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## **“Headless Rome” and Hungry Goths: Herodotus and *Titus Andronicus***

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### **Abstract**

This essay argues for the intertextual contribution of Book 1 of Herodotus’s *Histories* to *Titus Andronicus*. Translated by B.R. in 1584, Herodotus’s accounts of rise and fall of the founder of the ancient Persian empire, Cyrus the Great, hold topical resonances for the first audiences of Shakespeare’s Roman play, resonances that the play seems to invite. Modelling Tamora on Herodotus’s Tomyris and borrowing crucial elements of plot from the narratives surrounding Cyrus, Shakespeare’s most productive response to Herodotus is his adaptation of the figure of the “swallowing womb” from the account of Tomyris’s revenge on Cyrus. Through it, Shakespeare explores the contentious and topical subjects of female rule and England’s imperial aspirations. The essay explores possible connections between Tamora and Queen Elizabeth through their shared iconography in the mould of the just avenger, Tomyris. Ultimately, I argue, the Herodotean allusions facilitate a position sympathetic to the Goths in the play, one that tackles the dominance of Roman cultural models in late-sixteenth century English culture, and that responds defiantly to the vexed and embarrassing subject of Britain’s own barbarian history as a colony of Rome.

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For scholars tracking the origins and intertexts of *Titus Andronicus*, all roads lead to Rome.<sup>1</sup> Rome and *Romanitas* provide its setting, sources, values, politics and interests, and although its plot is not found in Livy or any other historian of Rome, there can be little doubt but that Shakespeare’s interest in the play is to examine the cultural legacy of classical Rome. And, as T. J. B. Spencer famously noted, in his representation of classical Rome, Shakespeare seems concerned not so much with getting it all right but with getting

it all in.<sup>2</sup> Yet, as modern editors of the “noble Roman historye” entered by John Danter in the Stationers’ Register often remark, sometimes the world of *Titus Andronicus* hardly looks Roman at all. In fact, the ubiquitous Latin tags, names and overt appeals to Roman values make the aberrant details alongside them all the more conspicuous.<sup>3</sup> The very opening scenes at the Capitol, heart of the Roman political world for Elizabethan audiences, produce a false note when Lucius, in contradiction of well-known Roman mores, demands the ritual sacrifice of Alarbus -- the act that precipitates the revenge plots dominating the rest of the play.<sup>4</sup> Nor does the play’s Rome even remain classical. Advancing with an army of Goths, Lucius passes a “ruinous monastery” more evocative of Reformation England than early Rome. Ultimately -- and with a pointed accommodation of historical fact -- Shakespeare has the exiled Lucius, “the turned forth”, heading an army of Goths (Rome’s much maligned historical conquerors now embodying Rome’s own martial and political values), redeem Rome from its self-generated crisis. How might we account for these important dissonances and aberrations in Shakespeare’s Roman world? My contention in this essay is that we should take them seriously as indications of significant non-Roman material underlying at least some of the political work of the play and helping to shape and moralise Shakespeare’s critique of Roman values.

These dissonances have not gone unnoticed, but they have not generally troubled prevailing interpretations of *Titus Andronicus*, which continue to take their cues for reading the play’s literary, political, historical and ethical concerns from the Roman context and Roman intertexts: primarily Ovid, Seneca and Roman law. Coppélia Kahn, for example, argues that Shakespeare “generates his main action from versions of Roman *pietas* and *virtus*” even as it travesties those very notions, but even this self-divided model fails to capture the cultural complexity of *Titus*’s Rome.<sup>5</sup> While this Rome-centred approach has generated compelling accounts of the play’s critique of Roman values, and its legacy to early modern England, such readings have tended to overlook or trivialize the inconsistencies described, and, concomitantly, to make cartoon villains of the Goths, mere foils to the more significant matter of Rome.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, they fail to account for the streak of sympathy for Tamora that the play enables, although Jonathan Bate and Neil Rhodes have noted a residual sympathy for the Goths articulated in the play.<sup>7</sup> In this

essay I will suggest that just as the anachronisms of Roman paganism in the play allow it to become “a jagged mirror for Christians, reflecting the troubled conscience of post-Reformation Europe,” so the blurred lineaments of its classical Roman setting and the historical legerdemain of its treatment of the Goths betray the outlines of another ancient culture and another non-Roman intertext at work in the play.<sup>8</sup> That culture, that country is ancient Persia, and, I suggest, the important and hitherto unnoticed intertext through which it is mediated is Book 1 of Herodotus’s *Histories*. Specifically, Shakespeare’s play evokes a well-known set of narratives centred on the figure of Cyrus the Great, founder of the ancient Persian empire. These intertextual resonances work not only in Tamora’s favour, but also provide a positive moral cast for the play’s central image of the disaster that has befallen Rome: the “swallowing womb”. Through the Herodotean intertext, then, the contradictions of Shakespeare’s Rome take new political shape, and the questions Shakespeare poses of Roman values – and England’s obsession with them – gain a stronger moral and historical force than we have hitherto allowed.

The 1580s and 1590s saw a marked interest in Persia ancient and modern in Elizabethan England, an interest that went far beyond Herodotus and into the realms of political theory, Protestant exegesis and comparative historiography.<sup>9</sup> Although the successful commercial and diplomatic Persian travels of Anthony Jenkinson and other agents of the Muscovy Company were eventually sidelined in 1580 in favour of trade agreements with the Ottomans, Persia’s enemies, their narratives were proudly advertised and reproduced in Hakluyt’s *Principall Navigations, Voyages, Discoveries and Traffiques of the English Nation* (1589).<sup>10</sup> Histories of Persia formed a prominent part of the classical inheritance as well as a recent preoccupation of continental comparative historians and ethnographers, and the ambiguous image that these studies provided of a Persia that was *both* “barbarian” and “civil” was one that endured into the eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup> On the public stage, this interest was reflected in the production of plays such as *Tamburlaine* (Parts 1 and 2) (1587?) and *Soliman and Perseda* (1592), plays often associated generically with *Titus Andronicus*. But the best-known Persian in late Elizabethan England was Cyrus the Great, founder of the ancient Persian (Achaemenid) empire and the figure around whom many of the classical historical and ethnographic materials were centred. By 1590, accounts of the life of Cyrus by Herodotus, Xenophon

and Justin were available even in English translation, and the commendations of Cicero, Erasmus and even Machiavelli, as well as the striking approbation in the Old Testament Book of Ezra, made Cyrus a central figure of debate by scholars and schoolboys alike.<sup>12</sup> Beyond the purely scholarly domain, the romance play, *The Warres of Cyrus* (published 1594, but performed early in the 1580s), kept Cyrus on stage and in public view. And a long list of appearances in mirrors-for-princes and educational treatises, as well as in Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*, meant that the name and career of Cyrus had currency and prestige among English readers of all ages. It is this popular knowledge of a set of narratives centred on the Persian Cyrus that Shakespeare awakens in the "barbarous" Rome of *Titus Andronicus*, and specifically the account originating in Herodotus's *Histories*.

The antiquity of Cyrus made his life and achievements no less relevant to travellers or commentators on Persia. Early modern discussions of contemporary (Safavid) Persia, too, were heavily inflected by the accrued knowledge of ancient Persia disseminated through classical Greek texts, the most prominent of which were those of Herodotus and Xenophon. In writing about Persia, travellers such as Jenkinson, and later Thomas Coryat and the Sherley brothers, reached as easily for their Herodotus, Xenophon and Strabo as they did for more recent sources. While stories from Herodotus circulated through prose compendia such as Richard Taverner's two-volume *The Garden of Wisdom* (1539), it was through the 1584 translation of the first two books of the *Histories* that Herodotus was best known to Elizabethan readers.<sup>13</sup> But these readers inherited mixed views of Herodotus. Cicero's "Father of History," Herodotus had also acquired the appellation of "father of lies" and "lover of barbarians" (*philobarbaros*) from Plutarch who dedicated an entire essay to attacking Herodotus's scurrility and inaccuracies.<sup>14</sup> Prominent among those classical heroes whom Herodotus knocked from their pedestals (thereby incurring Plutarch's ire) was Cyrus.<sup>15</sup> Plutarch's reaction reveals an important feature of the textual legacy about Cyrus: an interrogative attitude about him, his status as an exemplar, his moral character and political leadership, one that arises from the significant divergences between the best-known accounts of his life and which is kept alive by his medieval and Renaissance proponents and opponents.

A favourite exemplar of humanist pedagogues notwithstanding the Herodotean account, Cyrus was known to Renaissance readers in the first instance through the fictionalised biography written by Xenophon, a Greek contemporary of Plato's. Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* described the education and career of Cyrus in glowing terms, making the life of Cyrus easily assimilable to the later mirror-for-princes tradition.<sup>16</sup> But Herodotus's account of Cyrus, which dominates Book 1 of the *Histories* (and which Xenophon had strategically ignored), gave an altogether less glowing account of a proud and merciless king who merited his bloody end at the hands of a barbarian queen, Tomyris. Xenophon omits this entire episode, replacing it with a dignified death-bed scene where Cyrus, ever the shining exemplar, dispenses advice to his sons on the vagaries of power and the responsibilities of the empire that he bequeaths them. If Xenophon's was the pious schoolroom narrative, Herodotus's was the story on the street. The obvious disjunctions between their accounts, notably on the subject of Cyrus's death, only added to their appeal, as the numerous references to Cyrus in both popular and esoteric texts testifies.<sup>17</sup> So if Shakespeare made use of Herodotus's narratives of ancient Persia, and particularly the tales of Cyrus, he should have been able to count on his first audiences to spot the allusions.

These allusions, at first, comprise rich parallels of plot and imagery, direct evocations, and looser but resonant details, and are revealingly numerous. The conflict between Media and Persia which first brought Cyrus to power -- a war between a dominant race and a subordinate nation which eventually reverses that hierarchy -- shadows the quasi-historical power-struggles between Romans and Goths in *Titus Andronicus*. Herodotus identifies the turning-point in the Medo-Persian struggle as the defection of the Median general Harpagus to the cause of Persian Cyrus in a counter-act of revenge upon King Astyages who had previously made Harpagus unwittingly consume his own son during a banquet. Astyages had organised that cruel act as punishment of Harpagus for previously disobeying his orders years earlier to murder Cyrus, his grandson whom he feared would, once grown, usurp him. Astyages's horrible vengeance is, in fact, the primary source for Seneca's cannibalistic banquet in *Thyestes* -- itself an acknowledged source for the infamous banquet in *Titus Andronicus*.<sup>18</sup> Some further allusions may persuade us we should remember this earlier cannibalistic banquet as well

as the Senecan source: in both Shakespeare and Herodotus baby-swapping is used as a means of saving the life of a young royal child. Continuing this theme, Aaron's mutinous silence broken only at the threat to his royal-born son remembers Croesus's mute son in Herodotus, who miraculously recovers speech only when his father is threatened with death by one of Cyrus's soldiers, ignorant of his royal status. The secret letters Lucius receives "from great Rome / Which signifies what hate they bear their emperor" (5.1.2-3) and Titus's letter to Saturninus delivered inside a basket of pigeons both evoke the secret letter sewn inside the belly of a hare that Harpagus sends to Cyrus inviting him to invade his grandfather's kingdom and guaranteeing him internal support. More distant echoes of Herodotus's account of Cyrus might include the truth-telling significance of play-acting and the Andronici's recourse to archery -- for which the Persians were famed -- as symbolic assaults on Tamora and Saturninus. But perhaps the strongest indication of the Herodotean resonances of the play comes from Shakespeare's naming of the Goth queen 'Tamora', a close approximation of 'Tomyris', notorious conqueror of Cyrus in the Herodotean account.

Herodotus is the primary source through which early modern readers learn of Tomyris and her achievement.<sup>19</sup> At least one early reader of the text seems to have made the connection between Tomyris and Tamora: in the First Folio Tamora is misprinted on one occasion (at 3.2.74) as "Tamira."<sup>20</sup> Twentieth-century editors have noted but quickly dismissed the echo of Tomyris's name in Shakespeare's Tamora: in his 1953 Arden edition, J.C. Maxwell suggested that she may owe something to "the notoriously cruel Scythian queen Tomyris", and both Eugene Waith and Jonathan Bate follow Maxwell's lead in their Oxford and Arden editions, but do not investigate further.<sup>21</sup> Dorothea Kehler alone pursues the Herodotus connection, but rejects the possibility that Tamora might be modelled on Herodotus's "most noble and vertuous queene" Tomyris, on the fallacious grounds that Tomyris is (again) "a Queen of Scythia notorious for her cruelty."<sup>22</sup> But Kehler appears to have misread her *Histories*: Herodotus quite clearly identifies Tomyris as queen of the *Massagetae*, and not of the Scythians whom he treats briefly in a later section of this Book and more fully in Book 4 -- a far less easily accessible Book of Herodotus in the 1580s. A northern tribe, the Massagetae -- unlike the Scythians -- were considered to be ancestors of the European Goths: this genealogy was suggested by the

sixth-century historian Jordanes, the only early historian of the Goths whose work survives. His point was picked up, in turn, by early modern readers and writers. Lodowick Lloyd, for example, writes in 1590 that “*Cyrus* made warre vpon the *Massagites*, which were of the stocke of the *Gothes*: of these *Messagites* came the *Getes* [Goths].”<sup>23</sup> For early modern readers, then, Tamora’s Goths are not just the historical conquerors of Rome: they are also the direct descendents of Tomyris’s Massagetae.<sup>24</sup> (That Tamora’s people do not regard themselves as Scythians should be clear in any case from Chiron’s angry remark about the ostensibly civil Rome: “Was never Scythia half so barbarous!” (1.1.134). It is hardly an expression of homesickness!) And if Tamora’s Goths strongly evoke Tomyris’s Massagetae, Tamora’s motive for revenge upon Titus -- that he refused mercy to her son -- is exactly that of Tomyris’s revenge upon Cyrus. More compellingly still, the manner of her revenge gives Shakespeare the precise form and figure for Titus’s counter-revenge on Tamora: the swallowing womb. But through the Herodotean intertext, that image acquires a more positive and politically meaningful set of resonances than has heretofore been considered.

Let me submit that Shakespeare fashions his horrifying master-conceit of the “swallowing womb” partly from Herodotus’s account of Astyages’s vengeance (of enforced cannibalism) on Harpagus, but primarily from the final revenge that Tomyris exacts upon the corpse of Cyrus, having defeated him in battle. Book 1 of the *Histories* closes with a detailed account of Cyrus’s fall, and his death and mutilation at Tomyris’s hands. Herodotus uses a Greek moral framework to describe an unforgettable case of barbarian *hubris*: Cyrus foolishly crosses the river Araxes to attack the Massagetae and then uses underhand means to capture a large part of the Massagetae army, including Tomyris’s son Spargapises. Refusing Tomyris’s pleas for the release of the now-suicidal Spargapises -- or, as Justin has it in a later version also known to Renaissance readers, actually killing Spargapises with his own hand -- Cyrus incurs her wrath and vengeance.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, Tomyris defeats his army and takes the terrible maternal revenge that so interests Shakespeare. After the battle, she seeks out Cyrus’s body and has it decapitated, ordering that his head be thrown into a vat of blood, whereupon she jeers at him: “Thou boutcherly tyrant, my sonne thou tokest by craft and kylled by cruelty, wherefore with thy selfe I haue kept touch; Now therefore *take thy fill bloody*



*caitife, sucke there till thy belly cracke.*”<sup>26</sup> Tomyris exacts her revenge upon Cyrus by literalising the figurative, visiting his bloodthirstiness on his body as cruelly as she can, pre-empting the classic horror technique so favoured in early modern revenge tragedy: “[t]hou insatiable and bloody butcher ... I will glut that greedy pawnc of thine with abou[n]daunce of bloude, wherewith thou seemest to bee insaturable and neuer to be satisfied.”<sup>27</sup>

Her revenge is both politicised and gendered. Indicting his bloodthirstiness by improvising a surrogate stomach full of blood in which Cyrus might sate his “insaturable” bloodthirstiness, Tomyris creates a gruesome but unforgettable image of righteous barbarian vengeance upon supposedly “civil” wrong-doing. The moral transgressions and hubris signalled by Cyrus’s crossing of the river Araxes, boundary between Europe and the barbarians of Asia, and highlighted in Herodotus’s account of his duplicitous stratagems and degraded standards of war and mercy, give Tomyris’s revenge a moral authority and even a providential inevitability for Christian readers. Tomyris’s act is also an image of salutary maternal vengeance: by its close association with her function as mother to Spargapises, the vat of blood also figures the womb of maternal nurture. Cyrus’s broken body is force-fed in a bloody barbarian womb whose proper issue he has unmercifully destroyed. And in a final cruel irony, this makeshift womb also becomes his tomb -- a conflation that Shakespeare powerfully mobilises in the Andronicus tomb and the “swallowing pit” of mother earth and “tigerish” earth mother Tamora.

Horrible as the revenge is, there is good reason to suppose that Shakespeare’s first audiences and readers read Tomyris’s actions as *just* vengeance. Herodotus relates Cyrus’s fall in the most sensational terms, and the tenor of his account, his tacit support for Tomyris’s actions after Cyrus’s cruelty to her son, remains an integral part of the narrative in the centuries that followed. The episode gained a particularly strong purchase on the early modern imagination, and Tomyris’s colourful condemnation of Cyrus’s bloodthirstiness was frequently remembered with it. The Duke of Buckingham’s ventriloquised complaint in the *Mirror for Magistrates*, for example, advises his auditors to

Consyder Cyrus in your cruell thought,  
A makeles prynce in ryches and in myght,  
And weygh in minde the bloudy dedes he wrought,  
In sheading which he set his whole delyght:  
But see the guerdon lotted to this wyght,  
He whose huge power no man might ouerthrowe,  
Tomyris Queen with great despite hath slowe.

His head disembred from his mangled corps,  
Her selfe she cast into a vessell fraught  
With clotted blood of them that felt her force.  
And with these wordes *a iust reward* she taught:  
Drynke nowe thy fyll of thy desyred draught.  
Loe marke the fine that did this prynce befall:  
Marke not this one, but marke the ende of all.<sup>28</sup>

The moralised terms of Herodotus's rendering of the Tomyris/Cyrus encounter were also strengthened by medieval exegetical traditions in which Tomyris is seen as fulfilling nothing less than divine mandate in toppling "irous Cirus."<sup>29</sup> The *Speculum humanae salvationis* makes this clear with its typological illustrations of Tomyris alongside Judith and Jael prefiguring the Virgin Mary's defeat of the devil.<sup>30</sup> In similar vein, Cyrus was consigned to the salutary exemplars of Pride in Dante's *Purgatorio*. Tomyris becomes a regular presence in medieval enumerations of the "Nine Worthies", heroic female figures from scriptural and classical history lauded in the verbal and visual arts.<sup>31</sup> These classical and medieval moralisations held currency well into the early modern period, as we see in numerous witty or moralised representations of Cyrus, and in Tomyris's inclusion in later catalogues of heroic women.<sup>32</sup> That Cyrus "did lose his heed" is playfully remembered by analogy with Ariosto's Orlando "quho did lose his braine" by one of King James's "Castalian band."<sup>33</sup> Robert Chester merely spells out what is implicit in many other texts when, in *Love's Martyr* (a 1601 miscellany to which Shakespeare was later to contribute) he describes Tomyris as being "full of Noblenesse."<sup>34</sup> It seems, therefore, that Sir John

Harington had good grounds for noting that Tomyris's was a "wel knowne speech" -- and Tomyris a well known and admired heroine.<sup>35</sup>

This tradition of Tomyris as an instrument of God's justice, or a just avenger in her own right, seems to lie behind moments in *Titus Andronicus* when Tamora is put in a position to generate sympathy from the audience -- and behind the image of the "swallowing womb" itself.<sup>36</sup> Her initial plea and persuasive reasonings with Titus on behalf of her son Alarbus is an example, one that made its mark on early audiences, as the curious Longleat manuscript drawing shows.<sup>37</sup> From moralization, it can be merely a small step to sectarian polemic, and Tomyris gets conscripted for such duties too. In Thomas Wilson's *A Christian Dictionary* (1612), for example, "to drinke Blood" is defined by explicit reference to Tomyris's revenge: "To take in blood, as men take in other drinke, as *Cyrus* did by the compulsion of *Tomyris*." Wilson's further explication that "[t]o haue their owne blood abundantly shed, till they swim in it, and do drinke (as it were) their owne blood ...[is] a fit punishment, for *Popish and all other cruel persecutors*, that they shold one slaughter another, til they be bathed in their own bloods, as hapned to the *Midianites* in the Iudges; and to Papists also" completes the validation of Tomyris's revenge in sectarian as well as moralized Elizabethan terms.<sup>38</sup> Thus, Tomyris's moral authority and just cause for sympathy and redress, evinced in Herodotus and developed by these later writers, remains a powerful strand of the early modern reception of Herodotus.

What, then, of the gruesome manner of her revenge? Mustn't it be mitigated even a very little given these strong moral precedents and memories of a civil barbarian justly brought low by a barbarian queen? And if the critique of imperial Rome articulated in *Titus Andronicus* through Roman sources is bolstered by the Herodotean allusions, the most prominent of these is Shakespeare's re-working of Tomyris's revenge in the figure of the "swallowing womb" (2.3.239), Shakespeare's dominant image for Rome's turbulence.<sup>39</sup> Rather than simply scapegoating such disorder as female and Gothic, as Heather James has argued, Shakespeare's Herodotean allusions, his remembrance of Tomyris's revenge to support a sympathy towards the Goth queen and her cause, enable a more trenchant and committed attack on Roman values and the cultural authority of Rome in Elizabethan society than has previously been recognised. This critique of Rome

may even be more topical and focussed still: if the build-up of variations of the “swallowing womb” allusions help to mould an image of Tamora as a just avenger, this in turn facilitates pointed connections to contemporary iconography of Queen Elizabeth as Justice.<sup>40</sup> This latter possibility will be explored in the final section of this paper.

### BELLIES AND BARBARISM

The connection between the swallowing womb and Tomyris’s revenge can be observed in the minor details of language and so on, as well as the larger structural parallels, and here the recent translation of Herodotus is particularly relevant. The account of Tomyris and Cyrus in the 1584 translation of the first two books of the *Histories* is markedly obsessed with stomachs and wombs. Tomyris is “full of *stomacke* and displeasure” to see her son captured by Cyrus’s ruse (which itself involved a banquet by which the Massagetae army “hauling there *stomacks* forced with vittayls” are easily captured); she determines to “glut that greedy *pawnech* of [Cyrus’s] with abou[n]daunce of bloude”; and another revealing elaboration on the Greek source details that rather than simply committing suicide, Tomyris’s son “*pawnched* him selfe into the *belly* with a Jauelyne and so dyed.”<sup>41</sup> This obsession might best be described as crowd-pleasing, proleptic intimations of Tomyris’s final revenge on the man responsible for the death of her son, a grotesque parade of bellies that bolster the readers’ sense of Tomyris’s justification in her terrible act as well as the thrill of horror in reading about it. Building on the substance as well as the cumulative techniques of these image-patterns, Shakespeare adopts the image of Tomyris’s vengeance as a politicised and gendered motif of disorder for his play: the image of the swallowing womb.<sup>42</sup> In his reworking of it within the play, however, its positive Herodotean moral coding itself comes under visible challenge, notably through the play’s adumbration of Tamora as a figure of failed justice, Astraea’s cruel usurper. More curiously still, through the course of the play, that image of justified barbarian vengeance migrates from Tamora to Lavinia, the true-blue Roman usually heroised within the play, its Roman imaginary, and through her own impeccable textual precedents. Vilified but justified, Tomyris’s bloody revenge ultimately brings Goth queen and Roman virgin into surprising coalition in their separate, vain attempts to counter the debased Roman imperial values that have made sufferers of them all.<sup>43</sup>

Through this challenge to its remembered Herodotean precedents, then, Shakespeare's play in turn challenges its audiences to consider what happens when the moral values they espouse come under pressure. Shakespeare's master-image of the swallowing womb is, in the first instance, a transferred epithet that symbolises both a voracious maternal appetite for revenge and a fundamental disorder at the heart of the Roman world, one conveniently (if temporarily) displaced onto the female and non-Roman Tamora.<sup>44</sup> The swallowing womb is repeatedly associated with Tamora in the play, and by extension, with Rome under her sway. But if Tomyris's revenge is the dominant pattern of Shakespeare's "swallowing womb," the image also remembers elements from Herodotus's account of the cannibalistic revenge of Cyrus's grandfather Astyages on Harpagus in forcing him to consume his own son, an account that appears just a little earlier in Book 1. Once again, we find a sense of justified revenge, but this time in Harpagus's subsequent defection to Cyrus's side as a response to Astyages's horrible punishment; here, I cannot help but think of Lucius's astonishing ability to occupy the moral high ground as he leads an army of Goths against his fellow-Romans. As noted previously, this particular allusion to Herodotus's narrative of Astyages/Harpagus/Cyrus is mediated through one of Shakespeare's acknowledged Roman sources: Seneca's *Thyestes*. Shakespeare also probably draws on the concluding scene added by Jasper Heywood to his 1560 translation of *Thyestes*, in which the eponymous hero laments that his "more then monstrous womb" has "become a cursed tombe."<sup>45</sup> Together, Herodotus's proleptic bellies and stomachs (culminating in Tomyris's revenge), Seneca's cannibalistic banquet and Heywood's "womb" and "tomb" form the pattern of Shakespeare's "swallowing womb." From these narratives of barbarian maternal revenge and "civil" paternal suffering, Shakespeare forges even fiercer narratives of civil maternal suffering and barbaric paternal revenge based on the swallowing womb, narratives which obfuscate the line between civil and barbarian, Roman and Goth, and which throw the basis of all "civil" values into question.

The pattern of Tomyris's revenge recurs throughout Shakespeare's play, sometimes on its own terms, other times in coalition with Roman cultural paradigms. Beginning with Marcus's plea to Titus to "help to set a head on headless Rome" (1.1.186), it reappears in the reminder in Saturninus's name of both Saturn (who, fearful

of their usurping him, consumed his sons) and the Assyrian emperor Ninus (whose wife, Semiramis, ruled in his stead and attempted incest with her son).<sup>46</sup> The imprisoning maternal womb invoked by Aaron later in the play as a way of engendering fraternal sympathy between Chiron and Demetrius and his own son again builds on the elements of Tomyris's revenge.<sup>47</sup> More often, the connection between womb and tomb suggested by Heywood and already implicit in Herodotus allows the swallowing womb to be figured as the earth. Shakespeare fuses this form with the quintessentially Roman notion of the earth as "great mother of us all," remembered to Rome by none other than Lucius Junius Brutus.<sup>48</sup> The earth with its "dry appetite" (3.1.14) simply drinks the penitent Titus's blood and tears, just as it swallowed most of Titus's sons. (The Andronicus brothers may be interred in Roman soil but the only solace its guardian, Marcus, offers is Greek: the (again, Herodotean) trope of "Solon's happiness".) Again and again, the Herodotean intertext dismantles the political distinctions between civil and barbarian in Roman imperial values, together with their tacit moral inflections. So, for example, if Roman tradition values the tomb as a sanctuary in which Roman heroism is perpetually remembered, the Herodotean overtones expose the heroic distinction of the tomb and Roman rites of death to be ineffectual decorations of the consuming, feminine womb of the earth.<sup>49</sup> Nor is it any different to what the barbarians endure: Tamora and Aaron, too, are eventually left to be consumed by the earth (Aaron set "breast-deep in earth" and starved (5.3.178) and Tamora exposed to be consumed by "beasts and birds of prey" (5.3.197)). Nor do the Andronici escape the swallowing womb of the earth.

The term "swallowing womb" first appears in Act 2, Scene 2, describing the pit in which Bassianus's body is dumped and in which two Andronicus brothers are entrapped. The "detested, dark, blood-drinking pit" (2.3.224) has long been associated not just with "the malign fecundity of the maternal womb" but, specifically, with Tamora's womb.<sup>50</sup> Once again suggestions of Tomyris's revenge shape events at the pit. Two of its victims, Quintus and Martius Andronicus, are beheaded as a result of having been found there; another, Bassianus, is dumped there as a makeshift tomb. An "unhallowed and bloodstained hole" (2.3.210) located in a sinister wood outside Rome, the pit is insistently marked as Gothic, and even more insistently as female. Tamora figuratively swallows the flesh and blood of the Andronicus boys, even as their entrapment within the pit is

manipulated to represent the lie that they have spilled the blood of Bassianus (“berayed in blood” (2.3.222)). But an awareness of Herodotus’s barbarian “pattern” for this “swallowing womb” highlights not so much Gothic rapacity as brutal and debased Roman appetites: the irreligious *pietas* of the Andronicus thirst for sacrificial Goth blood.<sup>51</sup> And the residual sympathy for Tomyris in the interpretative tradition inherited by Shakespeare goes some distance towards justifying Tamora’s vengeful actions, primarily by remembering her just cause. If it recalibrates the moral burden of the episode, however, it does not go all the way: the play does not stand over Tamora’s viciousness, nor that of her sons.

More striking still in its erasure of the boundaries between civil and incivil parties is another permutation of the “swallowing womb”: the revenge of Titus upon Tamora. Titus’s oddly pedantic methods are seldom remarked, but can be better understood through their evocation and re-working of Tomyris’s revenge. Like Tomyris, Titus first collects blood before proffering it to his primary intended victim. He cuts the throats of Chiron and Demetrius, fastidiously collecting their blood for culinary purposes.<sup>52</sup> Next, he uses this basin of blood to bake the Goths’ flesh, before making Tamora consume her own flesh and blood in cannibalistic “pasties” (5.2.189). In so doing, the barbarian revenge of Tomyris, overlaid with Astyages’s vengeful punishment of Harpagus, is reprised by the ostensibly-civil Roman faction in the play and visited instead on the delinquent young men who have raped Lavinia and their mother who has set them on to it. The Herodotean connection is reinforced in both the language and conception of Titus’s taunt that he will make Tamora “swallow her own increase” (5.2.190) to a horrible satiety: “And this the banquet she shall *surfeit* on” (5.2.193; emphasis mine). Just as Tomyris sought to literalise Cyrus’s bloodthirstiness, by insisting that Tamora “swallow her own increase” Titus forces a literal enactment of the “swallowing womb” with which Tamora has previously been associated. The result of Titus’s counter-revenge is yet another dissolution of the boundaries between civil and barbarian factions, one entirely in keeping with Tomyris’s revenge, in fact, where another terrible irony reposed: that in attempting in this fashion to impugn Cyrus’s bloodthirstiness, she succeeded equally in revealing her own.

But once again, the details of Shakespeare's re-fashioning of Herodotus demand scrutiny: although Titus orchestrates this barbarian revenge, *Lavinia* is enlisted to act it, and in another gruesomely memorable way. It is Lavinia who collects the surfeit of blood upon which Titus's victim will be gorged. In his extraordinary elaboration of Tomyris's revenge, Titus has the despoiled Roman virgin, cipher for the most enduring social and political ideals of Rome, hold "[t]he basin that receives [their] guilty blood" (5.2.183) in the "stumps" (5.2.182) of her mutilated arms. In including her in his revenge, Titus mobilises Lavinia -- and by implication Rome -- to avenge her own rape, her own destruction.<sup>53</sup> But the image of justified female vengeance that he seizes upon is that of the barbarian queen Tomyris, one already conspicuously and corrosively embodied by Tamora and her "swallowing womb." This identification of Lavinia with vengeful agency on the model of Tamora thus becomes another corrupting assault on Lavinia, simultaneously a doomed defence and desecration of Lavinia's body and what it stands for, a travesty of the female offices of care and chastity as they once operated in Roman ideology.<sup>54</sup> (In turn, it is this brutalisation of Lavinia (and not necessarily a misremembered Roman precedent) that prepares Titus for her mercy killing soon after, I would suggest.) Just as the echo of Tomyris's revenge helped to justify that of Tamora up to a limit, so too it couches Titus's revenge in relatively sympathetic terms -- up to a limit. Critics tend to agree that Titus is, ultimately, "a man more sinned against than sinning," but his appropriation of the moral authority of Tomyris's revenge in turn subjects him to the paradox of the revenger: that in the psychological and moral dynamics of revenge, the revenger must in a sense become, and become worse than the person who has wronged him.<sup>55</sup> Here, at least, Seneca trumps Herodotus. Lavinia's agency in Titus's revenge thus undermines her moral stature too, and the social and political myths of *Romanitas* that she anchors. In Shakespeare's capable hands, the motif of the swallowing womb is productively mobile, migrating from Tamora to Titus and Lavinia, marking the non-epiphanic nature of allusion within what James has termed Shakespeare's "politics of citational violence."<sup>56</sup> But more vigorously still, this re-fashioned, mobile Herodotean motif marks the diminishing of justice under the arrogance of imperial rule, whether Roman or Persian.



Herodotus and the reception tradition of Tomyris, thus give Shakespeare a powerful and malleable motif of disorder that can articulate not just doubts about the grounds of civility, the limits of empire and the mutability of humans and human affairs, but also even more topical contemporary anxieties about civil barbarism, female rule, and the moral probity of imperial ideals, anxieties that have previously been considered only within the Roman purview and terms of the play. In dissolving again and again the distinctions between civil and barbarian, and in showing the re-appropriations of Tomyris's revenge by Tamora and Titus, Shakespeare challenges *Romanitas*, and the moral authority and cultural prestige of imperial Rome. But he also weakens the polemical animus of the term "barbarian" and presents instead the self-justifying actions of competing peoples who refuse to recognise the humanity of the other. This has at least two important ramifications for our readings of the play: firstly, Shakespeare opens a space for a more sympathetic view of Tamora and the Goths as "*barbarians*" to prevail, one otherwise inaccessible through the Roman values that have dominated scholarship of *Titus Andronicus*. This space might well encourage Shakespeare's Elizabethan audiences to embrace "their own ancestors," as Jonathan Bate suggests, "barbarian" vanquishers of Roman might. In sparking echoes of a non-Roman text in a play that skirts conspicuously closely around the subject of the fall of Rome to the Goths, Shakespeare allows his first audiences to defy the weighty and unflattering writings of Caesar, Tacitus and others, and to contemplate a new English barbarian identity less beholden to Rome and their own embarrassing history under Rome.<sup>57</sup> Behind the play's image of ancient imperial Rome (its allure, as well as the Elizabethan concern with Britain's Roman inheritance) lies ancient imperial Persia (its allure, and the no less troubling Tudor fear of acknowledging the "barbarian" within their own ethnographic make-up). The revenge of Tamora thus potentially eclipses even the rape of Lavinia within the political imaginary of the play, at least as it speaks to Shakespeare's contemporary audiences. But foregrounding Tomyris's just vengeance rather than Cyrus's imperial conquests, Shakespeare also puts the question of empire at the heart of his play, uncovering its murky, bloody demands and its corrosiveness to moral and social ideals at a significant moment of England's self-definition as an empire-in-the-making.

Secondly, and building on that point, the Herodotean echoes of the play's central motif, the "swallowing womb", complicates the moral and political work of the play by overlaying Roman mores with Greek, Persian, Goth and "barbarian" models, challenging the esteem in which imperial Rome was held by Shakespeare's contemporaries. If Tamora is advantaged by the association with the just avenger, Tomyris, the play does not allow this identification any easy space within Titus's Rome: after all, Tamora stands for the failure of justice in Rome, the flight of Astraea, and becomes a victim of just vengeance herself when Titus successfully assumes Tomyris's prerogative. The bloody theme of the "swallowing womb" reveals in *Titus*, as it had in Herodotus, a classical maxim that Marcus Andronicus, unwittingly prescient, alluded to earlier in the play: "Solon's happiness" (1.1.177). Solon's apocryphal argument that no man can be deemed happy until his last day was a familiar *sententia*. It is also to be found in Book 1 of Herodotus, in the account of the Athenian Solon's declaration to the Lydian king Croesus that no man be called happy until his death, such was the mutability of fortune. In fact, the story is already second-hand in Herodotus: we hear it when the Persian king Cyrus has Croesus re-tell it, having just conquered the Lydia and ordered Croesus be put to death. Though Solon's advice was well-known and much cited by classical authorities and Renaissance writers including Sophocles, Aristotle and Montaigne, its touchstone -- and one of its earliest formulations -- was Book I of the *Histories*.<sup>58</sup> In thus re-describing the Roman culture of heroic death as confirmation of a Greek metaphysical principle mulled over by barbarian kings, Marcus again points to Herodotus as a vital non-Roman intertext through which the complex political imaginary of *Titus Andronicus* must be elucidated. The Roman model alone is insufficient as an exemplar to Elizabethan England. And in its troubling potential for vice and injustice, it may not even be a positive model at all. Through Marcus's remembrance of this maxim, the play suggests that Titus and Tamora -- like Cyrus and Tomyris -- are locked into a sterile struggle in which both of them may stand justifiably avenged on the other. The question is not which of them is justified, but rather how Roman deformations of justice have made aggressors -- and victims -- of them both.

Animating and moralising Shakespeare's conception of the dying days of the Roman empire, then, is Herodotus's account of the dying days of the founder of the

Persian empire, I have been arguing. Tomyris's revenge adds another, vital shade to the Roman colouring of Shakespeare's politics of dismemberment, and in the process, instigates a deeper challenge to the political arrogance and accepted moral authority of imperial Rome for Shakespeare's audiences and readers than has previously been considered. Through awakening a Herodotean intertext in *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare borrows the Herodotean tendency to critique great men, and not to praise them (as Xenophon did) -- and to critique the praising of them, as my next section will suggest. A short but salient digression, this section tries to reconcile my intertextual interpretation of the play through Herodotus with the play's own treatment of the dynamics of intertextual engagement, and to explore the purposes that Shakespeare's reflectiveness on this issue might serve. This will bring us, finally, to the question of Shakespeare's first audiences and readers, and the potential topical implications that the play holds for this contingent.

### INTERTEXTUAL *TITUS*

Positing a new intertext for *Titus Andronicus* has conspicuous perils: the play has already anticipated and theorised the hunt for its own sources, playfully dramatising the very acts of intertextual interpretation that it simultaneously demands.<sup>59</sup> Successful interpretation of signs and texts and the forms of resolution that such interpretations produce are subject and strategy for the protagonists as much as for Shakespeare's audiences. Intertextuality is one of the crucial ways in which the semantics of the play operates, both within and beyond the world of the play, allowing Shakespeare to reach out to, and assert political community with his audience and readership. Of those audiences, the sensibilities of one contingent in particular seem to be privileged: those young educated men recently arrived from Cambridge and Oxford, marked out by their disposable incomes, fashionable literary tastes and showy classicism, men who might in the long run prove to be useful patrons and who, in the short run, were valued customers of the public theatres. Shakespeare's responsive adaptations from Herodotus seem to target the learning and concerns of this savvy audience, playing both to their bloodthirsty dramatic appetites and to their sceptical political sensibilities in the last years of Elizabeth's reign.

The very privileged textuality of the play, the playful interest in books and the experience of schooling and reading supports this. The play repeatedly and ostentatiously

invites the viewers and readers to make sense of its plots and moral codes by reference to other texts, just as its protagonists do to try to make sense of their own situations. More often than not, it is the well-worn classical texts of the early modern schoolroom and the homosocial communities of the universities and Inns of Court that are invoked: Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Seneca, Livy, and a host of Roman historians and lawyers. And the spirit in which such texts are invoked is mock-scholarly, sometimes brutally so. The counter-revenge plot, of course, turns on Lavinia's recourse to Ovid's Philomela narrative, and Titus finally kills his daughter on the authority of Virginius's precedent (misremembered from the Roman historians), first checking his interpretation of the sources in high pedagogical fashion with Saturninus. If these moments provide valuable interpretative cues, they also introduce a note of warning about how such intertexts can be used. Underlying all of the play's intertextual impulses is the familiar search for authorising classical models, the dogma Titus insists upon when he kills Lavinia upon "A pattern, precedent, and lively warrant / For me, most wretched, to perform the like" (5.3.43-4). And if the play puts this characteristic habit of thought in question, it interrogates with particular zest this canonical selection of classical Roman models upon which English culture bestowed such dazzling authority.

*Titus Andronicus* interrogates the very transferrals of narrative meaning upon which it so loudly relies. It does so in two ways: it exposes the fragile mechanics of interpretation and the slippages that can occur in that process, and it provides unsympathetic exemplars of literary interpretation within the plot. (Both of these have a cautionary relevance for readings of the play through other texts, whether or not the play invites such intertextual readings!) The painfully grotesque rigmarole of Lavinia trying to express herself through her terrified nephew's copy of Ovid is only matched by the horror of Marcus's untimely verbosity when he finds his niece raped and mutilated and sorely in need of more than words. The price -- as well as the necessity -- of intertextual interpretation could not be evoked with more pungency. Half-remembering their schoolday Horace, Tamora's sons in turn demonstrate the more quotidian vagaries of schoolroom learning and intertextual application. As Goths with conspicuously Greek-sounding names, they might be forgiven a sloppy grasp of Roman authors. But here, as elsewhere, it is Aaron the Moor who proves the better scholar. Villain though he may be,

Aaron joins bloodless Marcus Andronicus as the two best intertextual readers in the play. When Lavinia turns to Ovid to communicate her pain, Titus looks to his brother (“Marcus, what means this?” (4.1.30)), and Marcus obliges by both interpreting the text and improvising an alternative mode of expression for his niece. His reputation as the scholarly brother is justified: it is Marcus who tips us to look to Herodotus early in the play by evoking “Solon’s happiness” (1.1.177) in solemnising the funeral rites of Rome’s fallen sons. Similarly, Aaron correctly apprises Titus’s textual “conceit” (4.1.30) far ahead of his tutees, Chiron and Demetrius (5.1.98) and advises them accordingly.<sup>60</sup> In these embedded examples of reading and interpretation, Shakespeare is at pains to highlight the political stakes in the game of identifying intertexts and, as Renaissance literary theory would have readers do, in the ensuing task of selecting models both personal and social/political for emulation.

However compromised they may be, the literary skills of Marcus and Aaron prove as valuable to Shakespeare’s audience as they are to their interlocutors. Both Roman and Moor like to evoke the dynamics of the early modern schoolroom, and this helps to authorise their intertextual choices. Provocatively styling himself a “tutor” in vice, Aaron’s pedagogical flair counterbalances the more pedantic Marcus, but both implicitly address themselves to educated but impressionable young men not too distant from Shakespeare’s own target audience. Strikingly, both tend to look not just to Roman sources but also far beyond Roman culture for an understanding of what is happening in Rome. Aaron, like Marcus, thinks intertextually, and despite his sure grasp of Roman social and cultural mores, his classical references are, for the most part, Greek rather than Roman: Tamora climbs “Olympus” top” (2.1.1) in marrying Saturninus, and puts Aaron in mind of the Assyrian queen Semiramis (2.1.22), whose notorious exploits are recounted in Book 1 of Herodotus’s *Histories* and elsewhere. But the play’s sceptical eye on the uses and abuses of intertextual interpretation prevails.

Through the wide reading and different interpretative abilities of Marcus and Aaron, we see that intertextual allusion is a tricky business, all too amenable to self-serving interpretation. Clearly Herodotus does not seem to be a source in the same way or to the same extent that Ovid is a source for Shakespeare in this play.<sup>61</sup> But as an intertext, the Herodotean allusions open up a cogent critical perspective on Rome, her institutions

and mores that seems firmly embedded in the play, a perspective proximate but not identical to Tamora's perspective on Rome, and one that can speak to England's obsessive reflections on its own barbarian identity, female sovereignty and imperial ambitions, as I will argue in the final section. The analogies of plot between Herodotus and *Titus Andronicus* are sometimes just that, and it is difficult to map Herodotean characters onto those of Shakespeare. The hapless clown is simply executed for his message, and, confusingly, it is Tamora, the closest figure to Tomyris, who is most graphically made to swallow her own flesh and blood in a reprise of Tomyris's revenge on Cyrus. The figure of Cyrus himself is absent, or rather, mobile. Nonetheless, certain Herodotean motifs and narrative patterns are reworked over and over again in the alien Roman setting of *Titus Andronicus*, and they are patterns of which the protagonists seem on occasion to be aware. While none of the protagonists of *Titus Andronicus* stand constantly and unequivocally for Cyrus, Tamora is only the first of several to choose to follow Tomyris's example and to evoke Tomyris's revenge, the most important intertextual amplification of Shakespeare's "swallowing womb." The ironies underlying her actions -- that in the play, Tamora also stands for the flight of Astraea, the failure of justice in Rome -- do not only undermine that identification with the just avenger and the political scepticism about Roman imperial values that this helps to convey, but also direct attention to the malleability of the values of exemplary figures and the (sometimes questionable) political motivations behind their textual prestige. The pieties and pedanticism of Marcus, the grotesque, child-scaring accommodations of Lavinia's recourse to Ovid, the failure of Latin learning to teach Tamora's boys to live good lives: Shakespeare casts a caustic eye on the aspirations and conventions of humanist education and their claims over their subjects. I think that Shakespeare is trying to draw attention to the flexibility inherent in intertextual interpretation, a flexibility both destabilising and fortifying that is to be embraced, but which is rarely found in the rigid, implicitly conservative and authoritarian literary and quotidian doctrines of *imitatio* and exemplary imitation promoted in the early modern schoolroom and embodied by a Marcus Andronicus, or indeed a later Polonius.

Caveats aside, however, for the adept intertextual readers among the Inns of Court men, Tamora's evocation of both the just avenger and the absence of justice holds

additional interest in distantly reflecting on the iconographical instability of their own difficult queen. Tomyris's alignment with Judith and Jael in biblical typology, not so very far from Deborah, brings her into contact with the iconography of Elizabeth as a queen of justice so pronounced in the early 1580s. Does the play seek to activate reflections on Elizabeth's rule, her age, and indeed the imminent end of the Tudor dynasty? Does Shakespeare's play look to Elizabeth's increasingly conspicuous impatience with the forms and principles of justice, her recalcitrance in that role -- the Faerie Queene vanished and sought, Astraea elsewhere -- and allow her to be read through Tamora, vicariously, treasonably, but thrillingly for young men whose reading had not prepared them to accept female regiment but whose circumstances compelled them to do so in increasingly visible, courtly ways? Perhaps. And if so, they were probably not the only ones to find in Shakespeare's play ways of thinking about Elizabeth's rule, and about England under Elizabeth.

### **TAMORA IN ENGLAND?**

If the Herodotean overtones of the swallowing womb re-shape the moral configuration of the plot and its discourses of civility and barbarism, they also hold troubling political and symbolic implications for both Rome and an England that cherished Roman classical ideals. The sovereignty of the swallowing womb -- embodied by Tamora and then adopted by Titus in concert with Lavinia -- has significant consequences for Roman political ideology, not least because of its displacement of the expected totemic body-part preserving Rome: the head. One of the favourite political legends of Rome and *Romanitas* is Livy's account of the human head found under the Capitoline, taken to prophesy Rome's place as the "head" of the world.<sup>62</sup> The terms of Livy's prophetic legend (the imperative to "set a head on headless Rome" (1.1.186)) explicitly underscore Rome's degenerate state in *Titus Andronicus* under the sovereignty of Tamora and the swallowing womb. The play therefore also accommodates an exploration of the implications of female rule, the feminising of Rome and Roman values under Tamora, and with them, perhaps, England under Elizabeth.

On the face of it, those implications appear to coincide with the worst fears of the class of educated young university wits and Inns of Court men in Shakespeare's

audience: the emasculation of masculinity and virtue, the compromising of military defences and national borders, the erosion of sovereignty itself. (For these young men, such structural debilitation threatens all possible futures, and certainly stymies the daring military and imperial hopes of an Essex or a Raleigh and any number of their would-be followers.) While the play opens with the problem of a leader-less Rome, Titus's abrogation of the position with which Romans wish to invest him leaves Rome ominously "headless" even after the appointment of Saturninus as emperor. Within the Roman political mythology of body parts, a vacuum appears, quickly filled by the regime of the swallowing womb. Tamora's belly becomes "incorporate" with Rome, and Roman society accordingly takes on the voracious appetites of that belly and womb instead of the moderation of the masculine principle, the head.<sup>63</sup> The implications for Rome are disastrous. Instead of issuing forth children, the "swallowing womb" eats what it has already nurtured. In perversely swallowing her own life-blood, the new barbarian Rome destroys the future of imperial Rome; female rule destroys the past and future of a proud, ambitious state.

Nonetheless, Shakespeare's play also shows the impoverishment and moral dubiousness of those patriarchal Roman ideals *before* Tamora and even facilitating her dominion. I have argued that in using the figure of the swallowing womb to help blur the boundaries between civil and barbarian peoples and actions, Shakespeare strikes a blow against the established ideal of imperial Rome in all its cultural authority, revealing the hypocrisy of Roman denigrations of barbarians and deploying Herodotean intertextual allusions to legitimize and substantiate the Goths' concerns. In fact, despite the misogyny and pessimism ostensibly articulated in the play through Tamora's cruelty, the Herodotean intertext with its emphasis on Tomyris as a just avenger opens a moral perspective from which audiences are enabled to support the barbarian queen against her Roman opponents. It is here, in the evocation of Tamora as Tomyris, that the play's closest topical parallels with Queen Elizabeth are made available. While exaggerated for the purposes of genre, the play's admixture of sympathy and horror for Tamora, its simultaneous appreciation of her justice and cruelty, its observation of her tyrannous rule and the destabilising of the entire patriarchal fabric of society under her dominion,



articulates some recognisable contemporary reactions to Elizabeth and might well have acted as a vehicle for them.

How plausible is it that an English dramatist making his first forays into the world of the London theatres might imagine his queen as a vicious barbarian? If Jonathan Bate is correct in identifying a perceived sense of kinship between Shakespeare's countrymen and the Goths, then it is indeed likely that Tamora might be considered a fictional ancestor of Elizabeth's, just as Spenser construed Britomart. And beyond Gothic Tamora, the Massagete Tomyris. As James has pointed out, Tamora has particular affiliations with Elizabeth's "body iconographic" of the 1580s and 1590s, and many of these are mediated through her connection with Tomyris.<sup>64</sup> History was kind to Tomyris, as we have seen. Medieval and early modern readers credited Tomyris with the heart and stomach of a king, and early modern commentators tended to agree. For Arthur Golding, for example, she was "a manly woman," a comment intended as a compliment.<sup>65</sup> Tomyris was also frequently considered together with Judith and Jael, biblical virgins who had protected their countries by decapitating would-be aggressors of their people (and bodies). Judith and Jael were also prominent in contemporary iconography of Elizabeth in the 1580s, used to strengthen her position in the political framework of state.<sup>66</sup> Emanuel van Meteran's account of Queen Elizabeth at Tillbury, included in Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, explicitly describes her as "representing *Tomyris* that Scythian warlike princesse, or rather diuine Pallas her selfe."<sup>67</sup> In these telling overlaps, Elizabeth's image as a formidable, just and virgin queen can be remembered to her people.

Or it can be mourned. Such remembrances cannot have been as triumphant in the mid-1590s as they were in the preceding decade. The ageing queen -- a desperate Raleigh's Cynthia, a cool Spenser's Gloriana *and* Radigund -- continued to demand images of youthful vigour fashioned in Petrarchan ideals, or ageless virtue, but (as she well knew) those images failed to distract her courtiers from their preoccupations with her likely demise and lack of a successor.<sup>68</sup> Pointed remembrances of Elizabeth's preferred icons of justice as belated as this can work against their ostensible encomiastic powers at the moment of performance.<sup>69</sup> If the image of the virgin queen so celebrated in the 1580s drew for support on evocations of Elizabeth in the mode of Old Testament and classical heroines of justice, figures such as Deborah, Esther, and above all, Astraea, by

the time *Titus Andronicus* came to be performed, that cult of the virgin queen, and its attendant iconography was well and truly “depleted,” and remembrances of it could turn nasty.<sup>70</sup> Elizabeth’s languishing image as powerful virgin queen seems to be Shakespeare’s target in his parodic realisations of Tamora as a wanton Diana, a vicious *Venus armata*, a wicked Astraea. For James, Shakespeare deploys the worn iconography of formidable royal power so as to direct attention to the false promises of that iconography, producing a critique of Tudor imperial ambitions as they were legitimated through the Troy myth.<sup>71</sup> The juxtapositions suggested in the play’s refracted images of Elizabeth therefore had the potential to undermine the compliments of the royal iconography invoked. Shakespeare’s Elizabethan Tomyris could cut both ways.

By the same token, the play’s articulation of a flawed imperial model serves to both inspire and arrest any English imperial ambitions that might seek legitimation through the Gothic, “barbarian” line when Lucius commands the Goths to “be as your titles witness / Imperious” (5.1.5-6). The idea of a “barbarian” empire must have seemed an attractive one to Shakespeare’s early audiences, or at least a familiar one. In the 1590s and after, England -- or, better, Britain -- generated a national politics largely through the concept of empire.<sup>72</sup> But nationalist efforts to annex the *translatio imperii* and its promise of empire needed to confront Britain’s own history as a “barbarian” colony of Rome, evidence of which came primarily from all too eloquent Roman colonisers like Tacitus and Caesar.<sup>73</sup> Responses from early modern readers and writers to these troubling barbarian origins ran the gamut from severe cultural embarrassment to delusional repudiation of any foreign sources. On the one hand, Polydore Vergil’s scepticism about Arthurian myths laid open Britain’s subjugation by Rome while on the other, Camden took the opportunity to celebrate British-born emperor Constantine. Concerns about early English barbarism accrued particular importance at the sites of emerging English colonialism, whether Virginia or Ireland. Spenser’s Irenius enunciates the fears of a generation in noting that “it is but even the other day since England grew civil,” but he uses such reminders to promote vigorous plantation of Ireland, as if to purge the English memory of Roman colonialism through exercising such powers elsewhere.<sup>74</sup> If Shakespeare’s barbarians had empires on their mind, so too did his first audiences and readers. But ultimately neither Tomyris nor the Goths confer the political rewards of the

*translatio imperii*, the historical claims of which had been undermined by those same antiquarian investigations of Britain's barbarian origins.

As Jodi Mikalachki notes, "The double-bind of native origins -- barbarous if unknown and barbarous when found -- produced complicated and at times alienating versions of nationalism in early modern England, requiring both affirmation and denial of the 'native' in projects of national recovery."<sup>75</sup> With its affirmation and denial of "new-made empress" (2.1.20) Tamora as a proto-British Goth, and indeed as a crypto-English Elizabeth, *Titus Andronicus* might therefore be considered a defiant response to the increasingly obvious and embarrassing history of early British barbarism, and a repudiation those harsh Roman accounts of early Britain in a gratifying, sensationalised rehearsal of the fall of Rome to barbarian Goths. From this point of view, its dissolution of differences between "civil" and "barbarian" peoples enunciates a barbarian politics of defiance with strong nationalistic resonances for its first audiences. Thus, the return of Lucius with his army of Goths has the potential to awaken that English genealogical sympathy with the Goths that, for Bate, sees them as heroic avatars of "the Protestant succession."<sup>76</sup>

In the elucidation of a position sympathetic to the Goths through Herodotean allusion, then, Shakespeare moves toward formulating an English barbarian identity unbowed by its embarrassing early history as a colony of Rome, and unbound from that towering Roman model. But with the return of Lucius (who, in Act 5, looks suspiciously like Cyrus), the play also problematises the defiant identification that made this possible. The dream of empire, in several possible versions, is writ large, but inauspiciously, in Shakespeare's play. Tomyris almost succeeded in bringing down the ancient Persian empire of Cyrus, and the Goths certainly did bring down that of Rome as far as Elizabethans were concerned. Nor does the play allow Tomyris and the Goths to be constantly or easily supported. Promising though the Goths might have seemed to aspiring English minds, however, they are nonetheless far from Christopher Marlowe's testosterone-fuelled barbarians who manage in more than simply "conceit" to "bear empires on our spears."<sup>77</sup> Ultimately, Shakespeare's are not barbarian ancestors with an imperial destiny to bequeath, and the imperial fantasy his play entertains is shown to be severely flawed.

Shakespeare on occasion wrote histories in the conditional mode, histories that come close to the Nietzschean idea of a “critical history,” freed from the monumentalising drive of the victors and concerned instead to scrutinise the past -- including the roads not taken -- in order to be free of it.<sup>78</sup> *Titus* is an early example of this, but finds itself in good company later in Shakespeare’s career: *Othello* is set in Cyprus just before its historical fall to the Turks, though Shakespeare leaves the Venetians precariously in power at the end of the play; *Cymbeline* is set in a Roman Britain where the British relinquish their victory over the Romans as if in obeisance to a later history. Set in a fictionalised Rome just before it would fall to the Goths, *Titus Andronicus* explores a set of radical hypothetical possibilities -- and dangerous political realities -- centred on the issues of female sovereignty, barbarian identity and England’s imperial future. Despite its barbarian history, English (and later British) nationalism -- and its very real imperial aspirations -- had to be rooted in its sense of its own past, in “the sense of nostalgia.”<sup>79</sup> In Shakespeare’s hands, such nostalgia could smooth the sharp edges of the Goths’ notorious barbarity, and could resuscitate their victory against the Romans for English ends. But having indicted Roman imperial values, the play conspicuously fails to recuperate a solid imperial precedent from its barbarian politics. The Herodotean intertext enables audience sympathies for the Goths against the Romans, and against the combined weight of Roman history and cultural authority in Elizabethan England, but it falls short of transforming its nascent barbarian politics into an imperial agenda. Through the intertextual dynamics with Herodotus’s history of Cyrus, Shakespeare compels his audience both to remember and to revise Persian, Roman and British history, and to re-examine the dream of empire that his contemporaries were so keen to pursue.

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<sup>1</sup> All references to the play are to the New Cambridge Shakespeare edition of *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Alan Hughes (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006). Debate on the authorship of the play is ongoing, but is not particularly relevant to the argument of this paper. For the argument for George Peele’s contribution to the writing of *Titus Andronicus*, see Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare: Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), 148-243.

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<sup>2</sup> Spencer, 32; cited in *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Jonathan Bate (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 16-17.

<sup>3</sup> The play uses the terms “Rome” and “Roman” 126 times, as Charles Wells points out: that is, twice as often as in *Julius Caesar* and three times as often in *Antony and Cleopatra*. See *The Wide Arch: Roman Values in Shakespeare* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1992), 13. Yet the plot of *Titus Andronicus* has not been fully situated in Roman history, and as G.K. Hunter notes, its Roman ethic combines such contradictory elements as Republican austerity and imperial decadence. Charles and Michelle Martindale cite Hunter’s argument in support of their feeling that *Titus* is not a Roman play in the sense that *Coriolanus* or *Julius Caesar* are. *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity: An Introductory Essay* (London; New York: Routledge, 1990), 143.

<sup>4</sup> Other false notes include the dubious idea that hunting panthers (as the new emperor and his companions seek to do) was typical of “Our Roman hunting” (2.2.20).

<sup>5</sup> *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds and Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 47.

<sup>6</sup> On Rome and English dreams of *translatio imperii*, see, for example, Heather James, *Shakespeare’s Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997); Liz Oakley-Brown, “*Titus Andronicus* and the Cultural Politics of Translation in Early Modern England,” *Renaissance Studies* 19 (2005): 325-47. Naomi Conn Liebler finds echoes of Herodian’s Roman history in certain names and elements of plot in “Getting it All Right: *Titus Andronicus* and Roman History,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45 (1994): 262-78.

<sup>7</sup> Bate, “Introduction” to his edition; Neil Rhodes, “Shakespeare the Barbarian,” in Jennifer Richards (ed.), *Early Modern Civil Discourses* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 99-114.

<sup>8</sup> Nicholas R. Moschovakis, “‘Irreligious Piety’ and Christian History: Persecution as Pagan Anachronism in *Titus Andronicus*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 53 (2002): 460-86, esp. 473.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Jean Bodin, *Les Six Livres de la République* (1576; translated into English 1606), Joannes Boemus, *The Fardle of Facions* (1555). Lodowick Lloyd, *The Consent of Time* (1590),

<sup>10</sup> Prominently in the prefatory material, Hakluyt boasts, “Which of [“all the [other] nations and people of the earth”] hath euer dealt with the Emperor of Persia, as her Maiesty hath done, and obtained for her merchants large & louing priuileges?” (sig. \*2v).

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<sup>11</sup> John Speed, for example, proffers an up-to-date map of Persia in *A Prospect of the most Famous Parts of the World* (1646) even as he castigates the Persians' "antique barbarisme" (fol. 34). See also Ros Ballaster, *Fabulous Orient: Fictions of the East in England, 1662-1785* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005) for material on Persia being read as both "civil" and "barbaric."

<sup>12</sup> See footnote 16. An earlier play about Cyrus's son, the eponymous *Cambyses* (possibly by Thomas Preston (1570)), also drew directly on Herodotus's accounts of ancient Persia.

<sup>13</sup> *The famous hystory of Herodotus*, trans. B.R. (London: Thomas Marshe, 1584). Book 1 deals mostly with Persia and Assyria, Book 2 with Egypt. The edition was a small, accessible quarto, containing only the first two books of the nine promised on the title-page. The identity of B.R., the translator, remains unclear, but the only candidate to have emerged with any likelihood is the soldier and pamphleteer, Barnaby Rich. Rich could have sidestepped an ignorance of Greek by working from either a Latin text (Lorenzo Valla's 1450 translation, revised in 1537 by Heusbach) or a French text (the more recent translations of 1556, 1575 or 1580 by Pierre Saliat).

<sup>14</sup> *The Malice of Herodotus*, ed. and trans. Anthony Bowen (Warminster: Arish & Phillips, 1992). Johannes Boemus, for example, explicitly follows the Ciceronian model of Herodotus in *The Fardle of Facions* (1555). Christopher Pelling has recently shown that Plutarch's animosity towards Herodotus was not sustained beyond this essay. "De malignitate Plutarchi: Plutarch, Herodotus, and the Persian Wars," in *Cultural Responses to the Persian Wars*, ed. Emma Bridges, Edith Hall and P.J. Rhodes (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), 145-64.

<sup>15</sup> The best history of the Persian (or Achaemenid) empire is that of Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*, trans. Peter T. Daniels (Winona Lake Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002; first published in French (1996)).

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed account of the texts and influence of the *Cyropaedia* in English Renaissance literature, see my essay, 'Barbarous Utopias: Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* in the English Renaissance', *Hermathena* 183 (2007; published 2009): 163-74.

<sup>17</sup> It was only in the seventeenth century that attempts were made to reconcile these divergent accounts of Cyrus, most notably in Mlle de Scudéry's monumental romance, *Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus* (1649-53),

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and in John Banks's ill-fated tragedy, *Cyrus the Great: Or, The Tragedy of Love* (1696). In both, Cyrus is made to fall in love with Tomyris.

<sup>18</sup> Critics also posit Sophocles's lost plays *Atreus* and *Thyestes* as intermediate sources for Seneca.

<sup>19</sup> Justin also gives a derivative account of Tomyris in Book 1 of his *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, translated by Arthur Golding in 1564 and reprinted in 1570 and 1578. But the story of Solon's happiness, also explored by the play as I will later suggest, is absent from Justin's narrative. Less well known was the (more tenuous still) account of Cyrus and Tomyris in the surviving books of Diodorus of Sicily's *Library*, whose work was only fully translated into English in 1653. Diodorus, however, also gives the story of Solon's happiness (9.2.1).

<sup>20</sup> This may also be influenced by French translations of Boccaccio and Christine de Pizan in which Tomyris is translated as "Thamire" or "Thamiris."

<sup>21</sup> "Introduction" to *Titus Andronicus*, ed. J.C. Maxwell (London and New York: Routledge, 1989; reprint of 1953 Arden edition), xxx.

<sup>22</sup> B.R., sig. K1 verso. Curiously, Kehler deems Herodotus -- Plutarch's *philobarbaros* -- to be "no friend of the Persians." "'That Ravenous Tiger Tamora': *Titus Andronicus*'s Lusty Widow, Wife, and M/other" in Philip C. Kolin (ed.), *'Titus Andronicus': Critical Essays* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 317-32, esp. 329n. Carolyn Sale has recently endorsed the connection between Tamora and Tomyris from whom, she states, Tamora 'almost certainly gets her name' (41), although Sale's essay is primarily concerned with the play's challenge to Roman literary values, channeled through the figure of Aaron the Moor. 'Black Aeneas: Race, English Literary History and the "Barbarous" Poetics of *Titus Andronicus*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62: 1 (2011): 25-52, especially 41-43.

<sup>23</sup> *The Consent of Time* (London: George Bishop and Ralph Newberie, 1590), fol. 243. Jordanes also relates Tomyris's defeat of Cyrus, treating her as a Goth queen, in chapter 10 of his *Getica* (*The Origins and Deeds of the Goths*). Jordanes offers us a one-volume abridgement of a lost 12-volume history of the Goths by another sixth-century historian, Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus, and remains the major source on the history of the Goths.

<sup>24</sup> Bate suggests that Shakespeare's Elizabethan audience would also recognise them as their own German forebears (19-21).

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<sup>25</sup> For Justin see Arthur Golding (trans.), *Thabridgment of the histories of Trogius Pompeius* (London:

Thomas Marshe, 1564). The adjustment is one that would have been readily understood (or even taken as implicit in the Herodotean account) by an honour culture such as that espoused at Elizabeth's court.

<sup>26</sup> B.R., sig. K4 verso; emphasis mine. By contrast, Xenophon entirely suppresses the memory of Tomyris and Cyrus's ill-advised campaign against the Massagetae, fabricating instead a dignified death-bed scene in which Cyrus determines the succession, giving wise advice to his two sons before going gently into that good night.

<sup>27</sup> B.R., sig. K4 recto.

<sup>28</sup> *The last part of the Mirour for Magistrates* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1578); emphasis mine.

<sup>29</sup> Herodotus's implicit Greek moral perspective challenges Cyrus's *hubris*, fitting him into a larger pattern of foolish kings and wise advisers, as Stewart Flory notes in *The Archaic Smile of Herodotus* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1987). The term "irous Cirus" comes from Chaucer's "Summoner's Tale" (l. 415).

<sup>30</sup> The (anonymous) *Speculum humanae salvationis*, dating from the early fourteenth-century, was a popular text in both manuscript and print before the Reformation.

<sup>31</sup> These include Giovanni Boccaccio's *De Mulieribus claris* (1361-62), Christine de Pizan's *Le livre de la cité des dames* (1405). Tomyris, or the Nine Worthies, were popular subjects of tapestries in the period, and numerous Flemish examples from the period featuring Tomyris could be found across Britain, Ireland and Europe.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Heywood's *Gunaeikon* (1624) is a good example. Tomyris also makes an appearance in Jonson's *Masque of Queens* (1609).

<sup>33</sup> This comes from the translation of the *Orlando Furioso* by John Stewart of Baldynneis, canto 11, ll. 35-40, in *Poems of John Stewart of Baldynneis*, ed. Thomas Crockett, 2 vols (William Blackwood & Sons. Edinburgh and London, 1913), vol. 2, 81.

<sup>34</sup> 'A Meeting Dialogue-wise betweene Nature, the Phoenix and the Turtle Doue' 1601 Line 402.

<sup>35</sup> Glossing Ariosto's praise of women in Canto 38, Harington evokes Tomyris who, "in reuenge of her son, ... put Cyrus head into a great boule of bloud, vsing that wel knowne speech: *Satia te sanguine quisanguinem sitiisti*, Fill thy selfe with bloud that didst thirst for bloud." See Harington, *Orlando furioso in English heroical verse* (London: Richard Field for John Norton and Simon Waterson, 1607), fol. 314.



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<sup>36</sup> A later play also finds some moral flexibility in Tomyris's vengefulness, or at least manages to parody it, perhaps with a subtextual dramatic remembrance of *Titus Andronicus*. George Chapman's *The Reuenge of Bussy D'Ambois* opens with the dead Bussy's former lover, Tamyra, calling for 'Reuenge, that euer red sitt'st in the eyes / Of iniur'd Ladies, till we crown thy browes / With bloody Lawrell ...' (1.1); (London: T[homas] S[nodham] for John Helme, 1613), sig. C2 verso. Her appropriation of Tomyris's just vengeance is compromised, however, by her adulterous affair with Bussy in the earlier play, *Bussy D'Ambois*.

<sup>37</sup> In the drawing, Tamora appears not as Revenge incarnate -- as she was to appear soon after in *Bussy D'Ambois*, for example -- but at her most "royal and sympathetic," pleading for the life of her son, as Wynne-Davies notes (134).

<sup>38</sup> This appears in "A Dictionarie, for that Mysticall Booke called the Reuelation of Saint John" in Thomas Wilson, *A Christian Dictionarie* (London: W. J[aggard], 1612), 17; emphasis mine.

<sup>39</sup> See especially Heather James on Shakespeare's poetics of imitation and what she terms his Ovidian deformation of Virgilian imperial rationale.

<sup>40</sup> James, 48. See also Wynne-Davies, "'The Swallowing Womb': Consumed and Consuming Women in *Titus Andronicus*," in *The Matter of Difference: Materialist Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. Valerie Wayne (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 134, 145.

<sup>41</sup> B.R., sig. K3 verso, K4 recto; emphases mine. Galenic humoral theory postulated that both the womb and the stomach were nourished by blood, but ambiguities about the referent (stomach/womb) of the term "belly" allow for further development of the "swallowing womb" theme. See, for example, Helkiah Crooke, *Microcosmographia* (1615).

<sup>42</sup> The Longleat manuscript drawing arguably depicts Tamora pregnant.

<sup>43</sup> James also argues that Tamora and Lavinia's bodies are "twinned," and that it is the pit that marks "her sexualized body as the metaphorical site of revenge" exacted on Lavinia (58).

<sup>44</sup> See James, 48.

<sup>45</sup> *The seconde Tragedie of Seneca entituled Thyestes* (London: Thomas Berthelettes, 1560), sig. E4 verso

<sup>46</sup> As if to confirm that Rome remains headless (like the decapitated Cyrus), even after Lucius's arrival, Titus's remaining sons kiss his "trunk" (5.3.151) in their closing burial and renewal rituals, although their father has not actually been decapitated. As Kahn points out, that Tamora takes her revenge on Titus upon

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the body of his daughter shows a sophisticated understanding of Roman mores (Kahn, 49). Ninus and Semiramis also appear in Book 1 of Herodotus's *Histories*.

<sup>47</sup> See Janet Adelman's influential arguments about the preoccupation with the suffocating maternal womb in Shakespeare's plays. *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, 'Hamlet' to 'The Tempest'* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>48</sup> This designation was enduringly remembered in Roman history: at the end of his first Book, Livy narrated how Lucius Junius Brutus— founder of the Roman republic - correctly interprets the Delphic oracle's prophecy about who next will succeed the Tarquins. Being told to kiss his mother, Brutus bends down and kisses the earth.

<sup>49</sup> Robert S. Miola reads the Andronicus tomb in Senecan terms as "an escape from worldly trouble, a memorial to the honoured dead." *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 21.

<sup>50</sup> Kahn, 69.

<sup>51</sup> Speaking beside the pit, Tamora's insistent remembrance of Alarbus strengthens the pit's association with Rome: "Remember, boys, I poured forth tears in vain / To save your brother from the sacrifice / But fierce Andronicus would not relent" (2.3.163-5).

<sup>52</sup> Louise Noble notes that this means of collecting blood is, in fact, in line with Paracelsian prescriptions for curing epilepsy, in "'And make two pasties of your shameful heads': Medicinal Cannibalism and Healing the Body Politic in *Titus Andronicus*," *ELH* (2003): 677-708, esp. 705n. Noble usefully shows how the play systematically breaks down the civility/barbarism binarism that turns on the issue of cannibalism through its construction of the Romans in terms that evoke contemporary European practices of cannibalism in the service of medicine.

<sup>53</sup> This chimes with Katherine Rowe's argument about the way that Titus instrumentalises Lavinia "as the vehicle and emblem of *his* efficacious action," but with Lavinia enabled to articulate revenge too. "Dismembering and Forgetting in *Titus Andronicus*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45 (1994): 279-303, esp. 296, 300-1.

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<sup>54</sup> This transformation of Lavinia into a type of Tamora might help to explain why Lavinia is explicitly compared to the avenging mother, Hecuba, in the play (4.1.20-1), although it is the less threatening Roman Hecuba rather than Euripides's Greek avenging Hecuba who is suggested.

<sup>55</sup> James, 80.

<sup>56</sup> James, 43.

<sup>57</sup> Bate, 16-21, esp. 19.

<sup>58</sup> Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, 1528-30; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I. 10; Montaigne, "Our Affections are Transported Beyond our Selves" and "That we Should Not be Deemed Happy till After our Death." A version of the commonplace appears in Book III of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but (as in Sophocles) without being ascribed to Solon: in Golding's translation, "But aye the end of everything must marked be and known / For none the name of blessedness deserveth for to have / Unless the tenor of his life last blessed to his grave" (ll. 158-9). The account given in Plutarch's "Life" of Solon is a close paraphrase of the section in Herodotus. The meeting between Solon and Croesus was probably fictitious, however, as the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (1421) suggests: Solon's travels can be dated to the ten or twenty years after his reforms (the latter probably 594BC) while Croesus's Lydian empire fell to Cyrus nearly half a century later.

<sup>59</sup> Other Shakespearean precedents exist for drama that incorporates explorations of the very mechanisms by which it might be received or interpreted. Heather James writes of Shakespeare's probing of "antitheatrical anxiety about the destabilizing influence of tragic performance on audiences" in the tragedies themselves. "Dido's Ear: Tragedy and the Politics of Response," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52 (2001): 360-82, esp. 364.

<sup>60</sup> See also Francesca Royster, "White-Limed Walls: Whiteness and Gothic Extremism in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51 (2000): 432-455.

<sup>61</sup> Jonathan Bate's suggestion that we think of the play's sources -- or in this instance, intertexts -- in terms of "patterning" rather than origins seems particularly useful at this point. Bate, 90

<sup>62</sup> Livy, *History of Rome*, trans. B.O. Foster, 14 vols (London: William Heinemann; New York: GP Putnam, 1919), vol. 1, Book 1.55.5-6.

<sup>63</sup> Stoic thinking also disapproved of choler, arrogance and other passions associated with the stomach.

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<sup>64</sup> James, 83. Wynne-Davies sees Tamora as “a distantly refracted image of Elizabeth I” (134, 145).

<sup>65</sup> This is a marginal gloss in Golding, sig. B2 recto.

<sup>66</sup> Susan Doran has argued that it was precisely in the early 1580s that iconography of Elizabeth began most searchingly to look to Old Testament heroines such as Judith and Deborah, as wise and powerful protector-virgins. “Why did Elizabeth Not Marry?” in *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana*, ed. Julia M. Walker (Durham and London: Duke UP, 1998), 30-59 (37-8).

<sup>67</sup> Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Nauigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoueries of the English Nation* (London: George Bishop, Ralph Newberie, and Robert Barker, 1599-1600), fol. 595. Elizabeth’s Italian tutor’s pleasure in the fact that his charge had a “mervelous meeke stomacke” seems to have been somewhat precipitate. His comment is cited by Judith M. Richards in “‘To Promote a Woman to Beare Rule’: Talking of Queens in Mid-Tudor England’, *Sixteenth-Century Journal* 28 (1997): 101-21, esp. 118.

<sup>68</sup> See Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993), 97-148, esp. 97-99.

<sup>69</sup> I am grateful to Heather James for this point, and related comments.

<sup>70</sup> James, 2-3. See Frances A. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 29-87.

<sup>71</sup> James, 42-84, esp. 48.

<sup>72</sup> See the various discussions in Philip Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004); Willy Maley, *Nation, State, and Empire in English Renaissance Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003); Claire McEachern, *The Poetics of English Nationhood, 1590-1612* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996); Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare, Spenser, and the Matter of Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004); David J. Baker and Willy Maley (ed.), *British Identities and English Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002).

<sup>73</sup> See Tacitus’s comments on Britain in the *Agricola* and Caesar’s in his commentaries on the Gallic wars, both texts familiar to educated young Englishmen in the late sixteenth century. See also the various treatments of this issue in Camden’s *Britannia* (1610) and Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, for example. For discussion of Renaissance approaches to Britain’s barbarian origins see Schwyzer; Jodi Mikalachki, *The Legacy of Boadicea: Gender and Nation in Early Modern England* (London and New York: Routledge,

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1998); John E. Curran, *Roman Invasions: The British History, Protestant Anti-Romanism, and the Historical Imagination in England 1530-1660* (New York: University of Delaware Press; London and Cranbury, NJ: Associated UP, 2002).

<sup>74</sup> See *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, ed. Edwin Greenlaw, Charles Grosvenor Osgood, Frederick Morgan Padelford and Ray Heffner (Variorum edition), 10 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1949), vol. 10, 118.

<sup>75</sup> Mikalachki, 9.

<sup>76</sup> Bate, 21.

<sup>77</sup> *The First Part of Tamburlaine* (1.2.64).

<sup>78</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Utility and Liability of History for Life" in *Unfashionable Observations*, trans. Richard T. Gray (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995).

<sup>79</sup> Schwyzer, 10.