the same time the BBC Third Programme broadcast a performance with Wilfrid Walter and George Hayes of the 1923 Old Vic presentation in the parts of Titus and Aaron, while the Antioch Shakespeare Festival produced at Yellow Springs, Ohio, in July and August 1953, seven Greek and Roman plays, giving eight performances of *Titus*. It was offered in America for the first time and, except for *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, the plays were presented as satirical tragedies.[93] On 17 October 1954, then, at Toynbee Hall in London, an amateur production took place set in medieval Japan.[94] It is time now to take into account the years 1955 through 1957, which constitute the busy time for *Titus*.

Peter Brook set up a very successful production in 1955, which ran for 29 performances at the Stratford Memorial Theatre, beginning 16 August. The part of Titus was played not as a

[90] Quoted in Metz, p. 160.
[91] Quoted in Metz, p. 160.
[92] Quoted in Metz, p. 160.
[93] *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 5, 1954, p. 67, quoted in Metz, p. 161.
[94] *The Stage*, 14 October 1954, quoted in Metz, p. 161.

conquering general, but as an enormously weary old veteran and became a triumph for the producer and for Laurence Olivier, whose acting was applauded.[95] Anthony Quayle as Aaron, Maxine Audley as Tamora, and Vivien Leigh as Lavinia were the other leading actors. It is very interesting to know what impression Brook's production had on Stratford audiences and J. C. Trewin has recorded it, as reported below:

Peter Brook … began the night in a brooding Rome (his own set) where the music (his own "Quarter-ear" *musique concrète*) wailed and thudded; processions coiled; and priests, green-habited, moved in hieratic solemnity. When Titus appeared, in triumph from the Goths, he was a veteran white-haired warrior, a man desperately tired. All the lines of his body drooped; his eyes, among the seamed crowsfeet, were weary. Standing in mid-stage like some crumbling limestone crag, he greeted Rome because it was a thing of custom, but there was no spring in his voice, no light. This was a formal business that he had to endure; later there might be surcease from these eternal wars, these heroic rants, this useless rhetoric. At once Titus became real to us; and, having fixed him 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 stage and theatre with a swell of heroic acting. […] Lavinia's mutilation was not insisted on, and she did not hold that dreadful bowl between her stumps. But enough remained for us to acknowledge a collector's rare primitive: the night and the Festival season were lanced with fire.[96]

Richard David found Brook's "romantic play … still-born":

Brook not only produced the play but designed scenery, costumes and musical accompaniment, and he achieved a quite extraordinary unity and concentration of effect. The staging was powerfully simple: three great squared pillars, set angle-on to the audience, fluted, and bronzy-grey in colour. The two visible sides could be swung back, revealing inner recesses that might be used as entrances or, in the central pillar, as a two-storeyed inner stage. This was the tomb of the Andronici, sombre and shadowy against the vivid green of the priests' robes and mushroom-hats; festooned with lianes it became the murder-pit and the forest floor above it; stained a yellowish natural-wood colour it provided a background of Roman frugality to the bereaved and brooding Titus at his family table; blood-red, it made a macabre eyrie of the upper chamber from which the Revenger peers out upon his victims, come in fantastic disguise to entrap him. In the court scenes the closed pillars, supported by heavy side-gratings of the same colour and hangings of purple and green, richly suggested the civilized barbarity of late imperial Rome.… The compulsive and incantatory nature of the production… was reinforced by the musical effects, all of a marvellous directness… A slow see-saw of two bass notes, a semitone apart, wrought the tension of the final scene to an unbearable pitch, and ceased abruptly, with breath-taking effect, as the first morsel of son-pie passed Tamora's lips. Even more harrowing were the hurrying carillon of electronic bells that led up to the abduction of Lavinia and the slow plucking of harp-strings, like drops of blood falling into a pool, that accompanied her return to the stage… […] Who could forget the return of the ravishers with Lavinia? They bring her through the leafy arch that was the central pillar and leave her standing there, right arm outstretched and head drooping away from it, left arm crooked with the wrist at her mouth. Her hair falls in disorder over face and shoulders, and from wrist and wrist-and-mouth trail scarlet streamers, symbols of her mutilation. The two assassins retreat from her, step by step, looking back at her, on either side of the stage. Their taunts fall softly, lingeringly, as if they themselves were in a daze at the horror of their deed; and the air tingles and reverberates with the slow plucking of harp-strings…[97]

The Memorial Theatre became the second theatre to complete its presentation of the Shakespeare canon, even if, as Trewin states, "Stratford had always refused to believe that the casualty-roll in blank verse could hold a stage or an audience… After Peter Brook's production the play would not

[95] Metz, p. 161.
[96] Quoted in Metz, pp. 161-162.
[97] David, Richard, "Drams of Eale", *Shakespeare Survey*, X, 1957, pp. 126-127.

be scornfully dismissed".[98] But, even though Laurence Olivier (Titus) observed that "after generations of neglect, it looks like becoming one of Shakespeare's most popular efforts, turning Hamlet green with envy"[99], some critics who were delighted with the production nevertheless thought it illegitimate. The play was "twaddle", they said – a crude Elizabethan pot-boiler, a "horror comic" without "poetic characterization", a "preposterous melodrama" and a "bloody awful play".[100] Hughes tells us that

> Brook was accused of making a travesty by cutting extensively, ritualising the violence and making *Titus Andronicus* seem a better play than it really is. Critics pointed to the deletion of the last five words of Titus's notorious line about Chiron and Demetrius, "Why there they are, *both bakèd in this pie*" (V.iii.59). Perhaps it is our changed sense of humour which makes this a predestinate "bad laugh", but Brook had no practical alternative to cutting it. Again, custom had rendered audiences in the 1950s almost incapable of accepting any convention other than proscenium-arch naturalism. They could not be expected to tolerate Marcus's Ovidian apostrophe to Lavinia. Brook cut it, in the way any modern director cuts outdated topical allusions. Critics lamented the loss of the play's "best" poetry, but like any good production, Brook's found new poetic moments.[101]

In Brook's production, imagination "translates" the play's violence. Chiron and Demetrius were slain off-stage, Titus swiftly wrapped his lopped arm in his cloak[102] and Lavinia, as already seen, did not hold the bowl between her stumps. The blood dripping down her body is represented by long crimson scarves falling from her sleeves and mouth. Even thought the hand-cutting was concealed, however, most people fainted after the "nice scrunch of bone" coming from off-stage, as a theatre official explained.[103] As Hughes points out,

> Shakespeare probably wanted to shock his audience. But for an audience in 1955, Brook knew that the methods of 1594 would produce the opposite of the desired effect. So he used means which would have the corresponding effect in *his* time.[104]

Post-war man's vision, in fact, as Brook explains, is "locked to the dark end of the spectrum". *Titus Andronicus* appealed to everyone because "it was obviously for everyone in the audience about the most modern of emotions – about violence, hatred, cruelty, pain"[105]. Brook believes that *Titus Andronicus* "does come up astonishingly in performance"[106] and certainly the total of 90

[98] Quoted in Metz, p. 163.
[99] Quoted in Hughes, p. 32.
[100] Quoted in Hughes, p. 32.
[101] Hughes, p. 40.
[102] See note 2 in Hughes, p. 43.
[103] Quoted in Hughes, p. 43.
[104] Hughes, p. 43.
[105] Quoted in Hughes, p. 40.
[106] Quoted in Hughes, pp. 43-44.

performances in the two seasons (1955 and 1957) can prove so. Let us discover if subsequent productions repeated the same success.

4 . *Titus* spreads

Titus arrived in Australia only in 1958, in Sidney's Independent Theatre, where John Alden produced the play for Doris Fitton. It had a four–week run. In the same year, then, *Titus* was also presented by the Sidney University Players. But it was in the United States, in 1967, that the play got almost the same success achieved ten years before in England. The year started with a production by the Center Stage in Baltimore directed by Douglas Seale, which was performed 26 times in a modern setting and tried to apply Shakespeare's message to contemporary events. This is what the *Baltimore Sun*'s reviewer wrote about it:

> Saturninus … bears a marked resemblance to Mussolini, flaunts readily recognizable Fascist insignia and has a retinue of followers dressed in black shirts. The Andronicus group wear official Nazi uniforms … and Titus … is made up to look like a classic Prussian officer … The Goths who … appear as a sort of liberating army led by Titus's sole surviving son Lucius, wear clothes reminiscent of the Allied forces in World War II, Demetrius and Chiron wear leather jackets, brandish switchblade knives and ride about on motorcycles … when Titus, having just baked the Empress' sons into a pie, appeared at the banquet in a tall chef's hat I could not help but join in the general laughter. My reactions like the production itself were confused.[107]

Another interesting interpretation of *Titus* took place the same year. Joseph Papp, in fact, essayed his second presentation of the play in the 1967 New York Shakespeare Festival, in an original production by Gerald Freedman at the outdoor Delacorte Theatre in Central Park. Freedman tells us of his method in his Introduction to the Folio Society edition of *Titus Andronicus*:

> … if one wants to create a fresh emotional response to the violence, blood and multiple mutilations of Titus Andronicus, one must shock the imagination and subconscious with visual images that recall the richness and depth of primitive rituals; with the power of poetic conventions drawn from the ancient theatres of Greece and the Orient; with instruments and sounds that nudge our ear without being clearly explicit or melodic; with fragments of myth and ceremony and childhood fantasies that still have the power to set our imaginations racing. Thus the choice of music, mask and chorus seemed inevitable to me in order to make the violence, gore and horror of this play more meaningful and emotional to a contemporary audience. The solution to a more immediate response seemed to lie in a poetic abstraction of the events existing in an emotional compression of time and space … I wanted the audience to accept the mutilations and decapitations and multiple deaths with belief instead of humour … The solution had to be in a poetic abstraction of time and in vivid impressionistic images rather than in naturalistic action and this led me to masks and

[107] Quoted in Metz, p. 165.

music and ritual. […] The setting was non-literal but inspired by the forms and sense of decay and rot seen in the ruins of Roman Antiquity. The costumes recreated an unknown people of a non-specific time. The inspiration was Roman-Byzantine and feudal Japanese although again there was no literal use of any specific detail. […] In one of the play's most difficult moments, the audience audibly gasped when the two heads of Titus's sons were brought on stage. Although they were only empty half-masks on visibly empty wire frames, the audience had accepted the masks as the reality and were properly horrified and disgusted without being led to reflect on mundane and naturalistic detail. The poetic image had successfully substituted for the reality.[108]

This new method was well-received by critics and what follows is what the New York Times commented about the handling of horrors:

The slaughter of Lavinia, Andronicus, Tamora and Saturninus in the ghoulish banquet scene that closes the play … is handled symbolically. A shadowy chorus envelops each figure in a billowing red cloth, which unwinds to reveal a black cloth underneath. Instead of pitching forward, the victim – head and shoulders now swathed in black – remains vertical: statues instead of corpses. The effect is powerful, dignified and almost liturgical. It is this element of ritual – emphasized by half-masks, choral chant, stylized gesture – that takes Shakespeare's penny-dreadful out of the gutter.[109]

Mildred Kuner affirms that "symbolism rather than gory realism was what made this production so stunning", and that

In keeping with the concept, the actors preserved the dignity of the piece. Most notable were Olympia Dukakis as Tamora, no longer a ridiculously vengeful queen but the essence of revenge, an almost impersonal force in her savagery; Jack Hollander as Titus, destroying Tamora's sons with a calm that suggested Lear's peace after the storm; Erin Martin as Lavinia, her exquisite movements reflecting the dumb grief of a creature trapped in a hostile, senseless world.[110]

No doubt, Freedman underlined *Titus*'s versatility but, in Kuner's words, he "conceived of it, according to the program notes, as more of a ritual than a tragedy".

The German director Dieter Reible produced the only recorded presentation of the play on the African continent, in a version translated into Afrikaans by the poet Breyten Breytenback. These are the comments about the performance:

Shakespeare's rarely performed *Titus Andronicus* opened before a startled audience in Cape Town … nearly two hours of blood, sex, rape, cannibalism, miscegenation and even black power. Nothing like it has been seen on the stage in South Africa […] Reible, has exploded like a bombshell on the Afrikaner stage … now the problem is – what can be done about a Shakespearean play, splendidly directed, mounted and acted, even if it does drip violence, sadism and sex.[111]

In the spring of 1971, Keith Hack produced a stylized version in the tradition of Peter Brook and Gerald Freedman at the Citizen's Theatre, Glasgow. What I do find interesting in this production is black paint: it was employed, in fact, to signify the loss of hands, heads, and tongue

[108] Quoted in Metz, pp. 165-166.
[109] Quoted in Metz, p. 166.
[110] Mildred, C. Kuner, "The New York Shakespeare Festival, 1967", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, XVIII, 1967, p. 414.
[111] *Manchester Guardian* dispatch in the *Washington Post*, 22 September 1970, quoted in Metz, p. 167.

on the part of the Andronici. As Metz tells us, "as with other productions, this was greeted with some wonder that *Titus* could be so effective on the stage, and it ran for 17 performances".[112]

Another successful production, which ran for 33 performances, was presented by The New York Classic Stage Company's CSC Repertory Theatre during the 1972 winter season. "A descent into theatre of cruelty" is how Christopher Martin designated his production.[113]

In 1972, the Royal Shakespeare Theatre essayed its second production, seventeen years after the notable Peter Brook presentation as one of a series of four plays entitled *The Romans*, intended to "show the birth, achievement and the collapse of an entire civilization".[114] Trevor Nunn's production was compared to that of Peter Brook and these are the comments of *The New Statesman*:

> In Nunn's production, all the throat-cutting and mutilation happen out of direct view without fuss or relish … In spite of all this understatement it still seems … a fatuous, beastly play… the usual apologia for the play, that Titus is an interesting preworking of Lear, just will not do.[115]

The Times, instead, reported that Trevor Nunn was able to

> activate an unloved play into powerful life, but in the handling of the horrors monotony is not entirely avoided … The production … has the supreme merit of turning monochrome villains … into interesting and almost credible figures. The performance of John Wood was branded "marvellous". The play was performed 21 times.[116]

Titus was presented for the second time in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival[117] in 1974 and, directed by Laird Williamson, it was one of the more popular plays in a season of four Shakespearean pieces (the others were *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Hamlet*), as Metz informs. Unlike the Ashland production of eighteen years earlier where the performances were only two, the 1974 version was performed 31 times. With a note of incredulity, a reviewer commented that "*Titus* … comes over with an immediacy that numbs the current audience".[118]

Surely, the RSC production by Peter Brook, first at Stratford in 1955 and subsequently on the Continent and in London in 1957, and the New York Shakespeare Festival production by Joseph

---

[112] Metz, p. 167.
[113] Metz, p. 167.
[114] RSC in the 113th Season, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1972, p. 3, quoted in Metz, p. 168.
[115] *The New Statesman*, 20 Oct. 1972, pp. 571-72, quoted in Metz, p. 168.
[116] *The Times*, 14 Oct. 1972, quoted in Metz, p. 169.
[117] In 1956, at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland *Titus Andronicus* was produced by Angus Bowmer and directed by Hal J. Todd. The Oregon Festival under the guidance of Angus Bowmer became the third theatre to produce all of Shakespeare's plays (after Old Vic and Stratford) and the only one outside of England. Metz, note 39, p. 163.
[118] *San Francisco Examiner*, 21 July 1974, quoted in Metz, p. 169.

Papp under the direction of Gerald Freedman ten years later, constitute the most successful and unique productions of *Titus Andronicus*, but the desire to stage *Titus*'s shocking power has not run out during the years. As we will see in the next section, in fact, other new productions were realised.

5 . Modern productions of *Titus*

What Brian Bedford offered the audience in Stratford, Ontario, in 1978 and 1980 was "the relative intimacy of the thrust stage", as Hughes points out. Let us discover more about this mise-en-scène from Hughes's description:

> The horrors were neither gratuitous nor half-hearted, and their impact was no laughing matter. Chiron and Demetrius were trussed with their heads bent backwards over the edge of the stage; a realistic line of blood followed Titus's knife as he cut each throat. Bedford shied away from some of the most difficult moments. He cut Marcus's speech to Lavinia, the squabbling over whose hand was to be cut off in 3.1, and everything after the death of Saturninus. As the play ended, the focus narrowed to Aaron standing alone on the upper level while the voice of the Sibyl predicted Rome's fall, an alteration which changed the meaning: for affirmation and healing under Lucius the production substituted a sceptical modern theme of evil triumphant and Rome's decadence. The Goths' barbaric dress and the way they hunkered on their heels with their hands on their knees, like nomads, stressed the contrast between Rome and Barbarism.[119]

Praising comments about William Hutt's Titus were given by *The Nation*:

> always comprehensible, always sympathetic, always somehow like us. When he folds his ravished daughter in his arms and stabs her … what we feel is the lovely tenderness with which he does it. He leads the play to a transcendence of its own horrors; he makes it a magnificent affirmation of the persistence with which human beings can remain human.[120]

One thing is clear: "one of the most uninspired plays ever written", as Eliot thought it to be, becomes inspiration for new theatrical productions in different times, in different places. The passionate intensity of the characters never cease to intrigue the audience even in modern revised productions. Let us see now how Deborah Warner made this happen in the late '80s. Her production at the Swan in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1987 for the Royal Shakespeare Company, was remounted at the Barbican's Pit in 1988 and travelled round the world for eighteen months before seeing a highly successful run at Brook's own Bouffes du Nord in Paris in March 1989. Her text, the original one, spoken by British actors, was an integral version. She decided to have it uncut, unlike Brook and

[119] Hughes, p. 45.
[120] Quoted in Hughes, p. 45.

others producers, because she felt she owed it to the play to "try and make everything work".[121] Warner's slogan, so, was trust: "trust in the script, in the audience, in the Swan (a major component in the success of this show), in each other".[122] She set out to demonstrate that the play had a strong emotional appeal. She decided to use blood sparingly and from Alan Dessen we know that during Marcus's long speech to Lavinia (II.iv.11-57),

> Lavinia's plight was therefore signalled not by visible blood or by silken streamers but by a coating of clay or mud, by what appeared to be hastily-applied wrappings on her stumps, and by the abject posture of Sonia Ritter's shamed, half-crazed figure.[123]

But, just at the moment in which Lavinia is described by Marcus as "a crimson river of warm blood, like to a bubbling fountain stirred with wind" (II.iv.22-23), a trickle of blood from her mouth "elicited shocked gasps from the audience".[124] Warner explains that something horrific was needed to push the audience one step further and she was right as "the effect was greater because they had been denied it before"[125], as Warner notes. Stanley Wells supplies us with a description of the moment:

> spoken in Donald Sumpter's hushed tones it became a deeply moving attempt to master the facts, and thus to overcome the emotional shock, of a previously unimagined horror. We had the sense of a suspension of time, as if the speech represented an articulation, necessarily extended in expression, of a sequence of thoughts and emotions that might have taken no more than a second or two to flash through the character's mind, like a bad dream.[126]

The violence was not avoided. The rape happened on-stage. As Bate interestingly points out,

> The Warner version of Marcus' speech was revisionary in its effect even as it was faithful in its form because it brought the text squarely into the present. For Warner in her direction of Marcus and Sonia Ritter in her portrayal of Lavinia achieved what they did because rape matters to them as late twentieth-century women more than it could possibly have done to Shakespeare writing for Marcus and to the boy who first played Lavinia. The simple fact that Warner was (to my knowledge) the first woman ever to direct the play on stage itself effects a radical revision: for a start it defuses the argument that a speech written and performed by men cannot begin to make an audience feel what rape is like. Watching Ritter and sensing Warner behind Sumpter, one could with Marcus begin to share the rape victim's anguish. The scene was so powerful to so many members of the audience because our culture is more conscious of rape and its peculiar vileness than many previous cultures have been: so it was that the words from the 1590s (when rape was very rarely reported to the authorities or acted upon by the courts) worked a new effect in the context of the 1980s.[127]

---

[121] Quoted in Goy-Blanquet Dominique, "Titus resartus: Warner, Stein, Mesguich", in Kennedy, Dennis, ed., *Foreign Shakespeare, Contemporary performance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 37.
[122] Alan Dessen, *Shakespeare in Performance: Titus Andronicus*, 1989, p. 57, quoted in Hughes, p. 45.
[123] Quoted in Hughes, p. 46.
[124] Dessen, p. 60, quoted in Hughes, p. 47.
[125] Quoted in Goy-Blanquet Dominique, p. 43.
[126] "Stanley Wells on *Titus Andronicus*, directed by Deborah Warner (born 1959) at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, from *Shakespeare Survey* 41 (1989), pp. 178-81" in Wells, Stanley, ed., *Shakespeare in the Theatre, an Anthology of Criticism*, Oxford: Oxford University, Press, 1997, p. 304.
[127] Bate, pp. 63-65.

A factor of success, as in Bedford's production, was realism. As Bate notes, "it enabled Warner to bring out its representation of how ordinary human beings can be driven to extraordinary extremities of violence and cruelty on the one hand, resilience and tenderness on the other".[128] She, in fact, as Goy-Blanquet states,

> owned herself rather scared by the intensity of emotion she had released, wondering what hidden areas of guilt and remorse had been touched by Lavinia's plight. To her, there was never the least doubt that this and not Titus' extremity of grief was what some spectators could not take.[129]

Unlike Brook, Warner had also the sons killed in front of the audience and, curiously, the idea of breaking Lavinia's neck in a deadly embrace came to Brian Cox's Titus, not to her. How to deal with the mutilations and when and how to use blood, in fact, were a couple of the points discussed at length with the actors.[130] So, Warner, like Peter Brook, prefers to wait for natural growth, to leave the actors a great deal of freedom and – revealingly – have them assume that what they do is "their own idea".[131] This collective process made up a really successful production, which made "the audience scream out they could not take any more"[132], as Warner had in mind.

Deborah Warner spent little time on the political issues, being more interested in creating the barbarous world men set up for themselves. This is not what Silviu Pucarete[133] did instead. He stressed, in fact, the political relevance of the play. The Romanian director resisted attempts to associate his interpretation with the collapse of the Ceausescu regime, but, as Michael Billington observed, it was "impossible to divorce the production from Ceausescu's Romania, as it brings out the arbitrariness, cruelty and absurdity of tyranny".[134] The production presents a simple but effective staging, with a variety of visual signifiers enforcing the play's modernity, such as a hospital trolley and white operating-theatre gowns, television sets and microphones. Silhouettes and shadows in combination with white, clinical drapes are used to create a claustrophobic box-like

[128] Bate, p. 66.
[129] Goy-Blanquet, Dominique, p. 41.
[130] Goy-Blanquet, Dominique, p. 42.
[131] Goy-Blanquet, Dominique, p. 39.
[132] Quoted in Goy-Blanquet, Dominique, p. 41.
[133] With the National Theatre of Craiova. The premiere in Bucharest in Romania in 1992 was followed by tours in 1993, 1995 and 1997, which included venues in Japan, Canada, Germany, Belgium, Australia, Brazil, Singapore, France, Italy, the former Yugoslavia and the UK. "Recent stage, film and critical interpretation by Sue Hall-Smith" in Hughes, Alan, ed., *Titus Andronicus, Updated edition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 47, note 3.
[134] Quoted in Hughes, updated ed., p. 47.

structure enclosing the stage. Jonathan Bate writes: "the fragile figure of Lavinia is backed up against a huge white drop; she is grabbed from behind and pinned against it like a butterfly on a card before being dragged under and raped".[135] The same image was created for Chiron and Demetrius when Titus captured them, trapping them in the curtain before dragging them underneath to exact his revenge. The audience, as Hall-Smith tells us, were thus drawn into a disturbing world where people disappeared quickly and silently.[136] The banquet scene is also worthy of a mention. Sue Hall-Smith's comments are notable:

> The final Thyestean banquet was enacted to Mozart's last piano concerto, the E flat Larghetto, bringing the action to a close on an aesthetic harmonisation, but with no illusions of political restoration. This final fusion of aesthetic beauty with the physical horror of the action became a metaphor for the fall of the Ceausescu regime but also carried more distant reminders, specifically of Holocaust victims being taken to the gas chambers to the accompaniment of classical music. The director's vision was acclaimed in Romania by critics and audiences alike, and theatregoers regularly returned to the production, describing it as an "utterly mesmerising" experience, during which they imagined they had "walked in the shadow of evil".[137]

We should also take into account Peter Stein's version when considering *Titus*'s modern productions. Stein, in fact, used the play as a means of offering a broader commentary on corrupt political ideologies and has not always been well-received by European audiences. Let us see why. The origin of Peter Stein's production was an invitation in 1989 by the University of Rome to direct a workshop on the Elizabethan theatre at their Centro Teatro Ateneo. The enthusiasm of the students tempted him to follow up the seminar with a production of *Titus Andronicus* and drove him to a contract with the Teatro Stabile di Genova for a full professional tour[138] in Italy, Spain, France and Germany between 1989 and 1990. This was Stein's first work outside his native Germany. Hall-Smith furnishes us with some details about it and its reception by Italian audiences:

> Stein resisted anchoring his vision in any one recognisable period, or overtly aligning it with a specific historical event, choosing to present the play in an eclectic mix of visual styles as a more generalised reflection of contemporary society: "one in which monolithic Empire-building civilisations dwindle into chaos".[139] Nevertheless, the references to a particular culture – if not one specific regime – were palpable throughout, as Italian audiences were quick to note. The staging of the production evoked both ancient and twentieth-century Rome. The stage was bordered on three sides with marble-coloured walls, "with hints of the neo-imperial style of Piacentini (Mussolini's favourite architect)".[140]

---

[135] Quoted in Hughes, updated ed., p. 47 and note 5, p. 47: "Conquering despair", *TLS*, 28 July 1995, pp. 18-19. Lavinia, on her first entrance, wore a simple peasant dress and headscarf, allowing her eventual rape to be constructed as a metaphor for the degradation of the Romanian people.
[136] Hall-Smith, p. 47.
[137] Hall-Smith, pp. 47-48 and note 1 p. 48: Lyn Gardner, untitled article, *The Guardian*, *G2*, 19 May 1997.
[138] Goy-Blanquet, p. 37.
[139] Michael Billington, "Connoisseur of cruelty", *The Guardian*, 28 November 1989, in Hughes, updated ed., p. 48.
[140] Billington, "Connoisseur of cruelty".

> Culturally specific signifiers were insistently employed: for example, Titus's hand and the heads of his sons were returned to him in transparent plastic bags, "a technological torture characteristic of a post-*Godfather* era".[141] Costumes were similarly designed "to imply past centuries while anchoring the play in our own time".[142] […] Twentieth-century allusions continued during the hunt scene when the characters lined up on-stage wearing feathered hats and carrying guns, evoking a Fascist shooting party. Stein's conflation of a violent contemporary society and its equally corrupt Roman past received mixed reactions from Italian audiences, resulting in dissention between the director, the actors and the media […] Stein's was a world the Italian public recognised, but […] the representation of their own history and evocation of twentieth-century Fascism combined to project an image that resonated deeply and "hit too close to home".[143]

Even though part of the original seminar with the Roman students had been dedicated to exercises on the original text of *Titus*[144], Stein affirms: "I feel an enormous lack of contact with the Shakespearean world, and there-with a lack of imagination".[145] No doubt, he had the shock of the real awakened again.

Barbarism is the key-element in Daniel Mesguich's interpretation of *Titus*, which was performed at the Athénée in Paris in the autumn of 1989. He considered *Titus* not at all a simple Grand Guignol tragedy of blood, but a study in barbarism, with a "calculated, gradual, and inexorable escalation of crime, almost mathematical in its rigor".[146] He was disappointed by Deborah Warner's production of the play, which stressed the barbarism in costume and gesture without reference to the civilization from which this barbarism had departed. Carlson tells us more about Mesguich's interpretation of the play:

> Mesguich considered it critical that the play was set in Rome, a cradle of civilization, the master city, a metaphor for Shakespeare of high culture and civil organization. *Titus*, however, shows a late Rome, in which this culture and civilization have created their own barbarism, a new surge of cruel and elemental forces springing up amid, and in part defined by, the no-longer-understood relics and ruins of the past. This is not a pre-civilized barbarism, but a post-civilized one. When rituals are retained, their "civilized" meanings are forgotten, and they become elemental acts – the symbol becomes flesh, the cooked becomes the raw. In Mesguich's production, this phrase was enacted literally at the beginning of the play when the only dimly understood ritualized "sacrifice" of the symbolic ram was interrupted so that the victim could become the flesh-and-blood captive, Tamora's son. The horror of the play, Mesguich has commented, comes not from the spilling of blood itself, but from the "marriage of the ritual and the real, the marriage of the theatre and of civilization with the raw, with flesh and blood". […] The tension between barbarism and civilization was symbolically centered in this production in a common Mesguich symbol – the book. […] The lapse from civilization to barbarism was for Mesguich most clearly captured in the replacement of what the library represented by the physical violence of this new world. "Blood on a book", he has said, "is more frightening than the worst of slaughterhouses".[147]

---

[141] Fabiola Gulino, "Peter Stein's *Titus* at the Teatro Genova, 1990", in Philip C. Kolin (ed.), *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays*, 1995, p. 478, in Hughes, updated ed., p. 48.
[142] Billington, 28 November 1989.
[143] Kolin (ed.), *Titus Andronicus: Critical essays*, p. 477, in Hughes, updated ed., p. 49.
[144] Goy-Blanquet, p. 37.
[145] Quoted in Goy-Blanquet, p. 38.
[146] Quoted in Carlson, Marvin, "Daniel Mesguich and intertextual Shakespeare", in Kennedy, p. 223.
[147] Carlson, pp. 223-225.

I find Mesguich's visual symbolism magnetic. Let us see the salient aspects of the performance through Carlson's words:

> Perhaps the most poignant illustration of the loss of relationship to the books that surrounded these characters was the scene of Bassianus'death. As he expired, the horrified Lavinia kept thrusting a book at him, as though she felt somehow it had the power to cure him if she only knew how to use it. When this failed, she cast the useless book aside, and over his dead body opened her mouth in a silent scream. […] Both Aaron and the sons of Tamora, captured and dispatched by Titus, were shown in captivity in much the same way, like flies in the center of the stage, wrapped in a spider-web of chains that stretched away in all directions. The notorious banquet at the end converted the baroque library into something resembling a Renaissance hell scene. The ghastly pie served by Titus was decorated with the same ram's skull which marked the sacrifice that opened this cycle of horror. As Titus began to speak of Virginius, smoke began to rise from an up-stage pit behind him. Soon flames appeared here also. As Lavinia, then Tamora, then Titus, then Saturninus were stabbed, each fell across the table forming a heap over the ram's head, and as each fell, portions of the library burst into flame […] and its civilization disappeared. Grotesque waltz music was heard under the riot of destruction.[148]

The fascinating labyrinthine world into which Mesguich turns the stage, is inspired also by Kafka. The young director, in fact, has acknowledged Kafka as one of the continuing influences on his work – he adapted *The Castle* in 1972 -, particularly in *Titus Andronicus*, which he characterized as "Kafka through Shakespeare".[149] Astonishing and memorable stage images appeared again and again during the production. As in a painting by the Surrealist Magritte, as Carlson observes, then, a turn-of-the-century gentlemen, holding a dove in his hand gives a single line, "All is departed".[150] Mesguich's production is absolutely brilliant to me and I find interesting what he firmly believes:

> "the adventure of the symbolic" dramatized in *Titus Andronicus* includes such political or emotional crises as Stein and Warner chose to represent. The play pinpoints the moment when a civilization begins to fall apart, when the Law itself has become a dead letter.[151]

Bill Alexander changed direction. In his 2003 production for the RSC at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, he shifted the focus away from one specific event or political ideology. What was important to him was the story and the timeless examination of revenge and its aftermath presented straightforwardly by focusing upon the text.[152] He took into account the Peacham drawing and wanted to create a world "that drew from and brought together the classical Roman of the story and the late Renaissance of the author".[153] Confident that Act I was

[148] Carlson, pp. 226-228.
[149] Quoted in Carlson, p. 225.
[150] Carlson, p. 225.
[151] Quoted in Goy-Blanquet, p. 51.
[152] Hall-Smith, p. 50.
[153] Alexander Bill, unpublished *Titus Andronicus* production journal. No page numbers, note 5 in Hughes, updated ed., p. 50.

by Peele, not to alter the shape of Shakespeare's design, he re-shaped the whole of Act I to make it possible for Saturninus and Tamora to remain on-stage throughout, following their initial entrance. Mutius was cut and the plea for his honourable burial with him. Alexander omitted about one hundred lines, but was emphatic about remaining faithful in the remainder of the play to the language of the Folio text.[154] Michael Billington observes that although "less voluptuous than Peter Brook's Stratford production, Alexander's version makes a strong case for Titus as the raw essence of tragedy"[155]. Patrick Carnegy, furthermore, tells us that,

> Bill Alexander's production is in the unflinchingly serious mode … The emphasis is on the sorrows of Titus, not his anger. His stoicism and that of the sorry remnant of his family is set against the manic excitability of his enemies. It's a strategy that casts the play in a compelling new light".[156]

Mesguich declares that "theatre should seek not to explain written texts but to render them incandescent"[157]. Let us see if this has been accomplished by further contemporary productions.

6 . *Titus*, always a play for today

Titus is frequently performed across the world nowadays. This confirms its relevance to contemporary concerns. As we have seen so far, the violence enacted in the play has found more and more echo in political events and, as Sue Hall-Smith notes,

> audiences who have access to unflinching twenty-four-hour news coverage of horrific scenes and are familiar with the work of film directors such as Quentin Tarantino are less daunted by the graphic violence and black humour of one of Shakespeare's grimmest works.[158]

Worthy of a mention is the "Boggo Road" prison in Brisbane, Australia, as it is the place where "the resonances of brutality and pain give the play an extra dimension".[159] Brett Heath's production, in 1995, was mounted outdoors in this former prison. The plot was loosely framed with

[154] Hall-Smith, p. 51.
[155] Quoted in Hughes, updated ed., p. 51.
[156] "Seriously bloody", *The Spectator*, 4 October 2003, quoted in Hughes, updated ed., p. 51.
[157] Fernet, Frédéric, interview, "Daniel Mesguich: le feu sacré", *Figaro*, 23 July 1990:36, in Carlson, p. 231.
[158] In Hughes, updated ed., p. 45.
[159] Cotes, Alison, "*Titus Andronicus*: Blood Curdling Saga", *The Brisbane Review*, June 1995, in Hughes, updated ed., p. 53.

a device involving actors playing prisoners engaged in staging the play for a visiting audience, as Hall-Smith tells us.[160] Richard Waller, in Brisbane's *Sunday Mail*, affirms that spaces such as this instilled productions with "an energy and immediacy that might not surface if the same production were to be played out upon a conventional stage".[161] It is time now to deal with "the energy and immediacy" of two of the most exciting contemporary productions of *Titus Andronicus* to my view.

In 2006, *Titus Andronicus* comes back home. Lucy Bailey's direction is one of the most effective seen so far at the New Globe Theatre in London. Laura Rees tells us about some aspects of the performance:

> This is a technically complex show for the Globe, although the Globe itself isn't usually a technically complex theatre. There aren't any lighting cues, and lighting is usually one of the main things for the tech process. We don't have a lighting board. We don't have any electronic sound cues, but we do have music. We have wonderful musicians who come onto the stage and become part of the action. something new about the tone of the scene. Often the music is the opposite to what you are playing. So when I have a very sad scene the music is quite up. […] There's one moment just after I've been raped and my hands have been chopped off when Marcus comes on and calls for me to come back because I'm running away. There's a big pause, I walk forward, the music comes in and blossom falls from the roof. I just stand there, I'm not really doing anything. It is like a frozen moment. The first time I did that scene with all the blood and my bloody costume on, I literally didn't do anything, I just stood there. People came up to me afterwards and said it was incredible, but I wasn't doing anything, the music was doing everything. That is what I've learnt especially since moving into the theatre. […] I spend a lot of time thinking about Lavinia as an animal, that she is in complete chaos, with a breakdown of any sense of humanity that she had. But I can't let go of who Lavinia is, so I've been trying to get that back. What I was doing was feral and very physical. That is still there, but there is something about the sadness that I need to keep. If she turns into something else the audience will be repulsed it rather than see her pain. And they need to see her pain to understand Titus.[162]

The energy of the production is also given by the engagement the actor has with the audience at the Globe. As Douglas Hodge explains,

> We had some very bloody effects in *Titus*, like me cutting my hand off, and we had a lot of fainters. It was harder to make it work than working in a proscenium-arch theatre, but it is also more effective. It is the immediacy of it – the fact that everyone is standing around and looking at you, and quite often, they would be sprayed with the blood, all this sort of thing, which would make them scream and faint. It is a much, much more visceral experience than it is in some well-behaved theatres.[163]

I know how exciting is to find oneself among the groundlings at the New Globe. You never know what is going to happen. The actor could choose you to say his lines and you cannot but share that experience with him. At the Globe you do not look at the performance, you experience it. That is the charm. But pure emotion was my memorable experience at the Teatros del Canal in Madrid

[160] Hall-Smith, in Hughes, updated ed., p. 53.
[161] Waller, Richard, "Daring staging lends grisly reality to play", *The Sunday Mail*, 9 June 1995, quoted in Hughes, update ed., p. 53.
[162] http://globe-education.org/communities/lavinia/bulletins/rehearsal-notes-6 , "Technical Rehearsals", pp. 1-2.
[163] Mackeith, Ag, ed., *Discovering Shakespeare's Globe*, London: Shakespeare's Globe, 2009, p. 56.

on December 11, 2010. This was an astonishingly powerful production, staged by La Fura dels Baus: "Degustación de Titus Andrónicus" or "A taste of *Titus Andronicus*", directed by Pep Gatell. The Spanish company is famous for facing always new challenges in the field of scenic arts and unconventional places are always selected for its performances. Gatell's show cannot but be described as awesome.

La Fura has always tried to introduce food in their shows and the occasion has arrived with the mise-en-scène of *Titus*. Gatell had a kitchen and two cooks on the setting this time – Andoni Luis Adúriz is the chef of the Mugaritz, the forth best restaurant of the world, and it was he who set up the different smells and tastes associated with the various mental states of the tragedy, as will be explained further on. It is the first thing that the spectator sees when entering this ample, diaphanous space where you can move freely. No seats there for the audience. The audience, in fact, is part of the scenic stage, which will be shared with the actors. But, before their entrance, there is a lot going on around the room. The show, in fact, has already started when you arrive there. The kitchen is open and installed on a raised platform on a side of the enclosure. Two cooks are preparing something, but you do not know what. You can only wonder, smelling something sweet and salty in the air. You walk freely around while many baby faces are staring at you. Four big screens, in fact, surround the space and you cannot avoid the babies always watching you. When all the audience has entered, there is a blackout and music starts. All of a sudden, the actors enter on a kind of movable tower that they drive themselves and you need to move quickly from your place in order not to be hit. Saturninus, Marcus, Bassianus and then Titus arrive victorious from the war.

Much of the original text has been cut, but what is shown makes the spectator live an intense experience. The performance is pure energy and movement. Not only the actors shift from one place to another thanks to their movable vehicles, but the audience is required to move to follow the action, but someone prefers to draw back and stay in the corner. This does not happen when delicacies are offered by the actors to the audience. Lavinia, for instance, sensually hands out grapes, symbol of the soul of Romans, of the dead warriors, and when grapes falls, tears are meant.

What needs to be spotlighted is that the screens that surround the area are part of the real set. There are images all along the performance to go with the action, like the grape, and there are close-ups of some actors in the screens or multiplied - the Roman troops for instance. So the research in the audiovisual format is used to recreate virtual locations, which would be almost impossible to realize in conventional theatre. This constitutes an interesting mixture between theatre and cinema. The cut of Titus's hand is performed, but it can be seen through the screens, by means of shadows. The rape scene, instead, is staged in front of the audience, as well as the deaths of Chiron, Demetrius and the other characters. Lavinia has branches instead of her hands and pitiful were the moments in which she tried to rise from the floor, without succeeding. Probably the harshest moment of all was the killing of Tamora's sons: hanging upside down, tied hand and foot and gagged, in fact, the spectator agonizes with them. Terror and pity, so, are felt in this moment, at the same time and this is the aim of tragedy. However, someone in the crowd burst out laughing.

Only the audience can experience the strange sensation given by the smell of the sweet and spicy aromas coming from the kitchen, which can be somehow disturbing. They enter in your body and you cannot do anything to avoid it. The truth is that, Gatell explained to me[164], often aromas are made purposely to create confusion in the audience, to have the spectators lose their points of reference and not to have them understand what happens next. But, consistently with what happens in the show, the sweet aroma comes from the light-blue and pink candy flosses prepared by the cooks, which Tamora and Saturninus hand out to the audience, symbol of luxury, of a pleasant moment. The spicy smell, instead, is given by the pork cooked for the final banquet, so something unpleasant is coming up. This production, so, activates all the five senses.

It ends with the banquet scene. Thirty people from the audience take part in the last scene and I was one of them. While Titus disengages Demetrius and Chiron from the kitchen's hooks, tables are being prepared for dinner and all the platforms that seemed static begin to move. Titus invites the audience to seat at both sides of the new scene. Saturninus and Tamora climb up on one

[164] My interview to Pep Gatell, Madrid, December 11, 2010.

side with the tribunes (the audience) and on the other one, Lucius with the Goths (the audience). The cooks have been cooking thirty dishes during the play and Titus serves the meal to all the guests and invites them to start eating. The show goes on. Titus kills Lavinia. Saturninus hearing that, calls for Demetrius and Chiron to be present at the banquet. They are on the table, explains Titus. Lights switch off and the screens show Demetrius and Chiron hanging in the kitchen and Titus with a mallet. He hits the bodies until they explode in many pieces. The pieces falling in slow motion, are the dishes shown on the screens and the ones on the table. Tamora has just eaten her own sons. Titus kills Tamora and after that, Saturninus kills Titus with his sword. Lucius is going to behead Saturninus when there is a blackout. The actors disappear. The lights, instead, are on the table where the dinner goes on for the thirty people. Babies on screens reappear and observe the situation with the same immutable attitude shown at the beginning of the play - they are the symbol of the Roman people, that can only watch and accept what happens around them. The audience applauds the guests still tasting the appetizing dinner. They, in fact, carry on eating after the tragedy. This is the simple truth. Gatell wanted to highlight just this aspect of human, beastly nature.

Gatell adds a new dimension to the production to me. Thanks to the chance of taking part to the final banquet, I could feel myself part of the tragedy, or better, the tragedy could physically enter me and the other spectators. This is “the taste of *Titus Andronicus*” I do not want to forget, along with that of the “garum”, a sauce prepared in the show as they did in the Imperial Rome. It is really an innovative, powerful and exciting production, which does not forget the poetry of the original text. It is worthy to be seen and experienced.

I do believe that Titus is a play thought for the theatre. The intense, overwhelming emotions it arouses, in fact, cannot be caught by a camera.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:

Barnet, Sylvan, ed., *The Two Noble Kinsmen, Titus Andronicus, Pericles*, New York: The New American Library, 1977.

Bate, Jonathan, ed., *Titus Andronicus*, London: Routledge, 1995.

Boyle, A. J., *Seneca's Phaedra: Introduction, Text, Translation and Notes*, Liverpool, Great Britain, Wolfeboro, New Hampshire: Francis Cairns, 1987.

Boyle, A. J., *Seneca's Troades: Introduction, Text, Translation and Commentary*, Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1994.

Hughes, Alan, ed., *Titus Andronicus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Hughes, Alan, ed., *Titus Andronicus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Maxwell, J.C., ed., *Titus Andronicus*, London: Methuen, 1953.

Miller, Frank Justus, *Ovid Metamorphoses*, vol. VI, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, London: William Heinemann, 1956.

Tarrant, R. J., *Seneca's Thyestes*, Atlanta, GA: Scholar's Press, 1985.

Waith, Eugene M., ed., *Ben Jonson: Bartholomew Fair*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963

Waith, Eugene M., ed., *Titus Andronicus*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.

Wells, Stanley, ed., *Titus*, in *Oxford Complete Works*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.

Wilson, Dover, ed., *Titus Andronicus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948.

Critical Literature:

Andrews, Michael Cameron, *This Action of our Death, The Performance of Death in English Renaissance Drama*, Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989.

Armstrong Nancy, Tennenhouse Leonard, eds., *The Violence of Representation: Literature and the History of Violence*, London: Routledge, 1989.

Barker, Francis, *The Culture of Violence: Essays on Tragedy and History*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993.

Bartels, Emily C., "Making More of the Moor: Aaron, Othello, and Renaissance Refashionings of Race", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 41, 1990, pp. 433-54.

Bate, Jonathan, "Ovid and The Mature Tragedies: Metamorphosis in Othello and King Lear", *Shakespeare Survey*, 41, 1989, pp.133-44.

Bate, Jonathan, *Shakespeare and Ovid*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

Bate, Jonathan, "The Performance of Revenge: Titus Andronicus and The Spanish Tragedy", in Laroque, Francois, ed., *The Show Within: Dramatic and Other Insets: English Renaissance Drama (1550-1642), I & II* , Montpellier: Paul Valery University Press, 1990.

Berger, Harry, Jr., *Making Trifles of Terrors*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

Blakemore Evans, G., *Elizabethan - Jacobean Drama*, London: A&C Black, 1988.

Bowers, Fredson Thayer, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587-1642*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940.

Boyle, A.J., *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition*, London, New York: Routledge, 1997.

Braden, Gordon, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition: Anger's Privilege*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

Braunmuller, A.R., Hattaway, Michael, *English Renaissance Drama*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Broude, Ronald, "Four Forms of Vengeance in Titus Andronicus", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 78, 1979, pp. 494-507.

Broude, Ronald, "Roman and Goth in Titus Andronicus", *Shakespeare Studies*, 6, 1970, pp. 27-34.

Brucher, Richard T., "Tragedy, Laugh On: Comic Violence in Titus Andronicus", *Renaissance Drama*, 10, 1979, pp. 71-91.

Bullough, Geoffrey, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

Christensen, Ann, "'Playing the Cook': Nurturing Men in Titus Andronicus", *Shakespeare Yearbook*, 6, 1996, pp. 327-354.

Coddon, Karin S., "'For Show or Useless Property' : Necrophilia and The Revenger's Tragedy", *ELH*, 61, 1994, pp.71-88.

Cohen, Derek, *Shakespeare's Culture of Violence*, Basingstoke, London: The Macmillan Press, 1993.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, *Shakespearean Criticism*, Raysor, T.M., ed., London: Dent, 1960, II.

Danson, Lawrence N., "The Device of Wonder : Titus Andronicus and Revenge Tragedies", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language: A Journal of the Humanities*, 16, 1974, pp. 27-43.

Danson, Lawrence, *Tragic Alphabet: Shakespeare's Drama of Language*, London: New Heaven, 1974.

David, Richard, "Dreams of Eale", *Shakespeare Survey*, X, 1957,126-134.

De Sousa, Geraldo U., *Shakespeare's Cross-Cultural Encounters*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press, 1999.

Donald, Roslyn Lander, "Formulas and Their Imitations: The Spanish Tragedy and Titus Andronicus", *Publications of the Arkansas Philological Association*, 4, 1978, pp.13-18.

Drabble, Margaret, *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Dusinberre, Juliet, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women*, Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press, 1975.

Eliot, T.S., *Selected Essays*, London: Faber & Faber,1932.

Enterline, Lynn, *The Tears of Narcissus: Melancholia and Masculinity in Early Modern Writing*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

Fawcett, Mary Laughlin, "Arms/ Words/ Tears: Language and the Body in Titus Andronicus", *ELH*, 50, 1983, pp. 261-277.

Folkestad, Allan, "The Rhetoric of Evil: Metamorphosis of the Forest in William Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus", *Nordlit: Arbeidstidsskrift-i-letteritur,* 6, 1999, pp. 31-40.

Ford, P. Jeffrey, "Bloody Spectacle in Shakespeare's Roman Plays: The Politics and Aesthetics of Violence", *Iowa State Journal of Research*, 54, 1980, pp. 481-489.

Frye, Northrop, *Fools of Time. Studies in Shakespearean Tragedy*, Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1967.

Gagiano, Annie, "Barbarism and Civilization in Shahespeare's Titus Andronicus", *Literary-Griot: International Journal of Black Expressive Cultural Studies*, 10, 1998, pp.13-27.

Gay, Penny, "Women and Shakespearean performance", in Wells, Stanley, Stanton, Sarah, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp.155-173.

Gibbons, Brian, *Shakespeare and Multiplicity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Green, Douglas E., "Interpreting 'Her Martyr'd Signs': Gender and Tragedy in Titus Andronicus", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 40, 1989, pp. 317-326.

Gurr, Andrew, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Guthke, Karl S., *The Gender of Death: A Cultural History in Art and Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Hadfield, Andrew, "The Spanish Tragedy and The Elizabethan Homilies", *Notes and Queries*, 39, 1992, pp. 307-308.

Hallett, Charles A., Hallett, Elaine S., *The Revenger's Madness: A Study of Revenge Tragedy Motifs*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980.

Hansen, Jorgen Wildt, "Two Notes on Seneca and Titus Andronicus", *Anglia: Zeitschrift fur Englische Philologie*, 93, 1975, pp.161-165.

Harris, Bernice, "Sexuality as a Signifier for Power Relations: Using Lavinia of Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus", *A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts*, 38, 1996, pp. 383-406.

Hattaway, Michael, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre, Plays in Performance*, London: Routledge, 1982.

Helms, Lorraine, "'The High Roman Fashion': Sacrifice, Suicide, and the Shakespearian Stage", *PMLA*: *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 107, 1992, pp. 554-565.

Hunt, Maurice, "Compelling Art in Titus Andronicus", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,* 28, 1988, pp.197-218.

Hunter, G. K., "Seneca and English Tragedy", in Costa C., D., N., *Seneca*, London: Routledge, 1974.

Hunter, G. K., "Seneca and The Elizabethans: A Case-Study in 'Influence'", *Shakespeare Survey,* 20, 1967, pp.17-26.

Hunter, G. K., *Dramatic Identities and Cultural Tradition: Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1978.

Jones, Eldred D., "Aaron and Melancholy in Titus Andronicus", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 14, 1963, pp.178-179.

Kahn, Coppélia, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women*, London: Routledge, 1997.

Kehler, Dorothea, "Titus Andronicus: From Limbo to Bliss", *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, 128, 1992, pp.125-131.

Kennedy, Dennis, *Looking at Shakespeare: a Visual History of Twentieth-Century Performance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Kistner, A.L., Kistner, M.K., "The Senecan Background of Despair in The Spanish Tragedy and Titus Andronicus", *Shakespeare Studies*, 7, 1974, pp.1-10.

Leech, Clifford, Craik, T.W., eds., *The Revels History of Drama in English*, vol. II 1500-1576, vol. III 1576-1613, London: Methuen, 1980.

Levin Richard, "The Longleat Manuscript and *Titus Andronicus*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 53, 2002, pp. 323-340.

Liebler, Naomi Conn, "Getting It All Right: Titus Andronicus and Roman History", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 45, 1994, pp. 263-278.

Loftus Ranald, Margaret, *Shakespeare and His Social Context: Essays in Osmotic Knowledge and Literary Interpretation*, New York: AMS Press, 1987.

Mackeith, Ag, ed., *Discovering Shakespeare's Globe*, London: Shakespeare's Globe, 2009.

Maquerlot, Jean-Pierre, "'How to Do Things with Words': Performative Rhetoric in Titus Andronicus", *Cahiers Elisabethains: LateMedieval and RenaissanceStudies*, 54, 1998, pp. 45-53.

Marshall, Cynthia, "'I Can Interpret All Her Martyr'd Signs': Titus Andronicus, Feminism, and the Limits of Interpretation", in Levine Carole, Robertson Karen, eds., *Sexuality and Politics in Renaissance Drama*, Lewiston NY: Mellen, 1991.

McMillin, Scott, "Sussex's Men in 1594: The Evidence of Titus Andronicus and The Jew of Malta", *Theatre Survey: The Journal of* the *American Society for Theatre Research*, 32, 1991, pp. 214-233.

Mead, Stephen-X., "The Crisis of Ritual in Titus Andronicus", *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 6, 1994, pp. 459-79.

Metz, Harold G., "Stage History of Titus Andronicus", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 28, 1977, pp.154-169.

Metz, G. Harold, "The Early Staging of Titus Andronicus", *Shakespeare Studies*, 14, 1981, pp. 99-109.

Metz, G. Harold, ed., *Shakespeare's Earliest Tragedy: Studies in Titus Andronicus*, London: Associated University Presses, 1996.

Metz, G. Harold, "*Titus Andronicus: A Watermark in the Longleat Manuscript*", Shakespeare Quarterly, 36, 1985, pp. 449-453.

Middleton Raysor, Thomas, ed., *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Shakespearean Criticism*, London: Dent, 1960, II.

Miola, Robert S., *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.

Miola, Robert S., *Shakespeare's Rome*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Motto, Anna Lydia, Clark, John R., *Senecan Tragedy*, Amsterdam: Adolf M., Hakkert, 1988.

Murai, Kazuhiko, "The Flower of Aaron: Metamorphoses of Human Activities in Titus Andronicus", *Shakespeare Studies*, 33, 1995, pp.1-29.

Neill, Michael, *Issues of Death, Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

Palmer, Daryl-W., "Histories of Violence and the Writer's Hand: Foxe's Actes and Monuments and Titus Andronicus", in Bergeron, David-M., ed., *Reading and Writing in Shakespeare*, Newark, London: University of Delaware Press, Associated University Presses, 1996, pp. 82-115.

Palmer, David J., "The Unspeakable in Pursuit of the Uneatable: Language and Action in *Titus Andronicus*", The *Critical Quarterly*, 14, 1972, pp. 320-339.

Pearce, Howard, "Virtù and Poesis in The Revenger's Tragedy", *ELH*, 43, 1976, pp.19-37.

Reese, Jack E., "The Formalization of Horror in Titus Andronicus", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 21, 1970, pp. 77-84.

Rooks, John, "Mental and Moral Wilderness in Titus Andronicus", *Shakespeare and Renaissance Association of West Virginia Selected Papers*, 16, 1993, pp. 33-42.

Rothwell, Kenneth S., *A History of Shakespeare on Screen, a Century of Film and Television*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Rowe, Katherine A., "Dismembering and Forgetting in Titus Andronicus", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 45, 1994, pp. 279-303.

Sacks, Peter, "Where Words Prevail Not: Grief, Revenge, and Language in Kyd and Shakespeare", *ELH*, 49, 1982, pp. 576-601.

Sharpe, J.A., ed., *Crime in seventeenth-century England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Scuro, Daniel, "Titus Andronicus: A Crimson-Flushed Stage!", *Ohio State University Theatre Collection Bulletin*, 17, 1970, pp. 40-48.

Shickman, Allan R., "The Fool and Death in Shakespeare", *Colby Quarterly*, 34, 1998, pp.201-225.

Sid, Ray, "'Rape, I Fear, Was Root of Thy Annoy': The Politics of Consent in *Titus Andronicus*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 49, 1998, pp.22-39.

Slights, William W. E., "The Sacrificial Crisis in Titus Andronicus", *University of Toronto Quarterly: A Canadian Journal of the Humanities*, 49, 1979, pp.18-32.

Smith, Emma, ed., *Shakespeare's Tragedies*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Smith, Molly Easo, "Spectacles of Torment in Titus Andronicus", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 36, 1996, pp. 315-331.

Smith, Molly, "The Theatre and the Scaffold: Death as Spectacle in the Spanish Tragedy", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 32, 1992, pp. 217-232.

Styan, J.L., *Drama, Stage and Audience*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

Styan, J. L., *Shakespeare's Stagecraft*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

Taylor, Anthony-Brian, "Shakespeare's Use of Golding's Ovid as Source for Titus Andronicus", *Notes and Queries*, 233, 1988, pp. 449-451.

Taylor, Anthony–Brian, "The Elizabethan Seneca and Two Notes on Shakespeare and Spenser", *Notes and Queries*, 34, 1987, pp.193-195.

Taylor, Gary, "Shakespeare plays on Renaissance stages", in Wells, Stanley, Stanton, Sarah, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp.1-20.

Thomas Marc Parrott, “Further Observations on *Titus Andronicus*”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 1, 1950, pp. 22-29.

Tricomi, Albert H., “The Aesthetics of Mutilation in ‘Titus Andronicus’”, *Shakespeare Survey*, 27, 1974, pp.11-19.

Ungerer Gustav, “An Unrecorded Elizabethan performance of Titus Andronicus“, Shakespeare Studies, 14, 1961, pp. 102-109.

Waith, Eugene M., “The Metamorphosis of Violence in Titus Andronicus”, *Shakespeare Survey*, 10, 1957, pp.39-49.

Washington, Edward T., “Tragic Resolution in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*”, *College Language Association Journal*, 38, 1995, pp. 461-479.

Wells, Stanley, Stanton, Sarah, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Wilders, John, *New Prefaces to Shakespeare*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988.

Willbern, David, “Rape and Revenge in Titus Andronicus”, *English Literary Renaissance*, 8, 1978, pp. 159-182.

Wilson, J. Dover, “‘Titus Andronicus’ on the stage in 1595, *Shakespeare Survey*, I, 1948, pp. 17-22.