

The Danger of Nobility in *Titus Andronicus*

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“Noble” is a pregnant term in Shakespeare, particularly in his Roman plays. The most famous use of it is likely Antony’s declaration in *Julius Caesar* that Brutus was “the noblest Roman of them all” (5.5.67),¹ but the significance of the term is not limited to one line in one play, no matter how frequently quoted. Across the Roman plays, nobility serves as a contested space in which virtue and authority can be expressed, but which is frequently (as in the description of Brutus) ironized or otherwise complicated along the way. Many critics have noted the significance of nobility to Shakespeare’s Rome, and indeed to Renaissance imaginings of Rome beyond Shakespeare, frequently connecting it to the ideals of *Romanitas* and *virtus* that made up a neoclassical sense of Roman virtue.²

In this article, I will look at Shakespeare’s first Roman play, *Titus Andronicus*, which he co-wrote with George Peele, and which was first recorded in the Stationers’ Register as a “Noble Roman History.”³ I argue that *Titus Andronicus* is particularly ambiguous about the value of nobility. Specifically, I wish to suggest that the play uses nobility, and cognate terms like noble, noblest, nobly, and so forth to indicate not only characters who demonstrate the traditional Roman *virtus*, as we might expect, but those for whom that *virtus* will be insufficient to help them against whatever

obstacles they encounter. In this, I agree with Coppélia Kahn that the play stages a critique of *virtus*, which critique I see signaled by the use of “noble” in place of other terms for *virtus*.⁴ In some cases the doomed aspect of nobility applies to those already dead or damaged, but frequently it attaches to those whose very nobility leads them astray by causing them to misunderstand the world around them. In *Titus*, being identified as noble is dangerous.

Of course, in order to show how nobility identifies characters who misunderstand the world, we must begin by at least attempting to understand that world ourselves. This has proven remarkably difficult for scholars of *Titus Andronicus*, as the play seems at first glance to defy historical particularization. The most famous take on this difficulty is the much-quoted dictum that the play “seems anxious, not to get it [Roman history] all right, but to get it all in.”⁵ This is, of course, hyperbolic, and scholars have suggested historical intertexts for the play that may help ground our interpretations in history, if not necessarily purely Roman history.⁶ But ultimately it matters less when the play takes place in the timeline of Roman history and more what the play itself tells us about the Rome we are encountering in the text.

In this sense, *Titus Andronicus* is actually surprisingly forthcoming, once we accept the point that while the characters are Shakespeare’s invention, “the Rome they inhabit in this play was certainly not.”⁷ We are clearly and immediately placed in the time of the empire, since the play begins with a face-off between Bassianus and Saturninus for the imperial seat. There are references to senators and tribunes and some expectation that these worthies might in fact do something to help influence the emperor, suggesting though not requiring that we are in the earlier period of the empire (it is not quite accurate to say that the two offices never coexisted with the empire,⁸ but they did decline in influence over time). At the same time, the presence of Goths and the many gestures towards election of emperors by some kind of amassed popular-cum-aristocratic voice in the first scene strongly suggest the later empire. Whatever specific period we might best identify it with, the key point is that the play presents itself as portraying an individualized moment in Roman history, if a fictionalized one, and not a smorgasbord of multiple eras superimposed on each other.

In particular, *Titus Andronicus* represents a moment of transition and crisis where the governing system of the state is in question. In this play, the crisis is a moment of uncertain interregnum between two emperors, but this kind of situation (broadly described) is typical of Shakespeare's Roman plays: *Coriolanus* gives us the origin of the tribunes after the fall of the kings, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* the fall of the Republic via the second triumvirate. *Titus Andronicus* makes, in this sense, a tidy pre-parallel by showing the empire in crisis. In this sense, then, the play fits naturally into the historical arc of Shakespeare's Roman plays despite depicting a fictionalized version of Roman history.⁹

Because *Titus*, like the other Roman plays, gives us Rome in a period of political transition, the questions of which characters adapt to this transition, how, and how well naturally arise. These sorts of questions are frequently raised in criticism regarding Shakespeare's other Roman plays about characters like Brutus, Antony, and Coriolanus, but they are equally pertinent to *Titus Andronicus*. Understanding *Titus* through this lens means that we should look at flexibility in response to changing circumstances as a desirable quality in the play, at least in practical if not ethical terms.

I suggest that the play makes this easy for us by marking those characters who cling to antiquated political instincts with the word "noble" and its cognates. In doing so, I argue, the play marks the distinction between moral and practical considerations, because "noble" characters often act in ways that seem in line with what we might think of as traditional values but lead to dangerous outcomes for themselves and others. Of course, there are relatively few actions in *Titus* that do not lead to bad outcomes, and there are accordingly few characters who do not, at some point, get called "noble." But I argue that the timing and the intensity of this attributed nobility matters: characters are nobler when they have just done or are just about to do something politically unwise but traditionally virtuous, and the more a character is associated with nobility the more likely they are to carry out these actions.

The chief exemplar of this trend is Titus himself, who is the central figure in the play's pageant of nobility, both being described as noble and attributing the trait to others. Regarding

Titus, his brother Marcus tells us “A nobler man. . . / Lives not this day within the city walls” (1.1.25) and calls him “noble Titus” (1.1.359); Bassianus agrees he is Marcus’s “noble brother” (1.1.50) and “noble Titus” (1.1.278), one of the “men / Of noble minds” (1.1.215-6) in the state, and “this noble gentleman” (1.1.412); Lavinia calls him her “noble lord and father” (1.1.158), while her brother Lucius opts for “noble-minded Titus” (1.1.209); Saturninus declares him “noble Titus” (1.1.253); and Tamora outdoes them all with “Thrice-noble Titus” (1.1.120). Nor are we allowed to forget his nobility later in the play (though, as I will examine, it is significant how much his nobility is emphasized in that first scene). It is Titus’s “noble hand” (3.1.162) that is cut off when he falls for Aaron’s trickery, while Lucius calls him his “noble father” as they part (3.1.287) and Marcus later asks his son Publius what he thinks of his “noble uncle” (4.3.26). References to his nobility taper off in act five, when he starts achieving his (now much more nihilistic) goals but by then the pattern has been well established. Titus is a noble man.

But of course he is not the only one. He liberally uses the same terms for others: his “noble brother Marcus” (1.1.171), the “noble country” of Rome (1.1.197), even Saturninus, whom he says will treat Tamora and her Goths “nobly” (1.1.260). In fact, Saturninus receives the epithet repeatedly since Lavinia also takes Saturninus’s offer to treat Tamora well as a sign of “true nobility” (1.1.271) and he later declares himself “Your noble emperor” (1.1.332). How should we take all this nobility?

As I have proposed above, I believe we need to take the use of this term seriously by examining not just the frequency with which it is used, but the timing.¹⁰ When we do, I suggest, we find that characters are described as noble at the moments when they make major miscalculations or errors related to that very nobility. We are introduced to Titus as noble before he ever enters onstage, with Marcus’s homage to his unmatched nobility combining with Bassianus’s use of similar terms to contextualize our understanding of his behavior. Even those tributes to Titus’s nobility that come after his entrance crowd in early, as we have seen above. This draws our attention to his earliest behavior. And, indeed, we see Titus enter in a pageant of Roman honor, as we might expect from one so virtuously noble.

But we also see him make major miscalculations as soon as he has the chance. He ignores Tamora's pleas to save her son even as she reminds us once more of his nobility. This might not seem a bad decision in the immediate moment but will have long-lasting effects in the new Rome which will rebound on both him and his daughter, and it is marked in the moment as a bad decision: as "irreligious piety" (1.1.130) and a "barbarous" choice (1.1.131).¹¹ Then he proceeds to turn down the empire with an excuse that cannot help but feel weak in the context of his triumphant military entrance a hundred lines before: he is too old, his body "shakes for age and feebleness" (1.1.188-189). It seems strange that someone who just won a war would claim to be too old to serve his country. But at this point, we might still sympathize with Titus's perspective and see in this refusal a proper humility, not a miscalculation.

It is Titus's next action that most obviously shows that Titus misunderstands the political world in which he is operating. He plans to give the empire to Saturninus, the eldest son of the prior emperor. The first inkling of this comes when he declares that "Upright he held it [the scepter of empire], lords, that held it last" (1.1.200). Before he can continue to offer the scepter to Saturninus, though, that worthy interrupts him with intemperate anger, telling his supporters to "draw your swords, and sheathe them not / Till Saturninus be Rome's emperor" and then cursing "Andronicus, would thou were shipped to hell" (1.1.204-05, 206). Lucius chides Saturninus, pointing out that he is an "interrupter of the good" that Titus intends towards him (1.1.208). This creates the space in which Titus can complete his earlier thought, asking the people to "create our emperor's eldest son / Lord Saturnine" and "Crown him" (1.1.224-25, 229). They, through Marcus's voice, do so.

This is a clear and obvious political miscalculation both in retrospect and in the moment. Saturninus has, from the first, shown himself to be—and to be thought to be by others to be—unworthy of the empire. His is a purely "successive title" (1.1.4), and his only virtue lies in "my father's honours" (1.1.7). His brother Bassianus argues his own claim precisely from Saturninus's own lack of honor, asking the people to "suffer not dishonour to approach / The imperial seat" and arguing for "let[ting] desert in pure election shine" (1.1.13-14, 16). Perhaps Bassianus would also

make a bad emperor—after all, the people seem to favor neither son—but we are not set up to think kindly of Saturninus. Nor does his intemperate eruption in the face of Titus’s “Patience, Prince Saturninus” speak well of him (1.1.203). He literally cannot wait for Titus—who has already said he does not want to be emperor—to announce his support for him, but assumes Titus must be about to “rob me of the people’s hearts” (1.1.207). This is a fascinating accusation given that the scene has already established that Saturninus has none of their hearts to begin with, and indeed Titus is the one about to give them to him. In short, Saturninus is a hot-headed man who is clearly a bad choice here, for reasons that are obviously known to Titus. And yet he makes him emperor.

Why does he do so? His choice is a matter of primogeniture, the “successive title” Saturninus claimed for himself. The play is somewhat ambiguous about how legitimate an argument this is, and if we are to take seriously its claim to be set in Rome (rather than to be rehashing purely Elizabethan English concerns in a Roman context) that ambiguity is justified, since in early modern times the Roman empire was believed to have had a very inconsistent sense of lineal succession.¹² Crucially, in this context, the play appears to go out of the way to suggest that this is Saturninus’s *only* argument for the empire (beyond force, as he is repeatedly the first to call on his supporters to commit violence on his behalf). At the same time the scene stages a number of other options for the succession, including the election that ultimately carries the day through Titus’s intervention.¹³ This has the effect of making Titus’s decision seem out of step with what is happening onstage, because he asserts the primacy of a principle that, while recognizable and perhaps compelling to an Elizabethan audience, is no longer the decisive one in the world portrayed onstage.

Some critics have held that Titus’s decision here is actually correct for Rome, if not for him: that it is a triumph of “public order before self-gratification.”¹⁴ In this reading, Titus’s crowning of Saturninus “nobly privileges the ethos of gratitude over unrestrained self-interest.”¹⁵ But this can only be true if Saturninus’s election actually tends towards the civic good and the maintenance of public order, and there are clear signs that it does not. We can see that it does not, even if we cannot know that any of the other candidates will make a good emperor.¹⁶ The others are an

unknown quantity, and we can certainly critique them all: after all, I am suggesting that Titus himself is out of touch politically, hardly the ideal quality in an emperor. But only Saturninus is marked for us as actively harmful. Furthermore, the primogeniture which Titus uses to make his choice appears throughout the play to be a failure, and blindly following it is a clear error.¹⁷ Titus may think he is preserving the social order, but he brings about the downfall of that social order by a failure to adapt to the situation in front of him. In light of this, I would agree with those who suggest that “Titus no longer knows what ‘Roman’ means,” though I would disagree with the suggestion that “neither do we.”¹⁸ Rather, I propose, Titus no longer knows what the proper, Roman action would be in this situation, but the audience does. Or at least we know what *improper* action is: putting Saturninus on the throne. Titus only chooses primogeniture, and thus Saturninus, because he is still working with an outdated sense of proper Roman action.

I suggest that Titus’s overly conservative choice of political principles is closely tied to his perceived nobility: that is, that here being noble means holding to an outdated set of political values. His son Lucius, in the middle of Saturninus’s interruption and thus in the middle of Titus’s decision, declares he is acting as “noble-minded Titus” (1.1.209). Bassianus doubles down on this terminology in the same interval when he refers to Titus as one of the “men / Of noble minds” (1.1.215-16). Titus is thereby marked for us in this crucial moment as thinking noble thoughts. This sense that this is a particularly noble moment is reinforced by Saturninus’s joining the chorus, choosing the aftermath of his election as the time to first call Titus “noble Titus” (1.1.253). Yet this is Titus’s greatest error—or if it is not, the other was when he made a personal (as opposed to political) enemy of Tamora by killing her son, which was also described as a “noble” act. As everyone else apparently knows, Saturninus will not make a good emperor, and his tyranny will fall hardest on Titus. We get a hint of this when Tamora makes ironic reference to Titus’s choice, and to what will ensue for him from it, by first publicly telling her new husband to “lose not so noble a friend” and then assuring him in an aside that she will “massacre them all” (1.1.437, 447).

Although Saturninus is a bad emperor, he is the other major character who attracts repeated reference to his nobility, and he too

makes a critical mistake around the same moment that the term is applied to him. For Saturninus, this error is setting aside Lavinia for Tamora. Despite Saturninus's own vices, this seems at first like a virtuous choice, showing magnanimity to his brother Bassanius and Lavinia and allowing their already contracted marriage to go forward. And, indeed, it is coded for us as virtuous, since the first references to Saturninus's nobility accompany this decision. But this decision, or at least the part that involves marrying Tamora, is disastrous—in a way that is *also* coded as noble. The first suggestion of this is immediately after Saturninus's election, when Titus tells Tamora he will treat her “nobly” (1.1.260) and Lavinia describes Saturninus's affectionate words to the Goth queen as “true nobility” (1.1.271). He himself adopts this language after he has proposed marriage to her, asking the patricians (he never did like the people) to “accompany / Your noble emperor and his lovely bride” as they exit (1.1.330-31). For Saturninus, then, the moments where he is most associated with nobility are exactly the moments when he sows the seeds of his own destruction by turning from the Andronici to Tamora.

For other characters, it is more directly obvious that being referred to as “noble” is dangerous. Alarbus, eldest son of Tamora, is also noble, “the noblest that survives” among the Goths (1.1.102), and all his nobility brings him is a swifter butchery. This also connects to nobility as misunderstanding the political world, since the noble Alarbus, or at least those who speak for him, seem to think that Titus will not actually kill him—and indeed, as several critics have noted, this would be the traditional Roman view, which held that human sacrifice was un-Roman.¹⁹ But they are wrong to assume that Titus will follow the old ways. He shows no mercy, and Alarbus dies horribly. Likewise Mutius, Titus's most unfortunate son (though not his most unfortunate child) is killed by his father when Bassianus and Lavinia exit together and Mutius bars Titus's pursuit. Rhetorically, he becomes Marcus's “noble nephew” (1.1.373) and “noble Mutius” (1.1.386) only after his death. Again we see how nobility lines up with misfortune and misunderstanding; despite the kind words his relatives heap on his head afterwards, Mutius still died a tragic, pointless death because he failed to comprehend his father's wrath and the danger it put him in.²⁰ Bassanius is similarly identified as “noble” at an

unfortunate moment: Lavinia calls him “my noble lord” precisely at the moment when he insults Tamora for the last time, misjudging the danger of the situation he is in (2.3.81). A mere twenty lines later, her sons kill him.

I should pause here to explain that I believe the irony attached to the word “noble” here is dramatic irony experienced by the audience and not the characters. That is, I do not suggest that the characters using the term think of the characters being described as politically incompetent. Rather, I see it marking for the audience that a character is in danger (or has already become doomed), frequently because of their own error. There is at times a mocking or deceptive element in the protestations of nobility, as when Marcus notes that Tamora will “nobly . . . remunerate” (1.1.395) Saturninus for making her empress, and in Tamora’s comment on Titus’s nobility to Saturninus. But the overall thrust of the term is positive within the world of the characters; it is only from our outside perspective that we can recognize the dangers of being noble. When Titus, Alarbus, and the others are called noble, the characters using the term think they are delivering a compliment; we as the audience, however, quickly begin to pick up on the danger inherent in the description. From Alarbus’s death to Titus’s miscalculations and beyond, the audience consistently sees the noble characters come to bad ends that are directly related to what made them noble, alerting us to the dangers inherent in that seemingly positive term.

And, indeed, nobility continues to be a dangerous attribute as the play progresses. Lucius calls the raped (and later to be murdered by their own father) Lavinia his “noble sister” (3.1.291), and his son recalls this with a later reference to “my noble aunt” (4.1.22). Like Mutius, her nobility here consists not only in right action (he in protecting her, she in trying to right her wrongs), but also in having earlier misidentified the danger of the situations she was in (though she, like he, is not responsible for her own assault). A similar error, though in this case among the villains, is marked when Demetrius calls his mother Aaron’s “noble mistress” whom he “betray[s]” by not killing the baby that proves her infidelity (4.2.105)—she misunderstood how Aaron would react to the situation, judging him by her own assumptions even as (by trying to eliminate a bastard) she acted in a way that might have seemed right to her.

Indeed, the only “noble” people who do not at first glance seem to be doomed in their nobility are the Romans taken as a body: the “noble patricians” (1.1.1) in Saturninus’s appeal at the beginning of the play, the country whose “imperial seat” is “to virtue consecrate, / To justice, continence, and nobility” (1.1.14-5) and which Titus calls a “noble country” (1.1.197), and the “noble tribunes” (3.1.1) who ignore the desperate Titus after his daughter’s rape. Yet in this play, as in all Shakespeare’s Roman plays, the country hardly emerges unscathed—and these nameless Romans make the same sort of political miscalculations we see in Titus, Saturninus, and the rest. The people and patricians both put their trust in Titus’s choice of emperor and proclaim Saturninus; the tribunes might have saved the country some bloodshed and a great deal of disgusting spectacle if they had paid attention to Titus in his woe; and the country as a whole goes through first a period of tyrannous rule and then an overthrow at the hands of the very enemy they began the play in triumph over. Would any Roman at the start of the play have viewed the sight of Lucius Andronicus holding the throne with the forcible backing of a Goth army ensconced in the very seat of Rome with anything but horror? While Rome itself may not die, unlike Titus, Saturninus, Lavinia, Bassianus, Tamora, Mutius, and Alarbus, it certainly does not escape the play unharmed as a result of these miscalculations.

Nor should we think the end of the play promises Rome hope, since Shakespeare’s Rome should fear the judgment of the very man who has ascended to the imperial seat. Lucius’s final tribute to Titus is to call himself his “noble son” (5.3.154). This might, if we are optimistic, signal a return to the Roman values Titus seemed to embody at the start of the play, “drawing on the dutifulness of the past to secure the dutifulness of the future.”²¹ But when we remember all the trouble that nobility has brought to Titus and the rest, there is reason to worry that it rather heralds the continuation of the play’s bloody mistakes into its aftermath. Even as the play demonstrates its characters’ attachment to the Roman past, it critiques that choice.²² And if *Titus Andronicus* is, as I’ve suggested here, a play concerned with what it means to be out of step with the times, this problem does not seem to be solved by play’s end. A recent Broadway production, *Gary: A Sequel to Titus Andronicus*, declared its interest in what it means to “pick up

the pieces” when the play’s bloodshed finally ends.²³ Perhaps an equally important question would be what we ought to do when the bloodshed doesn’t stop, and those in power still cling to the same “noble” rules of political operation that proved faulty in the first place.

But as Lucius’s wish to reclaim the word at the end of the play suggests, being “noble” in *Titus Andronicus* is not, inherently, a bad thing. The characters in the play continually use “noble” as a form of praise, and it is unlikely that an Elizabethan audience, listening with Elizabethan ears, would have missed the positive connotations of the word. But it is this very positivity that makes nobility in the play so dangerous. Nobility is an ironic attribute in *Titus Andronicus*, one that simultaneously indicates personal rectitude and virtue while also suggesting that those personal characteristics are harmful to the character’s participation in the larger society. As we see with Titus, Saturninus, and the rest, being noble—or being thought noble—is an indication that a character is somehow misjudging the world around them, with tragic results.

Notes

1. References to all plays are from William Shakespeare, *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987). Hereafter cited in text.

2. For a summary of the interplay between Rome and nobility in early modern drama, see Clifford Ronan, “Antike Roman”: *Power Symbology and the Roman Play in Early Modern England, 1585-1635* (University of Georgia Press, 1995), 71-86, and Benjamin T. Spencer, “Shakespeare and the Hazards of Nobility,” *The Centennial Review* 17.1 (1973): 24-34. For a good summary of how nobility relates to virtue specifically in these texts, see Curtis Brown Watson, *Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 76-81, 174-80.

3. Robert S. Miola, “Shakespeare’s Ancient Rome: Difference and Identity,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare’s History Plays*, ed. Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 193.

4. Coppélia Kahn, “Shakespeare’s Classical Tragedies,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy*, 2nd edition, ed. Claire McEachern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 224. While I suggest that “noble” is used ironically, other terms for *virtus*, like “good” and “virtuous,” appear to be used more sincerely in the play.

5. T.J.B. Spencer, “Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Romans,” *Shakespeare Survey* 10 (1957): 32.

6. Naomi Conn Liebler, “Getting It All Right: *Titus Andronicus* and Roman History,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45.3 (1994): 263-78; Jane Grogan, “Headless

Rome' and Hungry Goths: Herodotus and *Titus Andronicus*," *English Literary Renaissance* 43.1 (2013): 30-61.

7. Liebler, 267.

8. Paulina Kewes, "'I Ask Your Voices and Your Suffrages': The Bogus Rome of Peele and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*," *The Review of Politics* 78, (2016): 553. Kewes's larger point that the offices were much less powerful under the empire is, of course, still correct, but the mere use of the terms is not the anachronism she suggests, and should not bias us towards thinking that the play's Rome is inherently ahistorical.

9. It is noteworthy, I think, that this kind of transitional political crisis is a feature of Shakespeare's Roman plays and English histories, but less so in the non-Roman tragedies (I count about half: *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Hamlet*, on the one side, and *Orbello*, *Timon*, and *Romeo and Juliet* on the other, with *Troilus and Cressida* in an ambiguous position) and even less in the comedies (perhaps *As You Like It*) and romances.

10. Brian Boyd has suggested that the use of "noble" in this scene is a verbal tic of Peele's, stemming from an attempt to mimic a high style. While this may be true, I believe that focusing on when the term is used, rather than simply its frequency, allows us to see the work that it does in the play regardless of the reason for its initial inclusion, and to see the continued significance of the term in the play beyond the first act. Brian Boyd, "Mutius: An Obstacle Removed in *Titus Andronicus*," *The Review of English Studies, New Series* 55.219 (2004): 200.

11. The characters who make these comparisons turn out to be evil, but for the audience in the moment they are as yet unmarked as such, and the practice of human sacrifice to which they object is troubling to most audiences.

12. Liebler, 268-74; Kewes, 565-67.

13. It is I think valuable to emphasize that while Titus's reason for casting the election towards Saturninus is based in primogeniture, Saturninus does not become king by lineal succession alone, but by "our election this day" (1.1.235).

14. Christopher Crosbie, "Fixing Moderation: *Titus Andronicus* and the Aristotelian Determination of Value," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 58.2 (2007): 158.

15. *Ibid.*, 159.

16. Kewes, 564.

17. Kay Stanton, "Intersections of Politics, Culture, Class, and Gender in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *The Merchant of Venice*," *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation, and Performance* 12.27 (2015): 46; Vernon Guy Dickson, "'A Pattern, Precedent, and Lively Warrant': Emulation, Rhetoric, and Cruel Propriety in *Titus Andronicus*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 62.2 (2009): 395.

18. Brian J. Harries, "The Fall of Mediterranean Rome in *Titus Andronicus*," *Mediterranean Studies* 26.2 (2018): 199.

19. Grogan, 30; Miola, 196; Curtis Perry, "Senecan Belatedness and *Titus Andronicus*," in *Titus Andronicus: The State of the Play*, ed. Farah Karim-Cooper (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2019), 29.

20. Boyd, 197. In this sense, I would suggest, the role of Mutius is not an "textual afterthought" to be overcome, as Boyd would have it, but a further indication along with Alarbus of how Titus's own behavior deviates from the Roman norm even as he expects others to adhere to it.

21. G. K. Hunter, "Shakespeare's Earliest Tragedies: *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet*," in *Shakespeare's Early Tragedies: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Mark Rose (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995), 10.

22. See Goran Stanivukovic, "*Titus Andronicus*: Elizabethan Classicism and the Styles of New Tragedy," in *Titus Andronicus: The State of the Play*, ed. Farah Karim-Cooper (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2019), 52.

23. Ruthie Fierberg, "Taylor Mac Explains Broadway's *Gary: A Sequel to Titus Andronicus*," Playbill, 29 April 2019, <http://www.playbill.com/article/taylor-mac-explains-broadways-gary-a-sequel-to-titus-andronicus>.