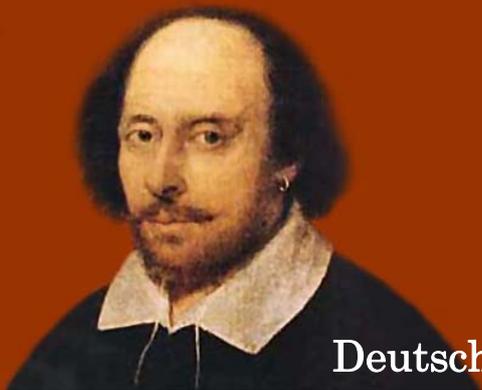


# Wissenschaftliches Seminar Online

*William Shakespeare*



Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft

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Staging Violence and Terror

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#### ERSCHEINUNGSWEISE

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# INTRODUCTION

BY

TOBIAS DÖRING AND SUSANNE RUPP

In one of his most intriguing stories, Plutarch tells us about a ruthless tyrant well known and widely feared for his own violence who, when he saw violent spectacles on stage, was noted to shed bitter tears. In his *Defence of Poesy*, Sidney has retold this story so as to show the moving power of theatrical performance and, in particular, to establish what he famously calls “the sweet violence of tragedy”. But his oxymoronic phrase gives rise to several questions: Does the weeping tyrant demonstrate the efficacy or uselessness of theatre? Is ‘sweetened’ violence on stage a cover, a commemoration or perhaps a revelation of actual violence at large? What aesthetic, what political and what commercial interests might be served in staging violence and terror, and for whom?

The works of early modern dramatists, both in their contemporary and in present-day enactments, offer many reasons to pursue such questions—as indeed the current rise of critical interest in these issues shows. Francis Barker still observed in 1993 that we are generally accustomed to think of culture and violence as antithetical terms. More recently, however, the opposite view seems to have become so prominent that the culture of violence—on stage and screen no less than in theory and history—increasingly calls for attention. What is at stake, therefore, in the popular as well as critical fascination with viewing and reviewing spectacles of violence?

The contributors to the *Wissenschaftliche Seminar* offer a wide range of approaches to and insights into the issue of violence and terror on the Shakespearean as well as contemporary stage. Margret Fetzer and Bettina Boecker explore the generic implications of the topic. Margret Fetzer (“Violence as the ‘Dark Room’ of Comedy”) argues that violence is as common in Shakespeare’s comedies as in his tragedies and histories, albeit being employed for different strategies. With reference to *Twelfth Night*, she presents a case study of the context and generic framing of violence and thus brings out the particularities of violence in comedy as opposed to tragedy. Bettina Boecker (“You like to watch, don’t you? Violence in *Cymbeline*”) maintains that violence in romances is anything but harmless. She argues that spectatorship is an integral part of violence and that violence in *Cymbeline* is presented as essentially theatrical. Thus, taking up the notion of the romance’s generic metatheatricality, Bettina Boecker proposes that *Cymbeline* is less concerned with violence as such than specifically with *spectacles* of violence.

In her contribution on Jürgen Gosch’s recent production of *Macbeth* (“‘Genuine’ Violence on Stage? Jürgen Gosch’s *Macbeth*”), Christina Wald emphasizes the paradox inherent in the production’s reception. While Gosch highlights the theatrical frame and follows an anti-illusionist aesthetics, the stylisation of violence on stage was

experienced as more ‘real’ by a large part of the audience than productions indebted to realism.

Ulrich Kaiser (“Violated Bodies, Truth and Language in *Titus Andronicus*”) challenges the assumption that a body marked by violence is invested with evidence and truth. Instead, in his analysis of *Titus Andronicus*, he argues that the play produces the violated body as evidence and reality while at the same time foregrounding the discursive, (inter)textual and ‘ideological’ construction of the violated body.

# VIOLENCE AS THE ‘DARK ROOM’ OF COMEDY: SHAKESPEARE’S

## *TWELFTH NIGHT*

BY

MARGRET FETZER

Whereas violence is traditionally associated with Shakespeare’s tragedies and histories, this paper sets out to explore the relationship between violence and comedy through a close reading of *Twelfth Night* where the dark room which Malvolio is confined to may be read as symptomatic of the workings of comedy in general. Violence is that aspect of comedy that is preferably left in the dark, but at the same time, it is the very place where comedy is primarily produced, where the pictures of comedy are developed, at least in the sense that audiences almost always laugh at or about someone. Especially in its connectedness to the main plot, the Malvolio subplot of *Twelfth Night* turns out to be quite a cruel joke. This paper explores why audiences are still quite happy to laugh at the rather violent treatment Olivia’s steward meets with.

Even though it is said to be Shakespeare’s last romantic comedy, *Twelfth Night: Or, What You Will*, probably written in 1601, is generally not considered a tragicomedy, a dark comedy, a problem play or whatever else may be the labels critics have come up with to account for Shakespeare’s notorious flaunting of established literary genres. On the contrary, audiences and critics alike generally tend to praise the play’s lightness of tone and its festive atmosphere.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I would like to introduce a different reading which points out the intrinsic connectedness between violence and comic festivity in *Twelfth Night*. My focus will be on the Malvolio subplot. This emphasis seems justified considering that, together with the introduction of the fool, this subplot was added by Shakespeare himself and is known to have been commented upon by John Manningham, a contemporary spectator of the play who praised the gulling of Malvolio as “a good device”, and later on by as illustrious a critic as Samuel Johnson.<sup>2</sup> The assumption of the Malvolio plot being ‘violently’ funny can be based on no lesser an authority than the Oxford English Dictionary: in one of its entries, the verb “to violence” is reported as having been used in the sense of “to compel or constrain; to force (a person) to or from a place, etc. [...]” during the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>3</sup> – the dark room

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. J.M. Lothian and T.W. Craik, “Introduction”, in William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, ed. by J.M. Lothian and T.W. Craik, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Arden, 2003 [1975]), xvii–xcviii.

<sup>2</sup> Lothian and Craik (2003), p. lx. Cf. also William C. Carroll, “Romantic Comedies”, in Stanley Wells, Lena Cowlin Orlin, eds., *An Oxford Guide to Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), 175–192, p. 180, 187.

<sup>3</sup> “violence, v.” In: *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) (Second Edition), H<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entrance.dtl>H.

Malvolio is destined for immediately comes to mind. I would like to argue that violence may be seen as the dark room of comedy in general, on the one hand designating a place that is preferably kept out of view and hardly ever illuminated, on the other hand the place where comedy largely originates from, the 'dark room' where laughter is processed and developed to give us the picture of comedy. The dark room in *Twelfth Night* is therefore not only a symbol of Malvolio's imprisonment in self-love and his inability to see himself.<sup>4</sup>

Most critics are quite unanimous in pronouncing the treatment Olivia's steward meets with as justified: Roger Warren argues that Malvolio is rightfully chastised and satirised for having based his whole life on fantasy, meaning he more or less gets what he deserves, and William C. Carroll very neutrally refers to the Malvolio subplot as an instance of "comic denial". Only Jason Scott-Warren declares that "the gulling of Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* is a joke that goes too far".<sup>5</sup> What goes unnoticed is that the Malvolio subplot constitutes more than just a (violent) joke: here, as in most other Shakespearean plays, the subplot is subservient to the main plot and its happy resolution into a series of marriages. In Act 2.3, Maria addresses Olivia's uncle as "Sweet Sir Toby" (2.3.132) and protests: "If I do not gull him [i.e. Malvolio] into a nayword, and make him a common recreation, do not think I have wit enough to lie straight in my bed: I know I can do it" (2.3.135–138).<sup>6</sup> As concerns the overall dramatic structure of the play, the gulling of Malvolio is highly significant as a means of improving Maria's chances with Sir Toby, a chance which had already been hinted at by the fool in 1.5: "if Sir Toby would leave drinking, thou wert as witty a piece of Eve's flesh as any in Illyria" (1.5.26–27). Maria soon turns into an "internal plotter—effectively a surrogate playwright"<sup>7</sup>, and we are not surprised to find that it is her who elaborates upon Malvolio's deficiencies and his exaggerated self-love to goad Sir Toby on. However, whereas Maria seems to be proved right when Malvolio is seen to muse why his lady treats him "with a more exalted respect than any one else that follows her" (2.5.27–28), this impression of his is not altogether false: from all that we have seen so far, Olivia has entrusted him with the delicate mission of forcing a ring on Cesario and asks him about his opinion on the quality of Feste's foolery. Also, in 3.4, she will call for him because "He is sad and civil, / And suits well for a servant with my fortunes" (3.4.5–6). Having found him 'mad', she gives orders to look after him carefully, since, so she declares, she "would not have him miscarry for the half of [her] dowry" (3.4.62–63). Not all of Malvolio's self-conceit can thus be said to be based on fantasy.

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<sup>4</sup> Carroll (2003), p. 187.

<sup>5</sup> Roger Warren, "'Smiling at grief': some techniques of comedy in *Twelfth Night* and *Così fan tutte*", *ShS* 32 (1979), 79–84, Carroll (2003), p. 178; Jason Scott-Warren, "When Theaters Were Bear-Gardens; or, What's at Stake in the Comedy of Humours", *ShQ* 54 (2003), 63–82, p. 80.

<sup>6</sup> William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, ed. by J.M. Lothian and T.W. Craik, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Arden, 2003 [1975]).

<sup>7</sup> Scott-Warren (2003), p. 76.

Sir Toby is not even for a moment in doubt about Maria's motives in suggesting the Malvolio project: "She's a beagle, true-bred, and one that adores me: what o' that?" (2.3.179–180), and in eager anticipation of the fun to come, he is quite generous with the terms of endearment he reserves for her: "Here comes the little villain. How now, my metal of India?" (2.5.13–14). As a consequence, we may wonder who Maria is thinking of when, addressing the letter, she commands "Lie thou there: for here comes the trout that must be caught with tickling" (2.5.21–22). After all, Sir Toby may also be said to have proved a trout "caught with tickling" since, after Malvolio has left the stage, he is in absolute revels about Maria:

Sir Toby: I could marry this wench for this device.  
 Sir Andy: So could I too.  
 Sir Toby: And ask no other dowry with her but such another jest. (2.5.184–5)

In more than one sense, this is Maria's cue: she re-enters the stage at this very moment, having been conspicuously absent from the eavesdropping scene itself. Apparently she is not nearly as interested in the gulling as is Sir Toby, and one may suspect that her extraordinary ability to write such an apt letter to gull Malvolio results from her herself being only too familiar with the kind of secret yearnings he harbours. Hers is quite a cruel and one-sided kind of empathy, though, for although she is later on to marry Sir Toby, she does not have any tolerance whatsoever for Malvolio's fantasies about marrying Olivia. This lack of emotional empathy also provides a link to the main plot where Viola admonishes the Duke to picture himself in somebody else's shoes:

Viola: Say that some lady, as perhaps there is,  
 Hath for your love as great a pang of heart  
 As you have for Olivia: you cannot love her:  
 You tell her so. Must she not then be answer'd? (2.4.90–93)

Maria at least does not bother to empathise any further with Malvolio than serves her purpose. Instead, she reminds Sir Toby and Sir Andrew not to miss the next act of the Malvolio gull, and there is some dramatic irony in how Malvolio seems to be addressing himself to Maria when he means to compliment his lady in 3.4:

Maria: Why appear you with this ridiculous boldness before my lady?  
 Malvolio: 'Be not afraid of greatness': 'twas well writ. (3.4.36–38)

In the final scene then, the purpose of Fabian's account of the 'sportful malice' (5.1.364) directed against Malvolio is to play it down, but he inadvertently also gives away what else there was at stake in the plot set up against Malvolio:

Fabian: Maria writ  
 The letter, at Sir Toby's great importance,  
 In recompense whereof he hath married her. (5.1.361–363)

Malvolio was thus by no means merely the victim of a 'sportful malice', but served as a means to a clear-cut purpose; he has therefore been at least as violently used as 'abused' (4.2.90). Gulling Malvolio has conveniently served Maria's purposes as well as the larger structure of the play by drawing most of the laughs and bringing about another marriage to make the harmonious comic ending complete. And yet, one feels

slightly uncomfortable about the way in which having someone “in a dark room and bound” (3.4.136–138), clearly a rather violent act, contributed so decisively to the comic success of *Twelfth Night*. This uneasy amalgamation of the comic and the violent or brutal, however, happens to be quite in keeping with the qualities of comedy in general.

In his book on comedy, T. G. A. Nelson right from the start acknowledges laughter and reconciliation as the two driving forces behind comedy that may indeed often be found to be in conflict with one another. Having recourse to Freud, who “recognized that hostile and cynical jokes were more common, and usually more potent than innocent ones”, he concludes that “[W]hen we laugh, we usually laugh at someone or something” for, speaking with Beckett's Nell from *Endgame*, “[n]othing [...] is funnier than unhappiness”.<sup>8</sup> In the case of *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio's unhappy fate is extremely funny, and we laugh at him because we are made to feel superior to him, believing ourselves to be less self-conceited and thus less prone to being duped as he is. However, Nelson makes it clear that this so-called superiority theory which goes back to Thomas Hobbes, namely “[t]he suggestion that laughter, which may be specific to human beings, arises from malicious delight in superiority to others is not flattering to humanity”. For Nelson, the generic conflict between laughter and harmony also explains why “philosophers and critics from Plato to Sartre and Eco have found reasons for distrusting comedy, festivity, and laughter”. The mocking laughter directed at Malvolio marks his “expulsion from a festive group”<sup>9</sup>: once he finds out how he has been duped, he leaves the stage with the cry “I'll be reveng'd on the whole pack of you!” (5.1.377), thus excluding himself from the reconciliatory tableau of the comedy's final scene. Someone else, however, is absent, too: Neither Maria nor Sir Toby, Malvolio's principal malefactors, are present in Act 5, although their recent union would normally predestine them for joining the marital merriness of the comedy's finale. One may suspect that the events which brought their marriage about are not that easily accommodated with the more innocent enthusiasm of the other couples. It makes you slightly nervous though, to speculate on what may be going on off-stage between Malvolio, Maria and Sir Toby.

One could argue that racking one's brains about the moral dilemma of potential violence in *Twelfth Night* is beside the point in the first place since such an approach might be criticised for neglecting the carnivalesque character of comedy in general and the festive mood of *Twelfth Night* in particular. After all, *Twelfth Night* was a time of merry-making where social hierarchies were deliberately overturned and moral ideals suspended and where the lower body was for once allowed to reign over the upper body.<sup>10</sup> Heavy drinking and dancing as well as playing tricks upon others such as practised by Sir Toby and friends would have been seasonally sanctioned, and the marriage between Maria and Sir Toby could be seen as an appropriate testimony to the

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<sup>8</sup>T.G.A. Nelson: *Comedy: An Introduction to Comedy in Literature, Drama, and Cinema*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford UP, 1990), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5, 186, 179.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997).

carnivalistic inversion of social hierarchy—after all, according to the “*Dramatis Personae*”, Maria, Olivia’s waiting-gentlewoman, has married above her station in being betrothed to Sir Toby Belch, kinsman to Olivia, a countess. Malvolio, on the other hand, appears to be truly out of season since he is frequently described as impersonating that very law (e.g. against drinking and brawling) which is supposedly suspended during carnival. As Indira Ghose writes, “the structure of the sub-plot, the gulling of Malvolio, reflects exactly the motif of Carnival vs. Lent. [...] The Lenten part in this play is taken by Malvolio, the Puritanical steward of the household who objects to the carousing of the carnivalesque figures”, or, in the words of Anthony Gash, “[t]he Christmas lord of misrule, Toby Belch, is opposed to the prim Lenten puppet Malvolio”.<sup>11</sup> According to Ghose, “the theatre took on the function of Carnival in Renaissance England”<sup>12</sup>, and one may easily conclude that *Twelfth Night* thus represents a perfect example of carnivalist revelry.

And yet, the mockery of Malvolio that ensues is by no means purely carnivalistic and carried out for its own sake. First of all, it serves, as we have seen, as a means to a purpose, namely to enhance Maria’s chances with Sir Toby. More importantly, however, there is a constant undercurrent that Malvolio effectively deserves to be treated thus: “it is his grounds of faith that all that look on him love him: and on that vice in him will my revenge find notable cause to work” says Maria (2.3.151–153), and Sir Toby later intends to confine him to a dark room “for our pleasure, and his penance” (3.4.138–9). Malvolio is thus sentenced to be duped and later even to be held prisoner “in a dark room and bound” (3.4.136–7) for his faults; paradoxically then, this trick played upon Malvolio as the representative of the law reintroduces law and order through the backdoor, turning carnivalesque mockery into a legalised procedure. Even if we allow for a definition of carnivalization that includes punishment and setting someone right as essential elements, it is quite clear that the opposition between Carnival and Lent, the “Christmas lord of *misrule*” (my emphasis) and the “prim Lenten puppet” are not as clear-cut as Ghose and Gash would have it be.

Michael D. Bristol shows some awareness of the complexity of the carnivalesque when pointing out that “Carnival is not anti-authoritarian”, emphasising that it is “put into operation as resistance to any tendency to absolutize authority”.<sup>13</sup> The carnivalistic thus does not define itself through its opposition to the Lenten principle, but rather by its refusal to be easily defined in the first place. In fact, it may even prove to be self-contradictory: It is striking how Sir Toby, witnessing Malvolio’s daydream of marrying Olivia and thus raising himself above his station, as well as his erotic phantasies about

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<sup>11</sup> Indira Ghose, “Licence to Laugh: Festive Laughter in *Twelfth Night*”, in Manfred Pfister, ed., *A History of English Laughter: Laughter from Beowulf to Beckett and Beyond* (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi 2002), 35–46, p. 38. Anthony Gash, “Carnival and the Sacred: *The Winter’s Tale* and *Measure for Measure*”, in Ronald Knowles, ed., *Shakespeare and Carnival: After Bakhtin*, (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998), 177–210, p. 198.

<sup>12</sup> Ghose (2002), p. 40.

<sup>13</sup> Michael D. Bristol: *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture*

and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England (New York, London: Routledge, 1989 [1985]), p. 212.

“having come from a day-bed, where I have left Olivia sleeping” (5.2.48–49), is on the verge of losing all his previous composure—while Malvolio’s social ambition and his physical yearnings are for once perfectly at one with the festive spirit of *Twelfth Night* since “[o]ne of the most widespread characteristics of festivity is the temporary inversion of social order”<sup>14</sup>. After all, Sir Toby will later on also marry below himself. The opposition between a gay Sir Toby and his friends on the one hand and Malvolio as Lenten and Puritan spoil-sport on the other is thus a simplification. Although cruelty, violence and punishment is implicated in the concept of carnival and Malvolio’s being not only ‘ill-willed’ himself, but also ‘ill-willed’ by others may therefore be said to be in keeping with the notion of the carnivalesque, his social ambitions and his burgeoning erotic fantasies would seem to allow for his inclusion into the festive mood of *Twelfth Night*. Instead, he is denied access to the carnivalistic feast and literally shut away.

As we have seen then, the Malvolio plot is not only the funniest, but also the most problematic, the most violently funny element of Shakespeare’s last romantic comedy. It now remains to ask why audiences, as well as the majority of critics, fail to acknowledge the calculating violence underlying this subplot or refuse to recognise it as violence altogether. Violence and the ways in which it is perceived or not perceived strongly rely on generic framing and representation. According to Shakespeare’s text, we never get to see Malvolio in his dark room or how he is dragged there and bound; all we get is Sir Toby’s plan to do so in 3.5, and the next we hear of Malvolio is from “*within*” (4.2). Nowhere are we given details about his imprisonment, but it appears that he is held in complete darkness and not able to see what is going on outside of his prison: having dressed up as Sir Topas, the Clown is informed by Maria: “Thou might’st have done this without thy beard and gown, he sees thee not” (4.2.66–67). While Malvolio’s treatment may have been common for the mentally deranged at the time it surly also sounds like a promising strategy for driving a sane person mad in the first place. As Fabian notes: “Why, we shall make him mad indeed” (3.4.134). But the audience’s emotions are carefully monitored and guided by the presence of an on-stage audience consisting of Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Fabian, Maria and the fool—who at the same time all also play quite a significant part in directing the Malvolio play we and they are watching. This eaves-dropping device is a common characteristic of the genre: since comedy has always been famous for putting one’s perceptions of reality to the test, “[m]etafictional techniques, which lend themselves to such procedures, are for that reason peculiarly suited to comedy”.<sup>15</sup>

And indeed, when we witness Sir Toby and his company laughing at Malvolio’s being duped, this is nothing less than a *mise-en-abyme* of the mechanism of comedy in general, where “nothing is funnier than unhappiness”. By characterising laughter “in its dialectic of exclusion and inclusion” as an activity that produces a sense of shared identity between the “laughter-maker” and the “laugher(s)” while at the same time

<sup>14</sup> Nelson (1990), p. 171.

<sup>15</sup> Nelson (1990), p. 152. Another instance of metafictionality / metatheatricality can be seen in the duel Sir Toby sets up between Cesario / Viola and Sir Andrew Aguecheek, deluding either about the other’s intentions and martial prowess.

isolating and exposing the “‘butt of laughter’”, Manfred Pfister in fact illustrates that any instance of laughter already contains “a more or less marked element of self-conscious performance and theatrical representation, complete with actors and audiences”.<sup>16</sup> Lest we don’t miss the meta-theatrical dimension, Shakespeare has Fabian remind us: “If this were played upon a stage now, I could condemn it as an improbable fiction” (3.4.128–129). We, as members of the audience in front of the stage, are bound to identify with the audience present on-stage, especially since laughter has always been known for its infectiousness, something TV comedies hope to take advantage of by inserting canned laughter in the places where spectators are meant to laugh. Furthermore, if Ira Clark is right in assuming that “stage violence is funny because it is harmless” as “[d]ramatic presentation itself provides the first remove from the threat of actual damage”, it could be argued that the staging of the Malvolio plot as a play within the play distances audiences even further from the potential violence that may be involved, especially since, as F.B. Tromly notes, “[i]n none of the other romantic comedies is the discrepancy between the Olympian awareness of the audience and the limited awareness of the characters so sustained”.<sup>17</sup> And so we laugh and cannot help doing so while we, together with the on-stage spectators, watch Malvolio revelling in his private fantasies, making a complete fool of himself when he appears in yellow stockings, cross-gartered and smiling before Olivia and adopts a familiarity with her that is ridiculously out of place, or even when he is crying from his dark house and forced to humbly beg the fool for light, ink, and paper.

And yet, even though we may laugh, there are still a number of hints which may make us slightly uneasy about the treatment Olivia’s steward meets with. In eager anticipation of the gulling, Sir Toby enthuses that “[t]o anger him we’ll have the bear again, and we will fool him black and blue” (2.5.9–10). The parallels between the entertainments of theatre and bear-baiting were widely acknowledged in Shakespeare’s time, and Sir Toby’s gloating further highlights the parallels between the gulling of Malvolio and a play within the play. On the other hand, however, his likening of Malvolio to a bear also clashes painfully with the answer Malvolio provides to the fool’s alias Sir Topas’s quizzing him on “the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wildfowl”, namely “[t]hat the soul of our grandam might haply inhabit a bird”. Malvolio replies: “I think nobly of the soul, and no way approve his opinion” (4.2.51–57). At present, however, Malvolio is treated as a baited animal, and his opinion that human beings, distinguishing themselves by possessing a soul, should be treated with more respect than bears or birds, is ignored by the ones directing the play he finds himself in. “In acknowledging a strong affinity between humors comedy and animal baiting, Jonson and Shakespeare demonstrate their disquiet about the medium in which

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<sup>16</sup> Manfred Pfister, “Introduction”, in Manfred Pfister, ed., *A History of English Laughter: Laughter from Beowulf to Beckett and Beyond* (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2002), v–x, p.vi–vii.

<sup>17</sup> Ira Clark, “Comic Violence on the Late Tudor and Early Stuart Stage: A Theory and an Appreciation”, *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 13:1 (2001), 253–286, p. 256. F.B. Tromly, “*Twelfth Night*: Folly’s Talents and the Ethics of Shakespearean Comedy”, *Mosaic* 7:3 (1974), 53–68, p. 57.

they worked",<sup>18</sup> and by the time we get to 4.2, Sir Toby also begins to feel uneasy about the whole project: "I would we were well rid of this knavery. If he may be conveniently delivered, I would he were" (4.2.69–71). In the final scene, Fabian too shows some awareness of the conflict between the forces of laughter and final harmony that is so pertinent to the genre of comedy when he implores Olivia: "And let no quarrel, nor no brawl to come, / Taint the condition of this present hour" (5.1.355–356). This hour is, after all the laughs at Malvolio's cost, now dedicated to harmony. Malvolio's exit with the words "I'll be reveng'd on the whole pack of you!" (5.1.377), which follows soon after Fabian's speech, can be read performatively in this context: through leaving the stage, he revenges himself on his environment by tainting the final comic reconciliation which should harmoniously include and unite all characters.

Why then, do we still laugh? We laugh because we want to. T.W. Craik and J.M. Lothian, the authors of the Arden introduction to *Twelfth Night*, for example sharply criticise Laurence Olivier's tearful intonation of Malvolio's final line since he might thus "damage the tone of the ending" when "[t]he final mood should surely be one of harmony".<sup>19</sup> And the audience's sense of being lightly entertained should not be put at risk, for Malvolio has a point when he emphasises the fool's dependence on his audience in the first act: "unless you laugh and minister occasion to him, he is gagged" (1.5.85–6) says he about the fool. Likewise, our laughs are essential to maintain the comedy, and thus they must be triggered and itched out at any cost. Spectators will consider something funny if they wish to and will then no longer be prepared to judge it to be violent. Undoubtedly, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Fabian, Maria and the fool just want to have a good laugh—and because this is what they expect to get out of gulling Malvolio, this is what they see it as—and what they make us see it as. And we are easily persuaded: After all, we have come to see a comedy and are only too willing to allow ourselves to be deluded by the supposedly purely festive and comic spirit of *Twelfth Night*.

Interestingly enough, both audiences, the one on stage and the one in the theatre's auditorium, are herein not that different from Malvolio whose reading of the forged letter exemplifies how one's perception of reality may be shaped by one's desires and expectations. Perusing the letter, he famously reads Olivia's "very C's, her U's, and her T's" (2.5.88) from it and is more than ready to bend the words on the page to his liking: "If I could make that resemble something in me!" (2.5.120–121). Olivia for her part is likewise tempted to make the world fit her desires when she exclaims to Viola: "I would you were as I would have you be" (3.1.144), and later on, she explicitly acknowledges the parallels between Malvolio and herself: "I am as mad as he / If sad and merry madness equal be" (3.4.5). From this phenomenological and reader-response oriented point of view, one might even argue that, when rereading *Twelfth Night* under the auspices of "Shakespeare and Violence", it would indeed be quite likely that one would find what one was looking for—you tend to get 'what you will'. Comedy as a genre thrives on the effectiveness of "disguisings, deceptions, and mistakings: that is to say, on the provisional nature of our perceptions and

<sup>18</sup> Scott-Warren (2003), p. 81.

<sup>19</sup> Lothian and Craik (2003), p. xcvi.

interpretations of reality”, and this generic preoccupation thematically links the subplot to the main plot that is very obviously motivated through “disguisings, deceptions, and mistakings”, famously and happily to be resolved in the play’s final scene.<sup>20</sup>

What then, to sum up, is comedy, and what is its relationship to violence? Violence, as I have argued, is that aspect of comedy that is preferably left in the dark, it is a space that is hardly ever exposed to the light and very rarely at center-stage, a room that is never made quite accessible to the audience’s sight. In a second sense, however, violence, the dark room of comedy, constitutes the very origin of comedy: it is the ‘dark room’ where comedy is primarily made and produced, where the pictures of comedies are developed, at least in the sense that we as spectators almost always laugh at or about something or someone. Violence is thus almost as essential an ingredient to comedy as it is to tragedy, but whereas violence in the tragedies is openly staged and frequently leads to some kind of tragic resolution, as may be argued in the case of *Hamlet*, which ends with the prospect of Fortinbras as a new, more dynamic and determined emperor (he has, after all, Hamlet’s “dying voice”), the picture of comedy is carefully retouched to banish violence to the periphery of the happy ending: “And let no quarrel, nor no brawl to come, / Taint the condition of this present hour” (5.1.355–356). Still, the differences between what’s tragic and what’s comic in Shakespeare, are not hard and fast, not only in the tragicomedies, but even in his supposedly most comical comedies such as *Twelfth Night*. According to Manfred Pfister, “in England [...] the mingling of laughter and tears, of the laughable and the pathetic or even the horrifying, and their tragicomic juxtaposition or conflation are the rule rather than the exception”<sup>21</sup>, and one of the most prominent representatives of this tradition is Shakespeare - the English bard

### **Zusammenfassung**

Obwohl Gewalt bei Shakespeare eher mit den Tragödien oder Historien in Verbindung gebracht wird, stellt sie zugleich einen unabdingbaren Bestandteil der Komödien dar. Am Beispiel von *Twelfth Night* wird deutlich, daß Gewalt in der Komödie nicht nur als dunkler Hintergrund, sondern auch als Dunkelkammer fungiert, in der die Bilder des Lachens für das Publikum primär entwickelt werden. Die Gewalt, der Malvolio zum Opfer fällt, indem er in einen „dark room“ verbannt wird, erweist sich daher als symptomatisch für den Mechanismus der Komödie im allgemeinen.

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<sup>20</sup> Nelson (1990), p. 138. Madness is another concept that characteristically occurs in this context of deceptions and mistakings, cf. Sebastian: “Are all the people mad?” (5.1.26).

<sup>21</sup> Pfister (2002), p. 8.



# YOU LIKE TO WATCH, DON'T YOU? VIOLENCE IN *CYMBELINE*

BY

BETTINA BOECKER

Could we do without violence? And, more specifically, could the theatre do without it? It is my contention that the play which is arguably the most brutal of the romances, *Cymbeline*, answers this question with a no. It is, however, a complicated no, a negation that operates on different levels of the play, opening up several and often conflicting perspectives on the cruel and the theatrical—and on the relation between the two. Depending on violence for emotional effects both on the characters and on the audience, *Cymbeline* stages the interrelatedness of violence and spectacle which is the precondition of its theatrical success. In its approach to manifestations of horror and cruelty, the play both exploits and criticizes the appeal of the sensational and the voyeuristic, leaving us with the question whether Shakespeare is indeed, as Frank Kermode suspected, “*playing with the play*”<sup>22</sup>, manipulating not only the emotions of the characters but those of the audience as well—and whether playwrights in fact ever do anything but precisely that.

More than any other of Shakespeare’s romances, *Cymbeline*, *The Tragedy of Cymbeline* as the First Folio calls it, is characterized by stark emotional contrasts. Lyrical evocations of the beauty of nature are followed by the sight of the heroine smearing herself with the blood of a headless corpse (1.1), and the eventual reunion of Posthumus and Imogen is preceded by him striking her down so violently that she is taken for dead (1.4). Against a backdrop of murder, attempted murder and war, however, a marriage is saved, a family is reunited, and a kingdom returns to peace. Within the logic of the play, it seems that the extremes of violence and betrayal are indeed a prerequisite for lasting peace, harmony and devotion. At least this is how several critics have tried to account for the play’s more atrocious displays of the brutal and the savage. Imogen’s waking up next to the bloody, headless body of Cloten has been seen as a “therapeutic dream”<sup>23</sup>, a “purgatorial experience, the crisis of her spiritual journey”<sup>24</sup>. The scene in which Posthumus strikes her down before he finally recognizes the boy Fidele as his wife has, in turn, been explained as a necessary prelude to the reunion of the lovers which follows immediately afterwards.<sup>25</sup> The

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<sup>22</sup> Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare: The Final Plays* (London: Longmans Green, 1963), p. 22.

<sup>23</sup> Elijah Moshinsky, *Cymbeline*, *The BBC TV Shakespeare* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1983), p. 17. (Cited from Roger Warren, “Introduction”, *William Shakespeare, Cymbeline*, ed. by Roger Warren, *The Oxford Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1–77, p. 56)

<sup>24</sup> Warren (1998), p. 46.

<sup>25</sup> Michael O’Connell, to name but one example, interprets Imogen’s swoon as one of the play’s “symbolic deaths that regenerate [the characters’] lives and renew love.” (Michael O’Connell, “The

violent experiences which (especially) the female protagonist is subjected to are thus put to use in what I would like to call a 'cathartic' reading, a reading which postulates that the violence in the play is not gratuitous but necessary and—perhaps—even moral, for it is through violence that the characters, Imogen and Posthumus above all, gain the maturity necessary for their eventual reconciliation. In this view, the play seeks to involve its audience in the emotional and physical ordeals especially of Imogen in order to effect a purgatorial experience similar to hers: by empathizing with her suffering as well as with her eventual good fortune, the spectator partakes in the characters' spiritual journey—and, it seems, leaves the theatre not only a well-entertained, but also a purer and a better person. This would align *Cymbeline* with classic theories of tragedy—if not so much with the notions of Aristotle himself as those of early modern Aristotelians who tended to moralise his originally physiological conception of catharsis.<sup>26</sup>

It is, however, my contention that *Cymbeline* proposes a view of violence, and especially of watching violence, which runs directly counter to that implied in classical, or rather, classicist theories of the genre. Voyeurism, sensationalism and spectacle are among the most insistent concerns of the play, and, counteracting Aristotelian theory, it deliberately turns its audience into onlookers of the non-empathetic kind. This is perhaps most obvious in the scene where Giacomo has himself smuggled into Imogen's bedchamber, a scene which continually plays on audience expectations of physical violence being done to the princess—without ever quite fulfilling these expectations, and without allowing spectators to experience anything like unalloyed pity or fear. Giacomo may be a villain, but he is not a simpleton, and his violation of Imogen's privacy is not of the brutishly physical kind. Although his immediate association of Tarquin ("Our Tarquin thus / Did softly press the rushes ere he wakened / The chastity he wounded." (2.2.12–14<sup>27</sup>)) makes it quite clear that he is at least toying with the idea of raping the princess, the Italian proceeds to embark on a somewhat academic approach to nocturnal intrusion into a princess's bedchamber. With a couple of verses on her ravishing beauty in place, he begins to take notes:

[Giacomo] writes in his tables]  
 Such and such pictures, there the window, such  
 Th'adornment of her bed, the arras, figures,  
 Why such and such; and the contents o'th'story.  
 Ah, but some natural notes about her body  
 Above ten thousand meaner movables  
 Would testify t'enrich mine inventory.  
 O sleep, thou ape of death, lie dull upon her,  
 And be her sense but as a monument

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Experiment of Romance", in Alexander Leggatt, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 215–229, p. 224.

<sup>26</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. and transl. by Stephen Halliwell (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard UP, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> I quote from William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, ed. by Roger Warren, *The Oxford Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Thus in a chapel lying. (2.2.25–33)

This ‘inventory’ prepares the climax of Giacomo’s trespassing, his fatal theft of Imogen’s bracelet and his discovery of the “mole cinque-spotted” (2.2.38) on her left breast. The step from investigating her chamber to investigating the details of her body is a necessary one: Giacomo’s knowledge of Imogen’s body will ‘prove’ what knowledge of her bedroom alone will not suffice to substantiate, his claim to carnal knowledge of the princess. The means by which Giacomo attains the semblance of intimacy which will later convince Posthumus of his wife’s unfaithfulness are symptomatic of the attitude behind the wager as a whole: Imogen is treated as an object rather than as a person. In the course of Giacomo’s soliloquy, the distinction between the living, breathing princess and the inanimate bedroom that surrounds her becomes increasingly blurred, and by the time that the intruder has finally summoned the courage to actually touch Imogen, she has, in his mind, turned into a mere object of his investigating gaze, into a piece of furniture (even though she surpasses other, “meaner movables”), and, finally, into a statue in a chapel—the mere semblance of a human being. In order to muster the nerve to approach the princess’s body, Giacomo needs to turn Imogen into an object, a “moveable”, a “monument” with which, by definition, intimacy is not a possibility.<sup>28</sup>

Although no physical harm is done, Giacomo’s nocturnal intrusion as well as his objectification of the sleeping Imogen is clearly framed as sexual violence<sup>29</sup> – both from the perspective of the perpetrator and from the perspective of the victim. While Giacomo starts the soliloquy which accompanies his explorations of the chamber by associating himself with a notorious rapist, he ends it by pointing out Imogen’s bedside reading: “She hath been reading late, / The tale of Tereus. Here the leaf’s turned down / Where Philomel gave up.” (2.2.44–46) These classical allusions frame his violation of Imogen’s privacy as a rape completed, with him approaching silently, just like Tarquin, at the start, and the princess, just like Philomel, waiving her resistance at the end. Unlike both Tarquin and Tereus, however, Giacomo abuses Imogen visually rather than physically, turning her exposed and unconscious body into a mere object, to be taken stock of by his lecherous gaze.

The play makes its audience accessories to this crime. As voyeur, as someone who is ‘just’ looking, Giacomo is the uncanny double of those watching the play on stage.

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. also Glenn Clark, “The ‘Strange’ Geographies of Cymbeline”, in John Gillies, Virginia Mason Vaughan, eds., *Playing the Globe: Genre and Geography in English Renaissance Drama* (London: Associated University Presses, 1998), 230–259, p. 240: “Imogen’s body and the objects in her room are not absolutely different in Iachimo’s view, but rather different in the degree to which they can ‘enrich’ this ‘inventory’. Imogen’s body is simply composed of more valuable ‘moveables’ than her room. In order to make his gaze functional and profitable, he fragments and objectifies Imogen’s body and bedchamber. [...] Iachimo’s rhetoric has several purposes. He hopes that his itemization of Imogen and her room will allow him to take possession of her just as taking inventory was often preliminary to the colonizing of new land. At the same time, he hopes that the process of fragmentation will increase Imogen’s value to him by making her, in a sense, copious. His ‘voyage’ will be most profitable only if it gains as much ‘land’ as possible.”

<sup>29</sup> David M. Bergeron, “Sexuality in Cymbeline”, *Essays in Literature* 10 (1983), 159–168, p. 165

Just like him, we are trespassers into Imogen's privacy, and we share the forbidden knowledge he gains. The theatre does not leave its audience a choice: we have to watch, whether we like it or not, even when our watching turns us into accomplices of the villain. We cannot dissociate our own looking from that of Giacomo, and if we condemn him for his exploitative gaze, we have to condemn ourselves.

But it is precisely this kind of self-condemnation which the play sabotages by a variety of means. Although the scene articulates a critique of the kind of visual violation I have lined out above, it also deflects the threat that such a critique holds for any kind of theatrical enterprise—by foregrounding the fact that, after all, what we see and what we partake in is 'only' theatre. There is an undeniably humorous note to Giacomo's nocturnal encounter with the princess, not only because of his curious combination of flamboyant rhetoric, self-consciousness and ineffectuality, but above all because the play locates him in a tradition of 'staginess' which keeps audiences from perceiving him as a real threat to the princess. Like any stage villain worth his salt, he emerges from a trunk, and, as Harley Granville-Barker pointed out in 1930 (and audiences have realized ever since Shakespeare first wrote his play), "no tragically-potent scoundrel, we should be sure, will ever come out of a trunk".<sup>30</sup>

In a manner typical of Jacobean romance, *Cymbeline* thus relies on "the audience's consciousness of the means by which it is moved"<sup>31</sup> to keep them from taking Giacomo's villainy entirely serious. In addition, the allusions to classical literature as well as the fact that Giacomo's *blazon* of Imogen is clearly indebted to Petrarchan conventions<sup>32</sup> make the conscious artificiality of the scene almost impossible to ignore. The play thus presents Giacomo's voyeuristic abuse of the princess, and our own participation in it, as art, as an erudite game: if there is such a thing as visual violence, conscious theatricality can turn it into mere play.

Similar mechanisms as those operating in the bedroom scene undercut ready empathy with Imogen's frenzy over the murdered Cloten. Waking up next to a dead man devoid of a head, the princess examines the corpse's extremities in order to ascertain her husband's garments are indeed covering her husband's body:

A headless man? The garments of Posthumus?  
I know the shape of's legs; this is his hand,  
His foot Mercurial, his Martial thigh,  
The brawns of Hercules; but his Jovial face –  
Murder in heaven! How? 'Tis gone. [...]  
[...]  
This is Pisanio's deed, and Cloten. O!  
Give colour to my pale cheek with thy blood.

<sup>30</sup> Harley Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare* [1930], vol. 1 (London: B. T. Batsford, 1958), p. 512.

<sup>31</sup> Arthur C. Kirsch, "Cymbeline and Coterie Dramaturgy", *ELH* 34 (1967), 285–306, p. 286.

<sup>32</sup> Evelyn Gajowski, "Sleeping Beauty, or 'What's the Matter?': Female Sexual Autonomy, Voyeurism, and Mysogyny in *Cymbeline*", in Evelyn Gajowski, ed. and intr., *Re-Visions of Shakespeare: Essays in Honor of Robert Ornstein* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 89–107: p. 95f.

That we the horrider may seem to those  
Which chance to find us! O my lord, my lord! (4.2.309–313; 330–333)

The visual impact of the scene is extremely forcible and certainly conducive to feelings of horror, fear and pity. The attempt to identify a headless body by examining its limbs is in itself an extremely traumatic experience, and even more so if the body in question is that of one's own husband. Imogen's reaction to this shock, her smearing herself with the corpse's blood, is hardly less gruesome. The intensity of Imogen's suffering, however, is somewhat qualified by the fact that, right from the start of this macabre 'recognition' scene, the heroine has an array of classical allusions at hand which allow her to identify the heroic husband whom she takes to have died a heroic death. This use of erudite allusion takes the edge off her agony. It even subjects her to ridicule, for as the audience knows, the princess has not woken up next to Posthumus, but next to Cloten—not quite her idea of a hero when still alive. The scene seriously questions Imogen's judgment; in any case, her alleged familiarity with her husband's body is exposed as an imposture, and her 'identification' of his various physical characteristics can have a definitely humorous note in performance—if not for her. Imogen's suffering is thus set up as spectacle, as something (merely) to be looked at. This, however, is not something she passively undergoes, but a situation to which she actively contributes.

Anticipating a spectator's gaze on the scene she is about to 'stage', Imogen bloodies herself *in order* to provide a grisly sight to those who may find her and the corpse: "That we the horrider may seem to those / Which chance to find us!" Such a chance encounter of course is precisely what happens next. Imogen has hardly finished her macabre make-up when, in the guise of Lucius and the Roman Captain, the 'audience' she has been preparing for actually enters the stage. At what is ostensibly the climax of her suffering, Imogen provides a commentary on her own function at this point in the play and predicts the further development of the plot. The scene thus flaunts its own theatricality in a manner which effectively prevents empathetic identification with its protagonist. This is not to say that spectators don't feel for Imogen: exploiting both the horror of the bloody corpse and the humour of mistaken identity, the play certainly exposes its audience to an array of conflicting emotions. It does, however, provide comic relief and metatheatrical reflection before the full impact of the tragic can make itself felt. This can be seen as some kind of concession to its protagonist. As Roger Warren puts it, "Imogen undergoes tragic experiences, and expresses a full range of tragic emotions, without *having* [my emphasis] to suffer a tragic outcome."<sup>33</sup> And, one might add, without us having to take her emotions quite so tragically serious.

At this point, it would be possible to set out on a gender-oriented reading of the play's refusal to grant its female protagonist the prestige of truly tragic suffering, the kind of suffering that incites fear and pity. What I am more interested in for the moment—although I do not claim that the two points can be neatly separated—is the theatrical implications of the kind of violence that *Cymbeline* stages, and the reactions to violence the play seeks to elicit. Concerning Imogen's agony over the dead Cloten, Granville-Barker remarks,

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<sup>33</sup> Warren (1998), p. 50.

But now that we have reached this most effective situation, we must own it, and the whole business of it, to be, from one point of view at least, dramatically inexcusable. It is a fraud on Imogen; and we are accomplices in it. We have watched the playwright's plotting, been amused by his ingenuity. We shall even be a little conscious, as we watch, in this sophisticated play, of the big bravura chance to be given to the actress. But Imogen herself is put, quite needlessly, quite heartlessly, on exhibition. How shall we sympathize with such futile suffering? And surely it is a faulty art that can so make sport of its creatures.<sup>34</sup>

A faulty art in what sense? What Granville-Barker seems to be criticizing is some kind of moral failure on the part of the play, a failure to empathize with its own characters, putting them 'on exhibition' instead of inciting audiences to suffer and rejoice with them. But then of course it is in the very nature of theatre to put things on exhibition, to turn them into spectacle, to exhibit them to the hungry gaze of the multitude. Instead of accusing the play of "mak[ing] sport" of its creatures, it is therefore perhaps more appropriate to regard *Cymbeline* as a meditation on precisely the kind of moral failure and the kind of violence inherent in any theatrical enterprise. It seems to me that *Cymbeline* is indeed concerned not so much with spectacles of violence as with the kind of non-empathetic spectatorship that I would like to label, for lack of a better term, the violence of spectacle, the violence inherent in being exposed to an audience's exploitative gaze.

Judging from the two scenes I have discussed above, it may be tempting to surmise that, in *Cymbeline*, the violent is mingled with the humorous in order to demonstrate the theatre's power to turn cruelty and terror into something more bearable by representing violence as mere play. I suggest, however, that this is precisely the opposite of what is at stake here. Conspicuously, most of the characters' fantasies of violence—and there is certainly no lack of them in the play—involve an audience. It has often been noted that Posthumus Leonatus and Cloten have more in common than either of them would care to acknowledge.<sup>35</sup> Among these commonalities is the fantasy of violating Imogen in front of some kind of audience. On hearing of her supposed infidelity, Posthumus Leonatus vows to "tear [Imogen] limb-meal [...] i' th' court before her father" (2.4.148–150). Cloten's plans are more elaborate:

She said upon a time—the bitterness of it I now belch from my heart—that she held the very garments of Posthumus in more respect than my noble and natural person, together with the adornment of my qualities. With that suit upon my back will I ravish her: first kill him, and in her eyes; there shall she see my valour, which will then be a torment to her contempt. He on the ground, my speech of insultment ended on his dead body, and when my lust hath dined—which,

<sup>34</sup> Granville-Barker (1958), p. 539.

<sup>35</sup> Maurice Hunt remarks, "Many commentators on the play have remarked the dramatic appropriateness of this [Imogen's] confusion of bodies, for Posthumus's homicidal rage toward Imogen closely resembles Cloten's rapacious mood. It is as though the play's protagonist has grown a boorish Cloten within himself. Like *Cymbeline*, Posthumus could be said to have lost his head in a mindless savage rage. In this sense, Cloten literally loses what Posthumus has figuratively lost and undergoes what the protagonist figuratively deserves (if believing that a commissioned murder has been accomplished deserves the death penalty)." (Maurice Hunt, "Dismemberment, Corporal Reconstitution, and the Body Politic in *Cymbeline*", *Studies in Philology* 99 (2002), 404–431, p. 416f.

as I say, to vex her I will execute in the clothes that she so praised—to the court I'll knock her back, foot her home again. (3.5.132–143)

The fate that Cloten plans for Imogen is very similar to what happens to Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*, who both witnesses her husband's murder and is raped in its aftermath. Initially, Chiron plans to make the dead Bassianus an accessory and a silent audience to the abuse, ordering his brother Demetrius to “[d]rag hence her husband to some secret hole, / and make his dead trunk pillow to our lust”. (2.3.129f.)<sup>36</sup> This, however, is an atrocity (possibly the only one) which even the Goths refrains from committing; Bassianus's body is simply thrown into a hole in the ground, Lavinia dragged off stage to undergo multiple rape and mutilation at the hands of Tamora's sons.

For both Cloten and the Goths, the absent-present husbands of their actual or intended female victims fulfil a double function (if only theoretically, as neither Chiron's nor Cloten's scenario is ever realized). By making Bassianus and Posthumus unwilling accomplices in the sexual violence done to the women, the rapists create an audience before whom the wives' violation can be staged. While it increases the woman's humiliation, rape in the presence of a dead husband also presents a post-mortem opportunity to get equal with a former rival. Cast in the role of silent witnesses to the spectacle of their wives' abuse, Bassianus and Posthumus would be subjected to the emasculation which, during their lifetimes, their opponents found themselves unable to put into effect. Theatricality emerges as an important element in both Chiron's and Cloten's fantasies of violence, even if none of the perpetrators actually gets to realize the 'theatrical' rape they initially plan on. In fact, Cloten does not get to accomplish any of his perfidious plans concerning Imogen. But the degree to which theatricality informs his notions of violence is even more conspicuous than it is with Chiron. Not content with abusing the princess in the presence of her dead husband, Cloten is set on exposing Imogen's humiliation and desolation to the aristocratic public: “to the court I'll knock her back, foot her home again”, he swears. His obsession with both spectacles of violence and the violence of spectacle is apparent from the insistency with which he dwells on this particular scenario:

Posthumus, thy head, which now is growing upon thy shoulders, shall within this hour be off, thy mistress enforced, thy garments cut to pieces before her face; and all this done, spurn her home to her father, who may haply be a little angry for my so rough usage; but my mother, having power of his testiness, shall turn all into my commendations.(4.1.14–20)

Assaulting the princess in front of an audience, an audience which he clearly assumes to be little or not at all concerned for the welfare of the princess, is obviously the most extreme kind of violence that Cloten can think of. His threats concerning his rival must of course seem strongly ironic considering that not Posthumus's, but Cloten's head is going to be cut off within the next hour. If Cloten and Posthumus share the fantasy of doing physical harm to Imogen in public, they get what they hope for, for this public assault on Imogen is precisely what the play provides before she is finally reunited

<sup>36</sup> William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Eugene M. Waith, The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984).

with her—by then remorseful—husband. In the last scene, before the largest assembly of characters that the play has mustered so far, the princess, disguised as the boy Fidele, is knocked out by her quick-tempered husband. The two lines he has before he strikes her down are possibly the most revealing in the whole play as far as the interrelatedness of violence and spectacle is concerned: “Shall's have a play of this? Thou scornful page, / There lie thy part.” (5.4.228f.)

It may sound cynical, but of course Posthumus couldn't be more right. Throughout the play it has been Imogen's lot to be exposed to various kinds of violence—all of them in full view of the audience. There has been no intervention, no cry for help like that which the faithful Pisanio now utters, discarding the rules of theatrical collusion by actively intervening in favour of Imogen. It is this repudiation of passivity, this refusal simply to watch, which leads to denouement and happy ending. The point where the play is at its most explicit about the violence it perpetrates *as play* is also the point at which its investigation of non-empathetic spectatorship and the violence of spectacle begins to recede in favour of classical models of emotional identification. The extremes of love and hate, violence and tenderness, which the play has exploited, and is going to exploit in the two hundred lines yet to come, are re-channelled into what could be termed an extreme version of empathetic spectatorship. Paradoxically, this re-channelling is conveyed by precisely the character who has played such a prominent part in the fantasies revolving around anti-empathetic spectatorship and public violation of Imogen. On realizing that the unconscious and possibly dead pageboy is in fact his daughter, it is King Cymbeline himself who exclaims: “[...] [T]he gods do mean to strike me / To death with mortal joy”. (5.4.234f.) In his choice of words, the king relives the experience that his daughter has just gone through. Just like she has been struck by the husband she believed to be dead, Cymbeline has been figuratively ‘struck’ by the higher powers who have returned him his daughter. “Mortal joy” is what this portends for them both. The reaction—physical as well as emotional—which Cymbeline is subjected to can be described as cathartic: the higher powers obviously have the dramaturgical means to turn him into a compassionate spectator par excellence.

This may return the play to Aristotelian<sup>37</sup> notions of the impact of tragedy and the function of theatre—notions which presuppose the spectator's emotional engagement with what is presented on stage. However, it does not necessarily make the theatre a less violent place. King Cymbeline returns to a perspective on violence in the theatre which the play has been presenting as the perspective of the wrongdoers—of Posthumus and especially of Cloten. It is epitomized in the figure of the lifeless husband having to watch his wife's rape, condemned to passive spectatorship of a spectacle in which he has no chance of intervening, completely at the mercy of the director of this little ‘play’. *Cymbeline*, it seems, is very much aware of the darker sides of theatricality, of its own capability for the kind of violation which Frank Kermode refers to when he suspects that Shakespeare is “*playing with the play*”, manipulating characters as well as audience. For there is not only the violence of the disengaged spectator and his exploitative gaze. There is also the kind that resorts to

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<sup>37</sup> Again, I am referring to early modern notions of Aristotle rather than to Aristotle himself.

scenes of cruelty and horror in order to achieve a maximum of theatrical impact, subjecting an audience to the terror of *having* to watch. Can the theatre do without violence? Shakespeare's no has indeed many resonances.

### **Zusammenfassung**

*Cymbeline* stellt verschiedene Formen der Gewalt offen zur Schau. Mit den Mitteln der Metatheatralität wird den entsprechenden Szenen jedoch gezielt ihre emotionale Spitze genommen. Dem Zuschauer wird dadurch primär eine nicht-emphatische, distanzierte Rezeptionshaltung nahegelegt. Diese aber macht ihn zum Verbündeten der Gewalttäter im Stück, die ohne ein Publikum, dem sie ihr Opfer ‚vorführen‘ können, nicht auskommen mögen. In *Cymbeline* erweisen sich Gewalt und Theatralität so als eng miteinander verknüpft. Während das Theater als Institution die der Zurschaustellung inhärente Gewalt zum Prinzip erhoben hat, bedient sich die Gewalt der Prinzipien des Theaters, um ihre volle Wirksamkeit entfalten zu können.



# ‘GENUINE’ VIOLENCE ON STAGE? JÜRGEN GOSCH’S *MACBETH*

BY

CHRISTINA WALD

[...] let us meet,  
And question this most bloody piece of work,  
To know it further (*Macbeth*, 2.3.123–125)<sup>38</sup>

In times in which the cinema and TV depict violence in a realistic manner with an ever-increasing perfectionism, can violence depicted on stage at all have a genuine feel? Can it have a disturbing impact on audiences? Jürgen Gosch’s recent production of *Macbeth* seems to testify to these possibilities. It has aroused immense media attention since its opening at Düsseldorf’s Schauspielhaus in October 2005, its stagings in several European cities and its invitation to the Berliner Theatertreffen. The production has been both celebrated and heavily criticised, in particular for its depiction of violence. Stefan Keim, who belongs to the proponents of the production, rather apodictically states in his review for the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, „An Jürgen Goschs radikaler Inszenierung kommt erst einmal nicht vorbei, wer über Echtheit von Inszenierungen—egal wo—nachdenkt.“<sup>39</sup> I take my cue from Keim as to the importance and ‚Echtheit‘ of Gosch’s *Macbeth* for my following exploration of theatrical techniques that allow for the staging of ‘genuine’ violence.

As the production photos show, Gosch’s *Macbeth* was performed by an all-male cast, who were, for the most part of the play, naked. When a soldier returns from the battlefield in the play’s second scene to report the state of the fights to the king, Duncan asks, “What bloody man is that?” (1.2.1). Critics have emphasised the importance of this first bloody apparition that sets the tone for the play, henceforth “haunts the stage” and characterises Macbeth as “the bloody man, the image of death”.<sup>40</sup> Gosch takes Duncan’s question literally: He makes the other characters strip the captain and cover his body with blood—and the image of a blood-covered naked male body will indeed haunt the stage throughout the production, as it will return in ever-new manifestations.

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<sup>38</sup> All quotes from *Macbeth* are taken from William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katherine Eisaman Maus (New York: Norton, 1997), p. 2555–2618.

<sup>39</sup> Stefan Keim, „Nackter Wald: Jürgen Goschs Suche nach Echtheit auf der Bühne wird immer radikaler“, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 8. 10. 2005.

<sup>40</sup> John Holloway, *The Story of the Night: Studies in Shakespeare’s Major Tragedies* (London: Routledge, 1961), p. 58 and p. 59.



This first bloodshed is followed by many more; by the end of the production, not only are most of the actors covered in blood, but also is the scenery demolished and bloodstained. The production's visual imagery thus corresponds to the play's talk about bloodshed, such as in Macbeth's famous statements "It will have blood; they say, blood will have blood" (3.4.121) and "I am in blood / Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more, / Returning were as tedious as go o'er" (3.4.135–137). Harold Bloom accordingly describes *Macbeth*, which, on the verbal level alone, mentions 'blood' more than forty times, as the most extreme example of a "tragedy of blood" of all of Shakespeare's plays,

not just in its murders but in the ultimate implications of Macbeth's imagination itself being bloody. The usurper Macbeth moves in a consistent phantasmagoria of blood: blood is the prime constituent of his imagination. He sees that what opposes him is blood in one aspect [...] and that his opposing force thrusts him into shedding more blood.<sup>41</sup>

Discussing the depiction of violence in a number of Shakespeare's plays, Derek Cohen comes to a similar conclusion as Bloom, suggesting that *Macbeth* most radically investigates both the destructive potential and the fascination of violence:

The play seems to explore the possibilities of unleashed violence in a world already inured to violence. So that what is normally a violent place has then to absorb ever increasing eruptions of violence to a degree almost beyond measure. This rain of violence in all forms upon an already staggering world only produces corollaries such as the breakdown of 'normal' forms. [...] Most alarming of all, however, *Macbeth* suggests the terrible seductive power of violence. Indeed that is the context of its beginning. The haunting and terrible beauty that violence can be is pursued to its dreadful but rational conclusions.<sup>42</sup>

Francis Barker likewise identifies two attitudes towards violence in *Macbeth*, which he considers "a play of hurt and violence" and "the most bloody" of the high tragedies;<sup>43</sup> according to Barker, the play oscillates between "two violences", "between, on the one

<sup>41</sup> Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (London: Fourth Estate, 1999), p. 520–521.

<sup>42</sup> Derek Cohen, *Shakespeare's Culture of Violence* (New York: St. Martin's Press), 1993, p. 127.

<sup>43</sup> Francis Barker, *The Culture of Violence: Essays on Tragedy and History* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993), p. 58.

hand, the demonisation of violence, and on the other hand the contemplation of violent solutions to the historical blockages and depredations which form the nexus of its event".<sup>44</sup> R. A Foakes even suggests ordering Shakespeare's plays with regard to their treatment of violence and argues that they follow a trajectory of (1) the representation of violence for entertainment, (2) the problematisation of violence and (3) the investigation of human aggression in relation to self-control.<sup>45</sup>



<sup>44</sup> Barker (1993), p. 52–53.

<sup>45</sup> R.A Foakes, *Shakespeare and Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), p. 1–2.



Given the predominance of the topic of violence in Shakespeare's *oeuvre* and in *Macbeth* in particular, in which "violence is his [the protagonist's] way of life and violence is the blood and bones of the nation he helps to maintain",<sup>46</sup> Gosch's aesthetics could be considered an adequate visualisation of the "bloody business" (2.1, 48) of the play whose "colour is the colour of blood".<sup>47</sup> While many reviewers appreciated Gosch's approach to the play that brings to the fore the obscenity of the witches and the bloodshed of Macbeth, others criticised the gory aesthetics of the production. Tabloid newspapers in particular featured dismissive articles with headlines such as „Ekel-Skandal im Schauspielhaus: Hunderte Zuschauer flüchteten aus Premiere" and „Sudel-Macbeth: Ist das noch Kunst?"<sup>48</sup>, which included comments by local politicians such as Düsseldorf's mayor Joachim Erwin, who, without having seen the production, demanded, „Man sollte 'Macbeth' so machen, dass man Shakespeare noch erkennt [...]. Solche Umdichtungen sind ein unerträglicher Trend!"

<sup>46</sup> Cohen (1993), p. 141.

<sup>47</sup> Andrew Cecil Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth* (London: Macmillan 1992 [1904]), p. 293. Bradley continues, "It cannot be an accident that the image of blood is forced upon us continually, not merely by the events themselves, but by full descriptions, and even by reiterations of the word in unlikely parts of the dialogue. [...] It is as if the poet saw the whole story through an ensanguined mist, and as if it stained the very blackness of the night."

<sup>48</sup> *Düsseldorf Express*, 1.10.2005.



Recently, a similarly polemic and outraged tone has entered a more serious journalistic arena, when Joachim Lottmann in the *Spiegel* complained about the destructive attitude of the allegedly „jungdeutsche Regisseure” and characterised Gosch’s *Macbeth* as „Ekeltheater von Anfang an”.<sup>49</sup> Rather than acknowledging that “to address *Macbeth* is inevitably to address violence”,<sup>50</sup> Lottmann feels sympathetic with young pupils watching the production who must have, in his imagination, expected a cleaner and less violent Shakespeare: „Die minderjährigen Lämmer haben sich noch nicht richtig hingesetzt, als ihnen schon meterhoch der Dreck entgegenspritzt. Was mag in ihnen nun vorgehen? Der Lehrer hat etwas anderes versprochen. Auch die Mädchen hatten eigentlich Shakespeare erwartet. Nun sehen sie Blut und Schlimmeres.” Lottmann does not seem to consider the fact that whilst he complains about the bloodshed on stage in the *Spiegel*, the very same magazine runs articles on the pleasure involved in playing video and computer games that often contain “violence to a degree almost beyond measure” as described by Derek Cohen, in which these “minderjährigen Lämmer” nonetheless seem to revel.<sup>51</sup> Lottmann in a similarly pathetic manner describes the reactions of adult audiences to Gosch’s *Macbeth*: „Ein Rinnsal von Flüchtenden bildet sich, Vertriebene aus dem Theaterland, Alte, Gebrechliche, Enttäuschte, manche weinen. Etwa ein Drittel des zahlenden Publikums verlässt das Haus vorzeitig, trotz der Schikane” – this ‚Schikane’ refers to the fact that

<sup>49</sup> Joachim Lottmann, „Hau ab, du Arsch!“, *Der Spiegel* 10/2006, 06. März 2006, [Hhttp://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/0,1518,405037,00.html](http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/0,1518,405037,00.html). An equation of youth and stylistic radicalness can also be found in celebratory articles on Gosch’s production, such as in Christine Dössel’s remark, „Mit 62 Jahren ist er der Regisseur der Stunde—der jüngste, radikalste und offenste von allen“. Christine Dössel, „Bis sich der Körper im Text abdrückt“, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 5. 5. 2006, S. 15.

<sup>50</sup> Barker (1993), p. 52.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. for example Tobias Moorstedt, „Warum macht Gewalt uns so viel Spaß?“. *Spiegel Online* 27 (März 2006). [Hhttp://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/netzkultur/0,1518,408137,00.html](http://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/netzkultur/0,1518,408137,00.html).

the lights in the auditorium do not allow for secret exits; in Lottman's imagination, however, the normal lights have become „gnadenlose[...] Scheinwerfer“.

A number of the comments by audiences on the theatre's web sites and letters to newspapers show that some spectators indeed expected something else from a production of *Macbeth*. They pity both the actors who have to endure 'humiliations' on stage and the playwright 'who must have turned in his grave'.<sup>52</sup> That the violence inherent in the production felt appallingly 'real' to audiences and to some reviewers also becomes apparent in the curious fact that local newspapers ran series that explained through which techniques and props the production enacts the bloodshed.

Westdeutsche Zeitung, 5. Oktober 2005 (1/2)

## Horrorkabinett kommt vom Zuckerbäcker

Soviel Theaterblut floss noch nie:  
Bei „Macbeth“ dürfen Requisite und Maske  
aus den Vollen schöpfen. Mit dem  
Urmenschlichen kennt man sich aus.

Westdeutsche Zeitung, 5. Oktober 2005 (1/2)



Die Anatomie muss stimmen: Kopf und durchtrennter Leib sind aus Gummimilch hergestellt (oben). Ein ganzer Einkaufswagen voll Theaterblut wird pro Aufführung bei „Macbeth“ vergossen.

sind nicht anders als kalorienreiche Mousse au Chocolat und Wasser. In anderen Stücken wiederum kann Pudding leicht zu Eis werden. Eine gute Vitamin-C-Brause-Tablette es im Mundwinkel des Esstellers schmelzen. Und je nach Gusto und allergischer Empfindsamkeit des Schauspielers trinkt er Trauben- oder Kirscheft statt Beute-

lo, beziehungsweise veredelte Cola oder Tee statt Whisky. Einfallerschnitt war auch bei einem dekadenten Austernessen prägnant, bei dem es ausgedehnt dem raschen Verfall der frischen Meerestriche einen überzeugenden Einzug geben sollte. Hier bei Hein und ihr Team fanden eine gute Lösung: Austerschalen mit Litchis.

**IN ZAHLEN**

In dem Theaterstück *Macbeth* fließen pro Aufführung rund 21 Liter Blut (unter zehn bis 20 Millilitern) werden 20 Liter Wasser verbraucht und 7,5 Liter Mousse au Chocolat. Zum Vergleich: Ein Löffchen dieser Köstlichkeit im Supermarkt enthält im Durchschnitt 230 Gramm.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. „Kommentare zum Stück *Macbeth*“, [Hhttp://www.duesseldorfer-schauspielhaus.de/spielzeit/stuecke/kommentar.php?void=366&vid=248380&vtid=251143H](http://www.duesseldorfer-schauspielhaus.de/spielzeit/stuecke/kommentar.php?void=366&vid=248380&vtid=251143H) und „Was unsere Leser zu ‚Macbeth‘ sagen“, *Rheinische Post* 6.10.2005.

# Düsseldorf im Blutrausch

Obszön und krank oder hohe Kunst? Die Geister scheiden sich an Goschs „Macbeth“. Große Effekte auf der Bühne des Schauspielhauses, großer Skandal in der Stadt. Doch die Zutaten dafür sind banal. Hinter den Kulissen haben Requisite und Maske eher ein leichtes Spiel.

VON ANANDA MILZ

Fünf Kilo Mehl, fünf Kilo Bienenleber, drei Kilo Mousse au Chocolat, vier Flaschen Bier, eine Dose Cola und viel Wasser – das klingt nach Einkaufsliste. Und ist in der Tat auch eine. Doch zubereitet wird daraus kein festliches Mahl. Es gibt „Schlachtplatte“. Jedenfalls im Schauspielhaus. Denn es handelt sich dabei um die Requisite, die Harry Barthuli und sein Team bereiten müssen. Für jede Aufführung von „Macbeth“. „Dazu gibt es drei dicke Knippel und ein großes Schwert“, sagt der Requisiteur und krant in seinem Regal. „Damit zerleihen wir die Hesen ihren Thron.“ Aufkratzt zum Finale: Ekremente, Blut und Nackte.

Nichts für zartbesaitete Gemüter, wie wir alle wissen. Denn Goschs Inszenierung ist derzeit in aller Munde. Schauspiel, die schreibbar auf die Bühne umsetzen, dort sogar ihre Notdurft verrichten. Dazu spritzt viel roter Saft. In ihm wird förmlich gebadet, gewischt – ein Blutrausch sondergleichen. Großer Effekt, großer Skandal. Doch damit das umstrittene Spektakel auch funktioniert, muss die Logistik stimmen. Fürs Rote zuständig: die Maske.

„Wir unterscheiden zwischen A, B und C“, erklärt dort Matthias Butt. Sein Instinkt ist eher nüchtern. Die Reize von Theaterblut. Auch bei dem gibt es so was wie Blutgruppen. C-Blut können gegessen werden und sei in verschiedenen, mehr oder weniger leckeren Geschmacksrichtungen erhältlich, so Butt. A-Blut hingegen darf nur äußerlich zum Einsatz kommen. Und A-Blut spritzt auch bei „Macbeth“.



Fürs Gosch-Spektakel hinter den Kulissen zuständig: Mathias Butt (links) aus der Maske und Requisiteur Harry Barthuli.

Foto: Andreas Metz

**INFO**

**Mehr vom roten Saft**

„Macbeth“ im Oktober:  
Samstag, 8. Oktober, Sonntag, 9. Oktober, sowie Samstag, 29. und Sonntag, 30. Oktober, im Großen Haus, Düsseldorf. Schauspielhaus, Gendarmenbrunnensplatz 1  
Spielbeginn: jeweils 19.30 Uhr  
Karten unter Telefon: 36 99 11

Im Farbton zwei – der sei besonders authentisch.

21 Flaschen je ein Liter werden pro Abend davon geleert. So hat der Maskenfundus dieser Tage also etwas von einer Krankenkassette. Alles steht voll von „Blutkonserven“. Ein Paradies für jeden Vampir – doch sie sind ja nicht echt. „Auswird diese rote Flüssigkeit eigentlich bestellt, wissen wir selbst nicht“, bekennt der Maskenbildner. Es ist ein geheimes Rezept und wird vom Hamburger Hersteller nicht verraten.

Das dieses Blut nicht echt ist, wird auf der Bühne jedoch umso mehr gezeigt. „Die Akteure kippen sich die Blutflaschen einfach über den Körper“, sagt der Mann aus der Requisite. Ähnlich verhält es sich mit dem Einsatz der Mousse au Chocolat und dem vielen Wasser – verwendet als Ekremente. „Hinter den Schauspielern stehen Statisten, die das Zeug verschütten. Fürs Publikum wiederum gut ersicht-

lich.“ Dennoch, wir erinnern uns: Effekte und Skandal sind groß. Eher klein hingegen ist der Aufwand hinter den Kulissen. Für Requisite und Maske. „Für uns ist das Ganze viel banaler“, erklären die Ausstaffierer. Es gebe weitaus schwierigere Inszenierungen. Schließlich nimmt alles ja seinen Anfang mit einer harmlosen Einkaufsliste. Wie heißt es bei Shakespeare doch so schön: „Viel Lärm um nichts“?

It is surprising and interesting that such newspaper articles felt that they had to demystify the theatrical experience and explain about the use of theatre blood. It is surprising, since the production itself in a self-conscious manner exhibits the theatrical fabrication and simulation of violence. Thus, the production starts with showing the stage which is empty but for a few tables that seem to be set for a conference. Instead of the usual water and juice bottles, however, audiences can discern bottles of theatre blood on these tables. Not only does this initial stage image set the agenda for the piece that will negotiate the bloodshed of hundreds that has been decided upon by a few warlords, but it also introduces the most important prop of the production: artificial blood. If we take a closer look at some production images, we see that the blood bottles are used and emptied throughout the play.





The formidable final fight between Macduff and Macbeth illustrates particularly well the powerful yet at the same time self-conscious use of theatre blood in the production. The fight features two naked actors with flexible plastic knives whose task is to empty bottles of blood on the body of the enemy. Thus, Gosch's *Macbeth* exhibits and calls attention to its theatrical frame, which is reinforced by the fact that the production does not use common devices such as extra-diegetic sound or make-up, that it has the all-male cast constantly on stage and makes them repeatedly change roles, and that the light in the auditorium is never turned off. The production thereby not only, in some respects, offers an approximation to the aesthetics of the Elizabethan stage, but its anti-illusionist stance can also be compared to Brecht's epic theatre. Given the aesthetics, the reactions of both appalled audiences, who have written hundreds of letters and comments that are displayed on the web pages of the Schauspielhaus, and the critics who warn audiences about the graphic production and who feel responsible for highlighting the fact that the bloodshed on stage is far from real, come as a surprise.

Gosch's production and the reactions by critics and audiences are exemplary in bringing to the fore the paradox inherent in theatrical spectacles of violence: The stylisation of violence on stage can be experienced as much more 'real' by audiences than attempts to stage violence realistically, which inevitably has an artificial feel. Gosch's theatrical spectacle of violence neither aspires to an 'authenticity of pain' on stage as typical of performance artists such as Marina Abramović, nor shares the perfectionism of realistic spectacles of violence in the cinema. Nonetheless, the reviews and audiences' comments read as if Gosch's *Macbeth* staged violence in a nauseatingly realistic manner. They testify to the experiential impact of the production that is paradoxically achieved through its aesthetic *departure* from stage realism. Apparently, the images of bloodstained bodies have even greater impact if audiences beforehand are allowed to witness their theatrical fabrication and do not need to wonder about how and when the actors made invisible blood pads burst. In other words, since the *business of performing* is laid bare and needs no further investigation, the ever-oscillating gaze of the audience can focus on the *performed business*. It seems important, however, that the enactment of pain warrants the theatrical 'realness'. In many scenes, and most impressively in the final fight between Macbeth and Macduff, the actors of Gosch's *Macbeth* reacted to the plastic knife blows and the pouring of blood with the enactment of pain, thus establishing two simultaneous levels of action: the rehearsed choreography including the pouring of bottles by the actors and the fight for life and death by the figures. Thus, it is the achievement of the stage images as well

as the actors that audiences experienced the staged stylised violence as ‘genuine’, not despite of, but because of the fact that Gosch’s production foregrounds the processes of its theatrical fabrication.

### **Zusammenfassung**

Jürgen Goschs Inszenierung von *Macbeth* eignet sich in besonderer Weise zur Diskussion der Frage, ob und wie Darstellungen von Gewalt auf der Theaterbühne ‚echt‘ wirken können. Die Inszenierung, die ihre theatralen Mittel bewusst ausstellt, hat eine derart starke Wirkung auf das Publikum und einige Theaterkritiker, dass diese in Leserbriefen und Rezensionen das Ausmaß der dargestellten Gewalt scharf kritisieren. An diesem scheinbaren Gegensatz zeigt sich das theatrale Paradox, dass theatrale Gewalt dann besonders ‚echt‘ wirkt, wenn sie jenseits der Mittel des Realismus stilisiert dargestellt wird – im Fall von Goschs *Macbeth* wirken die Bilder von blutüberströmten nackten Körpern affizierend, obwohl das Publikum zuvor gesehen hat, wie die Schauspieler literweise Theaterblut aus etikettierten Plastikflaschen auf ihren Körpern verteilen.



# VIOLATED BODIES, TRUTH AND LANGUAGE IN *TITUS ANDRONICUS*

BY

ULRICH KAISER

“I need a life full of things. [...] Full of facts”, exclaims Phineas, the protagonist and narrator of Antonia S. Byatt’s *The Biographer’s Tale*.<sup>1</sup> His need can be seen as an example for a more general contemporary desire to escape the postmodern *conditio humana*. In questioning traditional notions of language as transparent instrument for the mimetic representation of a preexistent reality, and in substituting it with a (de)constructivist understanding of language as performative producer of reality, postmodernist and poststructuralist thinkers, writers, artists etc. have established a purely epistemological view of the world. Their keywords are uncertainty, play, textuality, citationality, simulacra and so on.<sup>2</sup> The un-postmodern yearning for certainty and truth<sup>3</sup>, which cannot be wholly suppressed, is frequently pinned down to the body<sup>4</sup> as the seemingly given and stable *sine qua non* of human existence and perception. More specifically, it is the spectacular body marked by violence that lends itself to be focused on as the guarantee for reality, because the conspicuously mutilated

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<sup>1</sup> Antonia S. Byatt, *The Biographer’s Tale* (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Among others I draw on: Jacques Derrida, *Grammatologie* (F.a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1974); Michel Foucault, *Die Ordnung der Dinge* (F.a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1974); Michel Foucault, *Die Ordnung des Diskurses* (F.a.M.: Ullstein, 1977); Jean Baudrillard, *Das Andere selbst* (Wien: Passagen, 1994); Jean Baudrillard, „Die Präzession der Simulakra“, in Baudrillard, *Agonie des Realen* (Berlin: Merve, 1978), p. 7–69; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993), esp. p. 1–55; Julia Kristeva, *Die Revolution der poetischen Sprache* (F.a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1978); Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia UP, 1982); Jean-François Lyotard, *Das postmoderne Wissen. Ein Bericht* (Wien: Passagen, 1986); Jean-François Lyotard, „Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist postmodern?“, in Peter Engelmann, ed., *Postmoderne und Dekonstruktion: Texte französischer Philosophen der Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2004), p. 33–48; Johanna Bossinade, *Poststrukturalistische Literaturtheorie* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2000); Catherine Belsey, *Poststructuralis.: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2002); Stuart Sim, *Irony and Crisis: A Critical History of Postmodern Culture* (Duxford: Icon Books, 2002); Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, “The Class of 1968 – Post-Structuralism *par lui-même*“, in Rivkin and Ryan, eds., *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 333–357; Andreas Mahler, „Das ideologische Profil“, in Ina Schabert, ed., *Shakespeare-Handbuch* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 2000), p. 299–323.

<sup>3</sup> Cf, f.e. Lyotard (2004); Sim (2002).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Manfred Pfister, „Zur Theoretisierung des Körpers“, *SJ West* (1989), 174–177; K. Ludwig Pfeiffer, „Körper, Handeln, System: *Henry IV* und andere Beispiele“, *SJ West* (1989), 178–195, esp. 178–180; Wolfgang Weiß, “‘There is language in her eye, her cheek, her lip.’ Körper und Körpersprache in *Troilus and Cressida*, *All’s Well That Ends Well* und *Measure for Measure*“, *SJ West* (1989), 196–208, 196.

and bleeding body is obviously alive and irrefutably present. Moreover, the marks left by violence on the body are visible traces of the crime and therefore highlight the body's status of evidence and truth. The (wounded) body can take on this function even if it is not the one of one's own experience but a representation (in photographs, movies, texts, plays on stage). The desire to escape the (postmodern) uncertainty of meaning and hollowness of reality enhances the consumer's general tendency to suspend disbelief and to take the representations for 'real'. The reality-effect of theatrical illusion is aided by the spectator's empathy, which draws on her/his own experiences of living in/with a (hurting) body and on her/his corporeal memory thereof.<sup>5</sup> Early Modern plays comply with the fascination for bodies (marked by violence), not only because they contain a superabundance of violence but also because one can find in them traces of other, older concepts of corporeality, which ascribe presence to the body, denied to it by the representationalism of postmodernism.<sup>6</sup>

## I

*Titus Andronicus* especially lends itself to be seen from such a perspective. Perhaps even more so because the way language is presented in this play bears strong affinities to postmodern theoretical accounts of it. Right from the beginning the collapse of order in Rome is linked with language that has become highly problematic. Language in this play is far from the traditional ideal of language as a means for communication via the transparent mimesis of reality and/or thought, which ensures certain and stable meanings. The connection between signifier and signified is loosened and becomes shifting. Central concepts of Roman culture like "honour", "virtue", "nobility", "religion" and "piety", "law" and "justice" are used throughout the play but vary widely in their meaning according to the respective user. The ideological unity guaranteeing semantic closure has obviously broken down.

Symbolized by the image of "headless Rome" (1.1.186)<sup>7</sup>, this state of affairs also nullifies the contractual power of language. Saturninus professes his deep gratitude after Titus has made him emperor (1.1.253–57) and withdraws it again only some fifty

<sup>5</sup> Ina Schabert contends that the theatre is particularly able to produce such empathy: „Theater nimmt die Zuschauenden in seinen Bann, überwältigt sie, erzwingt körperlich-konkrete empathische Identifikation, lädt ein zum Ausagieren von Emotionen, zum Wechselbad von schmerzhafter Betroffenheit und „comic relief“, zum sinnlichen Genießen, zum Staunen und Wundern.“ Cf. Schabert (2000), p. 262.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. f.e. Foucault (1974), esp. p. 46–77; Peter Czerwinski, *Exempel einer Geschichte der Wahrnehmung II: Gegenwärtigkeit. Simultane Räume und zyklische Zeiten, Formen von Regeneration und Genealogie im Mittelalter* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1993), esp. p. 259–508; Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991); Dieter Fuchs, „Meta-Morphosen der Autorschaft: Zur semiotischen Dynamik von Körper, Schrift und väterlicher auctoritas in *Titus Andronicus*“, *SJ* 139 (2003), 84–100; Schabert (2000), p. 295–296.

<sup>7</sup> All quotations will be based on the following edition: William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. by J.C. Maxwell, *The Arden Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 1961).

lines afterwards (1.1.299–303). His words may be adequate and truthful representations of his thoughts but his thoughts and attitudes change so quickly that his words lose their value as binding promises. For different reasons, the same holds true for Titus. He promises his daughter Lavinia to Saturninus (1.1.240–45) although she had been promised to Bassianus already (1.1.280–86; 297–98; 342; 356–57; 390).<sup>8</sup> The major events of the first act demonstrate already that contentions in the political realm are interconnected with fights for semiotic dominion. Saturninus and Bassianus couch their competing claims for the crown in strikingly similar terms. The decision whether the sacrifice of Alarbus is legitimate is a decision of the exact meaning of the word “religion”. The Andronici’s strife concerning the future husband of Lavinia is verbally represented by their implicit fight for the definition of words like “traitor”, “honour” and “justice”. In the world of “headless Rome” words lose their fixed meanings and their social power as binding promises. The semiotic uncertainty is effect of and at the same time cause for the political disorders.

The erosion of language gains a further dimension when Tamora becomes the wife of Saturninus and hence the new Roman Queen. It is she who introduces the politically highly important craft of dissembling in the first ‘aside’ of the play (1.1.442–50). Her advice to Saturninus brings about an unsettling of the mimetic link between thought and word. Closely connected to this kind of semiotic instability and to Tamora is Aaron and his successful manipulation of the referential function of language. He writes the letter (2.3.46–47) and deposits the gold (2.3.1–9) that serves as false circumstantial evidence (2.3.264–87) for the conviction of the supposed murderers of Bassianus, Quintus and Martius<sup>9</sup> (2.3.301–03).

Not surprisingly in this world of verbal uncertainty, Titus’s attempts to find justice via language fail. The basic function of language—communication—breaks down completely, when Titus addresses his messages to absent or unwilling addressees. The same holds true for the arrows he shoots to the gods (4.3), or the stones he talks to as if they were tribunes. In the latter instance it is made clear that Titus’s behaviour is not reducible to his person, i.e. his ‘madness’, but highlights the general deficiency in society and in language as a means to communicate:

*Lucius:* My gracious Lord, no tribune hears you speak.

*Titus:* Why, ’tis no matter, man: if they did hear,

<sup>8</sup> Textual evidence doesn’t settle the question whether Titus knew of the former contract. As *pater familias* it would be his responsibility and right to dispose of such matters. It may be, though, that his brother Marcus acted in his stead during his absence because of the war against the Goths. With respect to the promise in itself Titus may therefore be exculpated. The play makes it quite clear, however, that it is condemnable that Titus sticks to his promise after he has been informed. Titus hollows out the authority of the *pater familias* and Roman right, since his demand that this will be done rests on his personal authority only. Titus’s iniquity is made manifest when he kills his own son in the subsequent fight of Andronicus against Andronici. Lucius and Marcus, whose judgement carries particular retrospective weight because they will be the representatives of the restored order at the end of the play, reproach him severely for his “impiety” and “injustice” (1.1.291–92; 355–57).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Karen Cunningham, “‘Scars can witness’: Trials by Ordeal and Lavinia’s Body in *Titus Andronicus*”, in Katherine Anne Ackley, ed., *Women and Violence in Literature: An Essay Collection* (New York: Garland, 1990), p. 139–62, 147.

They would not mark me, or if they did mark,  
 They would not pity me, yet plead I must,  
 And bootless unto them.  
 Therefore I tell my sorrows to the stones,  
 Who, though they cannot answer my distress,  
 Yet in some sort they are better than the tribunes,  
 For that they will not intercept my tale. (3.1.32–40)

The uncertainty, or duplicity produced by language in this play is brought to a climax in Act 5, Scene 2. Tamora fully believes in the manipulative power of her weapon-like language –

*Tamora:* I will enchant the old Andronicus  
 With words more sweet, and yet more dangerous,  
 Than baits to fish, or honey-stalks to sheep,  
 When as the one is wounded with the bait,  
 The other rotted with delicious feed. (4.4.89–93)

– and pretends that she is Revenge (5.2.3) and her sons are Rape and Murder (5.2.62), although Titus makes it clear that they look like Tamora and her sons Chiron and Demetrius (5.2.21–27; 65). Tamora’s attempt to manipulate reality through verbal simulation leads to a dense entanglement of signification that can be seen as symptomatic for the verbal instability of the play. On one level, Tamora and her sons really are what they pretend to be, since Tamora revenges her sacrificed son Alarbus, and since Chiron and Demetrius raped Lavinia and murdered Bassianus. On another level, of course they are not the personifications of Rape, Revenge and Murder. Titus, by now an apt player in their game with words, believes them (on the actual level because he has seen through their pretensions) and not (on the allegorical level), and counters their manipulations with his own in that he pretends to believe in their dissimulation (5.2.142–43). Finally, he makes his pretension real in the form of the cannibalistic banquet (5.2.153–91). Tamora relies overmuch on the power of language. Titus sees through her (mis)representations, because he recognizes their bodies (or rather faces), i.e. the truth. The most daring attempt in the play to change, or even produce reality through linguistic dissimulation, turns back on itself and attests to the evidence of the body that guarantees truth and reality.

## II

The scene discussed above marks the turning point in the development of the play, not only concerning the dénouement but also with respect to the restitution of a ‘corporeal logic’ that grounds socio-political and semiotic transparency and certainty in the body (marked by violence). Right at the beginning Titus is carefully introduced as a person whose martial body visibly attests to his social and political value (1.1.18–35; 1.1.187–88)<sup>10</sup>, so much so that he is given the decisive voice in electing the next emperor, after

<sup>10</sup>The same occurs in *Coriolanus* somewhat more explicitly. Cf. William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, in: *Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, 2nd Vol. (Essen: Magnus, 2003), p. 874–915; 1.2.34–43; 2.2.129–48; 2.3.1–11 and esp. 2.1.111–147. For a discussion of the concept of social identity in the

he has declined to try to become emperor himself (1.1.185–99). The long time Titus has served his country in several wars has left its traces visibly on his body (1.1.187–88). In this conception of the body the sign/the bodily surface and its meaning/the inner personality of its bearer are seen not to be separated and shifting but fixed and simultaneously present<sup>11</sup>. This ensures its legibility, its semiotic transparency. The very physical presence and visibility of this body are taken to be the guarantee for the evidence, reality and truth of its meaning, the social and political value of the person.<sup>12</sup> The equation of the person and its body can also be seen when Titus demands that his hand, which he has cut off to save his sons, shall be buried (3.1.195).

Apart from its scars and its permanent appearance, which is marked by time, experience and exertion, Titus's body evinces a further means for seemingly unambiguous communication: Titus's tears that run throughout the whole play. Titus himself always expressly verbalizes his tears as sure and true signs of his inner state. At the beginning he professes that he comes "[t]o re-salute his country with his tears, / Tears of true joy for his return to Rome" (1.1.75–76). Of course, tears are not restricted to Titus. Lavinia sheds "tears of joy" (1.1.161) for Titus's return. Later on, after Lavinia's rape and mutilation, Titus, Lavinia and Marcus share their sorrow in a "sympathy of woe" (3.1.148), expressed by their abundant tears. Even Tamora sheds tears but significantly only at the beginning, where she weeps "a mother's tears in passion for her son" (1.1.106). In this passage Tamora gives the reason why tears are seen to be such a sure corporeal sign of the inner state of the weeper. Tears were understood to be the effects of the passions, which were held to be closely interconnected with the workings of the humours of the human body. Since the passions should and could be controlled by reason, according to Early Modern

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Renaissance and of the function of scars for male (and only male) self-fashioning see Ina Schabert, *Englische Literaturgeschichte: Eine neue Darstellung aus der Sicht der Geschlechterforschung* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1997), p. 165–169.

<sup>11</sup> For this I draw on Fuchs (2003), where he points out that *Titus Andronicus* draws on several competing socio-political and semiotic models because of the change of England to an absolutist state during the Early Modern period. Most significantly for my present essay is Fuchs' contention that the older, medieval „Sozialgefüge durch die Genealogien der Adelshäuser, Sippen und Clans (d.h. vom Allianzprinzip) bestimmt und mit Phallus und Schwert durch die organische Aufschreibfläche des menschlichen Leibes als Zeichenordnung der Eindeutigkeit (als ikonische Simultanpräsenz von Signifikant und Signifikat) beglaubigt [wurde].“ Cf. Fuchs (2003), 85. This function of the body lost a good deal of its importance during the socio-political changes, although remnants of this 'semiotics of the body' are still present in *Titus Andronicus* so that Fuchs contends with respect to the play's negotiation of competing conceptions: „Dort stehen sich einerseits das Primärsystem der feudalen Körpersemiotik und die postfeudale Ordnung sekundärer Zeichen als Relation des allianzfixierten Ikonenbeschauens und des semiotisch gewitzten Symboldurchschauens gegenüber.“ Cf. Fuchs (2003), 86.

<sup>12</sup> In addition to Fuchs (2003), cf. Czerwinski (1993), p. 259–508 and Joachim Bumke, „Höfischer Körper—Höfische Kultur“, in Joachim Heinzle, ed., *Modernes Mittelalter: Neue Bilder einer populären Epoche* (F.a.M.: Insel, 1999), p. 67–102.

humoural physiology and pedagogy<sup>13</sup>, the passions are forces between body and mind. Thus, tears could be taken as real and true signs for the inner state of a person. On the one hand they are close enough to the physiological and emotional workings of the body and therefore far enough removed from the possibility of dissimulation. On the other hand they are close enough to the mind and the will of the person to function as their expression.

On a further level, the logic of corporeal semiotics also governs the major events of the first act. Titus's reason to choose Saturninus as the next emperor rests on Titus's adherence to the genealogical principle of primogeniture. This is in keeping with Titus's overall reliance on the 'presence' of the evident and significationally transparent body, since the feudal principle of genealogy is based on the assumption that the aristocratic virtues are corporeally transmitted to the son, and even more so to the first-born son. The ritual sacrifice of Alarbus follows most clearly the corporeal logic of semiotic certainty. It is Lucius<sup>14</sup> who most actively demands and fulfils the rite (1.1.96–101). Following the Old Testamentarian physical logic of 'an eye for an eye', the act of revenge or retribution can be successful, if it is of the same nature as the act of wrong-doing. Thus, death can be revenged by another death, and one that is of similar 'value': for princes a prince must die. This logic is meant to ensure the certainty of signification with its 1:1-principle. The evidence and reality of the restored order are guaranteed by its reliance on the semiotics of the (violated) body. By now not surprisingly, Titus doesn't heed the plea of Tamora for her son's life (1.1.121–26) and thereby starts off the further enchainment of revenges.<sup>15</sup> Titus confirms Lucius' demand and legitimates it by calling it 'religion'.

The linguistic machinations of Tamora and Aaron endanger the certainties of this cultural and semiotic order. It is still present even in this middle section of the play, though. First of all it governs Tamora's motivation for revenge. Furthermore, Aaron uses it in a symptomatically distorted way to plague Titus even more. He reckons with Titus's belief in the feudal bodily logic of "Measure for Measure" and makes him cut off his hand by deceitfully promising him his sons in exchange. He gains particular

<sup>13</sup> Cf. f.e., Verena Olejniczak Lobsien, „'Signs and tokens' der Leidenschaft in Coriolanus, Titus Andronicus und Cymbeline“, *SJ* 140 (2004), 45–65; esp. 45–49; Wolfgang Weiß, „Das elisabethanische Zeitalter“, in Ina Schabert, ed., *Shakespeare-Handbuch* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1992), p. 2–40, 18–29; Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1994); Bernhard Klein, „England in der Frühen Neuzeit“, in Schabert (2000), p. 12–47, 16–25; Schabert (1997), p. 24–31.

<sup>14</sup> A fact that is significantly and commonly overlooked by those critics who read the end of the play as a successful restitution if not improvement of a positive cultural order and Lucius as the representative and perpetrator of that old/new order. Cf. f.e. Alan Sommers, “'Wilderness of Tigers': Structure and Symbolism in *Titus Andronicus*“, in Philip C. Kolin, ed., *Titus Andronicus. Critical Essays* (New York: Garland, 1995), p. 115–128, 122. For readings similar to my own see: Molly Easo Smith, “Spectacles of Torment in *Titus Andronicus*“, *Studies in English Literature* 36 (1996), 315–331, 317 and 321.

<sup>15</sup> It's almost as if the play wanted to prove Girard's arguments. Cf. René Girard, “Sacrifice“, in Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1977), p. 1–38.

pleasure by perversely adhering of Titus's beliefs in that he does send him his sons: their heads (3.1.150–205).

The racist depiction of Aaron himself represents a striking example for the naturally evident body. Aaron represents himself as the vice figure (5.1.61–144), whose villainy is clearly indicated if not even produced by his physique. He grounds his determination for doing evil in his racially inflected looks and naturalizes it further by linking it to the discourse of astrological influences on the physio-psychology according to Renaissance humoral economy:

*Aaron:* Madam, though Venus govern your desires,  
Saturn is dominator over mine:  
What signifies my deadly-standing eye,  
My silence and my cloudy melancholy,  
My fleece of woolly hair that now uncurls  
Even as an adder when she doth unroll  
To do some fatal execution?  
No, madam, these are not veneral signs:  
Vengeance is in my heart, death in my hand,  
Blood and revenge are hammering in my head. (2.3.30–39)

Later on, when he robs Titus of his hand he makes a similar point:

*Aaron:* [...] O, how this villainy  
Doth fat me with the very thoughts of it!  
Let fools do good, and fair men call for grace,  
Aaron will have his soul black like his face. (3.1.202–05)

Aaron, who is one of the main perpetrators of the subversion of the cultural based on the evident body, is also one of its outstanding exponents. This shows quite clearly how important the semiotics of the body are in this play.

At the end of the text this order is restored. Crucial to its restitution is the presence of the raped and mutilated body of Lavinia on stage.<sup>16</sup> The bleeding marks of violence inscribed on her body are irreducible signs of the crime committed on her. Their evidence counteracts the destabilization of reality surrounding the murder of Bassianus. They ensure that the truth about the crime and its perpetrators is searched for, found out and the crime revenged. The truth-function of her body grounds in the reality-effect her body produces. Titus makes the effect of her physical presence explicit:

*Titus:* Had I but seen thy picture in this plight  
It would have maddened me: what shall I do  
Now I behold thy lively body so? (3.1.103–105)

Her experience of pain, grief and shame are shared not only by Titus, Marcus and Lucius. Guided by their emphatic verbal responses<sup>17</sup> to her body and its bleeding

<sup>16</sup> See also Cunningham (1990), p. 145.

<sup>17</sup> Early Modern philosophical, rhetorical and physiological accounts of the power of rhetoric to produce feelings in the audience, backed up and strengthened by the workings of the humours, may

marks of violence, the reader is empathically drawn into the great community of the “sympathy of woe”.

The cannibalistic banquet and the physical punishment of Aaron adhere to the same corporeal logic of revenge which reigned in the first act. The banquet functions also as a kind of burial, or rather as the rejection of a proper one. How to dispose of the various corpses is a matter of great importance in the play: in the first act with regard to the sons of Titus and again at the end which stresses the circularity of the play’s structure. Chiron and Demetrius are fed to Tamora who in turn is thrown “forth to beasts and birds to prey” (5.3.198). In contrast, Titus and Lavinia, and even Saturninus get proper burials in their family monuments (5.3.191–94). Burial rites can only have such a huge meaning if the corpse is held to be meaningful in an almost magical way. As with the genealogical principle discussed above, in the case of the corpse the body is not only the expression of the inner person but the very receptacle of all the person stands for. Thus, the refusal of a burial for the persons who represent social disorder—Tamora and her sons—is held to be a means to abject this disorder effectively.<sup>18</sup>

The re-established order itself is based on the restituted martial body and its truth function. Like Titus at the beginning, Lucius legitimizes himself through the marks of martial violence visible on his body that attest to his socio-political value:

*Lucius:* [...] you know I am no vaunter, I;  
My scars can witness, dumb although they are,  
That my report is just and full of truth. (5.3.113–115)

With the ascendancy of Lucius to the Roman throne political order as well as semiotic stability seem to be restituted. Both restorations rely on the re-emergence of the ontological and epistemological reign of the real and evident body that ensures stable meanings. The semiotics of the body appears to have gained the victory over the destabilizing effects of duplicitous language. Thus, the text may indeed be seen to fulfil the yearning of (post)modern spectators for corporeally guaranteed reality and certainty.

Textual evidence, however, objects to such a simplified interpretation. The feudal logic of corporeal semiotics in itself is highly problematized in *Titus Andronicus*. Its reliance on physical violence and revenge leads to a principally never ending series of revenges. Titus’s rejection of the alternative principle of mercy and his insistence on the ritual sacrifice of Alarbus triggered off the ensuing violent events of the whole play. As we have seen, the end of the play is in many ways a return to the beginning. Thus, the stability gained there is very doubtful, especially so since the continuation of

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not sound acceptable to modern readers but in essence they still hold true. For further information see Jane Donawerth, *Shakespeare and the Sixteenth-Century Study of Language* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), p. 1–140.

<sup>18</sup> This feudal logic can be traced back very far. Famous examples include the importance accorded to the fulfilment of the proper burial rites in the *Illiad* and *Odysee*, and the denial of them for the attacker of his native city, Polyneikes, by his brother Eteokles in Aischylos’ *Sieben gegen Theben*. See also: Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

violence is hinted at quite forcefully. Aaron, the personification of disorder und instability, is buried “breast-deep in earth” (5.3.179). This circumstance not only enables him to go on using his dangerous language (5.3.184–88). It also means, according to the very semiotics of the body, that his power for disorder remains within the newly restituted order via his corpse and the earth.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, Aaron has another means to live on: his child, his own self reproduced in ‘new’ flesh. Thus, the political and semiotic stability founded on the evident (violated) body carries the germ of its destruction within its very own foundation.

### III

On a more general level, the nature itself of the evident body is called into question. The function of the body as the guarantee for truth and evidence is severely undermined by the immense role (inter)textuality and interpretation play in the establishment of truth. Lavinia’s mutilated body gives real evidence sure enough of the fact that violence has been done to her. The exact nature of the crime however, and the identity of the crime’s perpetrators is not clearly indicated by her body. It is quite late in the play that the Andronici find out that Lavinia was raped by Demetrius and Chiron (4.1.45–82). Deprived of speech, Lavinia’s body itself speaks, but to “wrest an alphabet” (3.2.44) from this “map of woe” (3.2.12) is a difficult matter. For instance, when Titus mentions her dead husband and her condemned brothers she weeps. Titus immediately recognizes its communicational importance (3.1.108–13), but the exact meaning of her tears cannot be settled (3.1.114–15). That the truth can finally be established by reading her body rests on the (inter)textual<sup>20</sup> nature of her violated body. The Ovidian intertext (amongst others) is not only necessary for the dénouement but also fundamental in planning and perpetrating the rape and mutilation of Lavinia<sup>21</sup>, which Aaron, who is the man behind the scenes plotting the crime (2.1), makes explicit (2.3.42–45). Thus, Lavinia’s violated body is an (inter)textual construct, a text made flesh. Marcus, seeing her for the first time after the crime, immediately draws on the stories of Lucrece and Philomel in his attempt to verbalize the horrible sight (2.4.26–

<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, Louise Noble arrives at the opposite conclusion and yet she draws on a similar logic of corporeal semiotics. She reads Aaron’s corpse as a kind of mummy and therefore as *pharmakon*, i.e. poisonous or polluting stuff used in order to heal. Cf. Louise Noble, “‘And Make Two Pasties of Your Shameful Heads’: Medicinal Cannibalism and Healing the Body Politic in *Titus Andronicus*”, *ELH* 70 (2003), 677–708, 701.

<sup>20</sup> For discussions of intertextuality in *Titus Andronicus* see J.C. Maxwell, “Introduction”, in Shakespeare (1961), p. xi–xl, xxvii and xxxi; Nancy L. Paxton, “Daughters of Lucrece: Shakespeare’s Response to Ovid in *Titus Andronicus*”, in Zoran Konstantinovic, Warren Anderson and Walter Dietze, eds., *Proceedings of the 9<sup>th</sup> Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association* (Innsbruck, 1981), p. 217–224; Grace Starry West, “Going by the Book: Classical Allusions in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*”, *Studies in Philology* 79 (1982), 62–77; Maurice Hunt, “Compelling Art in *Titus Andronicus*”, *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 28 (1988), 197–218.

<sup>21</sup> In addition to that, Lavinia’s death at the hands of her father is equally a literalization of a text (5.3.35–47), as is the cannibalistic banquet (5.2.180–95).

43). Lavinia's body itself may speak but the text preceding it, constructing it and investing it with meaning must be known. The very textuality of her body ensures that the meaning of her mutilations is finally found out. Lavinia manages to point out the respective passage in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and confirms the Andronici's suppositions by writing down the crime and the criminals with a staff in her mouth (4.1.41–82). Since the cannibalistic feast is a continuation of the intertext made flesh, all the major events leading to the restitution of political and semiotic stability depend on (inter)textuality and acts of hermeneutic reading. Thus, language and not the violated body seems to be invested with evidence and truth. The result of the first two parts of my essay are apparently reversed.

#### IV

This can be solved, if one follows the play in distinguishing between male/masculine and female/feminine bodies. Seen purely as a pattern, the structure of revenge rests on an ungendered concept of corporeality. Apart from that, however, the body invested with evidence and truth, which I discussed in the second part, turns out to be not the body *per se* but one that is highly specified along the lines of sex and gender. The politico-cultural order that is first destabilized and then restabilized in the course of the play is founded on the *masculine* body. The proponents of this kind of body are Titus, Lucius and even Marcus. The latter uses his evident body in the same strategy of legitimation as Titus and Lucius. He points to his "frosty signs and chaps of age,/ Grave witnesses of true experience" (5.3.77–78) to prove the value of his political insight. The martial bodies of Titus and Lucius have been discussed already. Their bodies have a lot in common with that of Marcus. To begin with, they are bodies. What they signify is therefore real, true and certain. Moreover, they are visibly marked by the violence of war and the 'violence' of time and experience. These kinds of 'violent' marks are bodily inscriptions, or incorporations effected by the inner person, its virtues etc., according to the logic of equatability of inside and outside discussed above. Attitudes to life and virtues are parts of the cultural order. The visibility of the marks ensures that they are readable signs for the adherence of their bearers to the 'cultural script', i.e. for their successful discipline over their natural body. Thus, the masculine body of Titus, Lucius and Marcus, which is seen to be capable of founding the cultural order of ontological and epistemological stability and certainty is characterized mainly by its *univocal cultural (intel)legibility*.

What about Aaron's body? In one respect it differs fundamentally from that of the Andronici. Aaron's description is situated within the racist discourse of naturalization. As such his body is a sure sign for his personality, too. But this kind of identity is seen to be unchangeable and beyond the control of the bettering moral influences of the cultural order. Whereas the Andronici's bodies presented their self-fashioned social positioning, Aaron's body delineates his nature.<sup>22</sup> Thereby his body shows that he is

<sup>22</sup> I am quite aware that Aaron can be read differently. His self-declarations of villainy could also be understood as a willing and active acceptance of cultural ascriptions to his skin colour and supposed character. His being a vice figure would then turn out to be a kind of self-fashioning. This reading could be further strengthened by his speeches in defence of his skin colour (4.2.71–105) that

the ‘other’ to the Andronici *within* the same cultural order.<sup>23</sup> Not surprisingly, then, Aaron’s body shares the major feature of the masculine body of the Andronici: it is univocally readable within the cultural script. The evidence ascribed to the masculine body, then, is not opposed to the evidence ascribed to language but is necessarily interconnected with it via its legibility.

What holds true for the body<sup>24</sup> holds true for language as well: it has to be differentiated according to gender. In the first part of my essay language was seen to be highly problematic because of its duplicitous manipulations of truth and reality. And yet it is language that ensures the univocal semiotics of the body. I would contend that the text insinuates an association of the destabilizing kind of language with femininity<sup>25</sup>, and of the one the cultural order rests upon with masculinity. As I have pointed out above, verbal dissimulation is introduced into the play by Tamora. At the end of the play she makes the most daring attempt to manipulate reality via language. During the middle of the play, however, she seems to be relatively absent (because she is pregnant with Aaron’s child; 4.2.29–31, 47–50), apart from the small part she plays in the murder of Bassianus, the rape of Lavinia and the condemnation of Titus’s sons for the murder. Here, it is Aaron who is the antagonist. Through his close personal links to Tamora and through his plotting in behalf of her revenge, it is possible to interpret Aaron as Tamora’s substitute, thereby keeping her present even in absence. This reading can be further strengthened by the fact that Aaron refers to Tamora, her wit and knack for deception (4.2.29–30; 5.1.91–120) several times, even implying her participation in planning the crimes (2.1.120–23). As soon as Aaron pursues his own aims, when he tries to rescue his child, his language may remain evil and ‘poisonous’

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demonstrate his principle ability to distance himself from the cultural script, and by his loving attitude to his child not in keeping with his being evil personified (4.2.85–111). Cf., f.e. Eldred Jones, “Aaron”, in Kolin (1995), p. 147–156; G. Harold Metz, *Shakespeare’s Earliest Tragedy: Studies in Titus Andronicus* (London: Associated University Press, 1996), p. 86, 91–92.

<sup>23</sup> The dialectics of self and other are well known enough by now so that I won’t enlarge upon it. See, f.e., Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 9: “Self-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile. This threatening Other—heretic, savage, witch, adulteress, traitor, Antichrist—must be discovered or invented in order to be attacked and destroyed.” A differentiation between “Other” and ‘other’ seems to me to be necessary to avoid gender blindness. In that I draw on Cixous’ distinction of the terms in: Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman* (Minneapolis, 2001), p. 70–71, and on Butler’s concept of the “constitutive or relative outside” (p. 39) in: Butler (1993), p. 27–39. According to their combined accounts I understand the ‘other’ as the historically and culturally specific opposite to an equally specific ‘self’. The ‘other’ is one part of a binary pair. The ‘Other’, however, is the defining outside to this binary structure. Thus, I interpret Aaron as the ‘other’ because he is presented (at least by one strand of the text) as the opposite to the Andronici, and because he is situated within the same cultural order of intelligibility. See also the “Introduction” in Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 1–28; Mahler (2000), p. 321–22.

<sup>24</sup> The female body will be discussed later on.

<sup>25</sup> Of course, in the Early Modern period the combination of language and women is usually seen to be dangerous. See Schabert (1997), p. 24–25, 102, 174–175; Paxton (1981).

but it is not duplicitous any more. At the end he openly declares his thoughts, thereby resuming the ‘masculine’ mode of language.

Contrasted with the duplicity of ‘feminine’ language, the ‘masculine’ language used by Titus, Marcus and Lucius at the beginning and at the end of the play could be defined as semiotic certainty and stability.<sup>26</sup> The decisive point is that it is always closely linked to the masculine body discussed above. Unambiguous, masculine language either legitimates itself by reference to the masculine body as the guarantee for its reality and truthfulness, or by its being turned into action. The latter can be exemplified by Titus’s linguistic development in the course of the play. His attempts to find justice via purely verbal means remain unsuccessful. His excessive laments, in which he tries to cope with his grief symbolically, are seen to be problematic. Although Marcus finally supports his excesses, after he had upbraided him for getting out of the bounds of reason (3.1.214, 218), the climactic movement of his rhetoric leads to a peak where eloquence reaches its final limit:

Marcus: Now is a time to storm: why art thou still?  
Titus: Ha, ha, ha! (3.1.263–64)

Titus himself sees his exorbitant verbalization of grief as “an enemy” (3.1.267) because it hinders him from pursuing his revenge (3.1.267–75). To be effective, then, language has to legitimate itself through its being turned into physical reality by the deeds it draws in its wake.

Connected to this way of linking the masculine language with the masculine body is the importance accorded to writing in the play. Writing could be seen as a kind of embodied because materialized language. Titus recurrently uses writing<sup>27</sup> during the middle passages of the play. He embodies and masculinizes writing ever more. With that he tries to fix and univocalize the volatile and plurivocal meanings of the duplicitous language. First he writes with his tears in the dust (3.1.1–12). Then he writes “with a gad of steel” (4.1.103), after Lavinia has also written down in the dust that she was raped by Tamora’s sons. He finally writes with his own blood. The latter kind of writing is the final form of language before language turns into physical reality, i.e. the cannibalistic banquet<sup>28</sup>:

*Titus:* [...] what I mean to do  
See here in bloody lines I have set down;  
And what is written shall be executed. (5.2.13–15)

<sup>26</sup> Compare Mary Laughlin Fawcett, “Arms/Words/Tears: Language and the Body in *Titus Andronicus*”, *ELH* 50 (1983), 261–277, 269–72. In opposition to my interpretation, Fawcett connects masculinity only with univocal language and contends that it separates itself from the body.

<sup>27</sup> Further critical assessments concerning writing and its connection to deeds see West (1982), p. 68; Fawcett (1983); Heather Kerr, “Aaron’s letter and Acts of Reading: The Text as Evidence in *Titus Andronicus*”, *Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association* 77 (1992), 1–19, esp. 11.

<sup>28</sup> Noble (2003), 699 discusses the politically healing function of the cannibalistic feast by linking it to Early Modern practices and discourses of medicinal cannibalism.

The duplicity and instability of feminine language, therefore, is abjected in the course of the play by the process of embodiment and masculinization of language, as well as by the physical silencing of Tamora via her death. Thus, the cultural and semiotic order, which is based on the univocal and evident masculine body that is interconnected with masculine language, can reestablish itself.

## V

The female body, so far left out of my discussion, presents the second threat to the masculinist cultural order (re)constituted in *Titus Andronicus*. The cultural script at work in this play posits other demands on the female body than on the male body. Whereas ideal male bodies are constituted as such by the marks of their encounter with the world and its diverse kinds of violences as long as these encounters are governed by culturally sanctioned motives, female bodies should remain unmarked. To use the expression of the text: women should remain ‘chaste’. Women more than men are meant to develop a ‘classical’ body in Bachtinian terms, a body with no orifices, purely a smooth surface without contact and penetrating exchange with its surroundings.<sup>29</sup> Such bodies are exchangeable between men, containable and possessable; they guarantee patrilinearity.<sup>30</sup> At the same time and paradoxically women’s bodies must be ‘grotesque’ enough to enable procreation. Moreover, another contemporary discourse claims that women are closer to nature than men, or rather that their bodies are more prone to resist cultural discipline. This makes it even more unlikely for women to reach the desirable goal of a ‘chaste’ body. The impossibility (or unwillingness) to fully realize both demands (only the Virgin Mary can do so) creates the problem of control and legibility of women’s bodies for the masculinist cultural order. Firstly, their bodies are further removed from visual control than men’s bodies. Thus, Marcus immediately recognizes that somebody has cut off Lavinia’s hands and tongue but whether she was raped or not cannot be decided by him. Secondly, there are next to no secure means to control the ‘chastity’ of a woman after her postnuptial loss of virginity. Demetrius puts that rather drastically: “easy it is / Of a cut loaf to steal a shive, we know” (2.1.86–87). Both main female characters of the play prove that point. Amorous Tamora willingly horns her husband Saturninus, Lavinia loses her chastity against her will. In both cases the real damage is held to be done to the male figures of authority. The play makes that sufficiently clear when Marcus symbolically equates Lavinia’s mutilation with her father’s castration: “Come, let us go, and make thy father blind, / For such a sight will blind a father’s eye” (2.4.52–53).<sup>31</sup> Thus, even Titus’s murder of Lavinia can be justified: “Die, die, Lavinia, and thy shame with thee;

<sup>29</sup> Michail Bachtin, *Rabelais und seine Welt: Volkskultur als Gegenkultur* (F.a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1987), f.e. p. 361–66.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Gisela Ecker, „Der weibliche Körper bei Shakespeare im Spiel von An- und Abwesenheit“, *SJ West* (1989), p. 223–41, 226.

<sup>31</sup> For the equation of blinding with castration see Sigmund Freud, „Das Unheimliche“, in Sigmund Freud, *Studienausgabe. Band IV: Psychologische Schriften* (F.a.M.: Fischer, 2000), p. 241–74, esp. 251–55.

/ And with thy shame thy father's sorrow die!" (5.3.46–47). The paternalistic nightmare of female sexual incontinence hints at the major problem the female body poses to the masculine cultural order of corporeally founded semiotic univocality, which is held to guarantee socio–political stability in *Titus Andronicus*. The female body is not controllable because it is not (intel)legible with the cultural script. As such it is a figuration of the 'Other' to that cultural order. It is outside that order. At the same time it is positioned in its very midst through actual women. Thereby, it threatens to destabilize or even destroy it from within.

To contain this threat the play represents a series of mechanisms to contain the power of the female body as 'Other'.<sup>32</sup> They try to bring it within the culturally (intel)legible realm by attempting to symbolize it, to make sense of it. They thereby try to reduce it to the structural position of the 'other'. The representation of the two main female characters as sexually uncontainable was already one of the mechanisms of reduction used by the text. Most apparent and most important in this respect is the presence of Lavinia's mutilated and sexed/raped body that entails the gap in visual control, which enforces the process of masculine interpretation. The fact that many acts of reading are necessary to achieve this, attests to the difficulty if not utter impossibility to fully symbolize her female violated body.<sup>33</sup> The play itself, however, insinuates that she can indeed be grasped by the powers of masculine language, since the series of interpretations reaches its goal and the crime is detected. The truth and evidence of her violently marked body are established. Her body has been rendered univocally readable within the cultural script. As such, her body has been turned into a 'masculine' body. But this masculine signification of her body can only be successful because of the textual framework, which in itself is a highly masculinist one.<sup>34</sup> The very masculinist (inter)textuality of her body is the decisive reduction of her body before the interpretative containment even begins. It ensures its success by the violently induced circularity of masculine (rhetorical and poetic) signification, which can celebrate its powers<sup>35</sup> only by finding what it put there in the first place. The functionalization of her by now readable, evident body for the restitution of the cultural order is a further step in the masculine appropriation of her body.<sup>36</sup> All this is not meant to imply that there is a 'true' Lavinia before the rape. At the beginning of the play she is represented as the dutiful daughter and wife with no 'voice' of her own (f.e. 1.1.157–64) – just another way to contain the potentially unsettling power of her feminine language and female body by functionalizing her as an agent of the paternalistic system.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Compare Metz (1996), p. 104–105.

<sup>33</sup> Compare Cunningham (1990), p. 149–151.

<sup>34</sup> See also West (1982), p. 69.

<sup>35</sup> Compare Lobsien (2004), 55–56. In contrast to my reading, Lobsien sees no further violence done to Lavinia in the celebration of the poetic and imaginative powers of language.

<sup>36</sup> See also Paxton (1981).

<sup>37</sup> In this vein I would also interpret the scene where she carries Titus's cut off hand in her mouth (3.1.282).

The subversive potential of her language and body are never represented in the case of Lavinia. They are transferred to Tamora and to the depiction of the pit.<sup>38</sup> In the latter, male anxieties come most clearly into the open. The very quantity of references to the pit, which borders on the obsessive, and the quality of its descriptions as a “subtle hole [...] / Upon whose leaves are drops of new–shed blood” (2.3.198–200), “fell devouring receptacle” (2.3.235) and “swallowing womb” (2.3.239) make it strikingly obvious that it is the phantasmatic symbolization (and hence attempted abjection) of male anxieties of the female in the well–known tradition of the *vagina dentata*.<sup>39</sup> The representation of the pit is another attempt to signify and therefore reduce what is held to be the subversive potential of the female body. At the same time, it gives the reason for the rest of the reductive representational mechanisms, the ones discussed already as well as the following ones.

To turn Lavinia’s female body into a univocally readable ‘masculine’ one is ultimately not sufficient in order to cope with it. Once more backed up by the authority of masculine intertextuality, it has to be effectively excluded, Lavinia has to die. The same holds true for Tamora, as we have seen already. Another textual strategy is brought about by the substitution of the male/masculine for the female/feminine. Aaron replaces Tamora as evil force in the middle of the play. Moreover, it is Aaron’s and his son’s racially different body that is allowed to represent the potential future threat to the re–established order, and not the female body of Tamora or Lavinia. Similarly, one could say that Titus substitutes Lavinia—with respect to his hand that Aaron cuts off, and with respect to his grief that turns attention away from Lavinia’s. In addition to that, Titus’s corpse is dealt with at great length, making it very present to the imagination of the reader/spectator<sup>40</sup>, whereas Lavinia’s corpse is disposed of matter of factly in merely two lines (5.3.193–94).

All these representations and representational reductions of the female body and femininity are products of the paternalistic and masculinist cultural order (re)establishing itself in *Titus Andronicus*. They are the means whereby it (re)constitutes itself via ‘othering’. They try to reduce the subversive potential of the female body that can never be fully signified, the ‘Other’, to culturally readable representations of it, the ‘other’. These are then used as the defining opposites to the representatives of the masculine cultural order. The very quantity of strategies used to circumscribe and contain the female body as ‘Other’ is a sure sign that they can never reach their goal completely. A disturbing rest of the female ‘Other’ always remains. My point here is not to say whether or not there is a true essence of femininity that resides outside the masculinist cultural order in *Titus Andronicus*, but rather to contend

<sup>38</sup> Compare David Willbern, “Rape and Revenge in *Titus Andronicus*”, in Kolin (1995), p. 171–194, 182.

<sup>39</sup> See: Simone de Beauvoir, *Das andere Geschlecht. Sitte und Sexus der Frau* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rohwolt, 1968), p. 164–65; Hans Peter Duerr, *Obszönität und Gewalt. Der Mythos vom Zivilisationsprozeß 3* (F.a.M.:Suhrkamp, 1993), p. 33–147; Metz (1996), p. 104; Willbern (1995).

<sup>40</sup> The way Titus’s corpse is handled is very theatrical (“Stand all aloof”; 5.3.151), emotional via full-blown rhetorics and ‘physical’ (“Tear for tear and loving kiss for kiss / Thy brother Marcus tenders on thy lips”; 5.3.156–57), thereby drawing full attention and empathy/pathos to it (5.3.151–175).

that the female body as ‘Other’ is *meant* to remain. The female body as ‘Other’ in its figuration as the ‘culturally not univocally (intel)legible’ is also an epistemological construct of the masculinist semiotic order that builds semiotic stability and certainty on the readable masculine body. As its “constitutive or relative outside” (Butler) the feminine ‘Other’ allows the cultural order to demarcate its boundaries and hence to come into being.<sup>41</sup> To produce the female body as the structural position of the ‘Other’ and to mask it with gory spectacles could be seen as the decisive structural violence of the play.

And yet, to function as such, the defining outside has to remain exactly there: outside. With the sensual presence of Lavinia’s body on stage something of that ‘Other’ intrudes, something that ‘makes sense’ without being (intel)legible: her pain, her humiliation, her grief for being forced to incorporate this kind of female violated body. It makes sense because the other characters and the (female) spectators can empathically understand and feel at least an approximation of her ‘reality’ and ‘truth’.<sup>42</sup> She is too ‘evident’ and present to be overlooked, she forcefully demands signification. The Andronici and especially Titus try to do so almost obsessively, particularly Titus with his grief-speeches. Caught in the masculinist cultural script, whose proponent he is, Titus’s only way out is to silence this demand by killing Lavinia.<sup>43</sup> To have fulfilled this demand would have entailed a resignification of the cultural order of the univocal semiotics of the masculine body in *Titus Andronicus*. Perhaps it is up to the (female) spectator to take up this demand and to make sense of it.

### Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel vertritt die These, dass in *Titus Andronicus* die Erschütterung und Rekonsolidierung einer kulturellen Ordnung der semiotischen und sozio-politischen Eindeutigkeit und Stabilität dargestellt wird. Diese erweist sich als eine sexistische und rassistische Ordnung, die sich durch den Zusammenschluss von männlicher Sprache und männlichem Körper unter gleichzeitigem Ausschluss von weiblicher Sprache und weiblichem Körper setzt. Diese strukturelle Gewalt verschleiert sich durch das Spektakel der körperlichen Gewalt, in dessen Zuge ein Körper präsentiert wird, der in einer Welt der sprachlichen Verunsicherung als Garant für Realität und Wahrheit fungiert. Durch die körperlich-sinnliche Präsenz der verstümmelten Lavinia jedoch bleibt ein Rest des ausgeschlossenen Anderen zurück, der ‚Sinn‘ macht jenseits der (Intel)legibilität gemäß des kulturellen Skripts; ein Rest, der nach (Re)Signifikation drängt.

<sup>41</sup> See also Ina Schabert’s notion of „Männertheater“ in Schabert (1997), p.152–180, esp. 157.

<sup>42</sup> This entails, of course, my opposition to those critics who read her suffering as purely rhetorical, allegorical etc. F.e.: J.R. Mulryne, “Philomel: Speech and Silence, Natur and Art: Three Instances”, in Marie-Thérèse Jones-Davies, ed., *Vérité el illusion dans le théâtre aux temps de la Renaissance* (Paris: Jean Tourot, 1983), p. 171–186; Eugene M. Waith, “*Titus Andronicus* and the Wounds of Civil War”, in Joseph P. Shelka, ed., *Literary Theory and Criticism* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1984), p. 1351–62, 1359–60; Metz (1996), p. 52, 54, 58–59, 62–64, 78–79, 95; Brian Gibbons, “The Human Body in *Titus Andronicus* and Other Early Shakespeare Plays”, *SJ West* (1989), 209–22, 219.

<sup>43</sup> A similar point is made by Fawcett (1983), 269–70.

**CALL FOR STATEMENTS – WISSENSCHAFTLICHES SEMINAR DER  
SHAKESPEARE-TAGE BOCHUM 2007**

**Shakespearean Soundscapes: Music—Voices—Noises—Silence**

In one of his most memorable lines, Shakespeare's Caliban speaks of the "noises", "sounds and sweet airs" which haunt the magic island and, with "twangling instruments" or "voices", wake its dreamers while also putting them again to sleep. Caliban is acting as a local guide, giving comfort to the foreign visitors who respond with terror to the sounds they hear when Ariel plays the tabor and the pipe. In fact, these very instruments belong to the established repertoire of stage fools. So, with the staging of their powerful effects, *The Tempest* here self-consciously presents the soundscapes of the theatre and explores what impact they have on the actual audience in the playhouse. In many ways, the ear may have been more important for early modern play-goers than the eye, because it used to be auditory rather than visual experience that defined the pleasures—just as the perils—of the stage. When old King Hamlet dies from poison poured into his ears, the tragedy points to the dangers of these organs that open our bodies to the world. Acoustic elements, like singing, howling, groaning, crying, are not regularly scripted; as elements of physical performance, they relate to a space beyond—or perhaps before—the symbolic code of language, a space from which transgressive acts like Lear's or like Ophelia's madness gain their noisy energies. By the same token, the acts of silence performed by Cordelia or inflicted upon raped Lavinia disrupt the rules of social discourse and suggest the relevance of hearing. What, then, can music, voices, noises, silence do and how are they used on the stage? What soundscapes are presented in Shakespearean productions, in early modern or in our times, in film or audio versions of the plays? What function does stage music have here and for whom? And what about the sounds of language in a foreign tongue, like the Welsh spoken in *Henry VI*?

The *Shakespeare-Tage* 2007 will take place from 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> April in Bochum. In this context, our seminar plans to address these and related questions. As critical input for the discussion and provocation for debate, panelists are invited to give short statements (of no more than 15 minutes) presenting concrete case studies, concise examples and strong views on the topic. Please send your proposals (*abstracts of ca. 300 words*) and all further questions by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2006 to the seminar convenors:

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