

SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

AN ANNUAL SURVEY OF
SHAKESPEARIAN STUDY AND PRODUCTION

27

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SHAKESPEARE'S EARLIEST TRAGEDIES: 'TITUS ANDRONICUS' AND 'ROMEO AND JULIET'

G. K. HUNTER

It is commonly accepted that Shakespeare's earliest essays in tragic form are *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet*¹ – accepted, that is, among those who allow that Shakespeare was responsible for *Titus Andronicus*. But few critics, even among the accepters, seem willing to go beyond the merely chronological point to take up the critical consequence: that we might expect to be able to analyse here an early but characteristic Shakespearian mode of tragedy.² The two plays are so obviously unlike one another that it is hard even to think of adding them together to make up any description of a unified mode. Whatever the reason, it is a clear critical fact that these plays are not normally considered together, or even apart, in a description of Shakespearian Tragedy. Shakespeare, it is implied, had to throw away this dispersed prentice work, set it against experience rather than achievement, when he began to compose the sequence of truly 'Shakespearian' tragedies beginning with *Julius Caesar* and growing out of the political interests of the English history plays.

These pre-judgements bear more heavily against *Titus Andronicus* than *Romeo and Juliet*, for *Romeo* has, whatever its generic implication, the refuge of being a 'well-loved' play, where *Titus* can only be called 'much disliked'. I begin, however, by assuming an equality of interest and importance, taking it that in both plays Shakespeare was writing as well as he knew how. The subsequent reputations of the plays may be thought to tell us

more securely about audience preferences in the period between Shakespeare and the present than about the author's intention. My concern in this paper is not with differences of valuation but with the formal similarities and relationships that can be established between the two tragedies.

In making this point I am not, of course, forgetting that *Titus* is the most horrific of Shakespeare's tragedies. To some minds this

¹ The exact chronology of these early plays is too uncertain to bear any weight of consequential argument. It is worth noticing that modern scholarship (following E. K. Chambers) has tended to keep the two tragedies within two or three years of one another; so there is nothing on this side to impede the idea of a close relationship. I have not included *Richard III* among the 'early tragedies', though it certainly has a tragic dimension. I have excluded it because I see its historical content and its role in completing the stretch of chronicle begun in *I Henry VI* as impediments, which effectively prevent it from being regarded as a straight example of Shakespearian tragic invention. That level of the play which is not dominated by historical sequence is largely concerned with the dominant personality of Richard himself. The creation of dominant personalities is not, of course, to prove uncharacteristic of Shakespeare in his tragic mood; it is, however, an over-tilled field, and in any case is not that with which I am here concerned.

² The obvious exception to this blanket statement is Nicholas Brooke (*Shakespeare's Early Tragedies*, London, 1968). Professor Brooke's brief is, however, much larger than mine; he includes *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet* (also *Richard III* and *Richard II*) within his survey. Brooke's sense of 'the mode of tragedy' is also rather different from that pursued here, so that the question of 'early tragedy' can, I believe, be rehandled without culpable repetition.

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implies that it is exceptional and that its evidence about Shakespeare's tragic mode is out of court. The idea that true tragedy is essentially about the mental suffering of noble natures, and therefore unbloody, is, however, probably a delusion, based on the social assumptions of a post-Enlightenment society which has shown itself incapable of writing tragedy. The Victorian sub-genre, 'the tragedy of blood', invented to deal with plays like *Titus Andronicus*, offers us, in fact, only a pointless tautology: the *Oedipus Rex*, *The Bacchae*, *King Lear*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, are all blood-spattered and horrific; but who would be so bold as to confine such plays to a sub-genre?

That Shakespeare when he wrote *Titus* was under the influence of classical exemplars must also be allowed; but this does not mean that his mind can be cleared of responsibility for it. Shakespeare was no doubt like other artists, and achieved his own voice by working through aesthetic enthusiasms and derivative exercises, and in this *Titus* is no different from other early plays. Like *Lucrece* and its comic counterpart, *Venus and Adonis*, *Titus Andronicus* is deeply indebted to Ovid's sense of human mutability, the frailty of man's happiness and of his capacity for reason. In a similar way *The Comedy of Errors* is indebted to Plautus, *The Taming of the Shrew* to Italianate comedy, *Romeo and Juliet* to the atmosphere and conventions of the Italian novella. The real difference between *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet* seems to emerge not from the derivativeness of the one and the originality of the other, but from the different implications of the genres used. If *Titus* is exceptional among Shakespeare's tragedies in its devotion to a hysterically bleak view of human potential, *Romeo* is exceptional also, in its general sunniness, its closeness to comedy. It is, of course, particularly close to the kind of comedy that Shakespeare was

writing in these years, 'Italian', courtly, exploring the romantic sensibilities of well-bred youth. It goes without saying that we are the better able to understand *Romeo and Juliet* because we know these cognate comedies.

The distinction I have so far made between the two plays suggests that Shakespeare's first move in tragedy was to seek to delimit the space within which he could operate, marking out the extreme polarities of his tragic range. He was never again to pursue the image of man's bestiality with the single-mindedness he showed in *Titus*. And likewise he was never, after *Romeo*, to write another tragedy which was so clearly a diversion by malign fate of materials that would normally form the basis of comedy. From time to time hereafter he will, of course, come close to one pole or the other, but always in a manner which invokes the presence of its opposite. *King Lear*, for example, can be regarded as in some ways a reworking of themes from *Titus Andronicus*. We have the same grieved and deprived father, hounded from dignity into madness by a malignant group whose authority comes from his gift, and rescued in the end by a foreign invasion led by his loyal child. We have the same pervading image of man as a beast of prey, the same contrast between extremes of female rapacity and female innocence, the same overlapping of lust and political ambition. But the role of the family in society is very different in the two plays. In both, the good and evil quickly sort themselves out as opposing forces. In *Titus* the social gap between the two groups is what is emphasised: on the one hand we have the barbarian outsiders, on the other the Andronici, the pious Roman family. In *Lear*, however, the opposition of good and bad emerges from the matrix of a single family. Among the sufferings of *Titus* the fact that Saturninus betrayed the favour he received does not bulk large; but for *Lear* the ingratitude of the daughters is the central agony.

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Thus the social rituals through which the conflict is expressed in *Titus* (feasting, family reading, the birth of a child, etc.) must give way in *Lear* to more unstructured domestic confrontations, and in these the side of Shakespeare's tragic vision represented by *Romeo* re-emerges. Something of Old Capulet's irascible absurdity survives into the very different world of *Lear* and his daughters.

Not only in *Lear* but throughout Shakespeare's mature tragedies the ritual of *Titus* is complemented by the domesticity of *Romeo*, the hieratic flanked by the familiar. Shakespeare achieves his later tragic centrality not only by diluting the unreality of *Titus* but also by making more remote and overpowering the cosinesses of Verona. Among the later tragedies *Antony and Cleopatra* is probably the one that most closely resembles *Romeo and Juliet*: in both plays the poetic power is centrally involved in projecting the love emotions of a socially significant couple, whose relationship defies the prevailing political and ethical assumptions of their society. Both are plays whose minor characters (Nurse, Mercutio, Enobarbus, Charmian, Alexis) are much given to comic routines. The lovers are finally united by quasi-sacrificial deaths; their deaths open the way to a unification of their society; and they are memorialised by joint tombs of exemplary splendour. But *Antony and Cleopatra*, in spite of its high comedy, does not in any sense give us a comic world wrenched by fate to a tragic conclusion. The characters are not like us; they are colossuses, and their laughter shakes the world. Here there is no private sphere into which lovers can escape from the pressures of other men's expectations. The love gestures of Antony and Cleopatra, all made in the world's eye, have to have the ritual quality of great public occasions. Their quarrels mirror the clash of alternative moral systems, Roman severity and barbarian self-indulgence. And in these respects the play may

be seen to be closer to *Titus Andronicus*, or at least to the pole of tragedy it represents, than to *Romeo and Juliet*.

I have been arguing for a relationship between *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet* and between these two and the rest of Shakespeare's tragedies in terms of the polar characteristics of tragedy they exhibit. But *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet* are not related only as opposites. As one might expect with a playwright finding his way into his craft, similar structural skeletons serve for both plays, though the flesh hung on top of them is very different. We may note how the two plays open:

Flourish. Enter the Tribunes and Senators aloft; and then enter below Saturninus and his followers at one door, and Bassianus and his followers at the other, with drums and trumpets.

The scene that follows fleshes out the diagram thus established: first Saturninus (the elder) speaks, claiming his right to the crown, derived from primogeniture; then Bassianus (the younger) repeats the speech claiming the crown as his right, derived from election. Then

Enter Marcus Andronicus aloft, with the crown.

Marcus tells us that the *populus Romanus* has chosen Titus Andronicus as its representative to take to himself the issue being contested. The contenders then leave the stage to allow Titus to enter in his *triumphus*.

The opening diagram of the forces in *Romeo and Juliet* is extraordinarily similar:

Enter [at one door] Sampson and Gregory, of the house of Capulet . . . Enter [at the other door] two other Serving-men, Abraham and Balthazar [of the house of Montague] . . . Enter [at one door] Benvolio [a nobleman of the house of Capulet] . . . Enter Tybalt [a nobleman of the house of Montague] . . . [they fight] . . . Enter an Officer and three or four citizens . . . Enter [at one door] Old Capulet . . . and his wife . . . Enter [at the other door] Old Montague and his wife . . . Enter [? above] Prince Escalus with his Train.

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In both plays the opening movement establishes discord against rule. The formalised stage-pictures set one competitor for power against another, the greater social range of the representatives of faction in *Romeo and Juliet* measuring the variety of social experience that play will draw on, the more concentrated concern with political power in *Titus Andronicus* marking that play's range of significant action. In both cases power is denied to the competitors. A central justice in the possession of power is demonstrated, and the establishment of this central authority over the brawling factions leads to their departure from the stage at the end of this dramatic phrase or movement.

In both tragedies, however, the remedy for discord which this opening diagram displays is a matter for display rather than acceptance. The failures to accept are, of course, very different. In *Romeo and Juliet* the Prince remains throughout the action an objective and unsubverted guarantor of order. The discord that persists is, in political terms, a hole-and-corner affair, dealt with by easy penalties. In *Titus Andronicus*, however, the supreme authorities of the opening, Marcus and Titus Andronicus, the representatives of the citizens and of the army, quickly lose their central position *alofit*. Titus is soon self-subverted and then hounded into grotesque subservience and madness. Astraea leaves the country; justice and order cease to have a political dimension. The movement by which moral order vanishes from Rome is, of course, without parallel in *Romeo and Juliet*. But the process by which Titus, in his wrong-headed and high-principled choice of Saturninus, his abject surrender of all rights to the new Emperor, falls from arbiter to suppliant does not end by breaking the parallel with *Romeo*. It ends, in fact, by re-forming the opening diagram of strife into a more stable and more exactly parallel shape.

The central conflict of *Titus Andronicus* stabilises itself as the story of two family

groupings, whose conflict destroys (or threatens to destroy) the civilisation represented by the city. The opening chorus of *Romeo and Juliet* can easily be adapted to fit the other play:

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In Rome's fair city, where we lay our scene,
From early grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.

It must be confessed, of course, that the 'two households' of *Titus* are less obvious than those of *Romeo*. By the middle of act II, however, it is clear that the action is going to hinge on the conflict between the Andronicus family and that alternative 'household' of Saturninus/Tamora/Aaron with Tamora's assorted children, Chiron and Demetrius (later joined by the black baby). That this latter grouping can only be called a 'family' by a radically deformed definition does not reduce the significance of the parallel; indeed it strengthens it. The family ties of the Andronici suggest the strength of the family unit as the basis of all social order, and particularly that of Rome, demonstrating loyalty, mutual support and above all *pietas*, drawing on the dutifulness of the past to secure the dutifulness of the future. The household of husband, lover and assorted children that clusters round Tamora suggests the opposite: a dreadful burgeoning of uncontrolled nature into a rank and unweeded plot, where parental love cannot compensate for the various disorders and mismatings that result. Within a short time we are shown the wife over-ruling the husband, the mismating of Emperor and enemy, of Empress and slave, of white and black, the mother encouraging the sons to rape and murder, the brothers ready to kill one another until reduced to 'order' by the black lover (acting as surrogate father). Finally we have the black baby itself 'as loathsome as a toad', the complete image of instinctual wickedness.

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In the two plays the conflicts of the households are handled, of course, in very different terms. In *Romeo and Juliet* the conflict between Montagues and Capulets has little political reality. It exists to maintain a certain pressure on what the play presents as more real – the personal emotions of the two lovers. In *Romeo and Juliet* evil exists only in so far as the traditional conflict exists. It is not presented as a facet of the normal human will (even in the case of Tybalt); stability and concord are always possible, as a result of spontaneous human action, and we are always aware that peace is only a hand's breadth away. The narrow distance between tragedy and comedy is of course one of the principal effects of the play. But in *Titus* the political conflict remains central and cannot possibly be evaded. It arises from the fact of being human, from the need to resist destruction, the imposition of chaos, the reduction of civilisation to appetite, and man to beast, all of which here grows out of a personal will to evil, deeply implanted in human nature, and requiring for its neutralisation every energy and every resource available in the play. Here no aspect of life can be thought of as merely personal and private, and so exempted from the struggle. The loves of Aaron and Tamora, the rape of Lavinia, are political as well as moral offences. There is no Duke to intervene; the conflict is not simply a relic of past bitternesses, but a monstrous burgeoning of manic energies; death or flight are the only alternatives to absorption into the system.

And in the end, flight is not possible either. The world of the play demands a return to the scene of the struggle. This is equally true of both tragedies: the two plays are (uniquely among Shakespeare's tragedies) tales whose significance is expressed in terms of single cities, though *Rome* has, of course, a very different civic resonance from *Verona*. Verona suggests to us when we hear that it is in 'fair Verona, where we lay our scene' the anticipa-

tion of Italian passions, Italian family honour, the hot blood stirring in the sun, balconies, friars, domestic luxury and homely social display, a cosy familiarity of masters and servants, a world poised between the bourgeois and the aristocratic; though we must try to beware of finding in the play an 'Italianism' which entered English literature through *Romeo and Juliet*. Rome on the other hand suggests *ab initio* a military civilisation, severity, self-conscious masculinity, stoical self-denial, the inexorable rule of law – the collection of ethical icons that long dominated the European sense of culture: Horatius defending the bridge, Mutius Scevola burning off his right hand, Regulus returning to Carthage, Lucretia preferring death to dishonour, Manlius Torquatus killing his son for disobedience, etc., etc.

It appears in consequence that the two cities are well chosen by Shakespeare as points of focus, for a love story on the one hand, and on the other hand for a story of civilisation and its enemies, concerned with fortitude and brutality. In both plays the city walls measure the limit of the ordered world.

There is no world without Verona walls

says Romeo with what might seem merely adolescent exaggeration; but the exaggeration is in fact quite close to truth. Meaning does not exist for the play outside Verona; the only non-Veronese of whom we hear is the Apothecary, who is death's emissary:

Famine is in thy cheeks,
Need and oppression starveth in thy eyes,
Contempt and beggary hangs upon thy back,
The world is not thy friend, nor the world's law . . .
(v, i, 69–72)

The balance of love and hate, of personal life and public reputation, the context within which meaning exists – this can be found only in Verona.

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In *Titus*, very similarly, the play's meaning can only be brought to focus inside the walls of its city. Of course the focus is very different, the city being so different. We are here concerned with self-sacrifice and self-indulgence, rule and disobedience, with suffering and cruelty, with the destructive will to chaos, set against personal commitment to justice as the only meaningful basis for society. Only in Rome, it is implied, can the victory of cosmos or chaos be fully significant; Rome is seen as the hub of things, where final decisions are made and known to be final. This is why at the end of the play:

As for that ravenous tiger, Tamora,
No funeral rite, nor man in mourning weed,
No mournful bell shall ring her burial;
But throw her forth to beasts and birds to prey.
(v, iii, 195-8)

Rome is here finally returned to the status appropriate to it, a status it has seemed to lose in the course of the action, when the city came to seem no different from the barbarism outside. When, as Titus tells us,

Rome is but a wilderness of tigers,

when Lucius has to flee to the Goths to raise an army 'to be revenged on Rome and Saturnine', Rome clearly has forgotten how to be Rome. It takes a political convulsion and a blood-bath to re-establish the city as different from the wilderness of tigers. In the meantime Titus is required to carry the role of Rome's speaking conscience, when Rome cannot speak for herself. Where is Astraea gone? Why do the gods not answer, or not listen? Such questions keep continuously before our minds a sense of meaning in the city which is elsewhere out of sight. Meaning cannot be given to the world again, it is implied, till the mind of Rome and the mind of Titus are at one, when Moors and Goths know their place outside the walls and Roman *severitas* rules all within.

The only locale established in *Titus Andronicus* outside the walls of Rome is the forest of act II where the major crimes are committed. It is to be noticed that those who are at home and effective here are Aaron and Tamora, Chiron and Demetrius. For Tamora everything in the forest 'doth make a gleeful boast':

The snakes lie rolled in the cheerful sun;
The green leaves quiver with the cooling wind
And make a chequer'd shadow on the ground;
Under their sweet shade, Aaron, let us sit . . .
(II, iii, 13-16)

For Lavinia, however, the forest scene is, like Aaron, dark and evil:

let her joy her raven-coloured love;
This valley fits the purpose passing well.
(II, iii, 83-4)

Aaron is skilful in the use of forest pits and stratagems; his energy sprouts at the thought of them. The young Andronici, however, grow uncertain and dim of sight:

Quintus.
My sight is very dull, whate'er it bodes.

Martius.
And mine, I promise you; were it not for shame,
Well could I leave our sport to sleep awhile.
.

Quintus.
I am surprised with an uncouth fear;
A chilling sweat o'er-runs my trembling joints;
My heart suspects more than mine eye can see.
(II, iii, 195-7, 211-13)

Within the dim light of the forest meanings change at the whim of the observer; this is no place for the hard clear minds of the Andronici. It is, however, a natural context for Tamora's Gothic deceptions and shifts of role. At one point the forest is for her, as noted above, a place of love and repose. It is also Tamora, however, who expresses most eloquently the idea of the forest as a place of horror – without

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even the excuse that it is 'another part of the forest':

A barren detested vale you see it is:
The trees, though summer, yet forlorn and lean,
Overcome with moss and baleful mistletoe;
Here never shines the sun; here nothing breeds,
Unless the nightly owl or fatal raven.

(II, iii, 93-7)

This description, like the previous one designed to encourage Aaron to acts of love, is, of course, not organised as a scientific account of a place actually there, but presents a rhetorical backdrop, appropriate in this case to murder, rape and mutilation. When Titus asks for 'proof' that his sons performed the murder he brings a Roman attachment to the rules of evidence to a Gothic dream of total personal fulfilment, where the world becomes what the dreamer desires it to be. At the end of act II when the night-world of the forest is giving way again to the daylight clarities of Rome, Marcus Andronicus sees the nightmare figure of his niece; he remarks:

If I do dream, would all my wealth would wake me!
If I do wake, some planet strike me down,
That I may slumber an eternal sleep!

(II, iv, 13-15)

Henceforth in the play, however, such nightmare shadows have to be allowed as part of the daylight population of Rome. The ghosts are only laid, the shadows of the forest dispelled, when nightmare and truth have faced one another in Tamora's last disguise – as Revenge, the mother of Rapine and Murder ('A pair of cursed hell-hounds and their dam' as Titus puts it) – so that mutilators and mutilated can perish together in a shared universe of absurdity and Rome be restored to rule and the daylight processes of justice.¹

At the centre of the city, as its soul you may say, stands the family of the Andronici, and at the centre of the Andronici's sense of themselves stands one essential object, which the stage-

picture should surely highlight – the tomb. The structural use of the family vault or tomb provides another point of correspondence between *Titus* and *Romeo*. We are shown the tomb of the Andronici very early in the play: when Titus first enters in his Roman Triumph, bearing the Gothic family into Rome among his prisoners, the first action he undertakes is the burial of the dead in the family vault:

Romans, of five and twenty valiant sons . . .
Behold the poor remains, alive and dead!
These that survive let Rome reward with love;
These that I bring unto their latest home,
With burial amongst their ancestors . . .
Make way to lay them by their brethren.
There greet in silence, as the dead are wont,
And sleep in peace, slain in your country's wars.
O sacred receptacle of my joys,
Sweet cell of virtue and nobility,
How many sons hast thou of mine in store
That thou wilt never render to me more!

(I, i, 79-95)

And it is the tomb that stimulates the first statement of the conflict that will dominate the play. Lucius demands, in what is clearly part of a controlled ritual:

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

(I, i, 96-101)

Shakespeare seems here to be dramatising a clear conception of the religious basis of the Roman way of life; there is no suggestion that he is criticising the system. The dead citizen-warriors claim the right to be returned to their family place within the city. There they will rest in peace, provided the appropriate honour is paid to them; and the appropriate honour is

¹ In these terms *Titus* looks like a tragic version of the city-forest-city pattern found in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* – a play which also has close affinities with *Romeo and Juliet*.

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that the living should hear their claim for the propitiatory sacrifice of 'the proudest prisoner of the Goths', and be absolutely obliged to fulfil this claim.

Against this Roman ritual Shakespeare sets the personal plea of Tamora:

Victorious Titus, rue the tears I shed,
A mother's tears in passion for her son.
(1, i, 105-6)

Modern readers naturally feel more sympathy for the more personal position taken up by Tamora and argued by her with eloquence and passion. But the play hardly supports the view that these Roman rituals are in themselves barbarous, or that Tamora is in some sense 'justified' in taking up revenge against the Andronici. The stern suppression of self in the interest of family, community or state is certainly presented in an extreme form, but it is the extreme form of a value-system consistently preferred in the play before subjective passion or individual emotionalism. The military dead are represented as an essential part of the living family and of the national destiny; they cannot be fobbed off with something less than their right. As in other military civilisations, the valiancy of the living is preserved by the promise that they, too, in their turn will have the right to enter the family tomb, to join the honoured bones of their ancestors and be rewarded with reverence and with sacrificial victims. This is why the tomb becomes the primary focus again at the end of the play. The new conqueror and paterfamilias, Lucius Andronicus, throws out the tiger Tamora for birds to peck at; Aaron is treated very similarly – half buried in the earth and left to the mercies of a Nature that 'swallows her own increase'. Both are replaced in the extra-mural world of unhallowed appetite. But

My father and Lavinia shall forthwith
Be closed in our household's monument.
(v, iii, 193-4)

Interment in the tomb validates the efforts of the life preceding, and ensures the continuity of past, present and future under the same standards of civilisation.

The parallel importance of the tomb in *Romeo and Juliet* suggests that the Andronicus 'household's monument' reflects more than Shakespeare's study of Roman antiquities. It implies that Shakespeare found the tomb property a convenient expression of his sense of the tragic importance of family and social continuities. The Capulet family monument is not, of course, a military symbol. But the choice of it as the most appropriate final setting for the tragedy brings out the structure of significances this play shares with *Titus Andronicus*. It is entirely appropriate that the 'public' wedding-bed of Romeo and Juliet (as against their previous private bedding) should be placed in the Capulet tomb, for it is there that Romeo may be most effectively seen to have joined his wife's clan, there where their corporate identity is most unequivocally established:

Where all the kindred of the Capulets lie,
(iv, i, 112)

Where for this many hundred years the bones
Of all my buried ancestors are pack'd.
(iv, iii, 40-1)

The rash and personal passion of Romeo and Juliet can hardly claim a truly tragic significance if it cannot be caught up in the corporate and continuing life of Verona. Here, as in *Titus Andronicus*, the presence of the tomb assures us that the extreme acts of tragic individuals contribute to the past and future as well as to the brilliant present of personal assertion, here where they join the confluence of acts that make up social continuity.

In both plays a woman as well as a man is placed in the tomb at the end of the action. One might have expected the Andronicus tomb to exclude women; but Lavinia is clearly said to

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be Titus's companion in death. I do not think, however, that this implies any weakening of the military significance of the family monument. Lavinia, too, has like a soldier triumphed over her enemy. The battle has, of course, been a strange and even a grotesque one. The code of military ethics does not provide much guidance for dealing with a wilderness of tigers; and the cunning ploys of the mad Titus are only marginally 'Roman'. But it is worth noticing that the appeal to Roman precedent and tradition returns at the moment of Lavinia's death:

Was it well done of rash Virginius
To slay his daughter with his own right hand,
(v, iii, 36-7)

asks Titus, and, being told by the Emperor, 'It was, Andronicus', he stabs and kills her. This is often seen as yet another senseless butchery; but in the light of the precedent explicitly established one may prefer to see it as the restoration of truly Roman or meaningful death. To have killed Lavinia earlier would have been an act of despair, for the standards by which such an act might be justified seemed to have vanished. To have enclosed her in the tomb then would have devalued the generations of soldiers already inhearsed. Now, with the mutilators mutilated, and with Tamora and Saturninus securely within the grasp of

punishment, the practical possibility of justice reappears, the tomb can reopen and receive the honourable dead. Their presence there can now give meaning to the continuing efforts of the living. The persistent *Romanitas* of the family is spelt out in Marcus's submission of the 'poor remainder of Andronici' to the will of the Roman people:

Now have you heard the truth: what say you,
Romans?
Have we done aught amiss, show us wherein,
And, from the place where you behold us pleading,
The poor remainder of Andronici
Will hand in hand all headlong hurl ourselves,
And on the ragged stones beat forth our souls,
And make a mutual closure of our house.
(v, iii, 128-34)

On the contrary, of course, the people exalt the family and the family, in its turn, must exalt the dead. It is in this context that Lavinia, like another Lucrece, comes to represent something like a Roman tutelary deity, raped, mutilated, rendered incapable of crying out against these invasive barbarisms, but, by virtue of family *pietas* and unflinching self-sacrifice, enabled to take up her niche in the household monument and to represent to later ages a mode of tragic experience appropriate to a meaningfully 'Roman' world.

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