

**VIOLENT LANGUAGE AND ITS FEMALE SITE IN *TITUS ANDRONICUS***

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**INTRODUCTION**

*Titus Andronicus* (ca. 1593-94), Shakespeare's early tragedy, is known among literary critics as the goriest of his plays. They attribute this feature to the spectacle of mutilation and murder that beset its characters. This paper suggests that the violence of the play is situated subtly in its language, and not primarily in the actions. The illocutionary nature of language makes the violence possible through the use of animal imagery and intertextuality. The case of Lavinia as the site of a disrupted homosocial relation exemplifies this violence.

*O, why should nature build so foul a den,  
 Unless the gods delight in tragedies? (4.1.58-59)*

If physical pain were the gauge for calling a play as tragedy, then *Titus Andronicus* is Shakespeare's most tragic<sup>1</sup> because of the many mutilations that happen to its characters. For instance, the pitiable state of Lavinia's maimed body is made more miserable by her tongueless mouth gushing with blood. Titus' left hand is cut in vain because Saturninus has not really asked for it as a ransom for Quintus and Martius. When Aaron announces the deal for the release of both sons, the audience—more or less—is given a rationale for the amputation as a viable option for the restoration of order. Although Titus believes hesitatingly Aaron's words, nevertheless, such hesitations are framed as doubts based on the Moor's color. For the modern audience, the amputation is becoming more of a viable reason compared to hesitation based on racial discrimination. A few lines later when a messenger brings Titus the heads of his sons, we feel a sense of brutality and goriness that lead to nothing but inhuman wastage. With Titus as the hero who has to suffer the death of his innocent sons, the play situates him on the verge of the greatest misfortune, making him less a human and more of a personification of misfortune itself. Classical theories on tragedy have often functioned as universalist explanations for human fate.<sup>2</sup> The atrocities in the play reinforce the idea of tragedy as a universalist notion; how else would the audience make sense of its bloodbath, aside from doubting its Shakespearian authorship or explain it away as Shakespeare's parody of his contemporaries' revenge tragedies?<sup>3</sup> But if we look at the early modern theater historically, the Elizabethan stage employed a cosmology more immediate than ours because the political and the cosmological was rendered cohesive by the Chain of Being.<sup>4</sup>

For Aristotle, tragedy depicts a great person—usually a nobleman—whose fate changed from good to bad (*peripateia*) due to some tragic flaw in his character (*hamartia*). For instance, Oedipus' hubris motivates him to insist on the prophet to reveal the cause of pestilence. There is a sense of nobility in his persistence to know and to punish. The play ends with him “knowing” (*anagnoresis*) about life, more than he expects (the knowledge about the culprit's identity). For Hegel, the tragic character, compelled by “an equally ethical power,” is trapped in dialectic of two rivaling, weighty moral standards.<sup>5</sup> In a Hegelian sense, Titus is a tragic hero because at the middle of the play, the agglomeration of the sufferings of his children has transformed him into a revenge hero who, at the beginning of the play, is a patriot unhesitatingly loyal to the Emperor over paternal relations. He proves his loyalty to Rome by killing Mutius at the first act. Titus represents two ethical gauges: his loyalty to the Emperor and devotion to the family. The clash cannot but result in tragedy: “These tragic figures cannot do good without doing evil; they are doomed, not be a random predestination of bad luck, but by a situation in which all roads lead to wrong.”<sup>6</sup> For Nietzsche, tragedy is the reconciliation between the Apollonian (civilization, reason) and the Dionysian (nature, emotion) through the acceptance of the terror of reality, or amor fati.<sup>7</sup> Among Shakespearian critics, Bradley is a descendant of these thinkers who saw tragedy as a universalist enterprise which could be explained across history and culture because “evil exhibits itself everywhere as something negative, barren, weakening, destructive, a principle of death. It isolates, disunites, and tends to annihilate not only its opposite but itself. That which keeps the evil men prosperous, makes him succeed, even permits him to exist, is the good in him.”<sup>8</sup>

Despite the “agglomeration of atrocity”<sup>9</sup> going extreme in *Titus*, tragedy in its goriest aspect—even to the point of being a spectacle—has a function to play. Watson looks at tragedy as an acknowledgment of the presence of the violations against us, with the characters as our stand-ins.<sup>10</sup>

Shakespeare's play is based on a number of sources written across historical periods. Book VI of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is highly evident in the story of Philomela being used as a parallel to Lavinia's rape. The Ballad of Titus Andronicus registered in 1594 at the Stationer's register and a popular tale of a wicked Moorish servant, whose English version was entered in the Stationer's Register in 1569-1570, could have served as sources for Shakespeare's play.<sup>11</sup> The humanist movement had its influence in the style of the play, too. In 1581, Thomas Newton edited the complete tragedies of Seneca in English.<sup>12</sup> His tragedies appealed to the English for several reasons: the theme of shortness of life and change of fortune; the play as a study of the tyrant's characteristics; the five-act structure; its spectacle; an emphasis on a single character or two (making the play more comprehensible compared to Euripides who would create more round characters); a reduction of a character to a single passion; and the rising importance of rhetoric in European courts.<sup>13</sup> Despite Euripedes' influence on Seneca, according to McDonald, the similarity between Euripedean and Senecan tragedies are superficial because Seneca has less poetic spark and more moralistic declamations in his plays.<sup>14</sup> Hence, a number of Latin

declamatory lines are spread throughout *Titus Andronicus*.<sup>15</sup> Examples of Latin lines intertwine with English:

Sit fas aut nefas<sup>16</sup> till I find the stream  
 To cool this heat, a charm to calm these fits,  
 Per Stygia, per manes vehor.<sup>17</sup>

An adaptation from the lines of Hippolytus, a Senecan play about a stepmother's illicit love for her stepson, adorns the tragic yearning of Titus:

Magni dominator poli,  
 Tam lentus audis scelera, tam lentus vides?<sup>18</sup> (4.1.80-81)

Latin also serves as an opportunity for oratorical declarations. This line is taken from *Metamorphoses*: Terras Astraea reliquit<sup>19</sup> (4.3.4). Compared to his later plays, indeed *Titus Andronicus* lacks the poetic luster of *Hamlet*—also a revenge tragedy—as seen by the frequency of his proverbial expressions: “But metal...steel to the very back” (4.3.48) or “Ay, like a black dog, as the saying is” (5.1.122). Shakespeare might have written mainly for a literary audience due to his frequent references to classical literature.<sup>20</sup> Senecan plays—also known as closet plays—lent well to the declamations common to rhetorical schools.<sup>21</sup> In case *Titus Andronicus* is far different in style from the later Shakespearian plays, Waith suggests that at times there are styles which are common to most writers belonging to a certain historical period, or writers were adept in using more than one style.<sup>22</sup> Despite criticisms about this play, Watson argues that it would be “wrong to dismiss these plays as misguided or trivial works merely because of their sensationalism; there is a necessary genius behind the misprision and exploitation of Senecan violence.”<sup>23</sup>

Before 1698, *Titus Andronicus* has been frequently performed until distaste for horror and doubt of its authorship waned the public interest towards the play.<sup>24</sup> The Victorians also staged the play without the rape and mutilation of Lavinia.<sup>25</sup> In America, an advertisement for Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia reads: “The manager, in announcing this play, adapted by N.H. Bannister from the language of Shakespeare alone, assures the public that every expression calculated to offend the ear, has been studiously avoided, and the play is presented for their decision with full confidence that it will merit their approbation.”<sup>26</sup> To avoid goriness, scenes of Lavinia had to be presented with aesthetic stylization.<sup>27</sup> Peter Brook's performance at Stratford in 1955 downplayed brutality. Titus's hand is carried by Lavinia's arms (in the original, Lavinia has to carry it with her mouth) and Chiron and Demetrius' murder is done offstage.<sup>28</sup> A formalist approach to these scenes has also been done to mitigate the violence of the play. Gerald Freedman's 1967 production has sidestepped brutality to the point of defamiliarization<sup>29</sup>

Julie Taymor's production suggests a Brechtian project by aiming to deconstruct movie violence within a violent movie.<sup>30</sup> The extreme brutality in the play is almost close to unreality; the spectacle has become comic—especially when Titus asks Lavinia to carry his hand in her mouth. But audience could be mixed. In *Sunday Times* dated 11 November 1951, Harold Hobson reports that he “found practically the whole company waving gory stumps and eating cannibal pies...

really splendid.”<sup>31</sup> Eric Shorter, in a Bristol New Vic performance in 1978, said that “it proved surprisingly unlaughable ... until the closing cannibalistic supper.”<sup>32</sup>

Why this much violence? Where does atrocity lurk? Productions and criticisms have often emphasized the spectacle as a performance—just as the imagination reenacts the scenes even during silent reading. The bloody actions have frequently been foregrounded to the extent that the play indeed proves itself to be goriest. Since plays are indeed meant to be performed and watched, the spectacle leaves the mind preoccupied with the external brutality to the point of judging it as the most violent of the Shakespearian plays—the judgment based on the physical performatives like stabbing, maiming, cutting, baking and raping.

This paper primarily locates violence in the play’s language. Such violence in the language through its use of imagery that are inherently negative or images thought of as positive but used negatively make the play more violent than ever thought before. It is more violent on two grounds. First, the violence of the words further sanctions the cruelty to be acted out. As speech acts, declarations—which are inherently verbal—have to precede the actions. Hence, words give “truthfulness” (in an empirical sense because the action corroborates the declaration) to the actions—regardless of their characteristic. The words bind the character to perform the declared action, or else his identity crumbles and it attains an instability caused by lies and incapacity to legitimize his utterance. This point is very important especially when we look at Titus as a Roman hero who must give truth to his words through actions. In the first scene, he arrives victorious in Rome. Although he enters later than Saturninus who immediately opens up the conflict in the emperorship, Titus has declared his identity as a Roman first and a father next. In the pre-play (before the play begins), he has already sacrificed sons for the empire and he is ready to let go of the emperorship as long as Rome would just remain in harmony. As pledge to his loyalty to the empire over his family, he kills Mutius—as a form of legitimization of his words. Second, because words are less tangible on stage compared to the performance, the play becomes more violent because the violence is couched in the rhetorical floridness of Senecan tragedies. Although his closet plays indeed uses spectacle and reversal of fortune as theme for his Stoic philosophy, Seneca also had close ties with the Greek classical world which lent his plays a sense of traditional continuity with Euripides’. The rebirth of the classics also cultivated the desire for a perfect form. The five act structure was considered as the ideal theatre form, which also influenced later seventeenth-century French dramas. Since these features of Senecan tragedies and the subsequent early modern tragedies he influenced were emphasized, certain traces of the violence inherent in the language of the plays—in this particular case, *Titus Andronicus*—became less conspicuous than their spectacle. Even then, the goriness seemed to be blanketed by the rhetoric and Latin lines that suggest the validity of brutality in so far as it was couched in the Roman orderliness. More so, brutality was not an end in a Senecan performance: it was a means to show the twist of fate and an instruction on living a good life.

Moralizing in tragedy coincided with the Puritan obsession with hell and ethics. I don’t mean to say that there was no conflict between Puritanism and the theater. That is a preposterous statement which does not take into account the location assigned to the early theaters. There was

a conflict between theater and Puritanism, but it was a clash that surprisingly met halfway. Subsuming the theater under the Puritan obsession with didacticism, the former absorbed the discourse of the latter so that the justification of English theater—even though it was only permitted to exist in the geographical fringes of London—was based on the very obsession of Puritanism. As a spectacle physically performed on stage, *Titus Andronicus* was an artifact among other idiosyncratic brutalities of the Elizabethans like bear-baiting and the inhumane treatment of the insane. Nevertheless being spectacles as seen (and not read) by the naked eye, Shakespeare's early play was no match to the goriness realistically offered by other Elizabethan "diversions." Only in its language could *Titus Andronicus* match—or even outperform—these entertainments in their violence. But this insidious characteristic of the play's violence is more atrocious because of its subtlety—in a sense that actions are more tangible than words at the outset. Since violence has embedded itself in the words, the performative of violence becomes linguistically reiterable. Transcribed into paper, they ironically lend themselves more tangible through time—compared to performances—and perpetuate linguistic violences across historical periods and cultures.

If Cleanth Brooks locates the "naked babe" as the motif for the violence perpetrated in *Macbeth*, the play *Titus Andronicus* situates its imagery in animals<sup>33</sup> and their connotations like hunting and sacrifice. *Hamlet* is also a revenge tragedy, but it situates the conflict in the play put up by the tragic hero. Therefore, the recognition of the stage as central to *anagnoresis* is almost at the middle of the play already. *Titus Andronicus*, on the other hand, immediately introduces the locus for the tragedy—the revenge against "irreligious piety" (1.1.130). The death of Alarbus foreshadows the later violence to come like the rape of Lavinia, the death of Chiron and Demetrius, and eventually the end of Titus. Something quaint about this play comes from its inversion of signals. If the motif is based on animal imagery consistently sprinkled over the play and its connotation of sacrifice, then Shakespeare used the person of Alarbus to introduce the animals to be deployed henceforth in the play. It suggests that Alarbus functions as a signifier for the animals (signified). As a linguistic component that precedes the idea it signals, the signifier—from the point of view of the audience—comes first because its utterance would fish out signifieds familiar to the listeners. Such inversion of signals implies two things. First, Alarbus is equated to an animal itself because the signifier should be parallel—even in one semantic sense—to the signified. The barbarity of the Goths is confirmed here as it was "confirmed" on them in the pre-play. The juxtaposition between Rome and the land of the Goths—with Tamora and her Moor—is a clue to the audience's notion of the non-Romans as barbarians.<sup>34</sup> No other signal could be used to preclude the rest of the minor animal images from claiming centrality except the sacrifice of Alarbus. Second, his death also spurred the rest of the characters to a revenge binge so that they also share in the animalistic character of the sacrificed: Lucius killing Alarbus; Tamora subtly seeking revenge; Bassianus being a casualty to the plan against Lavinia; Martius and Quintus framed up; and Chiron and Demetrius turned into pasties. Hence, Titus's claim that Rome has become a "wilderness of tigers" (3.1.54) encompasses most of the characters.

Hunting signals the play's obsession for blood: "I would we had a thousand Roman dames/At such a bay [hunt<sup>35</sup>], by turn to serve our lust" (4.1.41-42). As a means for subsistence, hunting functions also as a higher form of sustenance through communication with the deity. Something caught in a hunt is offered to the higher being as a pact to sustain the relationship between the supplicant and the god. The Elizabethans are familiar with the Biblical basis of sacrifice. The book of Judges (11:30-40) tells about Jephthah who sacrifices his daughter as an offering for a victorious war. In fact, the sacrifice of Abraham is a favorite during the Reformation.<sup>36</sup> As the Europeans encountered different religious practices in the New World, the notion of sacrifice had to be rethought so that the Biblical sacrifices had to be distinct from the pagan sacrifices recounted by the explorers. If the Biblical sacrifices were to be proven legitimate, early modern paradigm should accept the existence of various sacrifices due to religious differences. From there, it could make a distinction between ethical and unethical sacrifices based on its conformity to the natural law.<sup>37</sup>

The gentle Lavinia is called a "wasp" (2.3.132) who might sting her rapists once she squeals on them. Tamora, who has called Lavinia an insect, also gets her share of metaphor at the end of the play:

But throw her forth to beasts and birds of prey;  
Her life was beastly and devoid of pity,  
And being dead, let birds on her take pity (5.3.197-199).

Proverbial, trite images are also employed in so far as they connote animals. The nurse, when she hands the baby to Aaron, calls it "as loathsome as a toad" (4.2.67). Such expression stings because of its trope and also its triteness parallels the insignificance of the baby's life from the point of view of the nurse. Another way Shakespeare uses animals is by juxtaposing contrasting animals to create irony. For instance, when Titus sees Aaron coming from the palace to tell him about the emperor's bargain, Titus exclaims: "O gracious Emperor! O gentle Aaron! / Did ever raven sing so like a lark" (3.1.157-158). The blackness of the first bird is a racial innuendo that, like a shrill cry, adds insult to injury by contrasting it against the melodious lark. A sense of doubt pervades Titus' lines that extend the contrast to racist tropes. The raven and the lark do not just signify the quality of news—death in the case of raven, and hope in the case of the lark—but also a racial distinction between skin colors, whose simulacra are the feather shades. Insects could also displace the hated person. For instance, when the Andronici learned about the death of Martius and Quintus, Marcus stabbed the fly with his knife: "At that I have killed, my lord—a fly" (3.2.53). Titus, surprised with Marcus's act, inquires. Justifying his act of cruelty as a topicality to the recent news of his nephews' death, he replies: "Pardon me, sir; it was a black ill-favoured fly, /Like to the Empress' Moor; therefore I killed him" (3.2.66-67). Notice the use of the pronoun "him." A mere insect is given a higher life form that transforms it into a person. Yet this change of subjectivity—if we may lend such to an insect—is easily denigrated through its association with the Moor, thus leading to its death. The insect in this passage simultaneously undergoes both absorption—in Greenblatt's sense—and displacement because it stands in as a

representation of Aaron and Marcus' scapegoat for the unbridled anger he holds against the black man.

The intertextuality of the play also boils down to animals and passion. As a framework for the crime, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* recounts the story of Philomela who is raped by Tereus, the husband of her sister Procne. Philomela is abandoned in the woods tongueless. When her sister finds out, both devise a plan for revenge. Procne kills Tereus' son Itys and serves the boy to his father. Learning about it, Tereus vows vengeance over the sisters. But the gods transform Procne into a swallow, Philomela into a nightingale, and Tereus into a hawk. The presence of *Metamorphoses* serves as a sanction to imitate the violence read in the book. The effect of the book is so subtle and potent that anyone connected to it also shares in the spirit of revenge. This could be likened to Umberto Eco's masterpiece *The Name of the Rose*, where those who desire the manuscript fall into deadly obsession. Lucius's son, the owner of the book, succumbs to anger in both the tale and its contemporary reenactment. His asides during the errand show hostility. If Ovid's tale pervades the textual atmosphere of the play, the setting also invites gloom: "Here never shines the sun, here nothing breeds,/ Unless the nightly owl or fatal raven" (2.3.96-97). The hole that serves as the grave of Bassianus is a site for both a lie and a mutilation. Tamora provokes her sons when she tells them about Bassianus' threat to throw her into the hole, she deceives her sons with "A thousand hissing snakes,/ Ten thousand swelling toad, as many urchins (2.3.100-101).

After looking into the intertextuality and the setting which breed violence, it is but proper we look into the concerns of medicine during the classical and early modern periods to evaluate how medical discourse could be utilized to understand the violence which centers on Lavinia. According to Maclean, medicine during the Greek period until the sixteenth century studied women to answer the following questions: What is the origin of semen? Do both sexes produce it? Which part of the body develops in the fetus first? What determines sex and resemblance of children to parents?<sup>38</sup> Medicine being coupled with philosophy, the notion of women was subject to speculative and cultural understanding. Aristotle's *Metaphysics* contains the Pythagorean opposites which govern the world and the individual.<sup>39</sup> The paradigm of opposites that situate it on the difference in anatomy has been oppressive in both medical and literary productions. In *Timaeus*, Plato opines that women are reincarnations of dissolute men. This negative image of women is connected to the "lack" that Aristotle and Galen saw: women are less developed, lacks heat for reproduction, possess inverse sexual organs, contain cold and moist humors, and cannot concoct perfect semen from blood. The attribution of bodily heat to males—and its supposed inadequacy among females—became a trope for psychological attributes: courage, liberality and moral strength for men, and weakness, hysteria, and dissolution for women.<sup>40</sup> Aristotle's *Historia Animalium*, IX.1 connects biological observations with gender "truths" on the differences between sexes.<sup>41</sup> A "scientific" account of animals whose characteristics were transported to humans have informed the medical world until the middle ages. Although Aquinas admitted the equality of the sexes in the spiritual world, his theology did not account for the

inequality apparent in the lived world.<sup>42</sup> Hence, the Thomistic notion of equality was just a tokenism that meant no change in the society.

Against this cultural backdrop, the woman then became a cause of the tragic life and theater was the site for tragedy that reenacted her condemnation. In *Theatrum Mundi*, Pierre Boaistuau posits that human tragedy starts at the “uncleanesse”<sup>43</sup> of the womb. As bane for humanity, the woman was also the cause for disharmony. In *Titus Andronicus* Lavinia’s rape is symptomatic of the destruction of Roman political order.<sup>44</sup> As a symptom to be eliminated altogether with the disease, Lavinia’s death then is an important step—for the patriarchy—towards restoration of the status quo. A heroine could sometimes function as a gauge for feminine virtue and simultaneously as a harbinger of disorder. A woman whose speech is equipped with the patriarchal discourse is considered a threat because “to have a tongue is at one level to be equipped with a phallus.”<sup>45</sup> In the case of rape, a woman’s capacity to speak about her ravishment must conform to the procedures imposed by the patriarchy; she must maintain an image of herself as a good, chaste woman. If some conditions were not met, then her accusation of abuse may backfire against her.<sup>46</sup> Lavinia’s rape embodies two types—both of which she has to endure. The first one is done by Tamora’s sons. But prior to that, her facticity has also been raped by the pact her father and Saturninus agree on. Lavinia, the obedient daughter, becomes the chattel for exchange. Titus, trying to procure a reassurance of his loyalty to the empire, buys Saturninus’ approval by trading her off: “Lavinia will I make my empress,/ Rome’s royal mistress, mistress of my heart”(1.1.240-241). If the transaction happens between two males, then the relationship between both parties is characterized by a homosocial exclusivity which, when broken by either party, is a transgression against the other. For instance, Lavinia’s rape is not just a transgression of Lavinia by Tamora’s sons. More so, it is a crime against Bassianus by Tamora’s sons. If Lavinia is a chattel in the patriarchal world, then her rape is a ravishment of her owner—Bassianus. Yet this rape is a painful realization among Shakespeare’s male audience. He could not but stage the rape of Bassianus as stabbing. Martius’ description of Bassianus in the hole is filled with phallic symbols which have been desecrated:

Upon his bloody finger he doth wear  
A precious ring that lightens all this hole,  
Which, like a taper in some monument,  
Doth shine upon the dead man’s earthy cheeks,  
And shows the ragged entrails of this pit (2.3.226-230).

This homosocial relationship that excludes women—or makes them as the site for transgression, a scapegoat—is evident at the end of the play when Marcus asks the young Lucius to stand beside the dying Titus:

How many thousand times hath these poor lips,  
When they were living, warmed themselves on thine!  
O now, sweet boy, give them their latest kiss (5.3.166-168).

Since rape is a property crime, it is the duty of the male members of the woman’s family to defend her cause.<sup>47</sup> But as a chattel she could be disposed according to the whim of her owner.

Lavinia's death in the hands of her father shows the power of the male over his daughter, by contextualizing the act with the male literary allusion to Virginius killing his raped daughter to save her honor—or the honor of his family. Lavinia's helplessness in the patriarchal exchange destines her to be the scapegoat who cannot talk back to the male. Although it is Saturninus who whimsically abandons her, he blames her for it: "Lavinia, though you left me like a churl" (1.1.485). For Saturninus, she is a "changing piece" (1.1.309). He even sanctions her death because of the stain she has incurred: "Because the girl should not survive her shame,/ And by her presence still renew his sorrows" (5.3.40-41).

The change of tense and the use of "object" as a term referring to her confirms her reification:

Marcus: This was thy daughter.  
 Titus: Why, Marcus, so she is.  
 Lucius: Ay me! This object kills me (3.1.63-65).

Even Demetrius' syllogism about his relation to Lavinia entails a presupposition of her as an object. The series of declarative sentence connotes a logic which invites no questioning:

Why makes it thou strange?  
 She is a woman, therefore may be wooed;  
 She is a woman, therefore may be won;  
 She is Lavinia, therefore must be loved (2.1.84-86).

Her reification can only be matched by her infantilization which empowers the male adults to interpret for Lavinia her own subjectivity.<sup>48</sup> She becomes a text to be read, and not an agent who can speak because "to speak is to become the antithesis of female virtue in its every aspect."<sup>49</sup> Lavinia then becomes absorbed as a property, who is excluded from the homosocial circle; nevertheless she undergoes the "process whereby a symbolic structure is taken into the ego so completely that it ceases to exist as an external phenomenon."<sup>50</sup> As the father, Titus is entitled to interpret her "martyred signs" (3.2.36). Incapacitated by the violence brought about by the males who transact their relationships with each other, Lavinia's access to speech (patriarchal sign system) is described in phallic terms:

O, that delightful engine of her thoughts,  
 That babbled them with such pleasing eloquence  
 Is torn from forth that pretty hollow cage,  
 Where like a sweet melodious bird it sung  
 Sweet varied notes, enchanting every year (3.1.82-86).

Helpless as she is, she is all the more expected to rely on the patriarchy. Marcus asks:

Shall I speak for thee? Shall I say 'tis so? (2.4.33)

The performance of *Titus Andronicus* has been considered a spectacle because it contains violence which the audience does not associate with Shakespeare. However, this paper has shown that the play is more violent than assumed because its viciousness lies on the language itself. The play has always capitalized its "notoriety" on the actions performed on stage. Upon closer examination of the text, the use of animal imagery has legitimized the violence that it

shows on stage. Framed as a speech act, the violence of the play is far more extreme compared to what is supposed before because words—poetic or not—legitimizes the illocution of atrocity. The play has utilized the available discourses in Western civilization to perform the violence. There is the use of the classics as exemplified in the intertextual use of Ovid and the use of sacrifice as informed by the Biblical stories to make the violence conform to the dominant discourse of the period. Sugarcoated in oratory and florid language, the play situates Lavinia's hapless plight which could be interpreted as the synecdoche for women who either have to speak the Father's language or be silenced.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Hereward Price believes that Lear and Titus are similar in a sense that the folly of both characters is dramaturgically exploited. Eugene M. Waith, ed., "Introduction," in *Titus Andronicus* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984), 19.

<sup>2</sup> Nympha Callaghan, *Woman and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy: A Study of King Lear, Othello, The Duchess of Malfi and The White Devil* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), 49.

<sup>3</sup> The suspicions about the Shakespearian authorship of the play was started by Thomas Ravenscroft's To The Reader of *Titus Andronicus, or the Rape of Lavinia... Alter'd from Mr Shakespears Works* (1687): I have been told by some ainciently conversant with the stage that it was not originally his, but brought by; a private author 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 than a structure. (Waith, "Introduction," 1)

<sup>4</sup> E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (New York, Vintage, 1961), 25.

<sup>5</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: A Lecture on Fine Art*, Vol. 1, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), 221.

<sup>6</sup> Robert N. Watson, "Tragedy," in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*, eds. A.R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990), 308.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 307.

<sup>8</sup> A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearian Tragedy* (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett, 1965), 38.

<sup>9</sup> Tzachi Zamir, "Wooden Subjects." *New Literary History* 39 (2008): 278, <http://muse.jhu.edu/>.

<sup>10</sup> Watson, "Tragedy," 341. This calls to mind the holy Mass as a direct influence on English drama. Looking at the ritual as the sacrifice of the Son of God in behalf of the faithful, the play with lots of lives sacrificed—such as *Titus*—evinces a similarity in that level. A peculiar character who becomes the center for the masculinist obsession with sacrifice is Lavinia. For the masculine preoccupation with sacrifice, refer to the death of Alarbus in the hands of Lucius, who is supposed to restore order in Act V.

<sup>11</sup> Waith suggests that a history-play-ballad order in the literary creation of the Titus versions. He also believes that the drawing in the Longeat manuscript depicts multiple scenes, and hence could not be considered as part of Act I, Scene 1 alone (Waith, "Introduction," 27-33).

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- <sup>12</sup> Charles Osborne McDonald, *The Rhetoric of Tragedy: Form in Stuart Drama* (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1966), 115.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.
- <sup>15</sup> Waith, "Introduction," 38.
- <sup>16</sup> Be it right or wrong. (Latin translation used throughout was taken from Waith.)
- <sup>17</sup> I am in hell.
- <sup>18</sup> Ruler of the great heavens, dost thou so calmly hear crimes, so calmly look upon them?
- <sup>19</sup> Astraea has left the earth.
- <sup>20</sup> Waith, "Introduction," 67. A contemporary implied audience was expected to have a notion about Roman law. For instance, when Marcus declares, "Suum cuique is our Roman justice." (1.1.280), the audience should have known the meaning of the Latin expressions (each to his own) as significant to the conflict between Bassianus and Saturninus.
- <sup>21</sup> McDonald, *The Rhetoric*, 57.
- <sup>22</sup> Waith, "Introduction," 15.
- <sup>23</sup> Watson, "Tragedy," 319.
- <sup>24</sup> Waith, "Introduction," 45-47.
- <sup>25</sup> Kim Solga, "Rape's Metatheatrical Return: Rehearsing Sexual Violence among the Early Moderns." *Theatre Journal* 58 (2006): 63, <http://muse.jhu.edu/>. To a certain extent the Victorians have preceded Alan Sinfield's approach to "doing violence to the canon" by vandalism—the cutting and reinterpreting of a canonical work to the extent that a peculiar characteristic of it is lost.
- <sup>26</sup> Waith, "Introduction," 47.
- <sup>27</sup> Lisa Dickson, "High Art' and 'Low' Blows: Titus Andronicus and the Critical Language of Pain." *Shakespeare Bulletin* 26, no. 1 (2008): 5, <http://muse.jhu.edu/>.
- <sup>28</sup> Waith, "Introduction," 55.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.
- <sup>30</sup> David McCandless, "A Tale of Two Tituses: Julie Taymor's Vision on Stage and Screen." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (2002): 489, <http://muse.jhu.edu/>.
- <sup>31</sup> Waith, "Introduction," 51.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.
- <sup>33</sup> According to Waith, the distinguishing characteristics of *Titus Andronicus* are the spectacle, violence, and the characterization of Titus and Aaron (58). The animal imagery sufficiently validates the first two characteristics.
- <sup>34</sup> The play proves otherwise this distinction because even the Romans themselves are as barbaric as the Goths.
- <sup>35</sup> Lavinia is the "dainty doe" (2.1.118) fit for the hunt
- <sup>36</sup> Nicholas Moschovakis, "'Irreligious Piety' and Christian History: Persecution as Pagan Anachronism in Titus Andronicus." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (2002): 468-469, <http://muse.jhu.edu/>.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 467.

<sup>38</sup> Ian Maclean, "The Notion of Woman in Medicine, Anatomy, and Physiology." In *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, Ed. Lorna Hutson. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), 129.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 127-128.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 132-133.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 142-143.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>43</sup> Callaghan, *Woman*, 52-53.

<sup>44</sup> Waith, "Introduction," 36.

<sup>45</sup> Callaghan, *Woman*, 76.

<sup>46</sup> Solga, "Rape's Metatheatrical," 61.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>48</sup> Marie Rutkoski, "Arm the minds of infants": Interpreting Childhood in Titus Andronicus." *Criticism* 48, no. 2 (2006): 204, <http://muse.jhu.edu/>.

<sup>49</sup> Callaghan, *Woman*, 82.

<sup>50</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 230.

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