

Lucius,  
The Severely Flawed Redeemer of *Titus Andronicus*

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Acceptance of Lucius, who restores order at the end of *Titus Andronicus*, has sometimes been qualified, on one or two rare occasions, his role has even been questioned,<sup>1</sup> but for the most part, the man who emerges as the redeemer of Rome has had the approval of the critics. Nothing has contributed more to ensuring his favourable reception than the work of Frances Yates. It was Yates who first drew attention to the fact that *The Book of Martyrs* begins with King Lucius, the legendary figure who introduced Christianity into Britain, and ends with Elizabeth, and concluded that the play's Lucius is the namesake of the first of a line of Christian rulers that leads to the Queen.<sup>2</sup> She also noted the reference in the play to the departure of Astraea, the goddess of Justice, from the earth (IV.iii.4); Elizabeth was often identified with Astraea, and as Lucius brings justice back to Rome, in his person, as in the Queen's, it can be said the goddess has returned. Consequently, his role of redeemer is spoken of in the most glowing terms:

The apotheosis of Lucius at the end of the play thus perhaps represents the Return of the Virgin—the return of the just empire and the golden age.<sup>3</sup>

As time has gone by, Yates' views have become so ensconced that they are now accepted as part of critical lore about the play, subscribed to by both editors and critics: in the seventies, for example, they were firmly endorsed by Reuben Brower:

Many less learned auditors would have seen the point in the restoration of peace and order under Lucius, the "first Christian king of England," as he was presented in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, one of the more widely read works of Elizabeth's reign.<sup>4</sup>

In the eighties, Maurice Hunt ended an article by pointing out that “Lucius predicts his Christian namesake, who began a dynasty that would eventually bring Astraea back to earth in the form of Queen Elizabeth”;<sup>5</sup> and in the nineties, the *New Arden* editor, Jonathan Bate, remarking that “the Christian faith” was received into Britain “in the time of King Lucius,” speaks of Lucius “bringing back the light” of Astraea to the earth in the play.<sup>6</sup>

Yet if one actually examines Yates’ case, there is reason for considerable misgiving. Close examination of the beginning of the *Book of Martyrs*, for instance, makes it extremely doubtful that Shakespeare would have wished an audience to identify his character with the legendary King Lucius and then, by implication, with Elizabeth. In the small space devoted to King Lucius, there are two salient facts: the first is that he introduced Christianity into Britain; the second is that he died childless with disastrous consequences for his country. *Titus Andronicus* was written when the Queen was well past child-bearing age; as a young playwright at the beginning of his career, Shakespeare would have had to have displayed a good deal less sense than we normally credit him with, to have invited his audience to link Elizabeth, even by remote implication, with a ruler who was the epitome of the Elizabethan nightmare, a childless monarch whose death led to a “commonwealth miserably rent and divided.” Foxe is quite explicit about the events that followed the king’s death:

Lucius the Christian king died without issue. For thereby such trouble and variance occurred among the Britons that they not only brought upon them the idolatrous Romans, and at length the Saxons, but also entangled themselves in much misery and desolation. For sometimes the idolatrous Romans, sometimes the Britons reigned and ruled as violence and victory would serve; one king murdering another . . . .<sup>7</sup>

There is also the nature of the textual evidence Yates finds for the association of Lucius with Astraea (and, by implication, with Elizabeth). This occurs in the arrow-shooting scene (IV.iii), which is the focus of her brief treatment of the play:

Titus, the good, the noble Roman, maddened by his wrongs, rushes on to the stage, accompanied by his friends . . . they hit some of the signs of the Zodiac

which begin to fall out of their places. One of the arrows, that shot by Lucius, hits Virgo. There must be a connection between the search for Astraea on earth and the hitting of Virgo in heaven, for Virgo, as we know well, was Astraea after she had fled to heaven from the wicked world. . . . the good Empire returns with Lucius. He is the just man who in the end assumes the purple, and his reign will "heal Rome's harms, and wipe away her woe." It is therefore perhaps a very significant detail that it was Lucius who hit Virgo in the shooting scene, and, therefore, presumably, brought her down to earth.<sup>8</sup>

In the light of these observations it is astonishing to find that Lucius, in fact, never appears in this scene. It occurs in Act IV; he leaves Rome for exile among the Goths at the end of the first scene in Act III, and does not reappear until the beginning of Act V. Yates has confused him with his young son who bears the same name: it is the boy who participates in the arrow shooting, and far from hitting her, as is claimed, his arrow lands harmlessly "in Virgo's lap" (IV.iii.64),<sup>9</sup> there being nothing that even remotely suggests that she consequently fell down from the sky. The only textual evidence produced to link Lucius with Astraea, the Goddess of Justice, therefore, rests on an elementary misreading.

Yates' thesis has also been afforded a dubious postscript in the most recent edition of the play where Jonathan Bate has produced a further historical namesake in Lucius Junius Brutus, the founder of the Roman Republic.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, however, Shakespeare shows no sign of ever having known the forename of Junius Brutus. His expulsion of the Tarquins from Rome is told briefly at the end of the Lucretia story; in *Lucrece*, however, he is referred to only as "Junius Brutus" and "Brutus" (See "The Argument" and 1801, 1844) which is consistent with what is found in Shakespeare's sources in Ovid, Livy, Chaucer, and Painter.<sup>11</sup> He is referred to in "The Life of Marcus Brutus" in North's Plutarch but again there is no mention of his forename, and in *Julius Caesar*, his descendant speaks of him only as "Brutus" (I.ii.159).<sup>12</sup> And finally and most tellingly, as the revenger of Lucrece's rape, he is invoked as "Lord Junius Brutus" in *Titus Andronicus* by Marcus, as he, Titus, and Young Lucius kneel and swear to avenge Lavinia (IV.i.90). Had the dramatist been aware of the man's full name, surely he would have had Marcus, who takes every opportunity to compare members of his family with

heroic figures of the past, link his nephew and the founder of the Roman Republic through the name of "Lucius" on this occasion.

In view of the confusion bred by Yates' hugely influential but decidedly shaky "apotheosis," therefore, it seems timely to return to the play and, setting aside possible associations with his name, revalue Lucius in terms of what he actually does and says.<sup>13</sup>

## I

As the man who emerges after the bloodletting and chaos "To heal Rome's harms and wipe away her woe" (V.i.147), Lucius invites comparison with other saviour-figures in Shakespeare like Richmond and Malcolm. In stark contrast to such figures, however, from the very beginning of the play, he has blood on his hands; if his country like Scotland under Macbeth is a "slaughterhouse," or England under Richard III is awash with "warm blood," he has unthinkingly but viciously played his part in making it so. Indeed, it is Lucius who brings bloodshed and death into the play; his first words spoken at the tomb where his dead brothers lie, are:

Give us the proudest prisoner of the Goths,  
That we may hew his limbs, and on a pile  
*Ad manes fratrum* sacrifice his flesh . . . (I.i.95-97)

And although this is referred to as a "Roman rite," there is something disturbing about the detailed way in which he talks of cutting up his victim, Alarbus:

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.*  
(127-29, italics mine)

Moreover, when the sacrifice is over, his report of the event is even more disturbing:

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.  
 (142-45, italics mine)

What kind of brutal and coarse mentality is it, one wonders, that allows a man to compare the smell of burning human entrails with "incense." Moreover, the butchery Lucius is so savouring also sets a cycle of savagery in motion. Alarbus' "lopped" and "hewed" limbs signal the entry into a dramatic world where hands are chopped-off, a tongue torn from a girl's mouth, heads severed, throats slit, and events rise to a macabre crescendo when, in a bloody banquet, a mother unwittingly devours her murdered sons. It is one of many ironies afforded by *Titus Andronicus* that it is the saviour figure who introduces the savage theme of dismemberment into the play.

The play gives the impression that Shakespeare, the new man among Elizabethan playwrights, is out to flaunt his feathers, borrowed and otherwise.<sup>14</sup> For example, he obtrusively displays his mastery of dramatic techniques with clever repetition of action. The play opens, for instance, with the quarrel of two brothers over who should rule Rome, which is being violated and torn apart. And when the scene shifts from the city to the forest, the second, darker movement also gets underway with a quarrel between two brothers. This time the issue is who should possess Lavinia who is consequently violated and literally dismembered; and as "Rome's rich ornament" (I.i.52), the girl, as has often been noted, symbolizes the city.<sup>15</sup> Dramatic parallels are characteristic of this self-consciously clever play; and, as in this example, repetition of action is often supplemented by repetition of word. In the opening quarrel between Saturninus and Bassianus, Rome is described as the "imperial seat to virtue *consecrate*, / To justice, continence, and nobility" (I.i.14-15); in the later quarrel between Chiron and Demetrius, Rome's new empress is described as "To villainy and vengeance *consecrate*" (II.i.122, italics mine).

In its witty, rather ostentatious way, the play underscores the fact that Lucius is the initiator of the cycle of savagery. There is the correspondence between the sacrifice of Alarbus and the rape of Lavinia: in the one, Lucius, with the approval of his father, gives vent to his bloodthirsty nature by butchering the brother of Chiron and Demetrius

in the city; in the other, the two Goths, with the approval of their mother, express their "barbarous" nature by their ferocious treatment of his sister in the forest. The link between the events is emphasized by Tamora in her response to Lavinia's plea for pity:

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  
 (II.iii.163-66)

And "away with her," the phrase she keeps repeating in this confrontation (cf. 137, 157), is a bitter echo of Lucius, immediate response to her own plea for "Sweet Mercy" for her son—"Away with him, and make a fire straight" (I.i.127, italics mine). Moreover, when Marcus later discovers the mutilated and raped Lavinia wandering in the forest, his describing her as "*lopped and hewed*" (II.iv.17) directly echoes Lucius' earlier "*lopping*" and "*hewing*" of Alarbus (italics mine). Such verbal patterning makes the point that the violence Lucius has unleashed, is rebounding savagely on all he holds most dear, his family and Rome.<sup>16</sup>

Lucius is habitually brutal; in the family quarrel in Act One, for example, when his father requests that he return Lavinia, his curt reply is "*Dead if you will*" (I.i.196, italics mine). Of course, Rome's history provides other examples of cruel and austere Romans; it is no accident, for instance, that Junius Brutus is invoked in the play, a man "of a sower stearne natur, not softened by reason. . . . so subject to his choller and malice he bare unto the tyrannes, that for their sakes he caused his own sonnes to be executed."<sup>17</sup> But Lucius is not just one more iron Roman; an incident when he returns from exile at the head of an army of Goths is a reminder of the deeply unpleasant nuances of his report of the sacrifice of Alarbus. His exile is seen by some critics as a turning point; for Robert Miola, for example, the young man who had been "a bloodthirsty youth" is transformed by this experience into "a man capable of wise leadership."<sup>18</sup> Leaving aside for the moment his capabilities as a leader, when he returns victorious and Aaron and his baby son are brought to him, learning that the Moor dotes upon his son, he orders:

First hang the child that he may see it *sprawl*—  
 A sight to vex a father's sight withal.  
 Get me a ladder. (V.i.51-53, italics mine)

There is no more horrible image in a play full of horrendous images than that evoked by Lucius' words; and "Get me a ladder" makes evident Lucius' personal eagerness to witness this ghoulish spectacle.<sup>19</sup> It is avoided only when he is duped by Aaron into swearing an oath that he will spare the child.<sup>20</sup>

After the bloodletting of Act V, when Lucius emerges as the man to restore order, when he comes to administer justice, his words may have a lofty, magisterial accent but his cruelty is once again appalling. This is the punishment he devises for Aaron:

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 my doom. (V.iii.178-81)

As Rome's new emperor, Lucius is not merely dispensing justice: he is once again inflicting pain and agony with calculated relish. And the same chilling note is struck in the treatment of the dead Tamora:

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 of prey;  
 Her life was beastly and devoid of pity . . . (194-98)<sup>21</sup>

The last time Lucius referred to observing rites in the play, it was in the course of meting out brutal treatment to the living; and here, as he deals in like manner with the dead, he is ordering, albeit in characteristically pious, weighty, and solemn tones, the body of a queen and empress, hateful though her life has been, to be cast out into the fields like so much offal. And as he dispenses his own sadistic brand of justice, it is ironic to note, given the "apotheosis" of Lucius, that the only other character the play contains, who desecrates the dead and applies comparable ingenuity to inflicting anguish and suffering on the living, is Aaron, the play's "black devil."<sup>22</sup>

The Andronici proudly equate being civilized with being Roman—"Thou art a Roman; be not barbarous" (I.i.378). And none of their number is more devoted to the civilized values enshrined in his family and in Rome than Lucius; his courage and soldiership in their cause are beyond question. Returning to the city in triumph, for example, he can indeed claim to be "the turned-forth," a Coriolanus-like figure, who has shed his blood in "Rome's quarrel" (V.iii.101), one who has,

preserved her welfare in my blood,  
And from her bosom took the enemy's point,  
Sheathing the steel in my advent'rous body. (109-11)

And in the final scene, in his own grief and the commendation of his dead father to young Lucius, he eloquently and movingly pays the "last true duties" of a devoted son. Yet Lucius is a deeply flawed Roman. Stolid, unimaginative, and soldierly, it never dawns on him that his readiness to commit unspeakable atrocities on man, woman, and child, is utterly barbaric and totally irreconcilable with the civilized values on which his life is centred. Moreover, in being a deeply flawed Roman, Lucius is his father's son, and as such, a fascinating extension of the play's central theme.

## II

The central statement Shakespeare makes about Rome, of course, is in the character of his eponymous hero. Initially Titus inspires admiration, a triumphant figure, his sons before him and his prisoners in chains behind his chariot. The victor in his country's "great quarrel" with barbarism, his opening speech over his dead sons has a deep Virgilian solemnity; threading its features, the epic simile, the comparison to Priam, and the reference to souls "hovering" "on the dreadful shore of Styx" (1.i.88), is a grave sense of "*lacrimae rerum*," of life as an unending, painful battle to sustain civilization.<sup>23</sup> It is no surprise that such a man when honoured by his country, took the name of "Pius" (1.i.23), an epithet, which as Eugene Waith has pointed out, inevitably



invites comparison with "*pius Aeneas*."<sup>24</sup> Yet, having made this moving opening Virgilian speech, Titus, "surnamed Pius," behaves as Aeneas never would; he unhesitatingly sanctions human sacrifice, quelling the anguished protest of the victim's mother in urbane accents that suggest what is about to happen should be accepted as natural and civilized:

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. (121-26)

And the considerable distance between the qualities and values of Titus and those of Virgil's epic hero is emphasized by Tamora's comment on the "slaughter" of her son "in the streets" (112)—"*O cruel, irreligious piety*" (130). And when in the family quarrel that follows, he kills Mutius, one of his four remaining sons,<sup>25</sup> it is again underscored when he is rebuked by his brother Marcus, "*My lord, this is impiety in you*" (355, italics mine).<sup>26</sup>

If his sanctioning the cruel treatment of Alarbus is to have dire consequences for Rome and the Andronici, however, the immediate cause of the rapid decline that follows his epic entry in Act One, is the total lack of political acumen that shows itself in his intervention in the succession question. Marcus is unavailing in his efforts to make Titus himself accept the imperial throne; on grounds of age and weariness, Titus refuses and the opportunity to take advantage of his current popularity is lost. There follows his choice of Saturninus for emperor. While Bassianus is virtuous, Saturninus lives up to his brother's description as the embodiment of "dishonour"; young, lascivious, and vicious, his unstable nature is illustrated by the suddenness with which he takes for a bride the queen of the Goths, a woman old enough, in her own words, to be "A loving nurse, a mother to his youth" (329). Titus must have had intimate knowledge of the brothers for his daughter is betrothed to one of them. And his decision is not taken on the spur of the moment; it has been discussed with Lucius as the latter shows when Saturninus erupts before Titus announces his precise intentions:

Proud Saturnine, interrupter of the good  
That noble-minded Titus means to thee. (208-9)

Moreover, Titus' total lack of political judgement is shown by the way in which he ends Act I: he deludes himself that Tamora, whose son he has had killed in the streets only hours before, is now his friend and political ally, and plays the fawning courtier by organising a "love-day" for the woman who is his mortal enemy.

But if the development of Titus as a tragic figure is one of the major weaknesses in the play,<sup>27</sup> his character nonetheless has quite remarkable dimensions. As various commentators have pointed out, the play is set at a time when Rome was "at the end of its civilized greatness, ready to sink into barbarism."<sup>28</sup> And Titus, noble, patriotic, but flawed by cruelty and an abysmal lack of political judgement, is a mirror of Rome in decline. He, too, has spent his life in repelling barbarism, but now his weariness, old age, and lack of mental agility in coming to terms with new problems, reflect the lack of real energy and capacity of Rome in dealing with the various crises that beset it in its declining years. His subscription to the unhistorical cruelty of making sacrifice of prisoners in the city streets is a symptom of the coarsening of Roman life and values.<sup>29</sup>

In the figure of Rome's "best champion," therefore, we see Shakespeare's initial exploration in microcosmic form of the painful and tragic collapse of a great civilization. In the middle of the play, this is translated with only partial success into a struggle for a language that will convey the enormity of what is happening, a frustrated quest for justice in a broken world, and eventually into madness. In the depiction of Titus' sufferings, the play also undergoes a curious change of pace; from being fast moving, the middle scenes involving the Andronici become slow with very little actually happening. What these scenes do reveal, however, in contrast to the prospect revealed by the earlier acts of a young dramatist imitating Marlovian *coups de théâtre* or trying to rival Ovid for cleverness, wit, and ingenuity, is sporadic glimpses of what Shakespeare himself will have to offer as a great tragic dramatist. A case in point is:

For now I stand as one upon a rock,  
 Environed with a wilderness of sea (III.i.93-4)

When will this fearful slumber have an end? (251)

and the scattering of other pre-echoes of *King Lear*.

When the play resumes its former pace in Act Five, one is once more reminded of Eugene Waith's observation that in this early play Shakespeare often seems to be ambitiously trying to "stage" Ovid's poetry.<sup>30</sup> In the play's major Ovidian source, the story of Tereus, Procne and Philomela, for example, part of the horror is seeing civilized life degenerating into a savage hunt with men and women preying on each other mercilessly like animals. Ovid merely implies what is happening with a series of chilling similies,<sup>31</sup> but the eristic young dramatist, having previously "staged" the savage hunt in Act Two in the forest with Tamora as the tiger and Chiron and Demetrius as her young and Lavinia as the prey, returns to it to provide his play with a shocking climax. Maddened by his sufferings, Titus casts aside all civilized pretensions; like the Athenian princesses in Ovid's story, he becomes as vicious an animal as his enemies and joins in the savage hunt. And beginning in the *primaeval* depths of the forest before emerging into the city, this is to end, as in Ovid, with the human beast trapping and devouring its own kind.

### III

A degree of scepticism is induced by the tendency in modern productions to depict Lavinia's plight on a non-realistic level in the scene in which Marcus discovers her raped and mutilated in the forest.<sup>32</sup> The Elizabethan playhouse was adept at catering for the taste of an age in which savage public punishments such as the cutting off of hands or disembowelling drew large crowds; and bloodstained animal flesh and bladders of pigs, blood concealed about the boy actor's person on this occasion, would have doubtless given the Ovidian image of the girl's blood spurting from her wounds "As from a conduit with three issuing spouts" (II.iv.30), full and graphic value.<sup>33</sup> And yet in the face of what he himself describes as "all this loss of blood" (29), Marcus affords the

girl no practical relief but lapses instead into a long speech in which care is taken to refine every detail: if her arms were branches, “kings have sought to sleep” in their “circling shadows”; if her blood flows from her mouth like water, it is both a “crimson river” and “a bubbling fountain stirred with wind”; and if he had heard the girl play “upon a lute”, her assailant would have

dropped the knife and fell asleep,  
As Cerberus at the Thracian poet's feet.  
(II.iv.49-50)

There is no doubting the sincerity of the widely respected “reverend man of Rome” but the “frosty signs and chaps of age” are upon “*olde Marcus*”<sup>34</sup> and like other old men, he tends to be “wordy.” Indeed, beginning with references to “dream” and “slumber” and ending with one to sleep, the speech is an old man’s reverie; shaken by the horrible and totally unexpected spectacle before him, he has succumbed to the senile tendency to drift away and become absorbed in his own thoughts rather than confront the harshness of reality.

Marcus’ speech has been much debated: its Ovidian style, its “unactability,” its affording the audience vicarious relief, and, latterly, its giving voice to human suffering.<sup>35</sup> But the main point *within the immediate dramatic context* of a witty, consciously repetitive play, has not been grasped. As he confronts the symbolic figure of Lavinia, her Virgilian name recalling the city’s rise, her plight, raped and devastated by “barbarous Goths,” foretelling its fall, it is Rome itself that stands bleeding before Marcus. And the situation therefore parallels the opening of the play when another aged figure had been confronted by the prospect of Rome in distress. On that occasion, the response of Titus, Marcus’ brother, as the city faced ruin and dismemberment, had been equally inept. His endorsement of Saturninus as the new emperor had ensured that Rome would continue to suffer and bleed. It was a political act of folly which is paralleled by the ineptitude of Marcus’ response to Lavinia. The Andronici epitomize *Romanitas* in the play but the members of the older generation of the family, both shaken with “age and feebleness” (I.i.188), for all their sincere patriotism, fail spectacularly, first literally and then symbolically, to come to their country’s assistance.

In the play's own terminology, one aged brother, given a golden opportunity, was unable "To heal Rome's harms," while the other, in this symbolic encounter, has not the presence of mind to "wipe away her woes."

The question posed by the finale is whether the new generation of the Andronici can do better. It is posed in characteristically witty terms with the play's ending echoing its beginning. It had begun with Titus being chosen emperor by the people of Rome "by common voice" (I.i.21); the successful general who had won the hearts of the people with his patriotism and courage, momentarily has Rome's future in his hands. It ends with his son similarly placed and applauded; Lucius, too, has won the hearts of the people with his courage—"Tis he the common people love so much" (IV.iv.72)—and he is similarly elected: "The common voice do cry it shall be so" (V.iii.139). Titus had exercised the supreme power vested in him disastrously and unwittingly ensured the continuation of Rome's misery. Can Lucius succeed where his father failed? There is no doubting his courage or his sincere wish to do so. But the same qualities he brings to the task and even the sentiments in which he pledges himself to undertake it, all echo those of Titus as the play opened; and soldierly virtues and patriotic sentiments were of no avail in the crucial moment of political crisis. Moreover, where Titus was flawed by cruelty, Lucius is considerably and chillingly coarser in that respect. Nevertheless, as Macduff tells Malcolm, vices in a ruler, although severe, are "portable," and the crucial issue is whether Lucius can now exercise the political wisdom and the statecraft his father so crucially lacked.<sup>36</sup>

From the first, however, the signs are ominous. Among much else that he says, for instance, Marcus strikes a disturbing note by reviving the Aeneas analogue when addressing Lucius:

Speak Rome's dear friend, as erst our ancestor,  
 When with his solemn tongue he did discourse  
 To lovesick Dido's sad attending ear  
 The story of that baleful burning night  
 When subtle Greeks surprised King Priam's Troy.  
 Tell us what Sinon hath bewitched our ears,  
 Or who hath brought the fatal engine in  
 That gives our Troy, our Rome, the civil wound. (V.iii.79-86)

Again shaken by violent events and now increasingly conscious of his age, as he resumes his role of political sage and manager of the Andronici's affairs in Rome, Marcus means well but once again displays an old man's vice of being too wordy.<sup>37</sup> And here, as he extends the comparison to the Troy story in the attempt to glorify his family, his final question is "who hath brought the fatal engine in / That gives our Troy, our Rome, the civil wound." In fact, if any of the "gracious auditory" cared to reflect, they would see that it was his own brother who brought into Rome the small party of Goths, Tamora, Aaron, Chiron, and Demetrius, which wreaked havoc, and "the fatal engine" which actually afforded them entry into the city was Titus' triumphant chariot. At the time, Titus believed his country's "ten years" of war (I.i.31) had been brought to a successful conclusion, just as the Trojans believing the same, unwittingly brought a small party of Greeks into Troy. And where Titus had unintentionally introduced the "barbarous Goths" into Rome in small number as prisoners, his son, "Rome's dear friend," the new "Aeneas," has now led a whole army of the Goths to the gates of the city as victors.

But are these the same "barbarous" Goths who appeared earlier in the play? One of the most ingenious and challenging features of Jonathan Bate's stimulating recent edition of the play, is the argument that they are not. Bate believes the play "begins with a Roman stigmatization of the Goths as barbarians, but modulates towards a very different view."<sup>38</sup> Citing grounds for the Elizabethans regarding the Goths as their ancestors, and arguing that the Goths were like the German leaders of the Reformation in opposing Rome, he devises a thesis for regarding the Goths who appear earlier in the play as "evil" and those who follow Lucius as "good." Unfortunately, however, as I have shown elsewhere, there is no evidence for thinking that the Goths have undergone any miraculous conversion on the road to Rome.<sup>39</sup> Those who follow Lucius remain a "warlike" people (V.iii.27) whose savage nature is demonstrated in the willingness with which they are prepared to participate in the most atrocious and cruel acts; when Lucius orders them to hang the baby, for example, they make preparations without demur. In fact, early and late, the Goths in the play conform to the stock Elizabethan image which can be found in writers like Ascham and Cooper and which was

known to every Elizabethan schoolboy from his study of Ovid's *Tristia* where they are described as warlike, lawless, brutal barbarians.<sup>40</sup> And what motivates the Goths who have allied themselves to Lucius, is no sudden burst of uncharacteristic altruism but the prospect of revenge on Rome; this is made clear when he addresses them as the play's final act opens:

Therefore, great lords, be as your title witness,  
Imperious and impatient of your wrongs;  
And wherein Rome hath done you any scath,  
Let him make treble satisfaction. (V.i.5-8)

How, one wonders, does letting the "barbarous" Goths exact "treble satisfaction" on Rome, sit with the dawn of the new Roman golden age Lucius is ostensibly ushering in. Clarity of thought in ticklish and potentially dangerous political situations is clearly no more Lucius' forte than it was his father's.<sup>41</sup> The services of the Goths, it appears, have been hired at a price, and that price is shortly to be paid.<sup>42</sup>

Besides the numerous, menacing Goths, there is also one sinister individual presence in the finale, Aaron's child. There is no evidence that he is present as a manifestation of any new found clemency on Lucius' part: the only reason given is so that he can be produced as proof of the empress' adultery with the "irreligious Moor" and thus convince the Romans of the justice of Andronici's actions. But there is also a less obvious, more ominous reason. The play, as D. J. Palmer has shown, presents an ironic anti-world,<sup>43</sup> and among its more daring features, is the comparison of three murderers, two of them rapists, to the Magi moments before a birth is announced (IV.ii.32-3); and the son that is born into this fallen world is "no redeemer"<sup>44</sup> but the "coal black" child of the "devil and his dam" whose birth is celebrated by murder. So, as the cheers ring out for the politically naive and brutal new young emperor, the presence among the hybrid assembly of the "growing image" of a "fiend-like face" (V.i.45) is one more indication of what the future has in store.

But the final comment on what lies ahead for Rome is in the repetitive structure of this witty and ironic play. Proceedings had begun in Act One with a display of Lucius' sadistic cruelty which had set in motion

a train of events that had brought Rome to its knees; they end in Act Five with a similar display. This time, however, as Lucius once again indulges himself before uneasy Romans surrounded by vengeful and triumphant Goths in a situation that can only be described as high octane, what is to follow is left to the audience's imagination.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>A. C. Hamilton, for instance, while accepting him, also notes that "Lucius, who succeeds as Emperor, first occasions the cycle of revenge by demanding the sacrifice of Tamora's son, and at the end he plans further revenge against her" ("*Titus Andronicus*: The Form of Shakespearian Tragedy," *ShQ* 14 [1963]: 202); Gail Kern Paster, while recognising his emergence as "... another Aeneas," also draws attention to his "merciless disposition" ("*To Starve with Feeding*: Shakespeare's Idea of Rome," *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays*, ed. P. C. Kolin [New York: Garland, 1995] 230; originally published in *The Idea of the City in the Age of Shakespeare* [Athens: U of Georgia P, 1986]).

Among the very small minority of critics who have questioned Lucius as redeemer are R. F. Hill, who finds it strange in view of his "fearful brutality" that "we are expected to applaud" Lucius in his "role as saviour of Rome" ("*The Composition of Titus Andronicus*," *ShS* 10 [1957]: 62); and more recently, Emily C. Bartels, who feels that "the stability of Lucius' reign is uncertain" because of his insistence on human sacrifice in Act One and because "the reliability of his new allies" is "questionable" ("*Making More of the Moor*: Aaron, Othello, and Renaissance Refashionings of Race," *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays* 272; originally published in *ShQ* 41 [1990]: 433-54).

<sup>2</sup>Yates' views first appeared in "Queen Elizabeth as Astraea," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 10 (1947): 27-82; and were reproduced in her book, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975).

<sup>3</sup>*Astraea* 75.

<sup>4</sup>*Hero and Saint: Shakespeare and the Graeco-Roman Heroic Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971) 194.

<sup>5</sup>"Compelling Art in *Titus Andronicus*," *SEL* 28 (1988) 214.

<sup>6</sup>Jonathan Bate (ed.), *Titus Andronicus* (London: Routledge, 1995) 21.

<sup>7</sup>*The Acts and Monuments of the Church; Containing the History and Suffering of the Martyrs*, ed. M. H. Seymour (London: Scott, Webster & Geary, 1838) 76. (For King Lucius, see 75-76.)

<sup>8</sup>Yates 75.

<sup>9</sup>Quotation is from *Titus Andronicus*, ed. E. Waith (Oxford: OUP, 1984).



<sup>10</sup>As we have seen, the man who led the people in their uprising was Lucius Junius Brutus. This is the role that Lucius fulfils in the play" (92).

<sup>11</sup>Ovid refers to him in the *Fasti* as "Brutus" (II.849); Livy in the *Historia Romanorum* as "Junius Brutus" and, with his idiosyncratic fondness for initials, as "L. Junius Brutus" (I.Iviii.6-7, lix.1, lx.3); Chaucer as "Brutus" in *The Legend of Good Women* ("Legenda Lucrecie," 1862); and Painter, Livy's English translator, follows his source precisely (see "The Second Novell"). (For Livy, see *Historiarum Romanarum* [Haunia, 1873]; the other sources used by Shakespeare are conveniently gathered by F. T. Prince in the Arden edition of *The Poems* [London: Routledge, 1964; rpt. 1994] 189-201.)

<sup>12</sup>See *The Lives of the Noble Grecians & Romanes Compared together by that Grave and Learned Philosopher and Historiographer Plutarke of Chaeronea, Translated out of Greek into French by James Amyot: and out of French into English by Thomas North* (Printed from the 1579 edition with the addition of 15 lives from the third edition [1603]), vol. 2 (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1930) 436-37.

<sup>13</sup>Modern productions have occasionally reminded us that there is room for a very different assessment of Lucius' role; in Jane Howell's recent BBC-TV production (1985), for example, "The new emperor emerges as a hypocritical opportunist" and a fascist (*Titus Andronicus*, ed. Alan Hughes [Cambridge: CUP, 1994] 45); see also P. C. Kolin, "Titus Andronicus and the Critical Legacy," *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays* 37.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. the quotations from Seneca (II.i.136 and IV.i.80-81), Horace (IV.ii.20-21), and Ovid (IV.iii.4).

<sup>15</sup>In the view of A. H. Tricomi, for example, "Shakespeare chooses to identify Lavinia's violation with the violation of Rome" ("The Aesthetics of Mutilation in *Titus Andronicus*," *ShS* 27 [1974] 17).

<sup>16</sup>Verbal patterning is a feature of the play influenced by Ovid. This particular instance, for example, is paralleled in the play's major Ovidian source, the story of Procne, Philomela, and Tereus (*Metamorphoses* VI.424-674). Sent to Athens by his wife, Procne, to secure her father's permission for a visit by her sister, Philomela, to Thrace, Tereus is consumed with lust for the girl. When at last he has her in his power on board his ship, he is described as a predatory animal closing in on its helpless prey. And as soon as the ship arrives in Thrace, he drags the girl, calling on her father in her panic, to a hut in the darkness of the forest to rape and mutilate her—"In stabula alta trahit silvis obscura vetustis / . . . frustra clamato saepe parente" (VI.521-25). Later when Procne revenges herself on him by murdering his only son, their small child Itys, the abduction of Philomela is deliberately echoed. Like the girl, the boy calling on his mother ("mater mater clamantem" 640) is dragged ("Nec mora traxit Itym" 636) like a small, helpless animal ("cervae / lactentem foetum" 636-37) in the grip of a predator ("Gangetica . . . tigris" 637) into the darkness of a forest ("per sylvas . . . opacas"). As in the play, ingenious verbal repetition emphasizes that the violence unleashed by the initial perpetrator has rebounded on what is most precious to him. (Reference to Ovid's poem is to a standard sixteenth-century edition containing the notes of Regius and Micyllus, *Metamorphoseon Pub, Ovidii Nasonis* [Venice, 1545].)

<sup>17</sup>*The Lives of the Noble Grecians & Romanes* 2: 436.

<sup>18</sup>*Shakespeare's Rome* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983) 69.

<sup>19</sup>At such a moment, it is considerably easier to credit the depiction of Lucius as fascist and “maniacal” in Howell’s production (see “*Titus Andronicus* and the Critical Legacy” 37), than Ruth Nevo’s description of him as “noble, honourable, and gentle” (italics mine; “Tragic Form in *Titus Andronicus*,” *Further Studies in English Language and Literature*, ed. A. A. Mendilow [Jerusalem: U of Jerusalem P, 1975] 18).

<sup>20</sup>Lucius’ “clemency” here and the presence of the babe at the finale have been taken as proof of his changed nature, but he has very pragmatic reasons, remarked below, for producing the child as the play ends. Moreover, Lucius’ “careful” observance of “popish tricks and ceremonies” (V.i.74-77) would be anathema to an Elizabethan playhouse audience. Yet modern editors have brushed aside this reference to Lucius’ religion as a meaningless anachronism, Jonathan Bate even arguing for shades of a “protestant succession” in his later election as Rome’s new emperor. (See Waith [ed.] 172, and Hughes 126; for Bate, see 21).

<sup>21</sup>Having characteristically prohibited “pity” in the onlookers’ response to Aaron’s cries as he starves to death, Lucius in almost the next breath damns Tamora for being “devoid of pity.” (The lack of clarity in his thinking is discussed in the final section of this article.)

<sup>22</sup>For Aaron’s desecration of the dead and ingenious torment of the living, see, for example, V.i.135-40 and III.i.150 ff. For Lucius (in spite of his indignation) equalling Aaron in cruelty see V.i.93-94 and I.i.143. R. T. Brucher, one of the few modern critics to actually remark Lucius’ “fondness for violence” (italics mine), also perceives that “It is not love of violence that distinguished Aaron from the Romans, but the witty conception of it” (“Tragedy Laugh On’: Comic Violence in *Titus Andronicus*,” *Renaissance Drama* 10 [1979] 82).

<sup>23</sup>Other instances with a Virgilian ring are I.i.71-74 and “Why suffer’st thou thy sons, unburied yet, / To hover on the dreadful shore of Styx?” (87-88), echoing Phaer’s translation “round about these shores they hove” (VI.355). (For “hove” as an alternative form of *hover* in the sixteenth century, see *OED*; for another echo of Phaer in the scene, see Waith [ed.] 98 [note to line 316]: reference is to *The Aeneid of Thomas Phaer and Thomas Twyne: A Critical Edition*, ed. S. Lally [New York: Garland, 1987].)

<sup>24</sup>Waith (ed.) 84.

<sup>25</sup>The influence of *The Jew of Malta* upon Aaron’s characterization has been widely recognized; here, like Tamburlaine, Titus makes a magnificent charioted entrance, commits atrocities and kills a son who opposed him.

<sup>26</sup>Romans and Goths invoke the Troy story in the course of the play, but there will be no more specific comparisons to Aeneas by the Andronici until Marcus’ ominous and rather inept public proclamation of Lucius as the “new Aeneas” following Titus’ death (see below).

<sup>27</sup>The assumption by Titus of the role of grieving, tragic father also strains credibility. He unhesitatingly kills Mutius, the son who was his “joy,” for acting against the interests of Rome, but when the evidence suggests that two more of his sons, Quintus and Martius, have even more gravely and viciously acted against the interests of Rome, Titus collapses before the prospect of their imminent death.

<sup>28</sup>G. S. West, “Going By The Book: Classical Allusions in *Titus Andronicus*,” *SP* 79 (1982): 77; P. C. Kolin, “‘Come Down and Welcome me to This World’s Light’: *Titus Andronicus* and the Canons of Contemporary Violence” 310, Michael Billington,

"Shaping a Gory Classic for TV (1985)" 436, and Joel Fink, "The Conceptualization and Realisation of Violence in *Titus Andronicus* (1988)" (a review of the production of Colorado Shax Festival) 459 (all in *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays*, ed. Kolin).

<sup>29</sup>There were human sacrifices made in Rome in the city's early history (see for example, Livy, *Historia Romanorum*, XXII.57.2), but these were a thing of the long distant past at the time the play is set.

<sup>30</sup>See "The Metamorphosis of Violence in *Titus Andronicus*," *ShS* 10 (1957): 39-49.

<sup>31</sup>The similes are of the eagle about to tear its helpless prey apart (VI.514-18), the bloodstained lamb momentarily cast aside by a wolf, and the terrified dove, its wings covered with blood (527-30), and the tigress bearing the helpless fawn away into the dark forest (636-37).

<sup>32</sup>In Peter Brook's celebrated production at Stratford in 1955 with Olivier in the lead, for example, as the raped and mutilated Lavinia, Vivien Leigh had "her arms swathed in gauze, with scarlet streamers attached to her mouth and wrists" (Waith 55).

<sup>33</sup>The image is derived from Ovid's description of Pyramus' blood spurting out when he stabs himself, *via* Arthur Golding's translation: "The bloud did spin on hie / As when a Conduite pipe la crackt" (IV.147-48). (Reference is to *The xv Bookes of P. Ovidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis, translated oute of Latin into English meeter, by Arthur Golding Gentleman* [London, 1567], ed. W. H. D. Rouse [London, 1904; rpt. Centaur Press, 1961].)

<sup>34</sup>This description of Marcus is taken from Q1 which, as Jonathan Bate points out was printed from the "foul papers" or "Shakespeare's working manuscript" (see 98-99). (It is puzzling that, having established Marcus' advanced years, Bate then transfers the lines in the final scene referring to "my frosty signs and chaps of age" [V.iii.72-86], which are traditionally assigned to Marcus, to "A Roman Lord.")

<sup>35</sup>For a useful resume of various interpretations, see Hughes 36-38. For the recent, brilliant explication of the speech as giving voice to human suffering, see Jonathan Bate. Noting Shakespeare's longstanding obsession with Orpheus, the archetypal figure of the poet, he sees it as an illustration of poetry's ability to "bring back that which has been lost" (111); he also suggests it is an epitome of fictive tragedy—when Marcus asks the mute victim, "Shall I speak for thee?" (II.iv.32), "it is the question, always present but rarely voiced, that every tragedy asks" (117).

<sup>36</sup>Earlier in the play the signs were not promising. When the storm broke over his family in Rome, Lucius' response was courageous but simplistic: he looked to his sword. And even after he has failed to rescue his brothers and been punished for his pains by banishment, he is still to be found wandering in the streets of Rome "with his weapon drawn" (III.i.48). It takes his half-crazed father to point out to "foolish Lucius" that the city is now "a wilderness of tigers" for the Andronici (54), and to do his thinking for him and send him to the Goths to raise an army. But it is possible that, although he is no less cruel, his period of exile has been a *political* watershed for him.

<sup>37</sup>In the Yale production of 1924, Marcus was played as a "superannuated Polonius" (A. M. Witherspoon, "Staging of *Titus Andronicus* gives Alpha Delta place in Shakespearean History" [Yale University, 1924], *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays* 386.)

<sup>38</sup>See Bate 19 ff. For similar views, see Ronald Broude, "Romans and Goths in *Titus*

*Andronicus*," *ShSt* 6 (1970): 27-34, and C. C. Huffman, "Titus Andronicus: Metamorphosis and Renewal," *MLR* 67 (1972): 730-41.

<sup>39</sup>That the Goths who support Lucius, are different from and changed in nature to the "barbarous" Goths who appear earlier in the play, is crucial for critics taking a favourable view of Lucius. See, for instance, Bates 19. For further details of the argument presented here, see my "The Goths protect the Andronici, who go aloft: The Implications of A Stage Direction," *NQ* 241 (1996): 152-55.

<sup>40</sup>Among Ovid's references to the Goths, one finds "belligeris . . . gentibus" (III.ix.13), "gente fera" (9), "rudis . . . Getis" (V.iii.8), "non metuunt leges" (V.vii.47), "inhumanae barbariae" (III.ix.2), "quamque lupi, saevae plus feritatis habent" (V.vii.46). (Reference is to *Tristia: Ex Ponto*, ed. A. L. Wheeler [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1924; rpt. 1965].)

<sup>41</sup>In German productions of the play, Lucius has been depicted not only as a fascist, but also as "a political bungler" ("*Titus Andronicus* and the Critical Legacy," *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays* 37).

<sup>42</sup>Any literate member of an Elizabethan audience familiar with Renaissance lore would also know that the employment of the Goths militarily signalled the beginning of the end for the Romans. See, for instance, Niccolo Macchiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. and ed. R. M. Adams (New York: Norton, 1977) 41: "If you try to seek the basic reason for the fall of the Roman Empire, you will find it began with the hiring of Goths as soldiers; from that moment, the force of the Roman Empire began to grow slack, and all the energy taken from it accrued to them."

<sup>43</sup>See "The Unspeakable in Pursuit of the Uneatable: Language and Action in *Titus Andronicus*," *Critical Quarterly* 14 (1972): 320-39.

<sup>44</sup>The phrase is Palmer's; see 324.