Shakespeare, Race, and Globalization
Titus Andronicus

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It has often been remarked upon with some degree of wonder that the playwright who arguably has the most established global reach and fame today never set foot outside England during his lifetime. Yet Shakespeare certainly was obsessed with "the great globe itself" (*Tempest*, 4.1.153). Using the word "world" at least 650 times,[1] Shakespeare's works manifest, from the very start of his career, a strong interest in what Roland Robertson calls "the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" otherwise known as "globalization."[2] In *The Comedy of Errors*, one of Shakespeare's earliest plays, Dromio of Ephesus – an enslaved young man owned by a merchant who sails and trades across the Mediterranean world too often for his own good – describes a kitchen wench as "spherical like a globe, I could find out countries in her" (3.2.115–16). Besides Ireland, Scotland, France, England, and Spain, those countries include "America, the Indies" (3.2.134), which lay "upon her nose, all o'er embellished with rubies, carbuncles, sapphires, declining their rich aspect to the hot breath of Spain, who sent whole armadas of carracks to be ballast at her nose" (3.2.135–38). In that moment, Dromio's words are eerily reminiscent of the 1588 portrait of Queen Elizabeth I who, covered in pearls and gems, extends her hand over a globe – specifically over the Americas – while in the background, the Spanish Armada is defeated and drowned. The globe as Dromio, and perhaps Shakespeare, imagined it aligned with the world as Elizabeth I envisioned it: open to England for colonial plunder, rivalry, and conquest – a world where expansion was driven by trade, lucre, and interests.

The last twenty years have seen the rise in early modern studies of an entire subfield devoted to that vision: "Global Renaissance studies," a field naturally informed by post-colonial theory, which focuses, in Jyotsna Singh's words, on the "historical phenomenon of an expanding global world, one which includes the discovery of America to the West, growing

interactions and encounters with the East ranging from the Ottoman empire on Europe's borders to the far East, forays into North and sub-Saharan Africa, and even explorations to the North Seas."[3] Shakespeare's plays and their global imagination have held a central position in that field. Global Renaissance studies, because they focus on intercultural encounters, often raise questions relevant to early modern critical race studies. That double critical framework informs the present account of Shakespeare's first tragedy, written circa 1591 – just a couple of years before Dromio's lusty musings on global goods and bodies – *The Lamentable Tragedy of Titus Andronicus*.

Shakespeare wrote *Titus Andronicus* while or shortly after completing the three parts of *Henry VI* – in other words, while or shortly after inventing the genre of the history play, a genre invested in the fashioning of England and English history. That project of national fashioning reverberates in *Titus Andronicus*, which, haunted by visions of a Rome infiltrated by Barbarians, Goths, and Blackamoors, displaces onto a weakening Roman Empire ongoing cultural reflections about past, present, and future English identity. A play devoid of direct source texts, *Titus Andronicus* best reads as a surrealist collage patching together within dream (or nightmare) logic bits of Roman history (such as the overthrow of monarchy following the rape of Lucrece in the sixth century BC, and the fall of the Empire in the fifth century AD), Roman values (such as stoicism, patriotism, patriarchy, and so-called decadence), and Roman imperial literature (such as Virgil's *Aeneid*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and Senecan tragedy). Like all dream-like surrealist collages, the play's rendition of Roman culture often seems absurd and jarring, but it is not arbitrary: it is immensely poetic, invested in a formal quest for modernity, and permeated with an urgent sense of futurity. I argue that this quest for modernity and this sense of futurity in the early global age involve, in the play, the creation of a racial regime informed by the needs of early capitalism.

Titus Andronicus is a play that simultaneously deploys and foils various racial narratives and rituals in a dialectic attempt to represent the racial regime ushered in by early modern globalization. That new regime, forged in the furnace of early capitalism, was predicated not upon the elimination of racialized others, but on their strategic and contingent inclusion into a hierarchized multicultural society – be it Rome or London. To understand that new racial regime, we must first explore the various overlapping historical forms of early modern globalization indirectly reflected in Shakespeare's anamorphic Rome. Only then will we be able unpack the

seemingly contradictory dynamics of exclusion and inclusion that underlie the play's new racial regime, and point out the unifying logic that actually requires their continuous push and pull. Finally, we will pay attention to the global afterlives of *Titus Andronicus* in early modern continental Europe before returning to Restoration England: the racial tropes cathected in the English context went global with *Titus Andronicus*, and so did the mold it provided for inventing a new racial regime.

Forms of Globalization: Empire, World-Economies, Colonization, Cosmopolitanism

The first historical form of globalization represented in *Titus Andronicus* is empire. The play seems to start in late imperial Rome, in a climate that evokes its impending fall at the hands of Barbarians at the end of the fifth century AD. The play opens with a succession crisis, as Saturninus and Bassianus both lay claim to their late father's imperial throne – the crisis is soon resolved by general Titus Andronicus, who returns victorious from battle against the Goths, as part of a war started ten years earlier, whose definitive issue remains undecided throughout the play. Titus declines the offer to take the throne for himself, and rules in favor of Saturninus, along the lines of primogeniture. The play thus opens on a stage where crucial decisions must be made that condition the future of the Empire. This proleptic orientation must have resonated with the play's first spectators, not only because in the early 1590s, given their unmarried queen's age, the English could fear a future crisis that might bring back the dark days of the Tudor succession wars, but also because, by virtue of the *translatio imperii*, a long-lasting concept of medieval historiography that posits the westward transfer of imperial rule across ages and cultures, the English (like most European nations) thought of themselves as heirs to the Romans.[4] Given this widespread identification between Romans and Englishmen, staging a future-oriented crisis in imperial Rome was a way of asking questions about a late sixteenth-century England that was by no means imperial, yet, as Elizabeth's 1588 portrait points out, aspired to be someday.

While an empire's unity is primarily political – and thus administrative and military – what world-system theorists refer to as a "world-economy" dispenses with heavy political superstructures as it is primarily economic in nature (although punctual state interventions are vital to its well-being). That model describes the processes of globalization as England experienced them in the 1590s more accurately than the model of empire. One premise of world-system theory is that globalization is not just a multiplication and

intensification of commercial exchanges between various points around the globe: rather it is a process that supports a specific economic system coeval with (early) modernity, namely, capitalism, understood as a system that "gives priority to the *endless* accumulation of capital."[5] In Immanuel Wallerstein's words, it was in "the long sixteenth century" that "our modern world-system came into existence as a capitalist world-economy," that is, "a large geographic zone within which there is a division of labor and hence significant internal exchange of basic or essential goods as well as flows of capital and labor," which primarily included "parts of Europe and the Americas" in Shakespeare's time.[6]

> Three things were essential to the establishment of such a capitalist world-economy: an expansion of the geographical size of the world in question, the development of variegated methods of labor control for different products and different zones of the world economy, and the creation of relatively strong state machineries in what would become the core-States of this capitalist world-economy ... the second and third aspect were dependent in large part on the success of the first.[7]

In other words, the colonization of the Americas was the indispensable key that enabled the European capitalist project, and globalization cannot be understood without colonization.

The early colonial aspirations of England, instrumental in claiming Western imperial rule ultimately, haunt the play. David Goldstein has compellingly shown that Iberian narratives of the American conquest are pervasive in *Titus Andronicus* – a play written as the feverish anti-Spanish propaganda operation known as the Black Legend climaxed in England. Indeed, "narratives of New World conquest [especially those by Francisco López de Gómara and Bartolome de Las Casas] circulate in the background of the structure and plot of *Titus*," and create a vertiginous set of shifting associations between Goths, Romans, Spaniards, and Native Americans that reflects Shakespeare's interest in "how the emerging paradigms of American travel narratives help his compatriots see themselves."[8] Goldstein focuses on ritualized cannibalism – a trope often associated with representations of Native Americans in conquest narratives – deployed in a play set under the aegis of Saturn (the god that eats his own children), especially in the scene where the Andronici have the Gothic queen feed upon her own sons' flesh. While the circulating motif of cannibalism points out the risks of "going native" in the symbolical realm, one must also keep in mind that, concretely, accounts of early English colonial forays in North America speak of English cannibalism. Archeological evidence of human remains discovered in 2012 confirmed without a doubt that

"Jamestown colonists cannibalized each other" during the "Starving Time," a sign of duress and famine that would register in the vanishing banquet scene of *The Tempest* in 1611, and that may very well have afflicted the 1587 colony of Roanoke whose disappearance hit English consciousness around the same time as Shakespeare wrote *Titus Andronicus*.[9]

We must add to Goldstein's account of the spectral presence of inter-cultural encounters between Spaniards and Native Americans in *Titus Andronicus* an account of encounters between Spaniards and enslaved Afro-diasporic people of Sub-Saharan descent. Indeed, the practice of color-based slavery had famously started in the Iberian Americas about a century before Shakespeare wrote *Titus Andronicus*, and that cultural context registers in Bassanius' decision to call Aaron the Blackamoor a "swart Cimmerian" (2.3.66). Indeed, that term is probably a distortion of the Spanish term *cimarrón*, which designated runaway slaves rejecting white masters' authority, societies, and so-called civilization in the Americas.[10] *Titus Andronicus* thus reckons with the Iberian colonial experience and evokes, in this ever proleptic sensibility, the various risks entailed by trafficking with Africans and Indigenous people in the New World.

Finally, early globalization took the form of English cosmopolitanism, understood as a financially interested form of "cultural accommodation and understanding" not only overseas, but also domestically.[11] While, in the 1590s, London was nowhere near as attractive to foreign traders and investors as other continental cosmopolitan capitals such as Venice, Paris, or Amsterdam, it was still a very dynamic economic center and a multi-cultural society in the making. Indeed, London's demographic boom gathered not only English people displaced by the enclosure movement, and foreigners, including entrepreneurial merchants, but also refugees often displaced by the wars of religion in continental Europe. Among them, one could find crypto-Jews of Portuguese or Spanish descent (*conversos* and *marranos*) who had found refuge from the Inquisition in England, yet still had to hide their faith since the Edict that had expelled Jews from England in 1290 was still in effect in the 1590s. Because domestic slavery had long been part of Iberian lifestyle, those refugees – whose number Gustav Ungerer approximates at 80–90 at the end of Elizabeth I's reign[12] – often had enslaved Afro-diasporic people of sub-Saharan descent in their service London, and Shakespeare seems to echo this association by giving his Blackamoor character a Jewish name, and not any Jewish name: Aaron, Moses' brother, a central figure in Hebrew diasporic history. Succinctly put, early globalization did not only mean

that England came to the world, but also that the world itself was coming to England, and, in the process, turned London into a cosmopolitan world city replete with foreigners, Jews, and Afro-diasporic people, among others. *Titus Andronicus*, by means of a Roman anamorphosis, dreams of London as a cosmopolitan capital with imperial aspirations within a proto-colonial world-economy. In the possible futures that the play dreams up for England, defining and prescribing the most profitable forms of intercultural trafficking is a priority. The smart device used for establishing such prescriptions is called race.

Worldly Matters: *Titus Andronicus* and the Uses of Race

As Ania Loomba cogently puts it, "by definition, empires need to expand, to annex territories and people outside themselves into their boundaries, and as they do so, to underline differences between themselves and those they conquer."[13] In *Titus Andronicus*, those imperial needs occasion an acute identity crisis. *Titus Andronicus* seems to dramatize in the proleptic mode the entrance of cultural others into a world city, and the terrible consequences for a European body politic of absorbing foreign bodies that become, as Tamora eloquently puts it, "incorporate in Rome," or as Romans "now adopted happily" (1.1.462–63). But does it?

When one considers the Andronici's barbaric course of action throughout the play, any allegedly immovable difference between Romans and Barbarians proves baseless. To give but one example among many, Lucius, his father's best hope and final ruler of Rome, enthusiastically performs a human sacrifice in the opening scene of the play, before any commixing has taken place; he impiously denies funerary rites to a queen; he decides without batting an eyelash to lynch a defenseless baby in breach of the law;[14] and we get a glimpse of his rich sadistic imagination when he devises Aaron's torturous punishment. When, at the very start of the play, the Gothic brothers comment that Rome is even more barbarous than Scythia, they are on to something:

CHIRON   Was ever Scythia half so barbarous?
DEMETRIUS   Oppose not Scythia to ambitious Rome.

(1.1.131–32)

Nowhere is the sameness of Romans and Goths more transparent than in the moment when Lucius marches into Rome leading a Gothic army.

In that context of radical sameness, racial narratives come into play to do what they do best: draw artificial essentializing lines that organize and justify the power relations of a multicultural society in the making. The

most authoritative racial narrative used in the play to frame the absorption
of foreign bodies into the body politic as an invasion and the source of all
evils is the story of the Trojan horse recounted in the *Iliad* and in the
Aeneid. As Heather James notes, the Andronici "virtually claim the *Aeneid*
as family history" throughout the play.[15] Thus, the myth operates in the
background of the play from its start, long before a railing Marcus
Andronicus evokes it in Act 5: "Tell us what Sinon has betwitched our
ears, / Or who has brought the fatal engine in / That gives our Troy, our
Rome, the civil wound" (5.3.83–85). This strategic mobilization of a
popular myth directly associated with the foundation enshrines the racial
work of this narrative within Roman political mythology in ways that will
likely orient Lucius Andronicus' reign at the end of the play. The kalei-
doscopic image of Lucius leading a Gothic army clearly shows not only
that narratives of racial difference are baseless, but also that they can be
mobilized or ignored at will, for their deployment is entirely strategic.

The dreaded "incorporation" of Barbarians into the Roman body politic
is political, since Goths and Blackamoors become subjects to the Roman
emperor, but it is also biological, since Tamora, as we soon find out, is still
of reproductive age and will likely give a mixed Romano-Gothic heir to
Saturninus. Moreover, although that possibility is, curiously, never dis-
cussed in the play, Lavinia might very well have been impregnated by
Chiron or Demetrius during the gang rape that she suffered. There could
be another mixed child in this play. Having Tamora conceive a child
with Aaron rather than her husband and Titus murder a potentially
pregnant Lavinia as an honor killing, the play's plot consistently works
to foreclose the possibilities of Romano-Gothic miscegenation. Such anti-
miscegenation politics are in line with what the early moderns perceived as
the ancient rejection of Barbarians as Others, and the primacy of civiliza-
tion as the category organizing racial boundaries imagined as immutable
in antiquity.

The threat of miscegenation does materialize, however, when it is
displaced onto the Gothic-Moorish baby fathered by Aaron – in his nurse's
words, "A joyless, dismal, black, and sorrowful issue . . . As loathsome as a
toad / Amongst the fairest breeders of our clime" (4.2.65–67). This
displacement is in line with the evolution of racial hermeneutics, since,
for the early moderns, phenotype – for which skin tone quickly became a
shorthand – was on the rise as one of the paradigms in the racial matrix,
overtaking "barbarity" as a conceptual basis to organize human difference.
The consternation that the black–white miscegenation evokes both among
Romans and Goths problematizes Tamora's racial status: Tamora is not

civilized enough to give birth to a Roman child, but she is too white to give birth to Aaron's child. Yet even her whiteness is put in question in the play. Indeed, some twenty years ago, Francesca Royster pioneered the now booming field of early modern whiteness studies by pointing out that, given her moral darkness and ethnic difference, Tamora's visually striking "hyper-whiteness" is dissociated from its usual implications, capital, and affordances in early modern English culture, and thereby "denaturalizes whiteness as a cultural signifier."[16] Highlighting the fact that whiteness is a socially constructed category, the very presence of Tamora, her sons, and her Gothic retinue in Rome puts pressure on the meaning of whiteness, occasioning a semiotic crisis.

As Joyce Green MacDonald pithily puts it, "the world of *Titus Andronicus* is afflicted by categorical disarray."[17] Besides barbarity and whiteness, a last category must be mentioned that is equally put "in disarray": the category of subjectivity. Indeed, Matthieu Chapman reads the character of Aaron through the lens of Orlando Patterson's definition of slavery as a "social death" and through the Afro-pessimistic vision of blackness as a condition of radical isolation and incommunicability. Chapman convincingly argues that Aaron starts in the play in the scripted position of the slave, "the abject of humanity," only to reject that position and to impose it onto characters usually equated with human subjects.[18] In that sense, to quote Ian Smith, "Lavinia is barbarized" by Aaron and the Andronicus clan follows in her footsteps.[19] Symmetrically, Aaron becomes a human interlocutor, and his transformation "coincides with the destruction of Roman civil society."[20] In that sense, "the incorporation of a black into civil society" brings about "the collapse of that society."[21] Who is civilized? Who is white? Who is a human subject? So many fundamental questions that the play simultaneously raises and seeks to answer in reassuring and stabilizing ways.

Stabilization operates in the play not only through the use of racial narratives such as the previously discussed myth of the Trojan horse, but also through rituals – specifically, cathartic rituals with high production value instigated by the Andronici in the name of Rome. Imtiaz Habib insightfully reads *Titus Andronicus* as Shakespeare's early engagement with the cultural politics of Greco-Roman tragedy, a genre historically involved in the construction of specific notions of civilization for imperial metropolises, which relies on catharsis:

> The metropolitan location of tragedy, within the confines of an urban community practice and implicated in the project of writing a national culture, dictates its interest in social construction ... Tragedy is the cultural

form of the metropolis's exclusionist self-construction … As the imperial metropolis defines itself by who or what it excludes, tragedy images that self-definition by personifying the exclusion of the barbarian that invents it.[22]

The symbolical cathartic exclusion of the Barbarian that Habib mentions takes a literal turn at the end of *Titus Andronicus* – a play where human bodies notoriously literalize political tropes and metaphors – when Lucius orders that Tamora's corpse be thrown outside of the city's walls: "as for that heinous tiger, Tamora, / No funeral rite, nor man in mourning weeds, / No mournful bell shall ring her burial, / But throw her forth to beasts and birds of prey" (5.1.193–96). The foreign body, the Trojan horse that had found its way through Rome's wall, is eventually expelled in an attempt to heal the body politic. Another sensational cathartic ritual meant to reaffirm Rome's cultural walls is the murder of Lavinia, which Arthur Little reads as the answer to "Rome's sacrificial crisis, that is, its need for a sacrifice, for a symbolic act that would establish the difference between, say, pure and impure blood."[23] In Little's luminous analysis:

> Rome's crisis becomes evident in its confusion of categories: the Roman and the barbarous (as Tamora becomes "incorporate in Rome"), piety and impiety, war and peace, civil war and national war, enemy and ally (Saturninus marries Tamora, Titus kills his son Mutius, the brothers Bassianus and Saturninus struggle with each other for Rome's imperial seat), Tamora's allegiance to both a racial whiteness and a racial blackness, and murder and sacrifice. Lavinia quickly emerges as Rome's symbolic sacrificial object, a body in crisis, caught in its own confused signification between being virginal and being raped.[24]

The large-scale semiotic crisis embodied by Lavinia (whose mutilation was designed to ensure that she could not signify anymore) should be resolved by her dramatic elimination. Women's bodies thus serve as highly visible sites for the cathartic rituals of civility.

In line with the play's continuous push and pull in matters of racial politics, those narrative and ritualistic attempts at stabilizing identity binaries fail by the end of the play. Namely, Rome's new emperor orders the high production-value cathartic ritual of expelling Tamora's corpse, on a stage where he stands surrounded by the Gothic soldiers who have just delivered him his victory over Rome – and the play does not say what he will or can do with this vengeful Gothic army. Similarly, after promising Aaron to save his son's life in exchange for information, Rome's new emperor is a slave to his own word, for he swore by his own god "to save [Aaron's] boy, to nourish, and bring him up" (5.1.84). In Lucius' race war,

eliminating Tamora's family was a pyrrhic victory, and high production-value rituals can hardly hide it.

It is very tempting to read that pyrrhic victory as a Shakespearean sign of resistance to clear-cut racist politics and simplifications: several scholars – myself included – have done so in the past. Yet we have to reckon with the fact that, in a capitalist world-economy such as the early modern society anamorphically depicted in *Titus Andronicus*, it is not a profitable move at all to eliminate and expel foreign bodies. As Immanuel Wallerstein explains:

> Xenophobia in all prior historical systems had one primary behavioural consequence: the ejection of the 'barbarian' from the physical locus of the community, the society, the in-group – death being the extreme version of ejection. Whenever we physically eject the other, we gain the 'purity' of environment that we are presumably seeking, but we inevitably lose something at the same time. We lose the labour-power of the person ejected and therefore that person's contribution to the creation of a surplus that we might be able to appropriate on a recurring basis. This represents a loss for any historical system, but it is a particularly serious one in the case of a system whose whole structure and logic are built around the endless accumulation of capital. A capitalist system that is expanding (which is half the time) needs all the labour-power it can find, since this labour is producing the goods through which more capital is produced, realized and accumulated. Ejection out of the system is pointless. But if one wants to maximize the accumulation of capital, it is necessary simultaneously to minimize the costs of production (hence the costs of labour-power) and minimize the costs of political disruption (hence minimize – not eliminate, because one cannot eliminate – the protests of the labour force). Racism is the magic formula that reconciles these objectives.[25]

Wallerstein spells out the reason why racism can reconcile those objectives in a structural account of racism that is very much in line with the pillars of critical race theory:

> Racism, sexism, and other anti-universalistic norms perform important tasks in allocating work, power, and privilege within the modern world-system. They seem to imply social exclusions from the social arena. Actually they are really modes of inclusion but of inclusion at inferior ranks. Those norms exist to justify the lower ranking, to enforce the lower ranking, and perversely even, to make it somewhat palatable to those who have the lower ranking.[26]

Simply put, capitalism is incompatible with the expulsion of foreigners – at least as long as foreigners remain efficiently kept at the bottom of the social hierarchy, as a cheap labor force, by the multifaceted socio-ideological

apparatus of racism. In the new racial regime informed by the needs of early global capitalism that the play dramatizes, Tamora and her sons, who have made it to the top of Roman social hierarchy through marriage, must be eliminated at all costs, while expendable Gothic soldiers and a potential Afro-diasporic servant of sub-Saharan descent such as Aaron's baby boy must be "included at inferior ranks." Francesca Royster insightfully notes that Aaron's initial plan to save his son hinges on him having "made contact with the Moorish community" in imperial Rome,[27] but that community, we might add in light of Wallerstein's analysis, will only thrive as long as it stays "in its place." Thus, while it is certainly true that "the play reminds us that new national identities were being forged in Europe at the same time as external frontiers were opening up," the play also reminds us that early modern processes of national identity formation accommodated the racial demands of global capitalism in the making.[28]
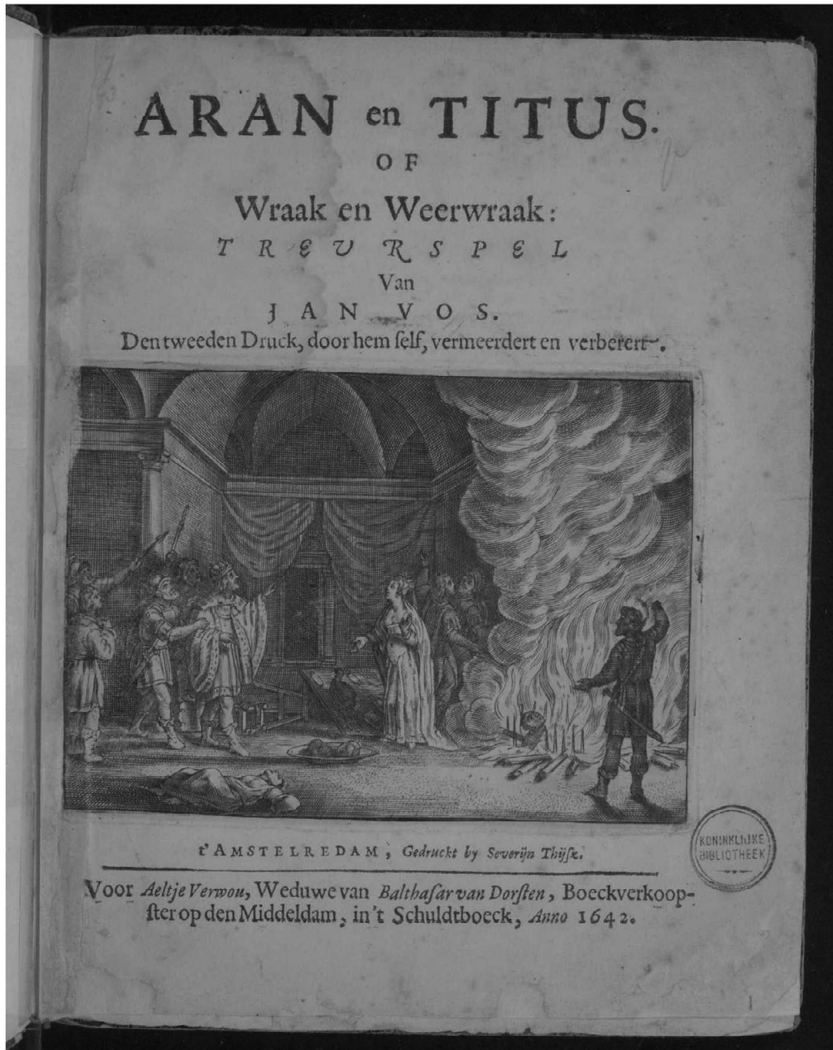
Emily Bartels made the controversial argument that Shakespeare's Rome is not a world city obsessed with racial purity to the extent that "Titus is not the only one setting the terms here . . . The play not only critiques the Rome he would create as dangerously self-centered but also juxtaposes it to a contrasting reality, which increasingly displaces and replaces Titus's untenable ideals."[29] Bartels does have a point that the play does not ultimately embrace the politics of cathartic expulsion idiosyncratically championed by the Andronici and enacted via narratives and rituals: the play actively foils those politics. Yet it would be a mistake to assume that the pragmatic politics of "inclusion at the inferior ranks" which the play ultimately embraces are not as racist as the Andronici's agenda. As a matter of fact, Rome *needs* the Andronici to push their exclusionary racial agenda just as much as it needs them to fail, for it is in that very push and pull between exclusion and conditional inclusion of racialized others that the early modern world-economy can thrive. The roots that Aaron is growing in Roman soil as he remains buried neck-deep in the ground at the end of the play – his symbolical implantation – and the implantation of his seed in Rome are no signs of a hypothetical Shakespearean resistance to racism.[30] Rather they manifest the play's earnest representation of racism's entanglement in the demands of the global capitalist project born in Shakespeare's time.

Conclusion: The Global Afterlives of *Titus Andronicus*

The inclusion of racialized others into inferior ranks in Roman society at the end of the play was not lost on its first spectators, both inside and

outside of England. Indeed *Titus Andronicus* was a major success in London and it quickly moved to continental Europe via English traveling players. In the anonymous German adaptation of the play published in a collection of plays and interludes in Leipzig in 1620, Vespasianus (Lucius) agrees to spare the life of Morian (Aaron) and Aetiopissa's (Tamora's) baby boy in a movement of inclusion at the inferior rank: "I will have pity on your child and bring him up as a warrior" (*Tito Andronico*, 222).[31] Vespasianus sees that the child will prove a good soldier – a cheap, devoted, and expendable labor force – for the Roman imperial army. However, in *Aran en Titus*, the popular Dutch version of the play written by Jan Vos in 1641, signs of implantation and inclusion of others at the inferior rank are erased: the mixed baby is excised from the plot, and Aaron is burned onstage, rather than buried neck-deep into the ground.[32] This Dutch version eliminates plot elements that I read as signs of engagement with racism's entanglement in the demands of early capitalism. This elimination is quite surprising in the light of the Low Countries' well-known involvement in the slave trade and color-based slavery in the 1640s.[33] Or maybe not. There might be a reason for this erasure, and going back home, to Restoration England, might help us pin that reason down.

Vos's play had 100 performances before 1665, and at least 34 editions, as well as translations into Latin and German.[34] It is quite possible, then, that Vos's version circulated across Dutch borders, furthering the global dissemination of Shakespeare's play. It is even possible that it influenced Edward Ravenscroft's 1679 rewriting of *Titus Andronicus*, given the fact that, in Ravenscroft's version, after being tortured at the rack, Aaron is burned onstage – as he was in Vos's version. Ravenscroft – whose other plays attest to a familiarity with continental theatrical traditions – would not even have needed to read Dutch to get that idea:[35] the engraving on the title page of Vos's 1641 play shows Aaron burning onstage (Figure 11.1). Ravenscroft painstakingly removed all traces of racial confusion and admixing at the end of the play by excising all the lines that explicitly depict Lucius' army as Gothic, by killing Aaron's baby, and by disappearing Aaron's corpse with fire. As Ayanna Thompson compellingly argues, those moves are part of a larger strategy to "stabilize Roman society in a way that was impossible in Shakespeare's original" by "reading the racialized body in an explicitly linguistic and physical way" that hinges on essentialism.[36] This attempt at "reinscribing a notion of essentialism through a clear linking and unity between the signifier and the signified" must, Thompson insists, be understood in the context of "the growing

ARAN en TITUS.
OF
Wraak en Weerwraak:
TREURSPEL
Van
JAN VOS.
Den tweeden Druck, door hem self, vermeerdert en verbetert.

t'AMSTELREDAM, Gedruckt by Severijn Thijsz.

Voor Aeltje Verwou, Weduwe van Balthasar van Dorsten, Boeckverkoop-
ster op den Middeldam, in 't Schuldtboeck, Anno 1642.

Figure 11.1   This 1641 Dutch adaption of *Titus Andronicus* shows Aaron the Moor
burning on a pyre.

violence experienced in the British colonies."[37] In that context, slavery-
based economic prosperity directly depended upon the policing of the
color-line, which itself depended upon unambiguous and essentialist racial
hermeneutics. Why, then, does a play so clearly informed by the concrete

ideological needs of British colonial slavery in the 1670s embrace the Andronican "idealist" politics of racial exclusion rather than the pragmatic inclusive racism so constitutive of early modern world-economies? Why does this play seemingly depart from the mindset of racial capitalism?

What appears to be a contradiction, both in Vos's and Ravenscroft's versions, might actually hide a deeper causal connection. We might venture that, in fact, the more explicitly and brutally an early modern society relied on the new racial regime mandated by early capitalist global thinking, the less likely its theatrical and cultural productions were to transparently stage those processes. This is by no means an absolute claim (the surviving English Restoration repertoire does include fascinating plays about colonization and slavery) – more of an invitation to consider the multifaceted relations that can exist between the stage and the sensitive worldly matters to which it attends. It might ultimately be the case that Shakespeare's original *Titus Andronicus* staged the push and pull processes at play in the creation of a new racial regime fit to support the project of early modern global capitalism more transparently than any of its avatars precisely *because*, in 1594, racial capitalism was only a project and not a reality. In 1594, the mechanisms of shame and denial that would later permeate European reckonings with the moral bankruptcy of racial traffics in the age of slavery had not crystallized yet. At the opening of this essay, I mentioned that *Titus Andronicus* functions like a surrealist collage ruled by the logic of dreams. Let me conclude then. The global history of the play's rewritings best reads as a process in which, little by little, the mechanisms of self-censorship commonly known as "repression" forced this nightmarish Shakespearean dream of a play to bend and hide the unspeakable object of desire: racial capitalism.

Notes

1 Andrew Dickson, "Why Shakespeare is the World's Favourite Writer," *BBC Culture*, 21 October 2014, www.bbc.com/culture/story/20140422-shakespeare-the-worlds-writer.
2 Quoted in Anston Bosman, "Shakespeare and Globalization," *The New Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells, 2nd edn (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 285.
3 *A Companion to the Global Renaissance: English Literature and Culture in the Era of Expansion*, ed. Jyotsna G. Singh (Chichester and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 5. See also Bernadette Andrea, *Women and Islam in Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2007); Jonathan Burton, *Traffic and Turning: Islam and English Drama, 1579–1624* (Newark:

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7 Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 38.

8 David B Goldstein, "The Cook and the Cannibal: *Titus Andronicus* and the New World," *Shakespeare Studies* 37 (2009): 99–133 (at 111, 115).

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20 Chapman, 157.

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27 Royster, 451.

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31 I am grateful to Maria Shmygol for introducing me to this play, and I look forward to using the critical translation and edition of the play that she is currently preparing in collaboration with with Lukas Erne as part of the Early Modern German Shakespeare project, www.unige.ch/emgs/plays/tito-andro nico-und-der-hoffertigen-kayserin-tito-andronico-and-haughty-empress.

32 Helmer Helmers, "The Politics of Mobility: Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, Jan Vos's *Aran en Titus* and the Poetics of Empire," in *Politics and Aesthetics in European Baroque and Classicist Tragedy*, ed. Jan Bloemendal and Nigel Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 344–72 (at 353).

33 On the Dutch history of engagement with color-based slavery and racism, see Pieter Emmer, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Economy, 1580–1880: Trade, Slavery and Emancipation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998); Kwame Nikamo and Glenn Frank Walter Willemsen, *The Dutch Atlantic: Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* (London: Pluto Press, 2011); and Allison Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World: The Evolution of Racial Imagery in a Modern Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

34 Ton Hoenselaars and Helmer Helmers, "The *Spanish Tragedy* and Revenge Tragedy in Seventeenth-Century Britain and the Low Countries," in *Doing*

Kyd: Essays On *The Spanish Tragedy,* ed. Nicoleta Cinpoes (Manchester University Press, 2016), 144–67 (at 148). See also Helmers, 345.

35 Ravenscroft based *The Citizen Turn'd Gentleman* (1672) upon Molière's *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670) and *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* (1669); he based *Scaramouch a Philosopher* (1677) upon Molière's *Le mariage forcé* (1664) and *Les fourberies de Scapin* (1671); and he based *The Anatomist or the Sham Doctor* (1696) upon Noël le Breton de Hauteroche's popular play *Crispin médecin* (1680). See Louis A. Knafla, "Ravenscroft, Edward (fl. 1659–1697), playwright," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (accessed 27 December 2019).

36 Ayanna Thompson, *Performing Race and Torture on the Early Modern Stage* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 62, 63.

37 Thompson, 55, 52.