

"Lucius, the Severely Flawed Redeemer of Titus Andronicus": A Reply*

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Anthony Brian Taylor's essay brings forward some excellent arguments for a sceptical view of Lucius Andronicus, who takes charge of Rome at the end of Shakespeare's first tragedy. I would like to suggest, however, that he misreads my recent Arden edition of the play (Routledge, 1995), for my reading in fact supports his argument that Lucius is "severely flawed."

I wrote on page fifteen of my introduction that Lucius' "final action raises questions" as to whether or not he will "usher in a new golden age." I pointed out that the play has begun to degenerate as a result of the denial of proper burial rites for Alarbus, and that the denial of proper burial rites for the victims at the end of the play may therefore be questionable. In addition, there is the problem of, as I put it, "how the Goths are going to be paid off for their assistance." My note to 5.1.145 also pointed out that it is left open as to whether Lucius will "resort to strong-arm tactics himself." We have some of the same doubts about him as we will have about Fortinbras at the end of *Hamlet*.

Does the play end with an invasion, a coup d'état or a popular election? The answer seems to me to be a murky combination of all three. There is an editorial problem regarding the two lines in which Lucius is hailed as Rome's emperor (5.3.140, 145): in the text of the First Quarto, uncle Marcus Andronicus does the hailing, as if cajoling the other Romans on stage to accept Lucius.

And who are these other Romans? According to the First Quarto stage direction at 5.3.16, when Emperor Saturninus and Empress Tamora arrive

*Reference: Anthony Brian Taylor, "Lucius, the Severely Flawed Redeemer of Titus Andronicus," *Connotations* 6.2 (1996/97): 138-57.

at Titus' house for the banquet, they are accompanied by "Tribunes and Others," whereas we would have expected them to be accompanied by Senators. It may be assumed that the Tribunes are brought on so that there will be a "common voice" available (5.3.139) for the resolution. The "Others" must be the imperial guard, attendants like those who accompany Saturninus in 4.4 (where some of them are ordered to take the Clown off to be executed).

At the beginning of the final scene, Lucius sets an ambush of Goths. Some of these Goths are still on-stage when the table is set at line twenty-seven. We can only assume that as the banquet takes place there is an uneasy truce between the Goths (followers of Lucius) and the Romans (followers of Saturninus). When, at the climax of the grisly feast, Titus points to the pie and stabs Tamora, there is an uproar. Saturninus stabs Titus and Lucius stabs Saturninus. It is clear from lines 129-35 that the surviving Andronici go aloft during the uproar. *Pace* Taylor, I stand by the assumption that what has happened at this point is that the uneasy truce has been broken: the Romans have been on the point of arresting or even killing Lucius for his treasonable act of stabbing the Emperor, causing the Goths to intervene and protect the Andronici.

From aloft, Marcus and Lucius then set about explaining events to the survivors below, and making the case for Lucius being proclaimed emperor. Given that the Goths are still on stage, there is a sense in which the Romans have little choice but to accede to the proposal. Lucius holds all the cards.

All this seems to support Taylor's reading of Lucius as a brutal, military-minded pragmatist.

But Shakespeare was never a didactic or a monovocal dramatist. Even this early in his career, he sees both sides of a question. Claudius-like, Saturninus has been worrying that the popular will is slipping away from him. In the paralysis at the climax of the bloody banquet, Lucius is the obvious figure to turn to, not only because he holds the cards but also because the play has set up the Andronici as "popular" figures (Marcus is a Tribune) and has set up Lucius in particular as a restorer of Rome—he is explicitly compared to Junius Brutus. Lucius restores the state in the wake of Lavinia's rape, as Junius Brutus had done in the wake of the rape of Lucrece, in the other Roman work of Shake-

speare's which was published in close proximity to *Titus*. Shakespeare knew from Livy and Painter that Junius Brutus' initial was "L" and it does not take much imagination to suppose him seeing the aptness of "Lucius" as the name of his correspondent character. The name itself suggests the restoration of light, the ending of the dark days of Saturninus' tyranny.

Just as the play is intriguingly open-minded with regard to Lucius, so it is with regard to the Goths. At one level, the Goths at the end of the play are invading Rome because they wish to take revenge on their Queen Tamora for selling out and marrying Saturninus. But at the same time, they and Lucius share a language of faithful friendship, worthiness, honour and valour. They serve as a rebuke to the decadence into which Rome has fallen. This is of a piece with the play's persistent dissolution of the binary opposition which associates Rome and the city with virtue, the Goths and the woods with barbarism. I suggested in my edition that the Elizabethan equation of Goths with Germans opens up the possibility that a Tacitean discourse of the plain outdoor virtue of the Teutonic tribes runs through the play, countering the images of imperial Roman decadence. In *As You Like It*, Touchstone compares his exile in Arden to that of Ovid among the Goths. Touchstone and his fellow-exiles find, of course, that Arden is a much more civilised place than the court: the implication is that Gothic associations may be preferable to Roman ones.

The image of northern Europeans returning to a kind of purity of life that had been lost by the decadent Romans in the south had a very modern resonance when the play was written in the 1590s: it suggests the German Reformers of the decadent Roman religion. That, it seems to me, is why we find a Goth in the latter part of *Titus Andronicus* gazing upon a ruined—which is to say a specifically post-Reformation—monastery. The great twister of truth, Aaron, accuses Lucius of "popish tricks and ceremonies" (5.1.76): we should never take what Aaron says at face value, so this strongly suggests that Lucius should in fact be regarded as the very opposite of a Catholic. So it is that a positive reading of the character may draw on the fact that, according to the arch-Protestant John Foxe, Lucius was the name of the king who introduced an original "pure" Christian faith into Britain.

I remain convinced that both the positive and negative readings of *Lucius* and his faithful friends, the Goth army, are there in the play, and that the concomitant indetermination of value-judgement is one of the play's excellencies. I am glad that Anthony Taylor shares my sense of the element of critique in the representation, but I am not persuaded that the representation is all critique.

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