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Shakespeare 221-01

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Law Enacted

The play *Titus Andronicus* begins with Titus being elected as the new king of Rome, but rejects the opportunity and vouches for Saturninus. Shortly after Saturninus is instated as king by Titus, the first few instances of governmental decisions create conflict with the Andronici family. During Saturninus' response to Titus's political endorsement and the "onset" of his reign, he says with reciprocity and gratitude "Titus, to advance/ Thy name and Honorable family,/ Lavinia will I make my empress," (Tit. 1.1.240-243) implying he still sees Titus as a fellow Roman leader. It further comes across as sincerity and not establishing Lavinia as bestowed gift when he adds "doth this motion please thee?" (Tit. 1.1.245); but the wedding of the two families seems to resemble a stereotypical monarchy, the Andronici become unrecognized in face of this new government demonstrating the foundation for its law.

Immediately after formally pronounces him king, Titus says as he transfers his prisoners, notably saying to Tamora, "Now, madam, are you prisoner to an emperor" (Tit. 1.1.260) to which Saturninus counters by saying, "A googly lady, trust me.../ That I would choose, were I to choose anew.../ Princely shall be thy usage every way." (Tit. 1.1.263-269) immediately displaying the hierarchy shift occurring. This difference of what should be done with Tamora after the transfer of power is extremely sudden and almost confusing; but it's extremely disrespectful to the Andronici, and Saturninus is in the highest place of power. The first ruling Saturninus orders is that Tamora is no longer a "prisoner", and should be elevated to a place of royalty. The confusion as to why Saturninus would immediately act against Titus can be examined in how Saturninus' attention is gained.

Titus' only remaining interactions from the king reveal how the Roman government works in a system of hierarchy based in power. In the remainder of the act, the only times Saturninus directly addresses Titus are whenever displays of power are present. Instantly after Titus kills his son while

attempting to return Lavinia to The King, Saturninus enters with Tamora and says “No Titus, no, the Emperor needs her not,/ Nor her, nor thee, nor any of thy stock.” (Tit. 1.1.305-306) as he leads into his marriage with Tamora. While Titus himself no longer has any political power, his “stock” of Lavinia is useless compared to Tamora; and when the Goths are barbaric and Roman authority only recognizes brutality, Tamora circumvents the hierarchy as a fetisation of Saturninus.

This answers the question of why the preceding disrespect occurs, why conflicts arise, and why this play is a tragedy. Titus’ return as a great noble general is juxtaposed by his sorrowful mourning of his son, so hurt he has reason to “sheathe my sword.” (Tit. 1.1.85), and further abandons his responsibility to be king because of his “age and feebleness.” (Tit. 1.1.187). After Titus has no more military power, no political sway, and he loses power within his family name. Saturninus reverting his marriage severs the only tie of the entire Andronici family to any nobility. The ultraviolence that proceeds is truly tragic, for it’s only done towards weakened people, leaving a perpetuating cycle of violence to repeat.

A Midsummer Night’s Dream offers a different sense of government’s involvement on family and the play itself. In act 1.1 of *Hermia’s* love life is introduced, along with her fathers seeking of government laws that imposes a dilemma onto Hermia. Egeus comes to Theseus outraged by his daughter's affinity for Lysander as he declares she only has “Consent to marry with Demetrius,” further thing the fathers consent law with the “ancient privilege of Athens:/ As she is mine, I may dispose of her,” (Mid. 1.1. 41-43) pleading with the king to take his side. In asking for “ancient” laws, it creates a ‘cut and dry’ sense of government rule. The concrete nature of why law needs to be enforced and the definitive ruling that proceeds, creates a far less nuanced government to interpret. The government is established as a ‘way of the world’, and instead of becoming focused on the political inner workings, it shifts the focus to Hermia and Lysander’s navigation of this world.

The pacing of the play supports the ability to recognize both law and people independent from each other. Characters recognize and acknowledge law with its consequences and quickly lead into their actions as a response to law. This fast pacing of comedy alleviates the premonitions of drama and lessens the amount of emotion audiences have to invest to connect with the play. The rigidity of law in Egeus,

devotion of love in Hermia, steadfastness of Lysander is all shown when says “The course of true love never did run smooth.” (Mid. 1.1.136) and adds a solvability aspect as they flee so that “Athenian law/ Cannot pursue us.” (Mid. 1.1.164-165). The distinctness in character, government law, and pacing makes it clear that the dramatic effects from this introduction of the play is a stepping stone to greater ideas introduced later.

The middle acts of *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare is allowed to explore the different complexities in governments innerworkings as Titus descends the social hierarchy that is ruled by Saturninus. In act 3.1, Titus is shown with no power, represented as a citizen in this trial and a child in his family, as he’s placed in the street, unable to be acknowledged by authority, and crying on the floor until his son stops him. When Aaron offers Titus an opportunity, lying about a severed hand from one of their family members could be exchanged for a pardon, Titus is so multidimensionally ignorant that he agrees. Titus pretends to surrender the fight to Lucius. When they step out Titus takes the opportunity “Come hither, Aaron. I’ll deceive them both./ Lend me thy hand, and I will give thee mine.” (Tit. 3.1.189-190) and spares Lucius. When it’s found out that the severed hand plea in fact did not save his son’s lives, the mistreatment the family faces mirrors that of the Goth prisoners in act 1.1. It’s made to portray to other Romans their killing of the Alarbus is done “religiously” (Tit. 1.1.124) and there innately good; This reversal of power shows that authoritative enforcement is justified meaningless violence on anyone lower in stature.

There's another element added to the interaction between power and politics that’s further shown through Titus’ Roman ignorance. After Titus understands that “Rome” is treating his family like “Prey” (Tit. 3.1.55), he disregards his own acknowledgements of merciless prosecution after Aaron’s opportunity, and is beyond pleased to save his family. In a scene that implores empathy from the continuous manipulation and improper justice, it’s easy to overlook that Titus’ ignorance is prominent in his desperation to exhibit power. Titus chose to “deceive” (Tit. 3.1.189) his son, sneakily cutting his own hand. It can be seen as a heartfelt attempt to spare his son's lives and the hand of Lucius; but as Lucius steps offstage to fulfill his obligation, it's unknown in this deception if he would return with his hand

attached to his body. When looking back on how Roman authorities abuse their power, Law is repeatedly utilized as circumstantial powers-dynamic based rulings. Titus still recognizes himself among them, therefore understanding him is under a representation of Roman government; The way law operates in, both onto and by Titus, creates a very controversial sense of it being good and bad; nevertheless the enforcing of order renders it valueless in society and summed create be deplorable acts.

A Midsummer Night's Dream simplicity of law allows the Fairies' government to be extremely similar to Athens law, but it grows to be a distinct independent form of politics. Titania and Oberons argument over the changeling closely resembles Hermia and Theseus, a king who will not empathize with a woman's deeply heartfelt values. Oberon entitlement leads him to be hurt and "torment thee for this injury." (Mid. 2.1.152). A punishment placed on Titania for the same Hermia's is, These women's individual pursuits stemming from love is taken as an insult to men they should be subservient to who invoke law to retain power. Oberon orders Puck to explore the world, pluck a flower from a currently growing plant in order to "charm" Titania and have her "pursue" whatever grotesque animal crosses her path "with the soul of love" (Mid. 2.1.184-190). The way the punishment is similar with nature shows that as the plant's existence is still in current time for it to be harvested for punishment.

This enforcement of law from Fairies begins with similarities to Athenian law in emotion being instigator of conflict. In law as personal desire needs to be approved by the government, but Kings are their own Jury. However, the Fairies have a deep connection to the world, showing their ability to influence the world as they please, acknowledging the world's ability to change, and allowing the world to speak through the flexibility of "The next thing she, waking, looks upon" (Mid. 2.1.186). This different world, shown through magic and worldly-based observant creatures, introduces a major distinction through in the revocability of the "charm" (Mid. 2.1.190). This government enforcing that leads separation of families, the punishment has both a permanence to the individual but allows reintroduction to society.

In the final acts of the play, the law of the fairies is seen to be preferable, capturing comedy through its whimsicalness as the effects of the ability to enforce punishment stack upon itself creating

intensely circumstantial events. Oberon, who has stolen the changeling, sees Tatania “Her dotage I do begin to pity/... I will undo/ This hateful imperfection of her eyes” (Mid. 4.1.48-64) and he removes the charm. This demonstrates that the act of observation and understanding is done by a higher society, in this world of Fairies, but even their magical government figures have flaws shown through human emotion. After Oberons’ actualization, Theseus enters into the woods for “Observerence” (Mid. 4.1.108) and comes across the four lovers. He enters the same process as Oberon, witnessing his powers leading to Lysander and Hermia’s fleeing, Demetrius’ change in romantic interest, and Eugus’ unchanged disposition. Theseus demonstrates a learning in his decision to overturn his original ruling on a day of intentional open mindedness and listening. Connecting this government to the setting the play in Greece functions as an acknowledgement of their political advancements and focuses its emphasis on reintegration after punishment.

There’s an enjoyment for audiences that our main characters have successfully been allowed to marry and laugh in its process of its conclusion. Shakespeare demonstrates the effect of this law by mirroring early resolution in law. Breaking expectations by resolving the play early in act 4, Characters are allowed to reintegrate and the audience is allowed to experience the same joys of them by experiencing a play in their world. In pursuit of a reintroduction of society, the comedy ends abruptly and the previously generated conflicts are intentional silenced; Titania's connection to the changeling, Helena’s love for Demetrius, and Hermia’s fighting with her father, are never mentioned after act 4, and the women are silent in act 5.

Titus Andronicus represents the exact opposite. In Act 5.3, Titus has become resupplied with the power, in the Goth army, reverting back into a power Roman military general. After Saturninus says Virginius was right to kill his daughter for “her shame” and “his sorrows” (Tit. 5.3.41-42), Titus’ action resembles his position as a soldier listening to orders. In repeating Saturninus' choice words, “With thy shame thy father’s sorrow die.” (Tit. 5.3.46-47) he kills Lavinia. Titus is repeating his descent in Act 1, showing in a way that shows Titus, as Rome, has not learned enough. A soldier who had a child killed by goths “‘twas Chiron and Demetrius/...’twas they, that did her all this wrong.” (Tit. 5.3.57-59), into

Tormenting Tamora. The only difference in this descent is more violence, as Titus' killing of Tamora and Saturninus killing Titus, amplifies the societal placement they, as kings, placed upon their victims.

When Titus' is the embodiment of Rome as a whole, his inability to learn and disregard of anyone below his status, both in government and in family, what drives the play and never diverges. The perpetuity is shown when Lucius becomes the new king and the head of the Andronici family. He immediately acts similarly to his father showing the person is insignificant as the crown is the same and growing worse. Lucius' first law to kill Aaron is done equally as brutally, desiring to display power over him. Burying him "deep in earth" to "famish him" and instating "If anyone relieves or pities him,/ For the offense he dies." (Tit. 5.3.181-184) shows a heightened disregard for any person perceived to have any empathy for a man crying in starvation. It's clear citizens will die as a result of this first law, they will not be able to navigate it similarly to Titus' couldn't either, and Aaron will be happy as he can still influence his evil from his 'grave'. The perpetuity is unsurprising, but the initial hope Lucius can divert from the cycle of violence fails. The ending is unsurprising and with brevity, only gives loathsome disdain of Rome.

Citation

Shakespeare, William. A Midsummer Night's Dream. Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, eds. Folger Shakespeare Library.

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