"A pattern, precedent, and lively warrant": Emulation, Rhetoric, and Cruel Propriety in Titus Andronicus

by VERNON GUY DICKSON*

Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus *critically engages and enacts teachings and patterns of emulation, including those of Quintilian, Roger Ascham, and other contemporary humanists and playwrights, pressing emulation's uses to extremes that suggest that imitative self-fashioning potentially results in monstrous or fragmented characters, decisions, and texts. The professed aim of the grammar-school education, the ability to judge well, is conflicted by* Titus*'s exposure of judgment as itself a contested concept, locked within a circularity of intertextual precedents.* Titus*'s excessive, even parodic, repetition of emulative strategies acts as a rebuttal of seemingly straightforward humanist models of character, judgment, self, and decorum.*

1. INTRODUCTION

At the height of *Titus Andronicus*'s final banquet, Titus cites a version of the supposed history of "rash" Virginius, who killed his daughter "because she was enforced, stained and deflowered," questioning Saturninus on the propriety of the act.[1] Saturninus agrees briefly that the act was "well done," offering at Titus's renewed urging what sounds like a textbook answer: "Because the girl should not survive her shame, / And by her presence still renew his sorrows."[2] That this answer does not reflect Saturninus's

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[1]Shakespeare, 1995, 266 (*Titus Andronicus*, 5.3.35–38), cited hereafter as *Titus*, with the standard act, scene, and line divisions. Norgaard traces the likely origin of this version of Virginius, which does not follow Livy's account. In Livy, Virginius kills Virginia to avoid having her raped by Appius Claudius.

[2]*Titus* 5.3.36, 40–41. Bate, 1993, 106, claims that Titus is here acting as a schoolmaster, drilling a student on his exercises, and that Saturninus gives the response of "a well-rehearsed pupil," though I believe that the lines can be read (at least superficially) as more like a student querying a teacher, emphasized by Titus's specific address of Saturninus as "My lord the emperor," beginning with "resolve me this" (*Titus* 5.3.35). In terms of the setting of the questioning, when Tamora describes Titus's banquet as "thy solemn feast" (5.2.115), contemporary readers may have heard an echo (parodic, finally) of the *convivia* of Erasmus (and others), such as the *convivium sobre*, *convivium profanum*, or the *convivium religiosum*, in which deep philosophical matters, including questions of precedent, are earnestly discussed between guests at these private banquets. Craig R.

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feelings, and seems instead to be merely a rote answer, is made clear when Saturninus responds, after Titus explicitly links his actions with Virginius's precedents, with immediate horror at Titus's subsequent killing of his own "enforced" daughter Lavinia: "What hast thou done, unnatural and unkind?"[3] Saturninus's wording emphasizes that Titus's action — now performed, instead of discussed hypothetically — goes against all notions of decorum or propriety. The act is seen as monstrous and inhuman, inappropriate for Titus as both father and person. Why does Saturninus, whom Titus has overtly addressed in search of guidance from the emperor and "mighty lord," immediately question the propriety of an action he has just proclaimed in a parallel example to be appropriate, even well done?[4]

Before slaying Lavinia, Titus states he is taking Saturninus's response as "A reason mighty, strong, and effectual; / A pattern, precedent, and lively warrant / For me, most wretched, to perform the like," and then specifically echoes Saturninus's own answer as he kills Lavinia: "Die, die, Lavinia, and thy shame with thee, / And with thy shame thy father's sorrow die."[5] Yet, Saturninus immediately questions his own public judgment, based on a known historical precedent. Titus's actions, which follow both Virginius's behavior and Saturninus's wording, and Saturninus's unwillingness to accept his own public reading of precedents, reflect *Titus Andronicus*'s intense questioning of character-shaping practices. This questioning is repeated throughout the text as characters are continually presented as modeling themselves on their history and historical fictions, forming their lives and actions in response to what has gone before, seemingly bound to communal precedents too "mighty, strong, and effectual" to break away from.

This kind of patterning reflects the play's involvement in examining emulation and related rhetorical and educational practices and beliefs. *Emulation* is a conflicted term that embraces imitative and mimetic practices, but also emphasizes difference and potential rivalry within these

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Thompson (in Erasmus, 1997, 925) argues in introducing the *convivium sobre* (the sober feast) that the colloquies are instructive gatherings that show Erasmus's belief "that essential lessons of history can be learned from the words and deeds of the ancients," an idea central to humanist notions of exemplarity that will be explored throughout this article.

[3] *Titus* 5.3.47.

[4] Ibid., 5.3.35, 39. Despite his earlier statement to the contrary, Saturninus — following the history of Virginius — enacts the role of Apius, the corrupt political figure responsible for Virginia's rape, and who attempts to punish Virginius for the killing of his daughter. This reading would powerfully reemphasize the political duplicity and social disintegration that pervade the play.

[5] *Titus* 5.3.42–46.

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practices.[6] As I will develop further in this paper, imitation for this period meant following a pattern or precedent, but it also meant personalizing the newly created text. As a term extant in the period and often used interchangeably with *imitation*, *emulation* signifies well these practices, emphasizing their creative nature.[7] Further, *emulation* also suggests the way Renaissance writers often vied with an original model, following it yet finding ways to personalize the text, often besting the original, which seems in part responsible for generating what René Girard has called a "theater of envy."[8] This paper will explore the significance of emulative practices, particularly the emulating of historical and contemporary models, within Shakespeare's (1564–1616) *Titus*

[6]For more on imitation and emulation, especially in terms of English Renaissance literature, see Greene, esp. 46, 58–60, 79, 172–74; Rebhorn, 1990; Mallin; Quint, Ferguson, Pigman, and Rebhorn; Christiansen.

[7]A review of texts within the *STC* shows that *emulation* and *imitation* were often used interchangeably. For example, Brinsley, 49, 51, argues for the centrality of emulation in early modern education, stating that "all things in Schooles be done by emulation, and honest contention," and further claiming "[t]hat for whatsoeuer exercises they [students] are to learne, they have the best patternes to follow, which can be procured: as in writing so for all kinde of learning, how to do euery thing; because all learning is principally gotten by a kinde of imitation, and arte doth imitate the most excellent nature. The patternes being singular, so shall their work proue in time, eyther to expresse their patterne very liuely, or happely to go beyond it. Of this also we shall haue occasion after to speake." Later, while describing the need for spoken models in class, ibid., 213, combines imitation and emulation, again arguing for their pervasive use in the classroom: "propounding such [spoken models] as patternes and markes to all their fellows, for al to emulate and imitate them; as I have advised generally." The gloss to this line reads, "To cause sundry to pronounce the very same sentence in emulation," while the paragraph begins by speaking about imitation. For Brinsley (and he is not alone) emulation and imitation stand at the heart of schoolroom practices and are sister arts, closely related and often overlapping. When *emulation* is used differently from *imitation* within rhetorical works, it often follows the pattern of Vives, 197–98, who considers emulation to be a step beyond imitation, a more mature and expert use of imitation that involves greater difference and more complex innovation.

[8]Girard. It is important to note that emulation was not always synonymous with envy in the period. While it was sometimes used in this sense, there are many instances, perhaps going back to Aristotle, 243–47 (*Rhetoric*, 2.11), where emulation is seen as the opposite of envy: a positive and active following of a model. Both meanings, and many others, were extant in the period, as my readings within the *STC* have shown me, though even a simple review of the *OED* hints at this as well. The first definition of *emulate* is "to strive to equal or rival (a person, his achievements or qualities); to copy or imitate with the object of equalling or excelling," which also illustrates a clear link to imitation. And the first example given, from William Warner's *Albions England* (1589), is "So much doe I emulate, not envie thy glorie," while the fourth definition is, from Tourneur's *The Atheist Tragedy* (1611), "To desire to rival (a person, his fortune, achievements, etc.); *hence*, to be jealous of, envy, feel a grudge against," though I found similar uses even earlier in the STC, emphasizing the word's interdependence with *envy*. In other texts of the period they are used synonymously.

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Andronicus (1594), which critiques Roman exemplarity by portraying the homecoming of Titus, a fictional war hero thrust into political betrayals and machinations that lead to his death, the destruction of most of his family and the ruling class represented in the play, and the destabilization of Rome. Given Elizabethan England's own social construction in terms of Roman precedence, Shakespeare's criticism of these systems of value has, to borrow Heather James's wording, "astonishing" implications for the period.[9]

The process of modeling actions based on prior precedents has deep roots in the Renaissance, as *Titus*'s own contexts manifest. Not only is *Titus* Shakespeare's emulation of Ovid's tale of Procne and Philomela — as well as reflective of Seneca's emulation of Ovid in *Thyestes* and Shakespeare's emulation of Christopher Marlowe (1564–93), Thomas Kyd (1558–94), George Peele (ca. 1557–96), and his other contemporaries — but the characters are also themselves enmeshed in emulative practices, seeking precedents from a wide range of classical sources — Horace, Seneca, Ovid, and Homer, among others — in order to "rival and vie with the original," in Quintilian's phrase.[10] As the characters compete to outdo available texts and each other's imitations of these texts and precedents, they weave throughout *Titus* a destructive pattern of conflicted, partial, and uncritical emulations. In reference to one example of the repetitive emulative discourse of the text, Albert Tricomi argues that the "craftier Tereus" of which "Marcus speaks [2.3.41] is really Will Shakespeare laying claim to having outwitted the Roman poet in the telling of a tale" and that in the revealing by Lavinia of her attackers Shakespeare creates a "solution to this puzzle . . . that is much more unexpected and original than Ovid's."[11] Tricomi speaks of "a witty competition with Ovid and Seneca," but this competition is about much more than wit, and indeed strikes at the social theories implicit in the earlier authors' works and the common decorous and emulative readings of these works in Shakespeare's time. Beyond this, as James's work suggests, Shakespeare's criticism attacks Elizabeth's own political self- and social constructions.[12]

[9]James, 81. On the political implications of Roman precedence, see ibid. in general.

[10]Quintilian, 4:359 (*Institutio* 10.5.5).

[11]Tricomi, 16.

[12]Ibid. For a discussion of *Titus*'s attack on Elizabeth's political and self representations, see James, 79–84. Ibid., 42, also argues that "Shakespeare both joins and rivals Kyd and Marlowe in a collective struggle to transform the theater into a legitimate sphere of social influence," arguing that Shakespeare specifically imitates and appropriates ancient Roman figures, "disturb[ing] the normative uses for Roman authority and claim[ing] no small share of this authority for his theater." Thus this emulation also has significant implications for Shakespeare and the early modern theater's social place.

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Given the complex and often brutal nature of *Titus*'s emulative patternings, the text is about more than just the (in)ability to judge, understand, and apply proper precedents. *Titus*'s excessive repetition of emulative strategies (even to the point of parody) is a rebuttal of straightforward humanist models of character, judgment, self, and decorum: a confounding enactment similar to Titus's performance of precedence before Saturninus.[13] T. W. Baldwin's work makes clear that Shakespeare's plays have ample links to the humanist-driven grammar school of the time — and perhaps also to the critique of it.[14] Robert Miola has suggested that Shakespeare's early depictions of grammarians and schoolmasters show a kind of comical revenge on them; in a sense, *Titus* acts as a tragic counterpoint to these.[15] With its rehearsal of almost all of the forms and patterns of the grammar school, including the twelve *progymnasmata*, the play can be read as a kind of schoolboy's revenge on his own education.[16] The humanist education and practices depicted in the play repeatedly turn to dark and violent renderings rather than artful declamations, thoughtful imitations, and exemplary judgment. Within the atrocities and uncertainties of the text, the discontinuous and self-contradicting characters, lies a strong questioning of the didactic models of self-construction taught by a grammar-school

[13]My reading of *Titus*'s parody of emulation finds a parallel of a kind in Tricomi's work, which focuses on the hyperbolic dramatic metaphors in the play. In discussing the literalized use of metaphor, Tricomi, 13, focuses on how the "ironic denigration of metaphor," such as Lavinia's all-too-real rape, "deliberately 'exposes' the euphemisms of metaphor by measuring their falseness against the irrefutable realities of dramatized events." As ibid., 15, claims about the excessive parody of metaphor, the use of emulation is "always conceived with the utmost literalness of imagination," leading to a similar parade of parodic imitation coupled with the ugliness of emulation indecorously pursued. Kendall, 299, expands Tricomi's work, beginning with the insightful claim that "words in *Titus* distort the way characters view their world, and the patterns of previous fictions and myths influence, transform, and mutilate the action of the play."

[14]Baldwin, 464, cites Baynes's claims that "one main object of [*Love's Labor's Lost*] being to satirise pedantry, to expose the tasteless display of learning, the mere parade of scholastic technicalities, the writer must obviously have had some personal knowledge of the things, paraded in order that the satire may be relevant and effective." While Baldwin never explicitly agrees with the statement that he cites, he does immediately refer to the play as an "exposé" (464). Baynes, 149, also cites *Titus* as evidence of Shakespeare's learning. Emrys Jones entwines Shakespeare and Tudor humanism, adding, "without Erasmus, no Shakespeare" (13). While Jones may be a bit too emphatic, the strong connections between Shakespeare's writing and humanist traditions has become nearly commonplace in Renaissance studies.

[15]Miola, 167.

[16]For more on the *progymnasmata*, see Clark, 1957. Murphy, 56–64, presents a brief account as well.

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education.[17] By pressing the patterns of imitation to varying extremes, the play enacts emulative self-fashioning as resulting in monstrous characters, decisions, and texts that are fragmented, partial, even horrid. The supposed aim of the grammar-school education, the ability to judge well, is conflicted by *Titus*'s exposure of judgment as itself a contested idea, locked within a circularity of intertextual precedents, a concept I will further develop in this paper.

Further, as the politically-charged nature of the feast at Titus's house highlights, emulation is not solely related to literary developments or social humanist agendas. Emulation is squarely located in *Titus* as a significant factor in the social and political messages of the text. In recounting the tale of Virginius, Titus connects his loss to the patriarchal and homosocial struggle in which Virginius found himself. As Virginius was disempowered through Apius's legal maneuverings, Titus finds himself repeatedly disempowered by Saturninus's and Tamora's political tactics. As Robin L. Bott describes it, the battle over Virginia is homosocial, a "patriarchal rivalry manifested through rape."[18] Apius is able to use his political position to legally transfer Virginia's custody to a friend who will then turn her over to Apius. Without political recourse, Virginius "moves to surer ground, his home, and counterattacks Apius" — specifically citing Apius's sentencing as he kills Virginia: "Take thou thy deeth, for this is *my* sentence."[19] As Botts puts it, "Using the same legal rhetoric of sentencing as Apius, he [Virginius] asserts the superiority of his own laws and judgements."[20] In a similar way, *Titus* is about the move to reassert control through emulative patternings that recall and outdo the actions of enemies.

Emulation lies near the heart of the legal and political power of the play, as power is often connected to negotiations and reinterpretations of precedent, thus also linking emulation and political power to rhetoric and oratory. Further, the desire to gain power and to impose one's will is a mimetic desire that breeds factionalism, political unrest, and continual contests for control, such as the contest between Saturninus and Bassianus that begins the play. In *Titus* the link between emulation and power is

[17]For more on the early English grammar schools, see Abbott; Bushnell; Clark, 1948; Baldwin.

[18]Bott, 195. Bott offers a powerful gendered rereading of the social and political ideologies that allow for the brutal deaths of Virginia and Lavinia. In a sense Saturninus enacts the role of Apius (following the history of Virginius), the corrupt political figure responsible for Virginia's (potential) rape, who attempts to punish Virginius for the killing of his daughter — a reading that reemphasizes the political duplicity and social disintegration that pervades *Titus.*

[19]Bott, 196 (emphasis in original).

[20]Ibid.

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further emphasized in the many patterns of emulative revenge, the patterning of seeking self-justified, self-imposed empowerment through precedents of personal revenge-taking. In addition, much of the rhetoric in the play relies heavily on precedents of empowerment through successful patterns of manipulation and control. *Titus*'s central tragedy may be largely personal, radiating from twin losses of Titus and Tamora, but this is specifically played out in a highly-charged political scene, the potential rise or fall of the Roman Empire.

Before continuing, it is worth noting that the emulative self-fashioning this paper addresses builds on and looks beyond the New Historicist modeling of the self's place within culture, asserting that Renaissance culture had a lively understanding of self-construction derived from rhetorical training and awareness.[21] In his work on self-fashioning, Stephen Greenblatt briefly acknowledges the significance of rhetoric, but he does not elaborate on its significance much beyond this suggestive statement: "Encouraging men to think of all forms of human discourse as argument, [rhetoric] conceived of poetry as a performing art, literature as a storehouse of models. It offered men the power to shape their worlds, calculate the probabilities, and master the contingent, and it implied that human character itself could be similarly fashioned, with an eye to audience and effect."[22] I believe that attempting to read *Titus* critically within rhetorical theories and texts extant in the period, while acknowledging and accepting the limits of such a reading, offers a useful addition to our understanding of the period's own educationally- and rhetorically-based sense of self-fashioning.

At a broader level, my work follows Wayne Rebhorn, who specifically seeks to revise rhetorical readings of literature toward more historically grounded readings, and away from the tradition of identifying tropes and formal rhetorical features. Rebhorn's approach shows awareness not only of the history of the texts examined, but also of rhetoric's changing

[21]Dugan examines Cicero's rhetorically-minded self-fashioning in ancient times, a pattern that certainly influenced the Renaissance, which so closely followed his texts and example. For a revision of New Historicist anecdotal reading, see Bruster, 2000, who also offers a revised formalist mode of reading, called "positional" reading, that closely resembles, without stating it as such, an informed rhetorical reading of text, author, audiences, contexts, significance, and meanings — a reading that reflects the kind of rhetorical awareness suggested in Cicero's ancient instruction to Brutus that an orator must "adapt his speech to fit all conceivable circumstances": Cicero, 399 (*Orator*, 35:123). Bruster, 2003, further develops the critique of the limited historicism of New Historicism. For similar moves to reintegrate formal reading into historical studies, see also Rasmussen; Cohen.

[22]Greenblatt, 162.

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historical place and body of theory and praxis, emphasizing that rhetoric does not act as a universal approach, but rather must be historicized itself in order to be used effectively to read a given text.[23] Relevant here is Quintilian's assertion that using and understanding rhetoric is always highly contextual, always temporally and historically situated: "Rhetoric would be a very easy and trivial affair if it could be comprised in a single short set of precepts. In fact, almost everything depends on causes, times, opportunity, and necessity."[24]

I also credit my earliest theoretical framing to Joel Altman's assertion that careful rhetorical readings always necessarily embrace both historicism and formalism. He positions his work on *Henry V* as "compatible with sensitive readings, both formalist and new historicist," though, as he states, "my reading will be essentially rhetorical," offering this clarification: "A rhetorical reading is by definition occasional, formal, psychological, and cognizant of agency."[25] Cognizant of agency and its many ethical implications, my work attempts to follow practices very recently explored by Marshall Grossman and others in *Reading Renaissance Ethics*, which focuses on critically locating Renaissance texts within their historical, literary, and rhetorical contexts, while maintaining an eye toward the ethical dimensions of texts (and of our reading of texts).[26]

2. Emulation, Humanism, and Judgment

Imitation and emulation stand at the heart of ancient and Renaissance educational practices, and can be argued to be a central aim throughout the Renaissance period.[27] When describing paraphrase as an aspect of the

[23]Rebhorn, 1995, 19–20.

[24]Quintilian, 1:341 (*Institutio* 2.13.2). Commenting on this, Hawhee, 35, states: "The rhetor must be aware of the issue's immediate relevance to the time, the place, and the community in which it arises."

[25]Altman, 1991, 34.

[26]Grossman, esp. 5–6. Also relevant are excellent compilations that theorize the recent move to more ethical readings, particularly Garber, Hanssen, and Walkowitz; Davis and Womack.

[27]In his description of the grammar schools in the Renaissance, Abbott, 157, states simply, "If there is one constant in Renaissance education it is a belief in the necessity, indeed, the inevitability, of *imitatio* as the principal method of learning." Burton, 328, claims, "Imitation was Renaissance literacy. It provided the manner by which language was learned, texts were read, and discourse produced." Greene, 1, introduces imitation as "central and pervasive," adding that the Renaissance might be aptly described as "the era of imitation." For the relation between emulation and imitation, see n. 7 above.

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imitative process, Quintilian, the foremost source for Renaissance pedagogy, clearly states that imitation is not merely the labor of copying or even modifying a text, but is an actual bettering of the original: "I do not want Paraphrase to be a mere passive reproduction, but to rival and vie with the original in expressing the same thoughts."[28] Significantly, Quintilian's statement contains both an assumption that this rivalry will remain fixed within "the same thoughts" — that is, within accepted codes of aesthetic and ethical decorum — and the material reality that imitation can be an act of transcendent invention, as *Titus* explores in its various violent departures from decorum through emulative rivalry.[29]

Traditionally, imitative rivalry extends throughout the practices of imitation, creating a competitive model of appreciative emulation, focused on outdoing the original text or precedent. This patterning Roger Ascham (1515–68) explains as "large and wide, for all the works of nature in a manner be examples for art to follow," suggesting earlier, though in a different context, that one living example to follow is "more valuable, for good and ill, then twenty precepts written in books."[30] As Ascham's words suggest, while imitation was primarily a textual process that appeared repeatedly throughout the early modern period — and that was often understood as a universal process — it became a central aim of the Renaissance, spreading to the emulation of texts of all kinds, including the reading of character and of the self as texts.

Thus, emulation was not seen as rote repetition but as an act of creation — self-creation in daily life — governed by decorum, though also potentially generative of invention. Working from Quintilian's writings, James J. Murphy argues that imitation was a "carefully-plotted sequence of interpretative and re-creational activities using pre-existing texts to teach

[28]Quintilian, 4.357–59 (*Institutio* 10.5.5). In laying out the curriculum that Baldwin, 1:77, claims established "the principles upon which the sixteenth-century grammar school was founded in England," Erasmus, 1978, 672, defers heavily to Quintilian, "who has left a very thorough treatment of these matters, so that it would seem the height of impertinence to write about a subject he has already dealt with." Baldwin, 2:197, asserts, "Along with Cicero, Quintilian was *the Rhetorician*, at the pinnacle of grammar school" (emphasis in original). Abbott, 148, argues that "So strong is Quintilian's influence that [his] methods . . . could, with slight revision, serve to describe the education of sixteenth-century England."

[29]Quintilian, (*Institutio* 10.2.7), argues earlier that "it is a disgrace too to be content merely to attain the effect you are imitating. Once again, what would have happened if no one had achieved more than the man he was following?" Quintilian urges imitation that borders on invention.

[30]Ascham, 114, 55.

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students how to create their own original texts."[31] As Murphy explains, through this process of (self-)creation via imitation, schoolboys were thought to "imbibe" the moral qualities of great men in poems, to perform what Aristotle calls "natural to man" in his *Poetics*, and what St. Augustine refers to in his *De doctrina Christiana* as "more important than Precept."[32] This kind of self-creation through reading and emulative self-modeling carries over into daily life, creating a kind of competitive pursuit of excellence in character and honor, based on ancient as well as contemporaneous models, both of texts and of people.[33] Perhaps the most suggestive statement on this link between rhetoric and daily life is by George Abbot (1562–1633) — professor of divinity and master of University College at Oxford, and later Archbishop of Canterbury — in *An exposition upon the prophet Jonah* (1600), in which he espouses emulating the prophets: "It is not in Rhetoricke onely that imitation holdeth, but in all the course of our life."[34] Imitation was not solely a rhetorical process, but an individual and social one, and the link between rhetorical theory and personal practice is evident in this citation. The period viewed rhetoric, and especially imitation, as relevant discourses for shaping their daily practices.

The following of individuals and their texts as models is emphasized at the beginning of Thomas Wilson's (ca. 1523–81) *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1553), in which he claims that the way to eloquence is to "folowe the moste wise and learned menne, and seke to fashion, aswell their speeche and gesturing, as their wit or endityng" so that one may "appere somewhat like the[m]" and learn to be wise by being in their company.[35] George Puttenham (ca. 1529–90), who calls all poets imitators, argues that decency in action and behavior, through discretion, is the necessary purview of poets

[31]Murphy, 54.

[32]Ibid., 55.

[33]In explaining *applicatio*, "the application of a text to action in the world," Hampton, 10, cites Erasmus's *De conscribendis epistolis*: "Erasmus prescribes a method for study that demonstrates the central function of all types of examples in humanist models of interpretation. Every text, he says, should be read four times: once to seize its sense, once for grammatical structure, once for its rhetorical technique, and a fourth time 'seeking out what seems to relate to philosophy, especially ethics, to discover any example that may be applicable to morals.' The assumption of application is that past words and deeds embody a value which the modern reader can appropriate to guide practical action." Rebhorn, 1990, further develops this kind of life-shaping emulation in regards to both real and fictive individuals in Renaissance England.

[34]Abbot, 429.

[35]Wilson, A3.

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and orators.[36] Puttenham also argues that example is the "way so fit to enable a man truly to estimate of [*decencie*]."[37] The following of lived texts leads Ascham to claim a historical precedence for the necessary linking of good judgment in words and decency in action: "For mark all ages, look upon the whole course of both the Greek and Latin tongue, and ye shall surely find that when apt and good words began to be neglected and properties of those two tongues to be confounded, then also began ill deeds to spring, strange manners to oppress good orders, new and fond opinions to strive with old and true doctrine, first in philosophy and after in religion, right judgment of all things to be perverted, and so virtue with learning is contemned and study left off. Of ill thoughts cometh perverse judgment; of ill deeds springeth lewd talk."[38] Significantly, not only does Ascham treat the misuse of language as the source of ill deeds and perverted judgment and virtue, but he also claims that ill deeds and thoughts create perverse judgment and lewd language. This circularity of cause and effect, and linking of judgment in language and action, pervades (and muddies) the discussion of decorum and imitation.

Emulation in its proper place in the grammar school was intended to teach judgment and analysis and was meant to create excellence of character as well as speech, through lively written examples and precedents. Quintilian declares that the process of imitation, a multistep process including analysis, synthesis, paraphrase, composition, and performance, was directed toward allowing the teacher to "test his pupils' judgment."[39] Quintilian makes clear that imitation should always be based on the "excellence" of the model, which in turn requires careful judgment to determine: he repeatedly counsels that imitation should only be undertaken with the best of models and that even with those models care should be taken to examine the models closely, recognizing that the best of sources have blemishes that are to be avoided. He also strictly warns his readers against having only a façade of

[36]Puttenham, 3, 261–98.

[37]Ibid., 263. Ibid., 277, specifically expands this application of decorum to actions as well as words: "And this decencie of mans behaviour aswell as of his speech must also be deemed by discretion, in which regard the thing that may well become one man to do may not become another, and that which is seemly to be done in this place is not so seemely in that, and at such a time decent, but at another time undecent, and in such a case and for such a purpose, and to this and that end and by this and that event, perusing all the circumstances with like consideration." Hillman explores the circularity (and exclusivity) of Puttenham's arguments about discretion, decency, and rhetoric.

[38]Ascham, 115.

[39]Quintilian, 1:307 (*Institutio* 2.5.13).

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excellence.[40] In his prooemium, Quintilian states his end goal: "So let our orator be the sort of man who can truly be called 'wise,' not only perfect in morals (for in my view that is not enough, though some people think otherwise) but also in knowledge and in his general capacity for speaking. Such a person has perhaps never existed; but that is no reason for relaxing our efforts to attain the ideal."[41] Quintilian's ideal orator is himself a model to be vied with, clearly stated as a quest for perfection in character and capability. The ideal orator is the good man who acts and speaks well.

Quintilian repeatedly holds up this ideal, calling on his readers and pupils to strive for an impossible excellence. This orator was also to be an expert in the study of grammar, as defined by Quintilian: "This subject comprises two parts — the study of correct speech and the interpretation of the poets — there is more of it behind the scenes than meets the eye. The principles of writing are closely connected with those of speaking, correct reading is a prerequisite of interpretation, and judgement is involved in all these."[42] While grammar, then as now, included the rules of syntax, it also included the ability to understand and interpret literature, guided by judgment. Judgment becomes even more important as imitation and rhetoric call on the orator-citizen to act with propriety based on models and precedents, real and literary, historical and contemporary.

Judgment, then, is always tied to the very acts and texts it judges, a troubling circularity that *Titus* explores. Judgment and excellence are learned through reading the same texts that are to be evaluated. Excellence is gained by accurately judging and following — and, where appropriate, superseding — the necessarily imperfect texts of others. The search for excellence and proper judgment is a cyclical search within complex, interlayered texts in order to gain the means to judge these same texts and understand a code of moral behavior and appropriate action from them. For Quintilian this complexity only reinforces the need for the right teacher, one who is also a model of excellence, but, as I will develop further, in *Titus* Quintilian's teacher as model is problematic, another deferral in an ambiguous search for judgment. Juan Luis Vives (1492–1540), tutor at one time to Mary Tudor, also encourages the teacher to watch over the pupils' use of models, though a bit later in his work he emphasizes that judgment derives from God (arguably a different kind of deferral).[43] Vives links

[40]Ibid., 4:329 (*Institutio* 10.2.15).
[41]Ibid., 1:61 (*Institutio*, prooemium. 18–19).
[42]Ibid., 1:103 (*Institutio* 1.4.2–3).
[43]Vives, 194–95, 275.

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imitation to judgment: "To attain good imitation there is a need of a quick and keen judgment, as well as a certain natural and hidden dexterity. Therefore a true imitation of what is admirable is a proof of the goodness of the natural disposition."[44] Again, circularity exists, though of a slightly different kind. The core point here remains much the same: to imitate well requires judgment and excellence, which can in turn be proven to exist when imitation is done well.

While of course there were external, socially constructed, and known markers of excellence in the period, *Titus* largely elides these to point out the circularity in reasoning located in value judgments, a circularity that had grounding even among the most excellent of instructors and texts available in the Renaissance. Further, *Titus* emphasizes that some of this circularity is tied to the difference between accepting theoretical or esoteric statements about propriety or excellence within a text and enacting, or seeing enacted, these same judgments. As my opening example illustrates, this cycle of precedents, even in a single, seemingly straightforward example in *Titus* — where a model is chosen overtly and read directly and publicly, similar to how it would have been done in a classroom — shows the difference between a theoretically proper interpretation of a model and the public enactment of that model, confounding to a degree the supposed applicability of classroom learning. The circularity of emulated precedents creates in *Titus* uncertain conceptions of self-construction and lively warrants for horrific action that question humanist reliance on imitative learning practices.

3. Training Youth in *Titus*

Read with this understanding of imitative and educational practices, *Titus*'s repeated patterns of emulation can be seen as pushing this questioning of circular judgment to a dramatic extreme, interrogating the emulative beliefs and practices of Shakespeare's contemporaries, whether poets, pedants, or politicians. Accordingly, it is not surprising that Saturninus's response to Titus's claim for precedence sounds like a textbook reply. *Titus* features at least three different textbooks in the play itself, Cicero's *Orator*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and, most likely, Lily's grammar, the *Brevissima Institutio* (1548), not to mention foregrounding several references within the text that apparently derive from schoolbooks familiar to the audience, such as

[44]Ibid., 194. It is worth noting that Vives devotes a full chapter to imitation immediately after his chapter on the study of rhetoric, the only other chapter directly related to rhetoric in his text.

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Cooper's *Thesaurus* (1565).[45] These references to books surround the longest appearance of the Boy onstage and the discovery of Lavinia's rape, indicating a connection between the acquisition and the application of knowledge, as well as a focus on the training of youth. However, through parallel examples of training, *Titus* explodes the emulative model, revealing its easy descent into error and suggesting that the space between believed universal decorum and enacted rivalry leads more often to violent repetition than to a transcendent means to excellence.

The play's structure parallels Aaron and Tamora as instructors to Chiron and Demetrius with Marcus and Titus as instructors to the Boy. Chiron and Demetrius, in fact, seem at times little more than boys, unaware of the dangers in pursuing Lavinia, naïve in their belief of attaining her, parroting proverbs thoughtlessly, and dismissing both counsel and instruction out of hand, with a specific disregard for education exhibited through their inability to read Titus's warning, so clearly apparent to Aaron.[46] Repeatedly, we see Aaron instructing Chiron and Demetrius in what is appropriate and in how to act, such as when he manipulates their rivalry over Lavinia to cause her brutal rape and mutilation.[47] Later, he specifically takes credit as "their tutor to instruct them" in their "bloody mind."[48] Lavinia, pleading for mercy from Demetrius and Chiron before her rape, calls specific attention to Tamora's instruction of her boys as well: "O, do not learn her wrath: she taught it thee. / The milk thou suckst from his did turn to marble; / Even at thy teat thou hadst thy tyranny."[49]

From this instruction Chiron and Demetrius create their overdoing of Ovid, failing to recognize their own mortal danger — such as when Tamora instructs them to enact Murder and Rapine, falling easily into

[45]Cicero's *Orator* is mentioned by Marcus in *Titus Andronicus*, 4.1.14; Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is alluded to throughout the play, but is referred to directly on stage at ibid., 4.1.42; finally, Lily's *Institutio* is the likely reference when Chiron claims he knows the origin of Titus's revealing citation of Horace: see *Titus*, especially nn. 4.2.20–21, 23. Cooper's *Thesaurus* is the likely source of the Boy's version of Hecuba running mad: see Norgaard; *Titus*, especially fn. 4.1.20.

[46]*Titus* 4.2.18–31. Bate's note at 1.1.582–83 claims that Chiron and Demetrius "have an unusually high frequency of proverbial language: they talk in clichés." That Chiron and Demetrius stand out as using proverbs in a play littered with them speaks to their assimilation of culture and learning through decontextualized bits and pieces. It also speaks to their failure to use their acquired knowledge according to patterns of decorum recognized by the audience: their speeches stand out as piecemeal, which is perhaps appropriate, given their final subjection to Titus's cookery.

[47]*Titus* 1.1.544–635.

[48]Ibid., 5.1.98, 101.

[49]Ibid., 2.2.143–45.

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Titus's hand — and attesting to emulation's potential failure socially as well as personally, deriving in this case from the thoughtlessness of Chiron and Demetrius's repetition, as well as the impropriety of the instruction they receive and the models they choose to follow. In no way do they exhibit the judgment that Quintilian espouses. As Bate puts it: "What Chiron and Demetrius have learnt from their reading of the classics at school is not *integer vitae*, but some handy information about how a rape victim was able to reveal the identity of her attacker even though he has removed her tongue because he had left her with her hands."[50] The imitation of Ovid is here based on what Quintilian would certainly see as a poor reading of the text that allows it to become a model for surpassing villainy, rather than a tale with a strong moral warning. The emulative act becomes about trying to wrest the moral from "lecherie" and "wickendnesse extreeme," to become instead about how to rape better than Tereus — not the condemnable lack of virtue that rape entails.[51]

Titus's and Marcus's instructions for the Boy reflect emulative models and practices, as Titus and Marcus compete to instruct him in appropriate action after the discovery of Lavinia's rapists. Marcus calls the Boy "Roman Hector's hope," arguing for well-thought out "mortal revenge" as appropriate prosecution for Chiron and Demetrius, and approving of the Boy's desire to kill the sons in "[t]heir mother's bedchamber," based on Lucius's example.[52] However, Titus rejects these suggestions for action as foolhardy, calling Marcus "a young huntsman," and speaks instead of copying the "lesson" from the sand, emphasizing the significance of Lavinia's written text: "And where's our lesson then? Boy, what say you?"[53] In response to the Boy's overbrave claim — "I say, my lord, that if I were a man / Their mother's bedchamber should not be safe / For these base bondsmen to the yoke of Rome" — and Marcus's encouragement and citation of Lucius — "Ay, that's my boy! Thy father hath full oft / For his ungrateful country done the like" — Titus instead suggests sending a message, instructing the Boy that he will "teach [him] another course."[54]

While Marcus worries that Titus is not planning revenge and calls on heaven to do so, Titus's claim of another course summons the possible hope, inevitably frustrated in the play, of an alternative beyond tragic revenge, beyond the cycle of killing modeled in *Titus* from Seneca's *Thyestes*,

[50]Bate, 1993, 108.
[51]Ovid, 1.52 (6.606).
[52]*Titus* 4.1.88, 92–94, 107–11.
[53]Ibid., 4.1.95–106.
[54]Ibid., 4.1.107–09, 110–11, 119.

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which in turn revisits the text of Ovid's tale of Philomela, though without the hope of divine transformation or intervention.[55] In fact, this hope for divine metamorphosis and salvation is mocked in *Titus* in the repeated commonplace *Terras Astraea reliquit* — that Astraea, the goddess of justice, has abandoned the earth — and also in Titus's futile arrows to petition the gods, as well as in Tamora's own feeble portrayal of Revenge with Rapine and Murder, the closest the play gets to any divine presence.[56]

Of course, Titus's other course ends up being little more than Hamlet's plan to delve beneath the enemies' mines to "blow them at the moon."[57] It is also, as with Hamlet, a move to feigning, which ties into Shakespeare's own elaborate emulative uses of intertextualities, linking to Hieronimo's feigned madness in *The Spanish Tragedy* (ca. 1589), Amleth's in the *Saxo Grammaticus*, and Brutus's in Roman legend.[58] As James has argued, Titus forgoes the epic genre and traditional modes of heroism, such as those that Marcus and the Boy espouse, and instead chooses another Roman precedent, "the feigned imbecility of Brutus, Rome's early champion."[59] We are given Titus's outdoing of Tamora, Chiron, and Demetrius, as well as Ovid's Procne and *Thyestes*'s Atreus: "For worse than Philomel you used my daughter, / And worse than Progne I will be revenged."[60] Titus's alternative is deception, rather than the open bravery Marcus advocates and the Boy reiterates — deception that, as Aaron puts it, Tamora would applaud.[61] Though Titus does not abandon revenge, he abandons a straightforward model of revenge — the one he cautions against when Marcus calls for revenge, even in "their mother's bedchamber" — opting instead to outdo the imitation of the tale of Philomela that Aaron has initiated, to outdo Tamora at her own machinations, to become more devious and deceptive

[55]Ibid., 4.1.123–29. Perry has developed the significance of Titus's links to Seneca's *Thyestes*. Perry's work significantly links Seneca to the kinds of questions of self-representation and self-assertion that my own work explores.

[56]As Bate also notes (*Titus* 4.3.4, n.), the phrase *Terra Astraea reliquit* is borrowed from Ovid and is repeated twice in *The Spanish Tragedy*, as is the search for justice by digging, as Titus instructs Publius and Sempronius to do while the others shoot the petitions to the heavens (4.3.10–15).

[57]Shakespeare, 1982, 332 (*Hamlet* 3.4.211).

[58]Hadfield, 187–88, suggestively links Brutus to Hamlet, who in turn is closely linked to Hieronimo. Further, James, 71, argues that Titus forgoes the epic genre and traditional modes of heroism, such as those that Marcus and the Boy espouse, and instead chooses a new precedent: "the feigned imbecility of Brutus, Rome's early champion."

[59]James, 71.

[60]*Titus* 4.2.20–21; 5.2.194–95.

[61]Ibid., 4.2.30.

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(and to capture the mother bear as well as her whelps), but not to give up revenge.[62]

4. Shakespeare's Emulative Theater

Titus's move to outdo Tamora — as well as Procne and Atreus — by creating a banquet of her sons, and his likely imitation of Brutus, connects Shakespeare to his own contemporaries, not just to Ovid, Seneca, and other ancient writers. *Tamburlaine* (1590) refers to a similar emulative banquet: "And may this banquet proove as omenous / As Prognes to th'adulterous Thracian King / That fed upon the substance of his child."[63] The reference to Marlowe is thus also an emulation of another purposeful emulation of ancient theater — and, within the play, of characters emulating other characters with precedents in ancient drama. In fact, throughout *Titus* Shakespeare borrows from his contemporaries — Peele, Kyd, Marlowe, Thomas Nashe (1567–1601), and others — purposefully highlighting his own emulative place, his own outdoing of his rivals, and creating a bloodier work than any by his contemporaries, pointing to the emulative core of the work itself.[64]

That a core model, physically present on the stage, in *Titus* and its exploration of emulation is Ovid, and specifically his *Metamorphoses*, is significant, since it was a staple of the English grammar school: "Extensive reading and memorizing of the *Metamorphoses* was almost universally required in sixteenth-century grammar schools."[65] In fact, Bate claims that "Ovid, being perhaps the easiest to read and to imitate in verse-writing exercises, occupied the foremost place" among the major Roman poets in

[62]It is important to note that Shakespeare's refiguring of ancient stories and precedents follows, as Robertson has pointed out, a continued move to elide the agency of women and yet equally emphasize feminine culpability. Repeatedly, Titus is able to outdo all earlier precedents, most of whom are female, and to counter and best Tamora, while at the same time killing his own daughter. No female characters in this retelling of ancient models are able to stand parallel to Progne, though it seems important to add that, with Tamora dressed as Revenge onstage, and the plot having moved from the public sphere to the private, that Shakespeare does suggest a type of feminine revenge. For more on the feminization of revenge, see Christensen; Hancock.

[63]Marlowe, 129 (4.4.23–25).

[64]Bate, 1993, 102, argues that Shakespeare "trumps his contemporaries in their own suit," showcasing his own abilities despite a lack of advanced education, perhaps even responding to Greene's now well-known "upstart crow" accusation. Bate also further addresses the range of Shakespeare's borrowings in the introduction to his edition of the play, particularly in the "Origins" section: see Shakespeare, 1995, 69–95.

[65]Bate, 1993, 21.

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the upper school where "rigorous rhetorical training was undergone," adding that "it is not an exaggeration to say that Shakespeare's first lessons in poetry were lessons in the imitation of Ovid."[66] For a play so absorbed in imitation, it is fitting that Shakespeare returned to his own early learning to shape a dramatic lesson about imitation. Such a lesson bitingly counters the humanist trust in imbibing moral values and virtues through reading and learning from ancient models, while also emphasizing the power, though morally clouded in this case, of emulation and learning through example.

5. Patterns of Roman Precedents

Though most clearly emphasized in act 4, with its multiplication of textbooks and its references to learning and teaching, interest in education and emulation as well as in rhetorical practices runs throughout *Titus*. The text enacts these practices, showcasing the potential failure of judgment and understanding, at both the social and individual levels. The play is littered with references to historic precedents and stories, as in my opening example. In the first act alone, Titus is compared to Aeneas and Priam, and perhaps to Polymestor and Abraham.[67] These comparisons are often quite subtle, but add tremendous subtext to the play and amplify the emulative nature of allusions and associations within the text. Marcus's subtle allusion to Virgil's "pius Aeneus" links Titus to Rome's lauded founder, while Titus's reference to his own children as half of King Priam's recalls Priam's sacrifices for Troy and links Titus to one of the greatest tragic figures of Rome.[68] In each case, Titus is compared positively to these popular ancient models of leadership, action, sacrifice, service, and goodness, thus increasing his own social place and identity within Rome. Demetrius's recasting in this same scene of Tamora as Hecuba (wife of Priam) flips the comparison, turning Titus from Priam to Polymestor, who betrayed Troy and Priam's trust by killing his son Polydorus after Troy's fall — a choice that attempts to invoke Roman sentiment and

[66]Ibid., 21, 22.

[67]The comparisons are found at *Titus* 1.1.23, 83, 141, n., and 387, n., respectively. Other comparisons include that of Rome to Scythia (134) and to the Greeks (384); implicitly, the Goths and Romans to each other throughout; Tamora to Hecuba (139), Phoebe (321), and Semiramis (521), and to a goddess, a nymph (521), and a siren (522); Alarbus to Polydorus (139); Saturninus to his father and to Titan (230); Mutius to Ajax (384); Marcus to Ulysses (385); Tamora's new position as empress to "Olympus' top" (500) and Tamora herself to the Greek gods and goddesses; and so on.

[68]Aeneas is frequently called "pius" in the *Aeneid*, an association familiar to both Roman and Elizabethan audiences; cf. Virgil, 262 (1.305), 266 (1.378), among others.

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history in favor of Tamora. This kind of self-construction in relation to historical and legendary precedents acts as a kind of shorthand for character building (and defaming) throughout this scene and throughout the play as a whole. Almost immediately after the many cited character referents in act 1, for example, act 2, scene 2, follows with Tamora and Aaron's bantering about Dido and Aeneas, Saturn and Venus, and includes Aaron's first direct reference to Philomel, which is picked up and continued throughout the play.[69] Of course, many plays have similar cited precedents, and a list in the end is just a list; however, I agree with Bate's claim that "From the outset, the characters in *Titus* establish mythical and historical patternings for the action," and that "the play's classical allusiveness is deep, [though] not wide."[70] Shakespeare appears to purposefully invoke a particularly strong sense of historical modeling and comparative emulation throughout the play.

Shakespeare begins *Titus* with a formal debate, carefully balanced and staged as a kind of representative dialectic inquiry that highlights competing precedents within Roman ideals. Each son of the deceased emperor enters at opposite sides of the stage, presenting opposing perspectives for their rule of Rome: Saturninus argues for primogeniture and Bassianus for election and virtue. The initial speeches are structurally balanced. Saturninus specifically addresses the patricians (1.1.1) and Bassianus the tribunes (1.1.66), their initial deliberations are respectively eight and nine lines, and after Marcus's reply their lines are again formally counterpoised: Saturninus speaks a single line, Bassianus nine, Saturninus seven, and Bassianus one. Marcus's reply — from above them on the upper stage in Bate's reading of the text — seemingly displaces them both, putting Titus forward as yet another *candidatus*, in an encomium of his character equal in length to all their lines added together.

However, through Titus each brother's claim is, in a certain way, simultaneously achieved. While Titus has the election of the people and embodies the Roman virtue Bassianus called for, he chooses Saturninus as emperor, supporting primogeniture.[71] As James argues, Titus's own rhetoric reflects a Virgilian exemplarity: "Through a deeply traditional simile and address, Titus transforms the political scene from chaos to stately triumph."[72] He "imitates the august citizen in Virgil's simile for Neptune,"

[69]Ibid., 2.2.43.

[70]Bate, 1993, 103.

[71]This kind of partial representation that Titus stands for here reflects the endemic misuse of synecdoche throughout the play, a point well documented by Christiansen.

[72]James, 49.

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who, in James's translation, when mobs rage, ready for political revolt, they see as "a man dignified by his patriotic duty and service," and accordingly "they fall silent and stand with attentive ears; he rules their spirits with words and softens hearts."[73] However, Titus's apparent dialectic positioning leads rather to social and political disaster, as his repeated choice of precedent — the killing of Alarbus, election based on primogeniture — leads to Saturninus's alliance with Tamora and a questionable rule that begins with an improper vying for Lavinia, who is already betrothed to Bassianus, and ends in multiple murders, with Rome on the verge of being overrun in battle.[74] Titus's personal losses begin here as well, with his loss of place and honor and the killing of his own son in the contest for Lavinia. Thus, the germ of *Titus*'s tragedy — for both the play and its title character — lies in Titus's rote following of precedent.[75] Equally, the personal failures of the play, tied up in imitative acts, are replicated and intensified in the political failures of Rome, deriving from traditional emulative models of action. These include virtues that have been torn from their roots through rote followings of precedent not all that dissimilar from the play's uncritical and indecorous patternings of Ovidian imitation, which have also been torn from their root moral messages and humanist beliefs.

Marcus's encomium of Titus demonstrates the play's bridge of political, moral, and rhetorical elements, reading Titus as an emulative pattern that represents a stable, strong model of public virtue, an exemplar such as Quintilian suggests. The speech highlights Titus's moral and political worth: he is not only personally virtuous — likened unto "Pius" Aeneas, Rome's hero and founder[76] — but also represents a source of political and social stability through his successful campaign against the Goths and the barbarism they represent for the Romans. Just as Titus is linked to Aeneas, he is freely associated with every Roman, "A nobler man, a braver warrior, / Lives not this day within the city walls."[77] Marcus's allusion to Titus's

[73]Ibid.

[74]In reference to Titus's choices, ibid., 52, points out that "Vergilian *pietas* has ossified over the centuries," and that "Titus's religious and patriotic observances conform to the letter rather than the spirit of the law." Ibid., 53, notes that Titus's choices in favor of ancient precedent would likely have unsettled an Elizabethan audience, who would have seen Titus as unsettling a balanced and mixed government and "seek[ing] to base his own political power on a dynastic claim."

[75]Kahn discusses how Titus's overzealous loyalty to Roman male ideals leads to tragedy in this play.

[76]*Titus* 1.1.23.

[77]Ibid., 1.1.25–26.

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sacrifice of expiation further highlights his moral character, and also suggests his relation (like Aeneas) to the gods and to the fate of Rome. To accept Titus as emperor is to select another Aeneas: morally strong, politically effective, and divinely supported.[78] Marcus is also careful to connect the election to the customary symbols of political power in Rome, the deceased emperor, the capitol, and the senate. His focus on honor, mentioned three times in 1.1.39–45, reflects the merging of Roman political strength and moral character. Accordingly, Marcus ends his speech with a lesson in appropriate action: "withdraw you and abate your strength, / Dismiss your followers and, as suitors should, / Plead your deserts in peace and humbleness."[79] That is, Marcus ends his oration by evoking proper character and choices, blending the political and moral messages with rhetorical eloquence.

Most significant to my argument here, Saturninus's response, "How fair the tribune speaks to calm my thoughts," does not necessarily suggest his agreement.[80] The lines do, however, suggest that Marcus's moral and political rhetoric must be accepted in this socially charged setting. Marcus is the good man skilled in speaking for whom Quintilian argues: his points are based in socially embedded Roman beliefs, practices, and precedents that are so weighted that they almost necessarily have to be conceded. Saturninus recognizes that Marcus's appeal to Titus's worth and to the appropriate symbols of governmental power, from the gods to the deceased emperor to the capital and senate, cannot be questioned. Saturninus concedes, then, but not without foregrounding that he has been forced to do so by powerful eloquence. This is a concession that does him no harm: he can always rally his supporters again, as he attempts to do when the election does not seem to go his way, and there is again a moment in which to question the appropriateness of the election's choice.[81] Alternatively, Bassianus's reply foregrounds Marcus's "uprightness and integrity," his personal honor (the good man skilled in speaking), and concedes to Titus as an honorable choice: for Bassianus, virtue is the focus of action and choice.[82] He cannot but accept Marcus as emulative of ideal

[78]James develops the notion of Titus's later move away from this pattern of Virgilian honor to Ovidian imitation, accurately reading the imitations of the earlier texts as critiques of Rome and as an important reexamination of England's own place in the 1590s (a historical reexamination that is further taken up by Bach). Waith develops the first thorough reading of Titus as pervasively echoing Ovidianism, and not just the tale of Philomela. For a larger study of Shakespeare's imitation of Ovid, see Bate, 1993, esp. 83–117.

[79]*Titus* 1.1.46–48.

[80]Ibid., 1.1.49.

[81]Ibid., 1.1.207–11.

[82]Ibid., 1.1.51.

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Roman oratory (and public choice) because of Marcus's personal virtue, not to mention the virtue of Titus, Marcus's "noble brother."[83]

Against this background of Virgilian honor and virtue enacted by Marcus and Titus, the play foregrounds Tamora and Aaron as representative of opposing — though, significantly, not always different — political and moral views.[84] Tamora's first lines create a parallel between herself and Titus and between her sons and his, questioning Titus's heralded strength, piety, and the symbol of his honor, his family tomb filled with noble sons:

> But must my sons be slaughtered in the streets
> For valiant doings in their country's cause?
> O, if to fight for king and commonweal
> Were piety in thine, it is in these.
> Andronicus, stain not thy tomb with this blood.[85]

The juxtaposition of similar values, though in the name of a different cause, undercuts Titus's absolute claim for justice, arguing for fair judgment and treatment based on mutually accepted precedents and values.[86] Titus, in this formulation, should live up to his emulation of Roman virtues and show mercy and honor to the warrior Alarbus.[87] When Titus dismisses Tamora's pleas, her exclamation of "O cruel, irreligious piety!" joins with her sons' comparisons of Rome to barbarous Scythia and of Tamora to Hecuba, reflecting, and rejecting, Titus's and Marcus's early speeches that praise Rome's honor and suggest Titus as another Aeneas and Priam.[88] Together, Tamora's family creates an opposing voice to the predominantly

[83]Ibid., 1.1.53.

[84]In fact, the writings of Ovid, Horace, Seneca, and others create an intertextual union between the differing groups as presented in the play. Each character, despite his or her background, is based in the same Roman models. For example, Aaron's character emphasizes not a difference in textual references (he is the one who chooses Ovid, who recognizes Titus's citation of Horace, etc.); rather, he represents a different application of knowledge, the choice of different precedents from many sources.

[85]*Titus* 1.1.115–19.

[86]Tamora's argument, though unsuccessful, acts as a kind of ulterior argument to the Andronici. In a way, her voice — and that of her family in the play — acts in accordance to Altman's excellent discussion of the period's active support of contrasting argumentation, argument on both sides of a question (*in utramque partem*), purposefully creating what he has called "a great complexity of vision" with "probable ambivalence and multiplicity of view(s)" (Altman, 1978, 3–4).

[87]Tamora calls Titus "thrice noble" (ibid., 1.1.123), echoing Marcus's triple repetition of Titus's honor.

[88]*Titus* 1.1.133–44.

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Roman voices in the text; indeed, the family's voice is reinforced by Titus's own later rejection of Rome's worth and honor, including his famous label of Rome as "a wilderness of tigers."[89] Through parallels in the characters that run throughout the play, Rome is seen as not unique in virtue but as common in reproducing warring emulations from conflicted and uncertain texts.

Titus relentlessly shows emulative patterns and parallels that are exhibited, and questioned, in nearly all the play's characters. As already discussed, Titus and Tamora become twin revengers, each seeking to outdo the other in the name of a child whose limbs are "lopped,"[90] while Aaron and Tamora parallel Marcus and Titus as instructors of a new generation. In addition, Lucius parallels Tamora, as a bridge between the Romans and Goths: Tamora begins the play as Queen of the Goths and then Empress of Rome, while Lucius ends the play as the military leader of the Goths and then Emperor of Rome. Lavinia and Tamora oppose each other as, respectively, "Rome's rich ornament" and one who "overshine[s] the gallant'st dames of Rome," each sought by Saturninus to be empress, and each in distinctive ways represents the moral center of Rome.[91] These formal parallels reinforce the pattern of emulative rivalry that points to the core of the play: the potential failure of imitation as self-creation, owing to the uncertainties and circularity of textual judgment and to the impossible balance between accepted decorum and mounting rivalry. This line of argument is not meant to suggest that there is no difference between these paralleled figures: but the parallels emphasize the slipperiness of judgment that the play enacts, its uncertainties more than its complete obscurity. Just how much do we finally approve of Titus's actions, or even of Lavinia's (perhaps unwise or ill-timed) berating of Tamora? We know where the lines between good and bad seem to be drawn in the play, but how we know, and how comfortable we are with even the purportedly good characters' actions, remain for many productions and audiences unclear.

6. Reading Rhetorics Embodied on Stage

Returning to act 4, which most clearly foregrounds the educative and emulative texts of the play, especially those of Ovid, we see the failures of imitative reading emphasized. The Boy, Marcus, and Titus all try to read Lavinia after her rape and mutilation, each failing as they apply

[89]Ibid., 3.1.54.
[90]Ibid., 1.1.146 (Alarbus), 2.3.17 (Lavinia).
[91]Ibid., 1.1.322.

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inappropriate models to her actions: Marcus compares her to Cornelia, mother and educator of the divisive political reformers, the Gracchi, and thinks she wishes to read with the Boy to continue his education, while the Boy compares her to Hecuba run mad with sorrow, reading the tale of Hecuba as a kind of exemplar of his aunt's state.[92] Even when they finally realize that "somewhat doth she mean," Titus dismisses the texts, judging them too easy and considering the works only as a means to "beguile thy sorrow till the heavens / Reveal the damned contriver of the deed," completely missing the point that the tale of Philomela is the means of revealing the deed, a perfect model for her own circumstance.[93] Later, when Lavinia attempts to signal that two were "contriver[s] to this deed," Marcus grasps immediately what her gestures indicate, only to back away from the reading — "I think she means that there were more than one / Confederate in the fact. Ay, more there was — / Or else to heaven she heaves [her arms] for revenge"— which instead matches his own actions in calling on heaven for revenge just lines later.[94] Immediately after this, Marcus fails to read her well again, this time thinking that Lavinia has chosen Ovid for sentimental reasons, "For love of her that's gone, / Perhaps she culled it from the rest."[95] Marcus consistently overreads the text before him, applying abstract and often personal models to Lavinia, perhaps locked into the pervasively self-focused rivalry of Rome that the play emphasizes, one that harkens back the self-assertions of Senecan tradition. Lavinia is of course able to read precedent perfectly in her situation, but this seems a horrible parody, an emulative reading made all too clear because of a perfect parallelism of circumstances made horribly literal through Chiron and Demetrius's adaptation of Ovid's tale.[96]

[92]Ascham, 17, uses Cornelia in *The Schoolmaster* as an example of the most proper and perfect learning of language in the home: she is often referred to in this kind of exemplary way in the period. Tiberius and Caius Gracchi, sons of the consul Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus (a plebeian), attempted together, each in turn serving as tribune, to reform social policy in Rome, especially limiting the size of patrician farms to allow the plebeians to compete with the wealthy landowners. They are in a sense, then, the exact antitheses to Saturninus and Bassianus and to the intense and pervasive rivalry that infects *Titus*, though their deaths for their attempt to improve the social conditions of Rome potentially reiterate the view of Rome as "a wilderness of tigers": *Titus* 3.1.54.

[93]*Titus* 4.1.9, 35–36.

[94]Ibid., 4.1.36, 38–40 (cf. 4.1.129).

[95]Ibid., 4.1.43–44.

[96]The discovery of the rape also relies on another unspoken intertextuality. Marcus's instruction to write in the sand emulates Ovid's tale of Io, whose act of writing in the sand reveals her true circumstances to her father.

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The drawn-out realization of exactly what has happened to Lavinia is amplified for the audience, since Marcus had already made the connection between Ovid and Lavinia's horrible circumstances when he first saw Lavinia after her rape.[97] This earlier reading is lost (dismissed as too literal, perhaps) as the process of seeking understanding begins again in act 4. Just as this arrival at understanding is a slow, even painful, parodic reading of emulation's place in society and education, Marcus's first meeting with Lavinia is equally painful, a slow comprehension of reality, spoken in a stylized rhetoric incapable of realizing in words the truth of Lavinia's mutilation.[98] Perhaps no other speech more clearly displays the failure of reading emulatively, of seeking for understanding in precedent. Marcus repeatedly tries to use literary examples to understand Lavinia's loss, though his evocation of textual precedents, such as Orpheus's ability to calm Cerberus, offer little in the face of Lavinia's reality.[99] Marcus also returns to a personal model of (largely ineffective) revenge, ignoring his opportunity to console Lavinia: "O that I knew thy heart, and knew the beast, / That I might rail at him to ease my mind."[100] Marcus seeks to

[97] *Titus* 2.3.11–57.

[98] Marcus's discovery of Lavinia and subsequent attempt to make sense of her condition through poetic means are connected to Shakespeare's powerful overlap of Ovid and Virgil throughout the play, creating in this scene a kind of horrid blazon of Lavinia. James, 61, claims that Shakespeare translates Ovid into "the theatrical medium to radicalize Ovid's habit of disconnecting events from their poetic representations. . . . [B]ut improves on his master's technique." This emulative overdoing of Ovid is meant to improve on and make more graphic Ovid's skepticism of imperial values: "Shakespeare, whom Francis Meres called the Elizabethan Ovid, adopts Ovid's contentious imitations in the speech he gives to Marcus, who inadvertently turns Lavinia's maimed body into an emblem of Vergil's contamination by Ovid" (James, 62). Marcus's failures here are linked to the limits of poetic precedents and the horror of lively enactment of what in Ovid was textually distant and metaphoric.

[99] Kendall, 303, argues that reading reality (even the staged reality of the play world) through precedents "make[s] for an inflexibility of mind." Her charge would be damning to the rhetoricians and teachers of the period, who emphatically felt that emulative thinking contributed to *facilitas* and *copia*, powerful inventive qualities — and perhaps this is part of the play's seeming attack on and parody of extant educational practices. Certainly we see a lot of mental inflexibility in this play — notably, Titus's initial rote following of precedents that precipitates the continuing actions of the play — though this represents as much a failure to understand the inventive potential of emulation as it does any limit of emulative thinking and patterning. Marcus's own actions here seem to be as much about his self-absorption in the face of another's tragedy as his inflexibility of thought. What we see repeatedly is how failures of judgment and propriety lead to thoughtless emulative choices, whether lacking in imagination or simply in decency.

[100] *Titus* 2.3.34–35.

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know Lavinia's heart, not to comfort her but to comfort himself through railing.[101] Only after she recoils from him, at the thought of having to face her father and subject him to the sight of her ravishment, does he sincerely speak of comforting her, though this comfort is delayed more than forty lines into his speech: "Do not draw back, for we will mourn with thee; / O, could our mourning ease thy misery!"[102] Marcus's following of Roman models of retribution is cold and empty in the face of Lavinia's suffering, and not all that different from Titus's slaying of Alarbus before Tamora and his later slaying of Lavinia at the play's final feast.

As I note above, the references to popular schoolbooks in act 4 connect to yet another schoolbook, Ascham's *The Schoolmaster*, which contends with Quintilian's emulative model of education and emphasizes the need to revise flawed ideas of learning through vying in rivalry. When Marcus alludes to Cornelia, he summons her as an example of the proper education of youth.[103] A similar passage from the first pages of *The Schoolmaster* recalls *Titus*'s concern with patterning, education, and judgment: "In very deed, if children were brought up in such a house, or such a school, where the Latin tongue were properly and perfectly spoken, as Tiberius and Caius Gracchi were brought up in their mother Cornelia's house, surely then the daily use of speaking were the best and readiest way to learn the Latin tongue. But now commonly, in the best schools in England, for words, right choice is smally regarded, true propriety wholly neglected; confusion is brought in, barbarousness is bred up so in young wits as afterward they be not only marred for speaking but also corrupted in judgment, as with much ado, or never at all, they be brought to right frame again."[104] While Ascham is here directly concerned with the instruction of Latin, his focus is the lasting impact that poor models have on judgment — social, moral, and rhetorical. Moreover, my earlier citation of Ascham's grim, Babel-like vision of a world without linguistic and rhetorical decorum emphasizes his totalizing view of the need for "true propriety" in education and language use.

A central point of Ascham's *Schoolmaster* is to put forward his process, which follows Cicero's model, of "double translation," urging its link to

[101]There is here an echo of Titus's own selfish slaying of Lavinia based on Virginius's precedent in order to end "thy father's sorrow" (5.3.46), though Titus embodies the idea in action, while Marcus does so in words alone.

[102]*Titus* 2.3.56–57.

[103]Marcus specifically connects Cornelia's excellent educational practices to Cicero, whom Ascham puts forward in his own work as the best model of education and oratory.

[104]Ascham, 17. Ascham repeatedly conjures the Goths as symbols of disorder and "barbarousness."

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"true judgment."[105] Later in his work, he specifies that his model is in opposition to Quintilian's ideal of emulative imitation. Ascham cites Cicero, Crassus, and Plinius Secundus as opposing Quintilian's belief in "striv[ing] and contend[ing]" with the best models.[106] Plinius calls this modeling "a bold contest" (*Audux contentio*), to which Ascham adds, "It is a bold comparison indeed to think to say better than that is best. Such turning of the best into the worse is much like the turning of good wine out of a fair, sweet flagon of silver into a foul, musty bottle of leather, or to turn pure gold and silver into foul brass and copper."[107] Ascham continues to speak of this modeling as "chopping, and changing the best into the worst," an apt phrase for *Titus*'s treatment of Lavinia and Titus.[108]

However, Ascham's double translation — learning to model ancient texts by translating them from one language to another and back again, with a period of time between translations — is only slightly removed from the imitative *paraphrasis* championed by Quintilian, mostly an academic quibble and by no means directly related to generating improved judgment. Using Plinius as his source, Ascham claims his method will facilitate apt and comely choice, and states, "following diligently thus the steps of the best authors, like invention of arguments, like order in disposition, like utterance in elocution is easily gathered up, whereby your scholar shall be brought not only to like eloquence but also to all true understanding and right judgment, both for writing and speaking."[109] Again, Ascham's goal is patterning based on models, with true judgment as the outcome. As he later argues, his method is more correct because the perfect pattern — the original text that is translated and then restored as exactly as possible — remains always before the eyes as a "touchstone" and measuring rod.[110] However, in Lavinia's case exact repetition and an attempt at double translation would have hardly mitigated Chiron and Demetrius's horrific translation of Ovid. It would certainly not by itself have taught them more appropriate patterning or have increased their judgment and understanding.

While Ascham offers a revision of Quintilian's emulative rivalry, his model equally fails to escape the recycling of precedents unsuited to new circumstances or lively reenactment. Imitation, whether precise translation

[105]Ascham, 14. The terms *double translation* and *double translating* are introduced later, on 83–87, 94.

[106]Ibid., 87.

[107]Ibid., 88.

[108]Ibid.

[109]Ibid., 86.

[110]Ibid., 94.

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or emulative patterning, fails to teach social codes of behavior, because it does not offer an apparatus able to judge texts, to weigh their applicability, or to guide their repetition. In *Titus*, where imitation is linked to revenge and justice — and not, as Tamora pleads, to mercy and forgiveness — rivalry leads to escalating violence only slightly worse than the simply repetitive quid pro quo of attempting exact retribution.

7. Shaping National Rhetorics

Marcus's inability to read well, discussed earlier, seems to derive directly from this inability to escape the cycle of precedents that imitation offers him, including related self-focused notions of rivalry and revenge. After the final banquet, as Marcus and Lucius take over the education of the Boy and, indeed, all the people of Rome (and likely the Goths as well), their lessons of emulation and judgment embody frightening principles of choice and bias. Marcus's final speech, meant to "teach you how to knit again / This shattered corn into one mutual sheaf," is notably one-sided, and macabre after the repeated "chopping, and changing the best into worst" exemplified in the play. It emphasizes, as always, the honor of the Andronici and Rome (via the safe, postmortem pardon of Saturninus) and attacks the wickedness of Aaron and Tamora as betrayers of both the Goths and the Romans.[111] In fact, the only possibility of unity offered in Marcus's closing oration is through the scapegoating of Aaron as "irreligious," "misbelieving," and "wicked," and Tamora as bestial — "a ravenous tiger" whose "life was beastly."[112] Rebhorn, reading carefully the various myths extant in the period about rhetoric's early civilizing influence on human beings — who are often seen as naturally violent and bestial, as Tamora is described — offers a view of rhetoric as a coercive force, a view that fairly aptly describes Marcus's biased and self-protecting oration: "If human beings in their natural states are creatures of violence, the orator, too in taming them, visits a kind of violence upon them, and his doing so may be interpreted as serving his own interests, his own *will*, no matter how much it supposedly serves theirs."[113] Marcus speaks to justify his own family, his way of life, and his view of society and civilization, which is often egocentric and colonizing in nature. His kind of unifying speech is a questionable move toward constructing self-focused homogeneity. Rebhorn's reading exemplifies the kind of exclusive universalizing that

[111] *Titus* 5.3.69–70.
[112] Ibid., 5.3.120, 142, 144, 194, 198.
[113] Rebhorn, 1995, 27 (emphasis in original).

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Ascham, Puttenham, and Quintilian each imply in their theories of language use, decorum, and imitation. Marcus's one-sided sewing together of the play's happenings, shared as "the truth," becomes a kind of blackmail of the Roman people into passing positive judgment on the Andronici — if Lucius and Marcus were to hurl themselves to their deaths, as Marcus suggests, it would leave the Goth army inside Rome without Lucius at their head.[114]

While Marcus does bring political order to an incredibly volatile situation, he does so in a way that is notably self-serving and one-sided. In fact, read back from this final scene, Marcus's early proclamation, "Titus, thou shalt obtain and ask the empery," so quickly rebuffed by Saturninus, appears more clearly as a moment of political juggling.[115] Marcus is often viewed as a stable and sensible character throughout the play, but here and elsewhere — as with his own calls for vengeance, at the hands of others, and his manipulation of Titus throughout the play — we realize that his drive for stability is perhaps most directly a selfish drive for political empowerment, most clearly evident in the final lines of the play. For Marcus, precedents allow him room, even pragmatic warrant, for political manipulation — his models seem to be kingmakers and the kinds of civilizers that Rebhorn addresses.

Lucius's final acts of judgment reify the accepted cultural stereotypes of the play, especially in the pitiless treatment of Aaron and Tamora.[116] Lucius punishes the accepted enemies of Rome and now of the Goths as well. He follows Roman precedent in pardoning Saturninus, despite the latter's transgressive actions, upholding Roman honor and condoning Saturninus's emulative vying for power and glory (it is the Roman way, the text seems to say). Saturninus's actions are finally judged decorous, despite the slaying of Lucius's own father — not all that different from Titus's slaying of Lucius's brother — largely, it would seem, because Saturninus is Roman, and thus ipso facto socially acceptable and politically linked to Roman precedent. Lucius's judgments programmatically replicate Roman tradition, following Titus's example at the play's beginning.[117]

[114] *Titus* 5.3.127, 118–35.

[115] Ibid., 1.1.204.

[116] Ibid., 5.1.178–82, 190–99.

[117] I am, of course, not the only reader to question Lucius as the newly installed ruler of Rome. Taylor has elicited a number of scholarly responses to Lucius's role. While there are variances in the readings of his character, there is no doubt that Lucius's final actions raise significant questions about the future of Rome and the precedents he is reiterating at the close of the play. For a response to Taylor, see Bate, 1996–97. See also Hancock; Smith; White, 360, who describes Lucius as "just another vindictive character."

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Beyond this, the education of the Boy at the play's end reinforces, despite all that has occurred, the idyllic encomium of Titus that Marcus gives at the play's beginning.[118] The Boy is told to remember Titus and the "pretty tales" he taught.[119] Given what the play does with the pretty tales of Ovid — and the tales that Titus teaches through his actions, as well as the punishments that Lucius, the Boy's father, inflicts — the Boy is left, as is the audience, with a portrayal of questionable patterns.[120] Anderson argues that "In Shakespeare's hands . . . Roman inheritance is not a *thing* already passed on to England and possessed by its citizens. Instead, the inheritance resembles a promise still to be completed, one that can, therefore, go violently and unpredictably awry."[121] However, given the emulous rivalry and violence reproduced in the play, going awry seems anything but unpredictable, and the desire to inherit Rome's patterns is thrown into question.[122]

Lavinia's rape offers a powerful site for the broad rejection of English emulation of Roman patterns. Returning a final time to my opening example of Titus before Saturninus at the final banquet, Titus, even in invoking the precedent of Virginius, seems skeptical, calling Virginius "rash" and appearing to expect the horror and dismay that his slaying of Lavinia brings, including the resulting bloody denouement.[123] The following of precedent in the play is questioned even as it is invoked. The citation of Virginius's tale can be read as evoking a larger social and political questioning of England's emulation of Rome. Bott argues that this "tale informs the larger issue of the play: the effect of the growth and spread of a

[118] *Titus* 5.1.159–74. Here is a kind of double translation, though the result is a simple repetition of the same idea. These ideas, which Hancock has made clear, include a very narrow definition of masculinity that dogmatically embraces violence.

[119] *Titus* 5.1.164.

[120] The omission in the First Folio (Shakespeare, 1968) of the injunction to remember Titus's "pretty tales" is perhaps suggestive of an attempt to clean up the play's ending. The Folio (ibid., 668 [5.3.164–169]) has Lucius specifically speak to appropriate action, in this case loving grief: "Many a matter hath he told to thee, / Meete, and agreeing with thine Infancie: / In the respect then, like a loving Childe, / Shed yet somme small drops from thy tender Spring, / Because kinde Nature doth require it so: / Friends, should associate Friends, in Greefe and Wo." Interestingly, the plea to follow kind nature reflects Saturninus's condemnation of Titus's killing of Lavinia as unnatural and unkind.

[121] Anderson, 303 (emphasis in original). Ibid., 313, notes that "by linking historical continuity to the violence within the precedent texts, Shakespeare's play challenges the imperialism of classical models in an era of *translatio imperii*."

[122] Kendall, 316, appropriately ends her article with the simple statement that "The violence of *Titus Andronicus* promises never to cease."

[123] *Titus* 5.3.36.

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type of 'sovereyn pestilence' [cited from the Virginius tale] or political corruption of the body of Rome. Shakespeare's references throughout the play to Rome as an unhealthy body invite a comparison of the political and social causes of Rome's malaise and a disease plaguing a physical body," linking the tale to interrelated sexual and political transgressions and failures.[124] The chaos of the political state is directly connected to, and enacted in, the vying over Lavinia that begins the play. Further, Aaron, particularly in his first monologue, specifically links political conquest to sexual conquest and political ruin to sexual transgression — patterns replicated throughout the play.[125] The evocation of Virginius's example ensures that the audience does not miss the connection between the political and legal — Apius's unjust legal attempt to gain Virginia mirrored in Saturninus's similar attempt — and the personal and social — the terrible impact of Titus's losses on all of Rome — associated with the play's repeated emulative enactments. Though social order is restored at the end of this tragedy, the judgments, beliefs, and precedents that the play enacts undercut the final order, questioning the models of self-creation and political construction employed in both ancient Rome and in England, its self-proclaimed heir.

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[124]Bott, 197.

[125]Aaron links his sexual domination over Tamora to her coming domination of Saturninus and Rome's resulting "shipwreck" (*Titus* 1.1.523).

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