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CHARACTERS IN TRAGEDY OF SHAKESPEARE: A STUDY ON TITUS ANDRONICUS

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Characters in Tragedy of Shakespeare: A Study on Titus Andronicus

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Abstract - In this paper we explore about the actions of key characters in Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus. In Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus, Tamora and Lavinia rebel against their society because of the misogyny and oppression that they suffer. Titus Andronicus is a difficult play for modern audiences to enjoy because of the violence and the apparent lack of positive female figures.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Character, Female, Titus Andronicus

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INTRODUCTION

Female characters play an important role for the dramatic run of events in Shakespeare's plays. Just as in reality, women of Shakespeare's dramas have been bound to rules and conventions of the patriarchal Elizabethan era. Therefore, it was very common back in Elizabethan England to compel woman into marriages in order to receive power, legacy, dowry or land in exchange.

Even though the Queen herself was an unmarried woman, the roles of woman in society were extremely restricted. Single women have been the property of their fathers and handed over to their future husbands through marriage. In Elizabethan time, women were considered as the weaker sex and dangerous, because their sexuality was supposedly mystic and therefore feared by men. Women of that era were supposed to represent virtues like obedience, silence, sexual chastity, piety, humility, constancy, and patience. All these virtues, of course, have their meaning in relationship to men. The role allocation in Elizabethan society was strictly regulated; men were the breadwinners and woman had to be obedient housewives and mothers. However, within this deprived, tight and organized scope, women have been represented in most diverse ways in Shakespearean Drama.

Catherine Belsey's article addresses the development of feminist criticism and the problems associated with it. Like Mc Eachern's article, Belsey looks at the concept of new historicism and its failure to cooperate with feminism. According to Belsey, anthropology's treatment of cultures as homogeneous when feminism is "interested in struggle, resistance, and heterogeneity"

Debora Willis's "The gnawing vulture": Revenge, Trauma Theory, and Titus Andronicus" focuses on all those ideas in the title as well as Tamora's contribution and significance in them. Her focus on gender and its relationship to the revenge them in this tragedy presents detailed evidence to her arguments.

KEY CHARACTERS OF TITUS ANDRONICUS

Titus Andronicus - General of Rome and tragic hero of the play. Father of Lavinia and Lucius. Titus has spent the last ten years fighting Rome's enemies and winning honor for his country, yet his heroic deeds have taken so much out of him that he feels incapable of leading his country despite its desire that he be its new emperor. He is first held up as a model of piety for his staunch reverence for traditions, but it is this strict adherence to tradition that causes his enemies to take revenge against him. A Senecan hero, he pursues revenge to the end, and dies in the process.

Tamora - Queen of the Goths, mother of Chiron and Demetrius. Though her very first speech shows her to be a caring mother who has an appreciation of the nobility of mercy, Tamora is associated with barbarism, savagery, and unrestrained lasciviousness. Indeed, Tamora exhibits extreme ruthlessness, particularly when she encourages her sons to rape Lavinia, and says that she knows not the meaning of pity. Even though she is opposite in everything to the archetypal victim Lavinia, feminist theorists like to cast her in the position of a victim of a male law of order. In this light, she becomes the dartboard for misogynistic fear of sexual appetite.

Aaron - Tamora's Moorish lover. Shakespeare only created four other black characters before the tragic hero Othello, and Aaron is the most substantial of the

four. As he himself admits, there is not a crime in *Titus* in which he has not had a hand. He is practically the engine of action in Act II, bringing Tamora's dream of revenge to reality. This simplistic, depthless portraiture of evil is a descendant of the "Devil" or "Vice" from early Elizabethan morality plays, created only to move the audience to contempt. For that reason, there is little about Aaron to win our sympathy or to even explain the motivation for his evil. His protectiveness of his child presents an interesting contrast in parenthood to Tamora and Titus.

Lavinia - The only daughter of Titus Andronicus, she spurns Saturninus's offer to make her his empress because she is in love with Bassianus. She is brutally raped and disfigured by Chiron and Demetrius in the forest during the hunt. Thereafter, she is a mute and horrifying presence constantly on stage, complement to her father's loquacious sufferings, and accomplice to his bloody vengeance. Deprived of every means of communication, and robbed of her most precious chastity, she comes across as one of Shakespeare's most incapacitated heroines. Yet, as she is physically pared down, her narrative and thematic importance escalates, drawing our attention to the importance of pantomime on the stage. The rape of Lavinia is undoubtedly the central and most horrific crime of the play, which is why Edward Ravenscroft's adaptation of the play has the alternate name of "The Rape of Lavinia." For this reason, her character invites especially careful scrutiny.

Marcus Andronicus - Roman Tribune of the People. Brother of Titus Andronicus. Unlike the other Andronici, he never participates in the war. Where everyone else has had a hand in at least one murder or crime, he remains conspicuously removed from the bloodshed. Every time he speaks, he is the sound of reason and calmness, standing in stark contrast to the ravenous and crazed speeches of the other characters.

Saturninus - The eldest son of the late Emperor of Rome. Titus successfully advocates for him to be the new emperor. However, Saturninus shows no gratitude. He is impatient with the Andronici and would rather have them out of his way; he feels threatened by the genuine honor and people's support that they have won for themselves. He chooses the captive Tamora, Queen of the Goths, for his empress, thereby giving her the power to wreak havoc on Rome and Titus's family.

Lucius - Titus's only surviving son. He defends his sister, Lavinia, from their father after she runs away with Bassianus. He tries to free his captive brothers Quintus and Martius, for which he is banished from Rome. The people of Rome support him over Saturninus. He is probably the one character to undergo a substantial psychological transformation over the course of the play, moving from bloodthirsty youth to sober leader.

Chiron and Demetrius - Two Goth princes, sons of Tamora. They squabble over who loves Lavinia more, when really they are merely guided by lust. They murder Bassianus and then brutally rape and disfigure Lavinia. They are shown in this play to be nothing more than engines of lust, destruction, and depravity, empty of even the basic wit that makes Aaron a more compelling villain. They are finally killed by Titus, who has their blood and bones made into a pastry to be fed to their mother.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we found that *Titus Andronicus* is an almost exclusively male world; its two female characters, their roles sharply circumscribed by patriarchal norms, are both dead by its end, and few other women are even referred in passing". Tamora, born of Gothic birth, and Lavinia, daughter of a battered war general, are two representations used for the female roles in *Titus Andronicus*.

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