City University of New York (CUNY)
CUNY Academic Works

School of Arts & Sciences Theses | Hunter College

Summer 8-7-2020

“They do us the honour of treating us like gods, and we respond by treating them like things”: The Problem with Fathers in William Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus and J.M. Coetzee’s Disgrace

Colleen Walsh
CUNY Hunter College

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

More information about this work at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/hc_sas_etds/608
Discover additional works at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu

This work is made publicly available by the City University of New York (CUNY).
Contact: AcademicWorks@cuny.edu

“They do us the honour of treating us like gods, and we respond by treating them like things”:

The Problem with Fathers in William Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* and J.M. Coetzee’s

Disgrace

by

Colleen Walsh

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Literature, Language, and Theory, Hunter College

The City University of New York

August 2020

<u>07/22/2020</u> Date	<u>Dr. Cristina León Alfar</u> Thesis Sponsor
<u>07/28/2020</u> Date	<u>Dr. Sonali Perera</u> Second Reader

Both William Shakespeare's tragedy *Titus Andronicus* and J. M. Coetzee's postcolonial novel *Disgrace* follow the stories of fathers struggling with their own dishonor and "disgrace" as well as that of their daughters, both of whom survive sexual violence. Berit Åström's argument for the historical and social transcendence of "referred pain"—"when the sexual suffering of women is featured, the narrative focus is on the emotions of fathers, husbands and lovers; the pain suffered by the female body is referred to the male mind"—explains how the expression of women's pain in both texts is eclipsed by the pain of their fathers (125). While both Titus Andronicus and David Lurie love their daughters and are willing to put themselves at risk in order to protect them, the precarious natures of honor and grace make navigating the challenges presented by such physical and emotional terrain nearly impossible for both men. For them, honor and grace seem to come not from meaningful, concrete relationships with others but from abstract and isolating ideals that will hopefully "lead [one] to a higher life" (Coetzee 74). As a Roman warrior and a post-apartheid South African academic, the stakes for earning that honor or grace are certainly not even remotely equivalent for Titus or David; however, when each of their daughters is physically and emotionally traumatized by a brutal gang rape, the stakes of fatherhood certainly are. This work will not, by any means, pretend to compare Lavinia and Lucy's traumas; instead, it compares the ways in which their fathers create—or fail to create—a safe space for them to contend with that trauma and move forward "in response to a wrong," one that must be answered even "when the gods are silent and the state too weak or corrupt to bring about just solutions" (Willis 23). While it is true that both Titus Andronicus and David Lurie are incredibly cold and cruel men, Titus's obsession with his honor eclipses Lavinia's agency whereas David's eventual (albeit reluctant) acceptance of Lucy's choices, no matter how troublesome they seem to him, ultimately creates conditions of possibility. Coetzee represents

Lurie as ultimately shedding the patriarchal preoccupation with "dignity" and "honor" that precludes various alternate possibilities for living and, instead, relies too heavily on death and destruction for its maintenance.

The familial conditions of what renaissance scholars define as the early modern period set up an economy in which the daughter was just a commodity, a reflection of her father's honor, and a way of expanding the family's honor. As historians like Elizabeth A. Foyster observe, early modern patriarchalism began in the home: "Political theorists… drew analogies between the power of the king in the state and that of the father in the family," thus designating the household the primary site of male supremacy with the father as its head (3). Alexandra Shepard adds in her article "From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen?" that the household was modeled in such a fashion "because the stability of the commonwealth was deemed to depend on its proper ordering" (70). This ordering consequently prescribed "appropriate" gender roles using the language of "honor" to ensure its maintenance. For example, in her book *Meanings of Manhood*, Shepard points out that "strength… self-sufficiency, honesty, authority, autonomy, self-government… reason, wisdom, and wit were all claimed for patriarchal manhood," which extended into control of his household, and earned a man honor and reputation in the wider community (247). Manhood, moreover, was defined in direct opposition to womanhood, so the differences between women and men were often exaggerated in order to reinforce men's authority. This diametrical opposition resulted in a significantly restrictive set of prescribed behavioral options for women; for example, the commonly held belief that femininity was marked by a lack of reason and an uncontrollable passion called for women's virtue and restraint, particularly, their chastity. Because wives and children were subordinate to husbands/fathers, this meant that his honor depended on their good behavior and obedience to

him. Being a good father/husband, then, involved maintaining the physical and moral well-being of the family. Because daughters were destined to one day become wives and mothers themselves, however, they were not only a reflection of their father's honor, but also a way of expanding it. Finding a suitable match, therefore, involved finding a husband for one's daughter who would benefit the family politically as well as economically. A marriage, while it may have been lovingly arranged, was essentially a transaction of "property" between men.

Such a system, of course, naturally placed families in competition with one another, just as their nations were, and those competitions were not without violence, Shepard notes:

> As a form of regulation and correction, as a demonstration of male strength and authority, and as a method of territorial demarcation, violence conferred manhood in ways which both bolstered and countered patriarchal codes of order and which also served alternative codes of manhood according to the status and context of those involved. (16)

As the most commodifiable member of the family, a daughter's value made her exceptionally vulnerable and therefore at significant risk for violation. The most extreme (although certainly not the only) violation of female sexual autonomy, at *any* point in history, is rape. In an early modern context, however, rape was both a private and public crime in that was both physical violence toward a woman that often resulted in their—and, consequently, their family's—social destruction. The rape of a chaste woman was viewed first and foremost as a property crime, as a theft of a commodity belonging to the husband/father. This theft had larger social implications as an "unchaste" woman brought dishonor to her family and also prevented the family from marrying her into a wealthier or more reputable family. Conduct books of the time, such as Juan Luis Vives's *Instruction of a Christian Woman* advised that unless a woman could marry her

rapist, she was "cursed" and "not worthy to live" (Vives 104). Not only does Vives provide multiple examples of women who lost their chastity and were killed by their families in horrific ways, but he also blames the women for their own attacks: "[chastity] which no man will take from her against her will, nor touch it, except she be willing herself" (107). To kill a raped woman was not considered murder, but justice. Jocelyn Catty reminds us, however, that although rape "may function as a crime against other men" in the early modern period, "it is the female body that is always the site of contestation" (10), a point that is too often forgotten in conversations about the significance of such a violent crime.

What is in place in early modern England, then, is a culture ripe for erasing the daughter's experience as about anything but her male family members, and a culture which we must be wary of ourselves. This is the stage on which William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* takes place. Two arguments dominate the critical conversation surrounding Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*: primarily, that she is an unfortunate victim of the violent patriarchal system[1] and, more recently, that she is also an agent in the traditionally masculine theatre of revenge.[2] This second argument tends to skirt around her murder at the play's end, yet both arguments ignore the intersection at which it is very possible that Lavinia is an active participant in this system *because she wants to live*, which accounts for the unsettling impact of both her survival and her death on the audience. My argument will show how Lavinia can both be an active participant in

[1] Deborah Willis provides a rather robust list of "feminist assessments" of Lavinia in the first footnote of her article "'The gnawing vulture': Revenge, Trauma Theory, and *Titus* Andronicus." To that I would add Lisa S. Starks-Estes's "Shakespeare's Perverse Astraea, Martyr'd Philomel, and Lamenting Hecuba: Ovid, Sadomasochism, and Trauma in *Titus Andronicus*."

[2] For a reading of Lavinia as an agent of revenge, see Marguerite A. Tassi's "Reporting the Women's Causes Aright: Wounded Names and Revenge Narratives in *Hamlet, Titus Andronicus,* and *Much Ado About Nothing*."

the revenge plot as well as, ultimately, a victim of it due to her father's obsession with the crime as one against him.

That her father sees Lavinia merely as a signifier of his own honor is clear from *Titus*'s opening scene, but equally important is the obviousness by which Lavinia plays the part to her advantage. When Titus returns from a decade-long campaign to expand Rome's empire, his daughter kneels at his feet and asks his blessing. Although Titus refers to her as "the cordial of mine age," what should be an emotional reunion is overladen with performativity (1.1.169). As Mary L. Fawcett notes, Lavinia immediately performs the honor due to her father upon her entrance, expressing the wish that he live "in peace and honor" and, more specifically, "in fame" (160-161). Next, she uses the interjection "Lo" to draw attention to the "tributary tears" she "render[s] for my brethren's obsequies" (161-162). The terminology she uses to describe her grief empties it of emotion, renders it (to use her own language) as purely ceremonial, merely "tributary" and "obsequious." The use of the term "brethren" is, similarly, so vague that it could apply to either the literal brothers she has lost, or to *any* of the Roman soldiers fallen in the last ten years. Moreover, the establishment of her tears as largely ceremonial empties the "tears of joy" she claims to shed for her father's return of emotion. Her speech and actions throughout the scene, including her consequent kneeling in subjection and request for a blessing by his "victorious hand, / Whose fortunes Rome's best citizens applaud," then, place added emphasis on the necessity of maintaining and even promoting Titus's honor over her emotional experience as a woman abandoned by her family and who has even lost several members of it in a time of war (166-167). She is, quite simply, performing *exactly* as would have been expected of a woman of her status at the time. According to conduct texts such as those by Juan Luis Vives, "as oft as a maid goeth forth among people, so often she cometh in judgment and extreme peril

of her… honesty, demureness, wit, shamefastness, and virtue" (108-109). Lavinia's speech and actions reveal the extent to which she plays the part of an honest and virtuous daughter, carefully avoiding language and action that might blot her "estimation" in order to win her father's favor. On the other hand, the evacuation of emotion from the reunion makes obvious how performative adhering to such a set of rules is, drawing attention to the mechanics of such an ideology.

As an exemplary father and soldier, Titus's response to Lavinia establishes what it means to be a father and a daughter at this time: to have raised a daughter who is valuable to him not only as a reflection of his honor, but also as an exchangeable commodity between men to form or strengthen alliances. First, like Lavinia, he uses the formal "thy." Second, even when he does refer to Lavinia as "the cordial of mine age to glad my heart," he gives credit not to her, but to "Kind Rome" (1.1.168). Furthermore, his blessing on her is for her to "live, outlive thy father's days" and fame "for virtue's praise" (170-171); in other words, he says that he blesses her not because he loves her, but because she is virtuous and therefore further honoring his good name. All of this is spoken, moreover, in the presence of the Tribunes as well as in the presence of the other men contending for emperor—those who the performance is for. Because Lavinia dutifully performs the role of daughter with all of the virtue that would have been expected of her, and Titus, therefore, values her, both are prime examples of individuals historian Alexandra Shepard would say subscribe to ideals of "patriarchal manhood" (291). If "early modern manhood is… closely linked to maintaining domestic order over subordinates," then Titus's language maintains both his dominance over his daughter as well as his subordination to his nation (Shepard 283). Lynda Boose points out how patriarchal manhood, even when strictly adhered to, constantly endangers women, particularly daughters, because "the father [is expected to sacrifice] the daughter to the perceived demands of the patriarchy and thus [affirm] his membership in it" (40).

Because Titus (like many other early modern men) views Lavinia as an extension of himself, she is diminished and made into something that he can, if he chooses, ultimately dispose of—even kill—if she no longer positively serves him.

The degree of Lavinia's value is made clear by her literal exchange between her father and the emperor. After his election, Saturninus thanks Titus for his service in the war by choosing Lavinia as his empress "to advance / Thy name and honourable family" (1.1.242-243). This exchange not only rewards Titus's soldiership, but also the state, as a suitable marriage to an honest and virtuous noblewoman by the head of state will bring stability and security. As Eve Kosofky Sedgwick argues, "through their competition for, their 'traffic in,' a shared female object of desire, two male rivals bond 'homosocially,' establishing and ensuring 'the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power" (528). Titus's immediate offer of more "Presents well worthy Rome's imperious lord," the spoils of war, to which Saturninus responds by addressing Titus hyperbolically as the "father of my life" as opposed to the more literal "father of my wife" emphasizes the relationship between the two men over all other relationships onstage (254 and 257). Furthermore, it emphasizes how the silent Lavinia already seems to have been forgotten and lumped in with the other gifts: his sword, chariot, and prisoners. Lavinia's association with these other "gifts," which include other people, implies the perception of her not as a separate person, but only in relation to himself—as an exchangeable commodity that cannot realize the benefits of its own exchange. In "The Traffic of Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" Gayle Rubin argues that "marriages are a most basic form of gift exchange, in which it is women who are the most precious of gifts… because the relationship thus established is not just one of reciprocity, but of kinship," which is linked to power (36). Thus, Saturninus's offer and Titus's agreement to marry Lavinia is merely a mutual exchange of power between the

men that does not account for the desire of (and therefore the subjecthood of) the person they are exchanging. The closest the play gets to accounting for their desires is when Saturninus asks Lavinia if she is "not displeased with" his promise to treat the Goths well (1.1.274). Although his asking of the question does elevate Lavinia above the Goths, his use of a double negative here ensures that his question is a closed one with an expected answer, which Lavinia seems to dutifully provide: "Not I, my lord" (275). Her response could be confirming Saturninus's benevolence, but it is also possible that she is negating it: she is not *not displeased*—not pleased—with his promise. Although Lavinia's commodification by her father is by no means anomalous, her marriage coupled with Titus's presentation of the spoils of war links her exchange to larger and more literal instances of patriarchal violence. Moreover, her reaction reveals that if Lavinia wants to maintain a position of any power whatsoever in such a system, she, too, must participate in it and accept the single opportunity for social advancement presented to her, thus resisting her social erasure through obedience to social expectations.

As Mary L. Fawcett points out, the action-packed remainder of the scene, although it revolves entirely around Lavinia, does not allow her to speak for herself: "we cannot tell about her intentions, or even whether she has any" (266), perhaps emphasizing the complicity necessary for her survival. Thus, Lavinia fully becomes the ideal exchangeable object in the war for men's honor and does not provide any evidence that she is anything otherwise. Bassianus, according to the stage directions, "seizes" her and calls her "mine" —not by asking for *her* consent, but for Titus's (1.1.280). The use of the word "seize," especially by the stage directions as opposed to a character, demonstrates her function as merely a material possession in the action of this scene. When Titus does not approve of the match and calls for immediate action, he claims that "Lavinia is surprised," introducing a counternarrative to the one Bassianus provides

of their already having been "betrothed" (288 and 290); one must wonder, does the actress appear shocked by the events, or is this merely Titus projecting his distaste onto her? The scene's ambiguity continues as Bassianus and her brothers "bear Lavinia out" while Mutius defends their exit from an enraged Titus. This could be staged in a multitude of ways depending on the extent that Lavinia is shown to be cooperating with or resisting the men. Are they carrying a struggling woman offstage, or are they merely escorting her away from the violence that is about to unfold?

The ambiguity surrounding her desires here is critical as it emphasizes the men's subjecthood over hers, and, furthermore, the choices Titus makes both refuse Lavinia agency and ultimately necessitate filicide. Not only is Lavinia not given a choice in her marriage, she is not even provided an opportunity to speak on her own behalf when its legitimacy is challenged. She, as Carolyn Asp points out, "visually… enacts the fate of a woman in the Symbolic Order: she is a pawn in a power struggle between men… seized by the strongest contestant" (337). It is not simply that Lavinia's desires are rejected by the men, but also that there is no indication whatsoever of what they might be; she is, as Whitney Sperrazza argues, "a kind of *tabula rasa*" for the men onstage, "a surface on which they can inscribe, read and overwrite their desired narratives" (185). Her character's opacity shifts attention away from questions of marital injustice and onto the violence of the men's ensuing actions. That Titus would go so far as he kill a son and disown the others to prevent his "dishonor," speaks to how enmeshed in the "subordination" required by the patriarchal economy of honor he truly is: because he sees his children only as extensions of himself, he would willingly sacrifice any of them for Saturninus's favor (1.1.300). As the war with the Goths before the play's opening demonstrates, "violence was one of the main props of patriarchy in early modern England," but Titus's resort to the murder of his own son in order to regulate a breach in social relations shows how "it was a

resource open to appropriation and abuse, and in its most extreme forms violence was deployed by men in ways which deliberately contravened prescriptive tenets of self-government" (Shepard 128). He is neither a militant father nor a fatherly soldier; instead, he is a soldier who expects his children to show the same loyalty and devotion to him that he does to his emperor, as was modeled by the common hierarchy of God, King, Man. Saturninus, however, does not engage with the Andronici's squabble and rejects them entirely: for who is Titus now a warrior? How is he to achieve honor if he has rejected his blood relatives and consequently lost the opportunity for kinship with the emperor? Lavinia's silence in this scene emphasizes the violence, destruction, and death necessitated by conflicting patriarchal messages about honor and duty.

Lavinia's willful silence and opacity in the play's earlier scenes draws attention to the danger of interpreting her as passive instead of as a survivor of a system that consistently neglects her agency. Bassianus's repetition of Saturninus's accusation of rape draws attention to the common feelings of *all* of the men onstage, but particularly Saturninus—the emperor—that they are victimized by the war over Lavinia's body, establishing their tendency to appropriate her trauma and foreshadowing later events. Her kidnapping and the ensuing bloodshed reveal the ways in which it is not, in fact, Saturninus's (as a symbol of the monarchy, of society) "rape" that the audience witnesses here, but Lavinia's. Implicated in this system of honor and violence as well, Saturninus, despite the lack of evidence of her participation, still blames Lavinia for "[leaving] me like a churl" (1.1. 409 and 490). However, in light of the ambiguity of what little dialogue Lavinia has before her attack, it is crucial to entertain the possibility of Lavinia's passivity as a *deliberate* silence on her part, necessary for her survival. Her response to Saturninus in Act 2, Scene 1 underscores this possibility: as Fawcett points out, to his lewd suggestion that she might be as tired after her wedding night as his new wife, Lavinia

enigmatically answers "I have been broad awake two hours and more" (2.1.18)—she does not say that she is tired, but she does not say that she is *not* tired either—which might be read as "a refusal of any kind of dramatic interchange, a deliberate muteness," which Fawcett reads as "an abjuration of sexuality" (266-267).[3] On the one hand, Fawcett's reading makes sense; Lavinia would want to distance herself as far as possible from Tamora's likeness as Romans would have seen her as an "alien [race]," which were "defined precisely through their departure from normative gender behavior" (84). It is important to note, however, that the focus here is not on Tamora; Saturninus is merely using her as a prop to draw attention to the sexuality of the woman he lost. Consequently, as she is being gawked at by both the monarch and his subjects, Lavinia must respond "correctly" in order to uphold her virtue and honesty. Contradictory patriarchal standards of conduct, however, necessitate a response that could be interpreted as either a chaste wife's refusal to share any information about her sexuality *or* a confirmation of their sexual activity—activity that is the fulfillment of wifely duty. As the head of state, Saturninus's misogynist assumptions about women's sexuality ensure that they are already *always* raped; therefore, we must pay careful attention to how Lavinia survives this constant reinscription of trauma on her body by the men that claim to care for her. If we observe only the ways that Lavinia is victimized and not the ways the play shows her survival, then we too will fall victim to the patriarchal mindset that there are no alternatives to the violence, destruction, and death the play seems to be critiquing.

Lavinia's literal rape, then, is only a natural conclusion for Aaron to draw after witnessing the patriarchal forces at work among the Romans, especially her treatment by

---

[3] Francesca T. Royster seems to agree in "White-limed Whites: Whiteness and Gothic Extremism in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus,"* referring to Lavinia being "so moderate in her desires" (447).

Saturninus and Titus, against whom the Goths seek revenge; her rape is an act of war against Titus. Although Aaron initially tells Chiron and Demetrius that they "do but plot [their] deaths" (1.1.577) in bickering over who would be more likely to woo Lavinia, his mind is quickly changed when Demetrius reminds him that she is, after all, the emperor's sister-in-law: so the brothers should "join for that you jar" and "resolve / That what you cannot as you would achieve, / You must perforce accomplish as you may" (603, 605-607). He claims that "Lucrece was not more chaste / Than this Lavinia" who is a "dainty doe" for "a solemn hunting" (167, 609-611). He alludes to Lucrece's rape, which Shakespeare describes as "the poor frighted deer, that stands at gaze, / Wildly determining which way to fly" ("The Rape of Lucrece" 1200-1201). Like Tarquinius, Demetrius and Chiron will be the hunters and Lavinia the doe to be chased and violated like Lucrece. Aaron's language here takes the language from the earlier exchange amongst the Romans to its logical extreme: Lavinia is not merely an object, but game hunted and consumed for sport. She is not merely something to be traded for social status, but also something less than human that is intended to satisfy man's basest and most primal instincts. As Marguerite A. Tassi argues, "these violent actions serve as a perverted sacrifice that reciprocates the 'irreligious' sacrifice of Tamora's son" (100). Good parenting under patriarchy, then, not only requires violence of adults but also teaches violence to children as a form of personal and political revenge.

Additionally, Tamora's complicity with the plot to rape and maim Lavinia establishes both how women can appropriate nationalist violence for their own benefit even as they find themselves victims of it, further perpetuating a deadly cycle. Lavinia is always an object to be used in battle between factions—she is always the daughter of Titus, a Roman warrior, the Goth's conqueror, a connection to him that constantly denies her subjecthood, making her the

perfect mechanism for revenge; moreover, she openly mocks Tamora when she and Bassianus catch her alone with Aaron, comparing Saturninus to Actaeon and her company with Aaron to "sport" to humiliate her new husband (80). She mocks Tamora for outlaw forms of sexuality both raced and adulterous—so her mockery is sexually charged and *also* defines Tamora as Saturninus's property. Lavinia's harassment is a sign of her own participation in the patriarchal erasure of women's agency for her benefit. Lavinia's connection to Titus as well as her use of Roman masculinist violence to humiliate Tamora makes Lavinia's rape the ideal revenge.

Tamora's hesitation in following through, however, forces the audience to imagine how the plot's trajectory may have been different if Tamora had rescinded her masculinist ethos of ownership of female bodies and violence and stopped her rape or mutilation. Although Tamora is initially receptive to Aaron's plan for "Philomel [to] lose her tongue… / [and her] sons make pillage of her chastity" (2.2.42-43), she ultimately finds it difficult to see Lavinia merely as the "booty" of war (49). After all, Tamora knows better than any other character in the play that women's bodies are all too often the collateral of war, as "we can see how white supremacy is normalized and patrolled through the bodies of women… through the failed project to incorporate Tamora into the Roman social body" (Royster 435). Tamora's body, one that we are repeatedly reminded is Goth rather than Roman, is literally one of the spoils of Rome's victory handed over to its emperor to use as he pleases. It would not be a stretch to assume that Tamora has experienced the violence of war herself, especially considering what surely must have occurred before the play begins, and she is made to beg for her son's life and forced to marry one of her captors. These experiences might explain why, as Lavinia pleads with Tamora as one who "bearest a woman's face" to "show a woman's pity" and even using the same heart-wrenching "O's" that Tamora spoke on behalf of her son, Tamora cannot stand to look at her or even hear

her cries and repeatedly demands her sons take their victim away, saying, “I will not hear her speak” and, twice, “away with her!” and (2.2.135 and 157).

Tamora’s call for revenge is a refraction of the masculinist violence perpetuated by the Romans, but her inability to do the job herself or see it through results in Lavinia’s survival. She tells Lavinia that her fate is less the consequence of her offensive words than it is of Titus’s murder of Albarus, instructing her sons “therefore away with her and use her as you will: / The worse to her, the better loved of me” (161-167). Her instructions reveal the extent of her grief for Alarbus and an objection to the way her son’s body was used for Titus’s ritual sacrifice. Referring to Lavinia’s rape and mutilation as “their fee” marks Tamora’s entrance into the same masculine discourse as the earlier scene by also reducing Lavinia to a commodity (both in her instruction and her language) to be destroyed and returned, an act to be performed against Titus, an act of war against him, indicating how she also sees Lavinia as an extension of her father. However, she does so in a way that distances herself from the act and the lustful violence that motivates it (179). The need to distance herself reveals how close in proximity she herself actually is to objecthood, causing Lavinia to again appeal to Tamora’s “womanhood” and its prescribed early modern characteristics: pity, grace, and charity—but Tamora’s rejection of these qualities ultimately causes Lavinia to see her as “The blot and enemy to [woman’s] general name” (182 and 183). Her accusation draws attention to Tamora’s appropriation of certain tenets of patriarchal manhood, but they are qualified by the obvious emotional tension between the two women. Tamora’s vague request that her sons “make her sure” results in Lavinia’s horrific and inexcusable rape and mutilation as well as what her uncle and father perceive as her shame, true—but ultimately, Tamora leaves her *alive* (187). This “branding or scarring [her] with [her] shame” (Catty 109) rather than death will allow Lavinia the possibility to finally be truly seen by

the men who claim to care about her and, eventually, to "play the scribe" (2.3.4) and take part in her own revenge.

Marcus's immediate response to Lavinia's rape and mutilation reveals the central problem of the play: the opacity of her character due to what the men around her perceive to be the constraints of her raped and mutilated body. In his attempt to "read" her mutilated body, Marcus, while neglecting important questions, uses the language of male desire to make the audience see her—take in the violence she has experienced—as raped. When he initially encounters Lavinia, the language he uses to describe the severity of her wounds is grotesquely poetic: her hands are branches that have been "lopped and hewed" and her mouth is "a crimson river of warm blood, / Like to a bubbling fountain stirred with wind, / [rising and falling] between… rosèd lips" (2.3.17 and 22-24). One can only imagine how profuse Lavinia's bleeding must be to be described "As from a conduit with three issuing spouts" (30). Lisa S. Starks-Estes uses Lynn Enterline's argument that Marcus' speech is, in fact, a blazon that anatomizes Lavinia's dismembered body and "presents [it] as an erotic object of desire" (90)[4]. Even his description of her unimaginable trauma is laced with the same language used to both objectify women and commodify their beauty. He sees her body as ruined and calls attention to the violence used against that beauty. As Lavinia stands on stage, silently bleeding, Marcus's speech forces the audience through the uncomfortable activity of both watching her suffering, unappeased, and seeing a perverted version of someone's former love object, one that is even more perverted when seen through a male family member's eyes—yet Lavinia actually stands onstage, is visible to the audience with or without his objectifying rhetoric. His words are

[4] For a discussion of Marcus's use of the blazon, see Enterline, Lynn. *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare. Cambridge University Press,* 2000.

redundant because Lavinia is her own object lesson; he does not need to make the audience see her, to describe her features in such a gross way.

Marcus's reading of Lavinia marks the beginning of the dilemma that haunts the remainder of the play: Lavinia's body can only "speak"—or rather, "be spoken"—through the interpretation of others as "Lavinia's body, like Philomela's tapestry, tells a story, one that is the focal point" (Starks-Estes 93), regardless of the fact that it is clearly visible to the audience. The "story" that Marcus "tells" by "reading" Lavinia's body is one that emphasizes what he assumes to be her turning away in "shame" at his recounting of Philomela's rape when in fact it could very well be the pain of reliving her trauma through Marcus's crude narration (3.1.27). The audience is painfully aware of this possibility as Marcus continues using rape metaphors to refer to her as "the deer/ That hath received some unrecuring wound," reminding the audience just how similar the Roman men's view of women, even their own kin, are to game: to be hunted and killed (90-91). He places the audience in the uncomfortable position of deciding whether to accept it or to attempt to read her themselves. Even more discomfitingly than his objectifying rhetoric, Marcus has no idea how close he is to the truth when he recounts the very allusion that her violators used as inspiration for her attack, exclaiming "some Tereus hath deflowered thee / And, lest thou shouldst detect him, cut thy tongue" but "a craftier Tereus… hath cut those pretty fingers off / That could have sewed better than Philomel" "a tedious sampler… her mind" (2.3. 26-27, 41-43, and 39). Marcus's language, however, emphasizes just how distant from empathy and close to violence that interpretation can be. Moreover, although Marcus seems to sense his own inadequacy at interpreting Lavinia's signs, wondering aloud "Shall I speak for thee? Shall I say 'tis so? / O that I knew thy heart, and knew the beast," his suggested solution to her awful trauma is, of course, entirely selfish and uninterested in any action whatsoever: "That I might rail

at him" (2.3.33-35). While his assumptions are correct, the tension created by his rhetorical questions implies that perhaps he might *not* be able to read her mind—that he is, in fact, incorrect about what happened to her. He does not, however, provide her any opportunity to show some sign of agreement or disagreement despite the fact that she is capable of communicating to a certain extent: despite her condition, she does open her mouth when he asks her why she does not answer him, and she *does* turn away as he anatomizes what he sees (and what he assumes) has happened to her body. The audience must make the uncomfortable choice to either accept Marcus's reading or to attempt to read Lavinia themselves.

Moreover, his solution to her trauma is entirely inadequate as he neither seeks to aid her, to comfort her, nor to seek justice. Instead, his solution is not only selfish, but it will also continue to reinscribe trauma: he wants to complain in order "to ease my mind" and for the family to "mourn with thee" after the sight of Lavinia inevitably "[makes] thy father blind" (2.3.35, 56, and 52). His language here is contradictory: if the family grieves with Lavinia, she is designated subjecthood, but if the mere sight of her blinds her father, she is no longer the acting agent and no longer someone who was violated—the violation shifts to Titus. This is doubly violent for if an object is named and then accepted as "disgusting," which his words suggest, because of the emotional reaction it elicits in the subject, then Marcus's assumption that Lavinia's body will blind Titus further transforms her "into an object of disgust" (Panek 1). While Starks-Estes argues in favor of reading these lines as a "sadomasochistic fantasy of the mutilated or tortured body of the martyr on display" over David Willbern's interpretation of the lines as "a description of Lavinia as a Medusa figure who suggests the fear of castration" (91)[5], I argue that both readings are valid as they emphasize the men's emotional experiences over

---

[5] Willbern, David. "Rape and Revenge in *Titus Andronicus.*" *ELR,* vol. 8 no. 2, 1978, pp. 171–3.

Lavinia's as well as the tension between the horror at and fascination with only her body. Marcus's speech not only magnifies the horror of Lavinia's rape and mutilation for the audience, but Marcus "rapes" her again by presenting her mutilated body to the audience as a grotesque spectacle.

Titus's reaction initially seems to be nearly the opposite, but is, in fact, even more self-involved than Marcus's: he makes her mutilation about him, even about his body. Even when confronted with the violence done to her, the pain she must surely be experiencing on multiple levels, Titus can only see Lavinia as an extension of himself. When Marcus tells Titus "This *was* thy daughter," Titus responds that "she *is*" (3.1.63-64, italics my emphasis). He confirms that his daughter is, indeed, living. Moreover, when Lucius falls to his knees, crying out "this *object* kills me" (again my emphasis), Titus tells him to "arise and look upon her," that which, as both her attackers and Marcus have already said, "was my deer" (65-66 and 91); he also later insists both men "look… look on her!" (111). On the one hand, he calls on the other men not to turn away from her body, to reinscribe the shame they assume she feels after such a horrific trauma. On the other hand, while Laura Mulvey is speaking of cinema when she argues that "the woman displayed [functions] on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium" (Mulvey 442), her argument easily transfers from the screen to the stage. The men display Lavinia to each other and the audience, and Titus's response is to call upon them (and, in turn, the audience) to look not *at* her, but "upon" or "on" her, as if her body is something to be observed, to be consumed by the eyes—repeating and reinscribing, with a larger audience now, the trauma Marcus enacted when he first came upon her. While Titus's language might reflect the love of an early modern father for a daughter who has experienced violent trauma, while we might read him as compassionate and

even as forcing everyone to contend with the violence she has experienced, the play is careful to highlight how that love actually reinscribes objectification, forcing her to again become a “thing” and to relive her trauma. In a moment when the audience anticipates compassion and action on Lavinia’s behalf, they are met with the harrowing reality of the spectacle her uncle and father have made of her suffering and mutilation.

Even worse, Titus only cares about and grieves for Lavinia as an extension of himself, which painfully reinscribes her trauma. Like Marcus, he can only understand her pain in relation to its impact on him. Titus’s self-obsession engenders sympathy for Lavinia’s suffering while simultaneously revealing how Titus plays an increasingly more obvious role in its causes. Even though he does not move to stop her wounds, Titus does inquire about her attackers. He does not, however, wait for a sign or an answer, instead immediately launching into a wildly self-involved monologue that essentially erases her trauma, her pain—which is still on full display for the audience as she waits while he raves:

> Give me a sword, I’ll chop off my hands too,
>
> For they have fought for Rome, and all in vain;
>
> And they have nursed this woe in feeding life;
>
> In bootless prayer have they been held up,
>
> And they have served me to effectless use.
>
> Now all the service I require of them
>
> Is that the one will help to cut the other.
>
> ‘Tis well, Lavinia, that thou hast no hands,
>
> For hands to do Rome service is but vain. (3.1.71-81)

Any attempt at justice, at providing her agency, or even simply comfort, is overridden by his self-absorption. Initially, Titus seems to demonstrate some sympathy for his daughter in saying that he would cut off his own hands. He does not say this, however, as a sign of solidarity; instead, he uses her body as a lens to look more closely at his own. His hands are useless; they have failed him in gaining any favor or sympathy from Saturninus. The only function they now serve, he says, is for one to chop off the other—not to seek revenge on Lavinia's attackers or even simply serve her, who has none. Furthermore, he tells Lavinia that she should not grieve for her lost hands, as their only purpose would have been to serve a thankless Rome. His self-obsession is magnified to a grotesque extreme as he stands beside his mutilated and silent daughter, using his perfectly good tongue to word a lament for his two perfectly good hands. He reduces hands to use—failed use—effectively erasing Lavinia's trauma, her pain, the violence done to her as moot. Moreover, he not only later repeats this gross claim to Marcus in order to elicit his sympathy, but also doesn't stop at comparison; Titus laments, "he that wounded her / Hath hurt me more than had he killed me,", and "that which gives my soul the greatest spurn" is not what *happened* to his daughter, but actually "*is* dear Lavinia" (92-93 and 102-103) herself; his grammar insists that her body itself is the insult—as opposed to what was done to it—reminding us of her value as discussed in Act 1, Scene 1. Lavinia is a constant reminder to Titus of his own failings. For the audience, his lamentations are a constant reminder of the daughter he has, so far, failed to truly "see." Consequently, he robs her of any agency she may have otherwise had. Åström's claim that "These scenes present Lavinia as an extension of her father's body," certainly holds true, but I would argue that his perception of her as an extension of himself causes us to become increasingly aware of and angry at his neglect of the daughter who is still bleeding, who is still suffering unimaginable pain directly in front of him (128). His

treatment of her reinforces the violence done to her, reiterates it, and reinscribes it on her… yet he only understands it as having had an impact on *him*.

Similarly to Marcus's rhetorical questions, Titus's instruction for Lavinia to "make some sign how I may do thee ease" creates an opportunity for Lavinia to express herself and her needs, yet, like Marcus, he too early forecloses that possibility for her (3.1.122). Instead of giving her enough time to make some sign, he instead immediately launches into a long series of seemingly rhetorical questions that focus on his own grief and mock hers:

> Shall thy good uncle and thy brother Lucius
> And thou and I sit round some fountain,
> Looking all downwards to behold our cheeks,
> How they are stained like meadows yet not dry,
> With miry slime left on them by a flood?
> And in the fountain shall we gaze so long
> Till the fresh taste be taken from that clearness
> And made a brine pit with our bitter tears?
> Or shall we cut away our hands like thine?
> Or shall we bite our tongues and in dumb shows
> Pass the remainder of our hateful days?
> What shall we do? (123-134)

There are no stage directions here to indicate how Lavinia behaves during this speech, and it is entirely possible that she, broken and bleeding, spends his entire monologue attempting to "make some sign" that Titus is clearly oblivious to as he, like Marcus, prioritizes the ways her attack impacts him instead. He does eventually come to the logical conclusion that "Let us that have

our tongues / Plot some device of further misery," but he does so without considering his daughter's ability to respond to real questions (134-135). This tension calls into question Titus's claims to "understand her signs" (144). Does he? It is certainly possible, but it is also important to note that first, he has been away at war for the last 10 years, and second, as an early modern man who rigidly upholds patriarchal ideas, he sees his children only as extensions of himself rather than autonomous beings. Moreover, what need has the audience to trust his interpretations if they can see Lavinia's actions themselves? The titillating tension between allowing and denying Lavinia agency continues when Lucius offers to wipe away Lavinia's tears and Titus claims that "Had she a tongue to speak, now would she say / That to her brother which I said to thee": to refuse the napkin and continue to grieve (145-146). Later, he suggests that because she cannot appropriately mourn without hands, she should either "wound [her heart] with sighing… kill it with groans, / Or get some little knife between thy teeth / And just against thy heart make thou a hole" (3.2.15-17); her primary function is to mourn for herself and her family to the point of self-destruction, as her life is, according to Titus, no longer worth living otherwise. Not only does he refuse her any agency, he does so under the guise of actually providing some meaning for her after her attack. To not know Lavinia's mind but to know her body is a kind of rape by her family, and we are made painfully aware of the ways that Titus perpetuates this.

The play demonstrates that we too can fall prey to our visceral reactions and foreclose opportunities for agency. For example, Titus seems to be aware of his own insufficiency when he insists "I will learn thy thought. / In thy dumb action will I be… perfect… / I of these will wrest an alphabet / And by still practice learn to know thy meaning," which I suggest signifies what he *knows* to be a faulty interpretation of his daughter's bodily signs (3.2.39-45). After all, she does attempt to provide him with some clarity: for example, when Titus allows Aaron to cut off his

hand in an attempt to save his two sons (which, by the way, Lavinia is present for and somehow entirely unnoticed during), Lavinia kneels with him in prayer, and after she kneels beside him, he exclaims, "What, wouldst thou kneel with me? / Do then, dear heart," asking her a rhetorical question and then answering it himself with an imperative (210-211). He seems genuinely surprised at her ability to express her agreement, but encourages her to continue doing so. Moreover, when his prayers go unanswered—and his sons' heads are returned to him—Titus casts aside his sorrow and calls for revenge, but chooses to include Lavinia as a participating member. Titus explains how Lavinia "shalt be employed" in this act of revenge against Saturninus and Tamora: rather than having Marcus, who has two working hands, carry both a head and Titus's hand, he tells Lavinia to "Bear thou my hand… between thy teeth" (3.1.282-283). On the one hand, as many critics have noted,[6] this could mark Lavinia's entrance into the play's revenge plot. She may not have had the opportunity to communicate Tamora's complicity in her attack, but she should certainly not hesitate to seek revenge for it. On the other hand, this command could be interpreted symbolically as no different than Chiron covering Lavinia's mouth to prevent her from speaking before he and his brother drag her into the forest because beyond being wildly undignified in demonstrating that her best "employment" is to carry dismembered body parts, it is not a request and also inhibits her ability to "make signs," effectively silencing her. While at the time, "the ornament of a woman" (Smith 12) was her silence, seeing Lavinia carry her father's hand in her mouth reminds us, "censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time" (Cixous 350). The latter reading, however, in many ways "rapes" Lavinia all over again. To read *Titus* without considering these possibilities is not only to even further deprive Lavinia of agency, but also to take part in reinscribing trauma

[6] See, for example, articles cited by Deborah Willis, Marguerite A. Tassi, and Jennifer Panek.

on a victim who is continually being more grotesquely silenced by those who claim to care about her.

However, the play goes on to demonstrate what is possible when we truly listen to Lavinia instead of silencing her. When Titus allows Lavinia enough agency to be heard, she communicates not only her attackers' names, but also their crime, and her desire for a specific type of revenge, suggesting that they have not, so far, interpreted her correctly—or at least well enough. Act 3, Scene 2 features Lavinia taking part in a family banquet where her nephew requests Titus "make my aunt merry with some pleasing tale" (47). Later, when reading with her nephew, both Marcus and Titus remind the boy of how much his aunt loves and cares for him; the boy even goes so far as to respectfully volunteer to "most willingly attend your ladyship" (28). These two scenes, in particular, exhibit what Lavinia's life might look like if the men around her, particularly her father, did not prevent her from actually living it. It is in this comfortable, comforting space that Lavinia "[seizes] the opportunity to speak… to write" (Cixous 351). Initially, the men are confounded by her movements; it is not until she physically "turns over the books" that they understand her intention: there is an answer within them (4.1.29). Titus, providing her with an opportunity to more effectively communicate, offers his entire library for the task. But the answer is already available in the text at hand, and he helps her turn the pages to find it. For the first time, he asks her a direct question: "Lavinia, wert thou thus surprised… / Ravished and wronged as Philomena was, / Forced in the ruthless, vast and gloomy woods?" to which she nods her assent (51-54). Like Tamora, Lavinia borrows a language she knows the men will most likely understand—but she borrows hers from the pages of the book; moreover, her choice of this particular tale, one previously referenced by Aaron and Marcus, is the borrowing of a specific story she knows they will recognize. Titus creating the space for her

to communicate allows her to reveal what happened to her the day of her attack. Moreover, instead of continuing a closed "yes or no" methodology of questioning, he asks her an open-ended question she cannot possibly answer by simply gesturing: who did it? Marcus is the one who arrives at a solution that permits her the most agency: "He writes his name with his staff, and guides it with feet and mouth" (68). His gesture acknowledges the subjectivity of meaning-making and does not lead to misinterpretation and misunderstanding; instead, he devises a means by which Lavinia can (as fully as possible) express herself.

The play seems to suggest a particular ethics here: in order to fully accept the agency of those who are most marginalized, one must allow them to, as Cixous claims, "write their bodies into existence." While Catty Jocelyn describes this model of female utterance by women like Philomela and Lucrece as a "swansong" (4-5), and Tassi claims that Lavinia's speechlessness "signifies the unspeakable nature of her violation" (98), the combination of Lavinia's word choice and the phallic image of the staff/pen suggests that providing agency for utterance may require a reimagining of what constitutes dignity. Providing conditions that enable the most agency may not fit neatly inside the parameters of what is considered "dignified" or "decent." Both Jocelyn's and Tassi's interpretations highlight our limited abilities to communicate the impact of horror and violence. However, Lavinia's guidance of the staff using her mouth and her arms transcends the boundaries of decency and allows her to communicate in a way best summarized by Cixous: "women must write through their bodies… submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve-discourse, including the one that laughs at the very idea of pronouncing the world 'silence,' the one that, aiming for the impossible, stops short before the word 'impossible' and writes it as 'the end'" (355).

Titus and Marcus actually *do* facilitate Lavinia's speaking and model the effectiveness of such an ethics. While Lavinia discovers her ability to communicate her rape through the pages of a book, her family creates the opportunity for her to rewrite the revenge plot to include justice for crimes committed against her. Moreover, The Latin term she uses to describe the crime against her—*stuprum*—carries connotations of "pollution, so that the victim, however innocent of causing the act, was nevertheless irreparably tainted" (Moses 49). Lavinia feels shame and seeks revenge, which would make sense because her family habitually reminds her that she has been "ravished" and has yet to take any action on her behalf. She knows that "women's bodies were both the cause and register of shame" (Gowing 232) and because her husband has been murdered, the shame of her rape falls on her father. Thus, "she writes a word that will activate a system of punishment performed by males" (Robertson) and "quite unlike Lucrece… can return her shame to her attackers by transforming them into something even more vile" (Panek 2). Her direct accusation here forces her family to both acknowledge the wrong done to her as a "chaste dishonoured dame" *and* to act, to "prosecute… mortal revenge" by killing Demetrius and Chiron and mutilating their bodies, desecrating them by feeding them to their mother (4.1.90 and 92). While this reinforces the idea that a violation of her body is an offense that is not personal to her but rather exclusively impacts the men in her family (as it would have been seen at the time), whose assistance she needs in order to achieve justice, it also shows how facilitating open-ended communication with Lavinia about her needs and desires enables her agency. We should, however, be less wary of Lavinia's use of a patriarchal system in this moment (as it is the only thing that seems to spur revenge for her attack into action) than we should be of the men's immediate usurpation of the conversation. She is told what to do ("kneel" and "come" [87 and 120]), but never again provided an opportunity to express herself. This is not to suggest that

Lavinia is not an active and engaged participant in the revenge plot, but rather to expose the silencing of women.

While Titus encourages Lavinia to witness and to participate in his revenge on her attackers, its impact is flattened by his objectification of her and his preoccupation with personal revenge that ultimately results in her death. When he binds and gags Chiron and Demetrius, he invites Lavinia to look on them, permitting her use of the gaze that is so often turned on her. The syntax of his address to the brothers, however, turns that gaze back on her. "Here stands the spring who you have stained with mud, / This goodly summer with your winter mixed," Titus announces (5.2.169-170). The syntax of these two clauses calls for the brothers to look at Lavinia, to look at how they have marred the beautiful image of her body; the language Titus uses to describe their actions (of "mud" and "winter"), however, is still natural and thus diminishes the forced violence of the act. To use language associated with nature to describe the rape of mutilation of his daughter *is* again conforming to patriarchal—and therefore objectifying—norms. Moreover, it almost sanctions the attack as something natural itself, something the men may not have been able to control, like mud after the rain or winter ending a beautiful summer. Titus does Lavinia further violence when he claims that the brothers took "her spotless chastity," implying that it is something that can be taken by force (and that she is, therefore, no longer chaste) (176). Because he believes her no longer chaste, Titus commands Lavinia to "come, / Receive the blood" in a basin held between her stumps, an incredibly sexually charged image (196-197). He reveals to the brothers that he, like Progne, will feed their bodies to their mother at a banquet "for worse than Philomel you used my daughter," which is true: whereas Philomel was raped and her tongue was cut out by Tereus, Lavinia is raped by two men and has both her tongue cut out and her hands cut off—but Titus says that "worse than

Progne I will be revenged," by which, as we are soon to find out, he means not only dismembering the brothers to bake into a pie to feed to their mother, but also publicly murdering his own daughter before murdering their mother as well (194-195). This moment shows that Titus can identify with a woman (Philomela's sister), but that he seeks an even more drastic form of revenge than the already horrific plan of feeding Tamora's sons to her. We do not yet know that this will include murdering his own daughter as well, but his words imply a need for even more destruction in order to reestablish his honor.

The manner in which Titus stages Lavinia's murder suggests a preoccupation with his own honor that eclipses hers, and it also makes obvious the patriarchal economy of honor's overreliance on death for its maintenance. He asks Saturninus, Rome's patriarchal figurehead, a leading question: "Was it well done of rash Virginius / To slay his daughter with his own right hand / Because she was enforced, stained and deflowered?" (5.3.38). When Saturninus denies Virginius's rashness and responds correctly, Titus "locates Lavinia's survival in nonlinear time" (Schwarz 77) as she has already lost her chastity to rape, and he uses this as a "warrant" to kill her, proclaiming "Die, die, Lavinia, and thy shame with thee, / And with thy shame thy father's sorrow die" (5.3.43 and 45-46). Titus's use of this particular question to "sanction" Lavinia's murder as well as his proclamation point to the ways that maintaining a sense of patriarchal manhood requires violence, even death. Imagine a Lavinia struggling, fighting for her life in the shock of this very last moment. If the Andronici's revenge "returned" her shame to her attackers, then she would not have felt the shame that necessitated death. Even Tamora is horrified that Titus would "[slay] thine only daughter thus" (54). Moreover, Titus's articulation of his need to end Lavinia's life in order to end his own sorrows highlights just how dangerous patriarchal fatherhood is, and Tamora and Saturninus's reaction, which is rightfully aghast at this "unnatural

and unkind" (47) deed, emphasizes the ways that "although violence was one of the most powerful patriarchal resources, it was impossible to control, both because it was so diffuse and because it served a range of male identities beyond the patriarchal agenda for order" (Shepard 151). Titus insists on Lavinia's death, and he is obsessed with ending her life because of the way that he believes her life hurts him.

While it is entirely possible that this moment is one of mutual decision, what if it isn't? Jennifer Panek argues that "it is only reasonable to think that *[Lavinia] knows how [Philomela's story] ends,* and that's exactly the revenge she's demanding" (7), which implies revenge against the violators and, ultimately, freedom for the victim. Her story ends not only with Progne's revenge of forced cannibalism, but also with the gods turning Philomela into a bird so that she can escape the wrath of her violator. Despite the fact that Lavinia is rather clear about her position in using Ovid's text to convey the story of her attack, Titus immediately conflates Philomela's story with Lucrece's in his call for "Mortal revenge" (93) against the Goths. The myth's revenge plot is not the only significant difference from the story of Philomela—so is what happens to the woman who has been the victim of the attack: Lucrece takes her own life. The "tarnished" woman's suicide is commonly explained in conduct books of the time as the only logical option, as Juan Luis Vives explains using the story of Lucrece, who Demetrius and Chiron alluded to when devising Lavinia's tragic fate:

> What can be safe to a woman saith Lucrecia, whan her honeste is gone? And yet had she a chaste mynde in a corrupt body. Therefore as Quintilian saythe, she thrist a sworde in to her body, and avenged the compulsyon, theat the pure mynde might be seperated from the defyled body, as shortly as coude be. But I saye nat this bicause other shulde folowe the dede, but the mynde: Bicause she that hath ones lost her

honestie, shuld thynke there is nothynge lefte. (Vives 34)

Vives suggests that even though a woman need not take her own life as a consequence of her rape, she should see herself as without value. While this value system does not directly encourage suicide, it reinforces patriarchal violence: first, by convincing women that they have lost their value if their honesty has been compromised, and second, by also giving the men who rely on that worth permission to assume those women have lost their value. This notion does not, however, suggest that these women's lives are worthless, which is an important distinction. Its ambiguity leaves room for living, although finding meaning in such a life seems impossible when conduct authors compare it to suicide. If Titus views his daughter as more similar to Lucrece than to Philomela, whom she has self-identified, he does not view her life as valuable beyond using her for his own personal gain in a game of revenge.

Lavinia's brutal murder by Titus in the play's final scene confirms that he no longer finds value in her life beyond using her as a player in his plot for revenge. It is necessary to consider, however, that Lavinia may believe there is something left beyond revenge other than suicide; the opacity of her character neither confirms nor denies such a possibility. When given the opportunity to truly live by her family, Lavinia eats meals with them, reads with her nephew, and finds new and increasingly more nuanced and effective ways to communicate with them, including calling for revenge on her attackers and taking part in the plot herself. Nothing Lavinia has done thus far suggests that she wants to end her life over her shame, and to do so would not have proven so difficult as to be impossible, including throwing herself off some parapet. Berit Åström, on the other hand, claims that Lavinia's earlier plea to be murdered rather than be raped justifies her murder by Titus. To have been murdered instead of raped would have maintained her chastity, which would have revealed "the demand for figures that signify fixed sexual states"

requiring death (Schwarz 53), but this is no longer possible, so it cannot possibly justify her murder. This only emphasizes the entirely selfish nature of the act: Titus's reputation (he believes) will survive precisely because Lavinia's body does not, a value system which demonstrates the patriarchal prioritization of men's reputation over women's lives. The four dead bodies on the stage testify to the failures of both the militant patriarchal government and the militant patriarchal father; both "use the dead to decide what lives are worth living, not to 'them' but to a consensually manufactured 'us'" (Schwarz 58).

Although the title suggests that this play is, quite simply, about the father, as Tassi points out, Lavinia has nearly as much stage time as Titus—so we must consider not only what kind of father he is (one who is preoccupied with "earning" the "honor" and "dignity" offered by an oppressive patriarchal economy, even at the cost of his innocent children's lives), but also how his choices impact his daughter. By allowing the audience to watch Lavinia survive her trauma as Titus's wars transition from national to factional to personal, even if only briefly, it quickly becomes clear that Titus's treatment of his daughter not only reproduces, but also resists such a custom by suggesting the possibility of alternate ways of living after such a horrific trauma. Lavinia's body, intensely magnified by her silence, becomes an inscrutable fulcrum for her trauma, and the play's ending only leaves us wondering whether or not her father interpreted it correctly. Rather than erasing Lavinia or her agency, her daily objectification, rape, and murder by her father instead makes her agency, her desire, and her suffering more painfully obvious to the audience. Maybe we too need to listen harder lest we silence her.

While the setting and structure of J. M. Coetzee's postcolonial novel *Disgrace* initially seem uncannily similar to those of *Titus Andronicus*, a closer reading of *Disgrace* reveals a narrative arc in which a daughter creates the conditions of possibility for a father who does his

absolute best to be blind to them. Although historically inaccurate, *Titus*'s central conflict fictionalizes the ongoing disputes between the invading Romans and the conquered Goths, specifically those between Titus and Tamora. Separated by time, history, and geography, *Disgrace* fictionalizes the land disputes that dominate post-apartheid South African discourse as the nation grapples with the effects of colonial land ruling, both social and material. As Megan Cole Paustian argues, *Disgrace* "[speaks] to… the 'problem-space' of the post-apartheid present in which the troubling continuity of inequality, poverty, and violence, reveals the urgent need to reimagine the post-struggle horizon" (104). *Disgrace*, like *Titus*, calls for a reimagining of a world that is enmeshed in a vicious cycle of violence. Also like *Titus*, *Disgrace* is told from the perspective of the "victors," the entitled and narcissistic white South African professor David Lurie and his daughter Lucy. Like Lavinia, Lucy is also the survivor of an act of war, a horrific act of sexual violence with an important variation: she is not physically mutilated to prevent her from identifying her attackers. Lucy, unlike Lavinia, *chooses* to be silent about her attack, while her father, like Titus, does his best to make her trauma about himself. Unlike Lavinia, Lucy repeatedly interrupts sanctioned meanings of daughterhood (and, eventually, motherhood) and sets the terms of her own agency, which David must accept if he wants to remain in her life in any meaningful capacity. Whereas *Titus* exposes the silencing of women, *Disgrace* calls for an ethics that decenters the white male experience and creates the conditions of possibility for a drastic reimagining of the future.

Despite the fact that a Black woman is the very first to refuse and displace David's logic of power, like *Titus*, *Disgrace*'s early chapters establish how thoroughly enmeshed in a stratified world view—in which he is at the top—he is. The book opens with David's already well-established working relationship with a sex worker named Soraya deteriorating to the point of

stalking her at her home. He refuses, however, to even acknowledge this as a violation, let alone apologize for or repent it; he assumes not only Soraya's cooperation, but also her pleasure in interacting with him and is surprised when she rejects him. David's assumptions about Black women are deeply engrained in what George Yancy refers to as "colonial gazing," and the focalization of the text through David emphasizes the influence of the white European patriarchy on South African society, "where the colonizer (white, good, intelligent, ethical, beautiful, civilized) is superior in all things, while the native (dark, exotic, sexually uncontrollable, bad, stupid, ugly, savage, backward) is inferior" (4).[7] His imperialist attitude is evident throughout David's relationship with Soraya whose "honey-brown" and "exotic" features he finds alluring (Coetzee 1), but especially when she declines his business after he follows her on St. George's Street while she is shopping with her children, who he begins to imagine himself as a "foster-father, step-father, shadow-father" to. Previously, he saw himself as "uxorious," a doting husband to a rather simple woman whose desires matched his, yet seeing her on the street with her family shatters that illusion, makes her into a whole person with desires separate from his own that he has no control over (2, 6, and 8). As a consequence of his growing anxiety about losing control, he hires a private detective to track her, and he is surprised when she asserts her agency and demands that he leave her alone. She rejects his paternalism by asserting that she is not, in fact, some subordinate "daughter" figure and redraws the power boundaries. In that moment, Coetzee presents the reader with a rhetorical question: "But then, what should a predator expect when he intrudes into the vixen's nest, into the home of her cubs?" (10). It is not clear whether the question is David's or the narrator's, but what is indelibly clear is that David is a predator out to hunt. Whether that be merely an animal or a sexually promiscuous woman, both

---

[7] Similarly to the Romans' views on the Goths in Titus Andronicus.

readings inexcusably dehumanize Soraya, whose backstory we cannot possibly know. By focusing on David, an unlikable, entitled middle-aged middle-class white man, the text demands the reader consider the violent and terrifying impact his attitude and actions have on her. His comfort depends on the destruction of her life outside of her job, the destruction of her reality in favor of David's fantasy as he forces his own reading and interpretation onto her.

Soraya's rejection propels David toward targeting easier prey: one of his young undergraduate students, Melanie. Not only does David "other" Melanie's quiet nature, referring to her as "the dark one" and renaming her Melanie-Meláni, he also fetishes her youth and abuses his role as her teacher, insisting that "a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone…. She has a duty to share it" (18 and 16). Moreover, he interprets her passivity as flirtation and repeatedly codes her as "wanting it." He reads her smile as "sly rather than shy" and then "evasive and perhaps even coquettish," so that he distorts even the most innocent behavior (11-12). He even interprets their interaction as one that is sexually charged from its first moments. Yet her reactions to physical contact suggest that he has not merely misinterpreted opaque signs; David notes that "she is passive throughout… her eyes closed, her hands slack, a slight frown on her face" (19). Her absence from class the following day and her slip in grades, moreover, suggest that this has been a traumatic experience for her. Not only does he commit sexual violence against her, but he also misrepresents her by coding her as some kind of "temptress" figure. When Melanie pulls away from him, he stalks her at home, like he did with Soraya, and forces himself on her because, he claims, he simply cannot help but give himself over to the passion that such a beautiful young woman inspires. He rapes her (despite the fact that far too many critics hesitate to call it precisely that)[8], but David and members of the committee of inquiry

---

[8] Elizabeth Anker refers to it as a seduction, Albert du Toit calls it an "affair," Derek Attridge a "liaison," while both Tom Herron and Maria Lopez refer to the relationship as merely "abuse."

called to investigate the relationship view his actions as "not rape, not quite that" (Coetzee 25). The description of her reaction, however, leaves no doubt that this is, indeed, rape: it was "as though she had decided to… die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck" (25). The comparison of David to a predatory animal and Melanie to his prey, reminiscent of his invasion of Soraya's home, again animalizes a woman (an age-old expression of racism, although Melanie's race is ambiguous), comparing her to an innocent and vulnerable animal, and it also demands the reader consider the emotional impact such a violent and horrific act can have, forcing the victim to resort to the basic instincts of survival. David's presumptions of women's sexuality and of their consent to a sexual relationship with him based on race and now age disqualify him from the sympathy that he so desperately believes he deserves.

The entrance of Melanie's father realigns Melanie as someone's daughter, and moreover, establishes a type of fathering that decenters itself and provides opportunities for accountability and repentance. Melanie's father calls David and asks him to "talk some sense into her" as "she wants to give up her studies and get a job" (36); he doesn't appear to know why she is so desperate to leave school, but apparently she has been speaking a great deal about David. A week later, Mr. Isaacs shows up at David's office to confront him about what he's done, calling him "a viper," demanding his shame, yet also giving David the opportunity to explain "if [he's] got hold of the wrong end of the stick" (38). Mr. Isaacs establishes an alternate type of fathering: one that clearly cares enough about his daughter to confront an individual that he believes is preying on her, yet one that does not seek revenge and instead, is willing to concede to the authority of the professor rather than unequivocally believing his daughter. He confronts David and accuses him of a crime, but still provides him with the opportunity to speak for himself, establishing a type of

fathering markedly different from David's when he is later placed in a similar situation: one that decenters anger and blame and allows for other perspectives. While this may initially seem like an erasure of Melanie's voice, ultimately her father does not hesitate to outright accuse David of violating his daughter, and even warns him that "you have not heard the last of it" (38). David, even as a father of a daughter himself, still refuses to admit his violation and flees, thus reinscribing both the trauma he himself has enacted on her as well as the trauma of her father being willing to hear David's version of events.

Even when David admits to the charge of "victimization or harassment of students by teachers" (39), he effectively silences Melanie *again* by refusing to read her formal statement—refusing to hear her—and dismissing any call for sincere admission of wrongdoing as a form of unnecessary emasculation. As Lianne Barnard argues, "he should take into account her view of the matter, something he consistently refuses to do. Even at the risk of losing his job, he prefers his own view of the events to the exclusion of all others" (24). He silences Melanie not only by raping her, but also by refusing to read her testimony—an act of oppression Mr. Isaacs himself rejects—and one that significantly undercuts David's outrage. He cannot read Melanie's statement because it dishonors him, but he is not willing to admit wrongdoing. David's interactions with Soraya, Melanie, and her father in the novel's early chapters establish how controlling and destructive attitudes towards women and people of color uphold antiquated conceptions of honor and dignity (ones that will shape the way he reacts later to his own daughter's attack); furthermore, although the committee for inquiry is hardly a model of accountability, David's preoccupation with his own dignity and honor at the expense of all others ultimately does not allow him to maintain his esteemed position as an academic at the university.

When David decides to leave Cape Town to visit Lucy after feeling dishonored by the proceedings, he still cannot understand the events from any point of view other than his own even when Lucy challenges his narrative; instead, he turns her argument into a personal attack on her body. His anxiety, like Titus's, is over "what he leaves behind," which he tells Lucy stems from his belief that "by comparison with being a mother, being a father is a rather abstract business" (62-63). He refers to fatherhood using the remnants of the same imperialist attitudes displayed in *Titus*: it is a transaction in which he expects to gain something; moreover, his comparison of it to motherhood "[depends] upon an exclusive identification of woman with the reproductive or copulating body" (Spivak 355). While he initially decides, however, that "If this is to be what he leaves behind—this daughter, this woman—then he does not have to be ashamed," he quickly changes his mind as the ways in which she exists cease to align with his idea of "a higher life," perhaps because he cannot think of her as more than merely a body (62 and 74). First, he hopes that her life in the countryside "is only a phase," clearly undermining the life she has built for herself (64); next, he decides that his initial use of the word "ample" to describe his daughter's body is too "kind," and that "soon she will be positively heavy. Letting herself go," a reactionary contrast to the content of their conversation: it is David, in fact, who is "letting himself go" as he is "so perfect that [he] can't do with a little counselling" and "would prefer simply to be put against a wall and shot." Rather than acknowledging the validity of her points, he turns her criticisms of his behavior into criticisms of her body and her lifestyle. Moreover, Like Titus, he seems to prefer death to change, or as Lucy calls his attitude: "unbending." Unlike *Titus*, however, we are privy not only to his words, but also to David's innermost thoughts. After he tells Lucy that "they wanted a spectacle," he does not add "The truth is, they wanted me castrated" (65-66). Perhaps both men prefer marginalization to

castration, which is somehow worse—in Lacanian terms, the loss of the privilege of the phallus. To accept a woman's agency, even to empower it, is a threat to both of these fathers—and why wouldn't it be, considering how patriarchal power seems only to result in violence and death? Castration, however, "cannot be feared if the phallus were not already detachable, already elsewhere, already dispossessed… Significant in its misogyny, this construction [of the feminine] suggests that 'having the phallus' is much more destructive as a feminine operation than a masculine one, a claim that symptomatizes the displacement of phallic destructiveness and implies that there is no other way for women to assume the phallus except in its most killing modalities" (Butler 65-66). David seems to be aware of the masculine relationship between dignity, which inevitably comes at the expense of others less privileged than him, and death—and either does not care or fears what would happen if he were to take responsibility for and repent his actions publicly. Admitting his wrongdoing to his daughter, to the committee, to Melanie or her father, to Soraya—for David, would be terrifyingly emasculating, destructive of the power hierarchy he is a direct beneficiary of. This anxiety has left him with few options, and he rejects the possibility of living a life in which he feels "castrated" by admitting *not* that he raped a student, but only that he "victimized" or "harassed" her in some way.

Whereas Lavinia's concession to the prescribed feminine role initially assures Titus of his social elevation, Lucy's rejection of conventional womanhood and daughterhood convinces David that somehow his daughter will "save" him and lead him to a higher life—yet he somehow manages to come to this conclusion while completely ignoring her criticism of his behavior. Lucy rejects a multitude of sanctioned ways of life for the daughter of a university professor: not only did she move to the country, she also operates a farm where she grows flowers and boards dogs, and it is implied that she may be a lesbian. Moreover, she does not hold back her opinions

and constantly reminds David of the fact that he is an active patriarchal agent, especially in his "relationship" with Melanie. She "[presumes] to tell him about women," which he can hardly believe, and when he attempts to argue that "Every woman I have been close to has taught me something about myself. To that extent they have made me a better person," Lucy responds with the declarative "I hope you are not claiming the reverse as well. That knowing you has turned your women into better people" (69-70). It is clear that Lucy makes a valid point as David is silent, unable to come up with a reply. We only know of a few relationships David has had with women, all failures: two divorces, his solicitation and stalking of Soraya, his rape of Melanie, a brief affair with an office secretary, his affair with Bev Shaw, and the solicitation another young sex worker, all of whom he thinks himself superior to. We might assume that these failures are largely due to David's narcissistic attitude, his conviction that he (and only he) has something to gain from these relationships. Lucy falls silent, but it is not because David has made the better point; instead, he has managed to miss her argument entirely—for an ethics of responsibility that is tied to privilege—altogether. She "draws a break [and] seems about to respond to his homily, but then does not;" the implication is not that she cannot think of a response, but rather that she senses its futility in responding to his "holier than thou" premise and chooses not to. When David agrees that "we are all souls. We are souls before we are born," Lucy points out that regardless of his professed belief in equality, he lives on his "own terms." His reaction to her is hardly a concession: "Forgive me, Lucy," he says, "For being one of the two mortals assigned to usher you into the world and for not turning out to be a better guide" (79). He does not apologize for the fact that his behavior demonstrates a firm belief in *in*equality or that he has done any wrong. He apologizes for not being a better father. Moreover, he deflects blame, saying he was only half of a pair and that he only happened to not "turn out" to be "better." The condescension

of his response implies that he believes that his efforts were more than enough, and that somehow she should accept what he perceives to be merely imperfections. Significantly, Lucy doesn't accept his apology or offer forgiveness; instead, she asks him to prove his beliefs, which he reluctantly accepts. She refuses to allow him to re-enter her life unchanged, and the narrative emphasis belies the wisdom of her demand: he no longer sees himself as her "guide." Instead, he firmly believes that as a father, it "is his fate [to turn] more and more… toward his daughter. She becomes his second salvation… Poor Lucy! Poor daughters! What a destiny, what a burden to bear!" (86-87). Like Titus, he has expectations for the role he believes his daughter is obligated to fulfill, and those expectations extend to his perceived function of all daughters' obligations to their fathers, to "bear the burden" of "saving" them. Despite critical concern about the impact of the focalization of David's perspective, this conversation lays bare the disparity between his perceptions and reality. His view of the world depends on control and limitation of women solely for men's benefit; according to David's worldview, even when women like Lucy have agency and autonomy, it is only for the purpose of becoming their father's caretakers.

Even though he has done very little to prove that he respects her autonomy, when Lucy is brutally attacked, David cannot accept that his daughter does not seek her father's help. But what happens when a father can no longer rely on his daughter for his salvation, as Titus cannot once Lavinia is raped and mutilated by Chiron and Demetrius? Or, as David frames it, "How will they stand up to the testing, he and his heart?" (94) as Lucy is raped by three men. Not only are David's initial assumptions about the role an adult daughter *should* play shattered, so are his assumptions about his role as a father to a violated daughter. Like Lavinia, Lucy is violated "offstage" by the perpetrators, their actions too awful to depict; however, while Chiron and Demetrius murder Bassianus, the three men leave David alive but injured while they attack Lucy.

Like Titus, David imagines that even when he is met with silence, his role as father guarantees his ability to "hear" his daughter: "Though he strains to hear, he can make out no sound from the house. Yet if his child were calling, however mutely, surely he would hear!" (94). Moreover, both fathers imagine that they can not only hear, but also interpret the needs of their daughters, despite the fact that both have proven themselves to be nothing short of selfish and completely oblivious to experiences outside of their own. Throughout the ordeal, he does not once actually hear Lucy cry out for him—although he repeatedly calls out for her, again and again. To imagine that she does is to imagine that she is a daughter in need of a father, but if she does not cry out for him, where does that leave him as a father? When she finally unlocks the bathroom door where David is trapped, she "has turned her back on him." When he follows her and tries to embrace her, "gently, decisively, she wriggles loose." Despite his inclination that his daughter has been raped, his first instinct is to touch her, which she clearly does not want. When he follows her to the bathroom, she tells him "don't come in" and answers his "stupid questions"—"Are you alright? Are you hurt?"—with silence. She rejects his attempts to prove himself her caretaker, a loving paternal figure. Not only does she refuse to be the victimized daughter in need of protection at this moment, but she also refuses to treat David as if he is a victim either: "She does not stir a finger to soothe him" and "leaves him" to get help. Moreover, before she leaves, Lucy asks that he "[keep] to your own story, what happened to you… You tell what happened to you, I tell what happened to me" (97-98). He fails to realize that she does not want or need him at this moment, and that his efforts to help are actively thwarting her ability to process her attack.

Her request that he not tell her side of the story suggests that she understands how men—especially fathers—will control the narrative at the expense of their daughters, as we saw in *Titus*. Her conversations with him prior to the attack only reinforce the idea that Lucy

understands quite clearly her father's biases, and so by remaining silent, she chooses not to allow him to tell her story *or* to (mis)interpret it. He resists her choice, calling it "a mistake" and trying to take her in his arms again even when she clearly does not want to be, "still as a pole, yielding nothing" (99). He does not "hear" what her silence is saying to him: he is not what she wants or needs at this moment. In fact, he continually tries to touch her, even though her body language clearly reveals how traumatic his touch is to her. Although her silence is chosen, unlike Lavinia's, the opacity of her silence implies the ways that manhood, including fatherhood, perpetuates and is complicit in violence.

Like Titus, the turning point for David occurs as he struggles to balance respecting his daughter's silence with his intense desire to protect her: he allows her to tell her version of her story. However, unlike Titus, David attempts to tend to Lucy's private emotional needs by creating the conditions for her to process her attack safely and comfortably even though his motives are misguided. Even though it is clear that he cannot adequately care for himself, let alone Lucy, David is not willing to give up his paternal role, "to abandon his daughter," despite the fact that his daughter clearly turns away from him in this moment (141). While he trembles at the hospital, Lucy seems to be "all strength, all purposefulness," but her friend Bill Shaw is the one who picks up David when he is discharged, and Lucy is already asleep at their home "[having] taken a sedative" (101-102). David allows her to take charge of the situation and care for him despite the implication that this was an incredibly traumatic experience for Lucy. It bothers him, however, that "she has spoken to him as if to a child—a child or an old man" throughout this ordeal, highlighting a moment where the novel's focus provides us with insight to David's anxiety about aging, which he sees as emasculating, despite his prior eagerness for a daughter to be the agent of his salvation. This inherent contradiction demonstrates how

patriarchal notions of what it means to be a daughter set impossible standards: you are responsible for your father's care, but don't make him feel as if that's the case. This anxiety is emphasized when he has a dream that Lucy calls out to him for help, and he slips into her room to "[watch] over his little girl, guarding her from harm, warding off the bad spirits" (103-104). He feels the most paternal instinct in a moment that is purely imagined, but it is perhaps the most sympathetic David has been yet. He wants to tend to Lucy's immediate physical and emotional needs before seeking "justice" (very much unlike Titus), and although he struggles with precisely how to do so, he is trying. He repeatedly asks about her health, "leaves it to Lucy to take [the police] through the story she has elected to tell," moves into her bedroom to "[chase the ghosts] out, not [allow them] to take it over as their sanctum," and helps Petrus run her stall at the market when she asks (108-111). His actions exhibit his desire to protect her, to provide a space where she feels safe and secure enough to make her own choices unimpeded and unthreatened.

He is not perfect, however, and cannot place what is in Lucy's best interests ahead of his: he confronts Pollux, and later confronts Petrus about Pollux despite Lucy's insistence that he not. She insists that she is "not her father's little girl, not any longer" (105), and David needs to understand this if he wants to maintain any kind of relationship with her. He knows "Patiently, silently, Lucy must work her own way back from the darkness to the light. Until she is herself again" (107), and he does his best to create a situation for her to comfortably do so even while he struggles to understand her choices. Unlike Lavinia, Lucy *chooses* her silence, and because of the ambiguity of silence, it is perhaps easier for the reader, like David, to sit with its discomfort and allow Lucy to tell her story the way she wants it to be heard. In both trying to shield her from further injury and in respecting her desire to maintain some semblance of her life prior to the attack, David tries to create the conditions for healing despite not understanding her reasoning.

This is not to suggest, however, that David's desire for Lucy to speak out against her rapists is not misguided. After the police report is filed, David asks her why she refuses to "[tell] the whole story." He thinks to himself that "It will dawn on [the perpetrators] that over the body of the woman silence is being drawn like a blanket," which, in his mind, is "[conceding] them [a] victory" (110). Critics like Lucy Graham agree with David, but actually the assumption that "silence is being drawn" is what reinscribes violence on Lucy's body as it deprives her of any agency in how her narrative is told—or not told; that it is "conceding them a victory" is doubly a violence as it presumes what Lucy should or should not do as a result of what happened to her. On the one hand, silence once equaled death; now, silence also equals complicity, which is not much better. David's desire for her to speak, however misguided, is rooted in the idea that to remain silent is to reinscribe violence on her body—an unexpectedly feminist line of thought. When he confronts her about this, however, he reveals the mechanics of a logic that, on the other hand, ultimately still reduces her to an object: "There is no shame in being the object of a crime. You did not choose to be the object." He consigns her to objecthood despite the fact that the crime has already occurred and now she is an acting agent who is capable of making her own choices about how to move forward. Lucy does not dignify him with an answer—perhaps suggesting that in not reporting her crime, she rejects the notion of being an object at all. She is not interested in what Graham calls "conscious restoration of the body as a site of suffering and violation" (440); this would be relegating herself to objecthood, which David fails to understand.

When Lucy attempts to explain her reasoning, David's inability to separate his understanding of justice from abstract principles like vengeance, guilt, and salvation forces her to end the conversation and refuse to have it until he makes an effort to understand her perspective. Her response to David's misogynist presumption that she is "trying to remind [him]... of what

women undergo at the hands of men" is that what has happened to her is not about him or even all men. She rejects the notion that, as Jacqueline Rose points out, "under apartheid… there is very little women were guilty of" (180)[9]. Even so, her rape is not a public matter either; "It is my business, mine alone," private *especially*, she claims, because she is South African. Lucy implies that she understands that she is a beneficiary of a colonial system, that gender is racialized in South Africa. She seems to understand the tension inherent in being both the beneficiary of a colonial system and the victim of racially motivated crime. When David presumes she means "some form of private salvation" or "[expiating] the crimes of the past by suffering in the present," she must again redirect him (Coetzee 111-112). Her refusal to report what happened to her is not because of some "abstraction;" she sees the necessity of considering her role in apartheid South Africa not as some "white savior," but as an individual who can "commit [herself] to the reconciliation process" (Rose 189). Lucy's forced ending to this conversation emphasizes two important points: first, that she absolutely refuses and displaces his logic of power—what he later refers to as "stubborn, and immersed, too, in the life she has chosen" (Coetzee 134); and second, that if he wants to have a conversation with her, he needs to "make an effort to see that [she doesn't act in terms of abstractions]" (112). She will not speak to him until he does. While, like David, we may be well intentioned in our desire for Lucy to speak up for herself, Coetzee continually emphasizes the fact that it is indeed Lucy's *choice* not to, that she will not be pushed, and—most importantly—that she has a reason she needs us to try to understand.

---

[9] Jacqueline Rose is referring to the fact that women were not generally recognized as violent agents of the apartheid regime—at least until a woman came forward in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings to call attention to the violence and immorality of the passive acceptance of Apartheid.

David must turn to Lucy's friend Bev Shaw for understanding; although he is still, without a doubt, too self-centered to get out of his own way, it is the first time he even entertains the possibility that his own point of view might somehow be limited . David cannot grasp the concept that some of these paths might be beyond his understanding. Bev reminds David "you weren't there… You weren't" (Coetzee 140). David's response echoes Cixous's claim about "masculine anxiety and its obsession with how to dominate the way things work—knowing 'how it works' in order to 'make it work'" (887). He thinks to himself,

> Where, according to Bev Shaw, according to Lucy, was he not? In the room where the intruders were committing their outrages? Do they think he does not know what rape is? Do they think he has not suffered with his daughter? What more could he have witnessed than he is capable of imagining? Or do they think that, where rape is concerned, no man can be where the woman is? Whatever the answer, he is outraged, outraged at being treated like an outsider. (140-141)

David's incredulity is almost comical. His thoughts, words, and actions speak to a desire for control that is not dissimilar to Titus's in usurping Lavinia's trauma as fodder for his own personal revenge. Despite the fact of never having been the victim of rape (and setting aside the fact that he also does not view himself as the rapist that he is), he equates basic understanding with experience, completely overlooking and therefore eliminating the possibility of empathizing with his daughter. He cannot stand the idea of being an outsider, of not being able to understand, because he wants to be able to provide a solution that "makes sense" to him. While this is rooted in the desire "not… to abandon his daughter," it is neither acknowledging his inability to sympathize with a woman's experience of rape, nor permitting her the space to grapple with trauma that is uniquely her own (141). He is so preoccupied with his own involvement in her

healing process that he completely neglects the possibility that he may not even fully understand what needs to be healed. As Phillip Dickinson explains, "What Bev and Lucy deny is Lurie's epistemological recuperation of rape, his articulation of a universe to which he has full access. They resist his attempt to reproduce the world in a way that preserves, and even fortifies, his own subjectivity—to produce a seamless narrative in which Lucy is 'a minor character who doesn't make an appearance until halfway through'" (189). Despite the fact that he acknowledges that "he can, if he concentrates, if he loses himself, be there, be the men, inhabit them, fill them with the ghost of himself" (160), this conversation with Bev reveals the possibilities that exist outside of David's worldview to the reader, establishing the effectiveness of an ethics that completely decenters the male experience—one that David has not yet accepted, even though he wonders whether or not "he [has] it in him to [imagine being] the woman?" (160). Ironically, he acknowledges that he can imagine being the perpetrator of such an awful crime, but he cannot endure the idea that he does not understand what it is like to be the victim. He cannot turn object into subject; this is the first time he even considers the limitations of his own knowledge.

When Lucy demands that David accept his own complicity in the same gendered system that brought about his daughter's attack, he pivots to an oversimplified understanding of race to thwart her efforts to make him understand her trauma. Even when Lucy compares her attack to murder—"When you have sex with someone strange—when you trap her, hold her down, get her under you, put all your weight on her—isn't it a bit like killing? Pushing the knife in; exiting afterwards, leaving the body behind covered in blood—doesn't it feel like murder, like getting away with murder?"—David can neither deny it nor explore that line of thinking (as he so proudly claimed the ability to do earlier). Instead of evaluating his own complicity in women's subjection, he wonders if he and Lucy are even "on the same side" and brings up the race of her

assailants in an effort to deflect (158-159). As David and Lucy both know (and as Sharon Friedman points out), women have always been the collateral of war, “subjects of harassment and rape… or forced impregnation…. Women are often targeted… to shame, intimidate, and unsettle communities” (596), and Lucy seems to be no exception. Moreover, although exact rates of sexual violence in South Africa are unknown, Romi Sigsworth of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconcilation notes that statistics from reported violence demonstrate “that someone is raped or indecently assaulted every minute in South Africa” (8). The problem, however, lies in how those statistics are portrayed: as Carine M. Mardorossian points out, “rapes of white women by black men… garner a disproportionate amount of media attention, even though nine out of the ten women who are raped in the country are black” (75).

This context lays bare the danger in placing too much emphasis on Lucy’s attackers while the text provides us with little to no information about them, instead focusing on Lucy and how she copes with the attack. My argument here is not that the race of her assailants is not relevant, but that to focus on the race of her assailants as opposed to how a racially charged rape impacts its *victim* is (a) to take a clear stance along racial lines that feeds dangerously into the Black peril myth, and (b) to reduce Lucy’s choices to white guilt, to make her into some kind of symbol for post-apartheid society when in fact *Disgrace* “highlights the inextricable relationship between incommensurable categories of identity such as gender, class, or ethnicity in the application of legal and moral authority” (Mardorossian 8). The Black peril myth is a function of pervasive racist ideology that Black men are sexual predators who indiscriminately prey on white women. This is a violence that David seems to accept as legitimate despite the fact that he cannot answer Lucy’s accusation about his own role in sexual violence because he wants to think of himself as somehow “on” his daughter’s “side” rather than a perpetrator himself. To the second point, I can

only partially agree with Mardorossian's reading that "Lucy accepts her fate as a symbol of the redistribution of power in postapartheid South Africa and sees her rapists as gathering apartheid debts" (74); although the attack may have been symbolic, for Lucy to consider that reality is not even remotely close to the same as accepting it as such; her later choices, in fact, prove the exact opposite. Instead, Lucy exhibits a working knowledge of the conditions of her attack, the potential impact of reporting it, and her ability to remove herself from such a narrative. While it is tempting to sympathize with David's point of view that she needs to report the crime, his inclination to believe that it was both an individually motivated act of violence *or* that "history [was] speaking through [the rapists].... A history of wrong" requires acknowledgement of his own complicity in such a system, which he has already clearly refused. He is trying to do what he imagines to be "right," but his reasoning is reductive rather than restorative.

Lucy rejects his interpretations of her rape by appropriating not only overly simplistic patriarchal language, but also the medium David believes himself the expert in: writing. She leaves him a letter that says, "You have not been listening to me. I am not the person you know. I am a dead person and I do not know yet what will bring me back to life" (Coetzee 156 and 161). She is not grappling with guilt nor is she preoccupied with notions of "honor" that would force her to flee after losing it, like he did (160). David's attempts to convince Lucy to leave the farm are an attempt to salvage what is left of a person that Lucy claims is dead—there is nothing left to salvage, only the possibility of reviving her dead self. What this reveals is how such violence can destroy, even kill, the self—but that there might be a way back to life. The way back will require imagining a future that, at the moment, seems impossible. What she sees as her revival is, for David, the "wrong road." This exchange reveals David to be more similar to Titus than ever: although both fathers seek understanding from their daughters through direct dialogue (think of

Lavinia and her staff), both are obsessed with making meaning out of what is left of their daughter's lives, of using them symbolically to salvage "honor" or to create a space where one is able "to live with [oneself]" (Coetzee 160). She sets her terms: David cannot hold onto both his concepts of dignity and honor *and* his relationship with his daughter.

David wants to prove that he is right, to write his story as one of redemption, but his painfully obvious inability to decenter his own ego ensures his continued failure. When he decides to return to Cape Town, he stops at the home of Melanie Isaacs to speak to her father, from whom he asks forgiveness. Although Isaacs does not reject him entirely, he doesn't grant him forgiveness. In fact, he redirects David by asking, "who did you really come to speak to?" David, not knowing what else to do, prostrates himself in front of Mrs. Isaacs and Melanie's younger sister, much to their horror, and even then he feels "the current of desire" for the sister (173). The sincerity, the humility asked of him in the book's earliest chapters, still eludes him. This moment is not one of repentance and redemption; it is awkward because he is still missing the point: he has not apologized to his victim, and he still feels grossly attracted to a child. It is painfully obvious how little he has learned. Moreover, when David returns to his home, it has been ransacked and destroyed. At his office, he has been forgotten. On campus, he watches Melanie perform in a play, nearly losing himself in the excitement of seeing her again—until four spitballs and a flurry of hissing from her boyfriend bring him back to "the shocks of existence." He even spends the night with a streetwalker "younger even than Melanie" (194) wondering what will become of his future. He he not learned at *all*; he is not sorry for anything that he has done, only that he has been caught. As Paustian posits, "living beyond apartheid demands more than an affective reordering of things through cathartic interactions, which enable apartheid's beneficiaries to get off without… paying for it" (110). David's choices are an attempt

at catharsis, at feeling as if he is moving forward with dignity. He offers empty apologies to everyone but his victims, expects to return to an arena of respect and dignity without having done any of the work for it, feels grossly "protective" (Coetzee 194) of a streetwalker he solicits services from. Each of these assumptions highlights how David's solution to disgrace—leaving—simply does not work, a realization that Lucy has already come to: "All I know is that I cannot go away" (161). He cannot avoid "paying for it" and expect redemption. Even though he may feel slightly better for having done *some*thing, he hasn't changed *any*thing for himself or for his victims. So what, then, we must ask, is the alternative?

Lucy provides him with the opportunity to start again by taking on a drastically different role in her life as a grandfather, but he is not willing to give up his role as her father or to accept her rejection of sanctioned forms of motherhood. Lucy's pregnancy represents her father's worst fear: for his daughter to be "marked" by her attackers not merely by physical violence, but through reproductive violence; consequently, David struggles to accept her choice to keep the pregnancy. On the one hand, a child is a living reminder of the trauma of rape; David pelts her with questions when she announces her pregnancy in an effort to once again guide her to making what he believes to be the "right" decision: to abort it (Coetzee 162). His motivations for abortion only accentuate pregnancy's symbolic power:

> They were not raping, they were mating. … And now, lo and behold, *the child!* Already he is calling it *the child* when it is no more than a worm in his daughter's womb. What kind of child can seed like that give life to, seed driven into the woman not in love but in hatred, mixed chaotically, meant to soil her, to mark her, like a dog's urine? (199)

David's language here plays on what he perceives to be the irony of his daughter's decision to maintain the pregnancy and raise the child. He sees the child's blood as polluted because of the

violent manner by which it was conceived. He conceives of the child as intentional, as the result of "mating" that was "meant to soil her, to mark her." He still conceptualizes her as a victim, the object of a crime, and the child as a sign of that trauma. On the other hand, a child is the marker of a person's entrance into a dramatically different role in life: parenthood, which places one in the acting role of caretaker. Before Lucy tells David that she is pregnant with her rapist's child, she warns him "I cannot be a child forever. You cannot be a father forever. I know you mean well, but you are not the guide I need, not at this time" (Coetzee 161). David continues to struggle to accept this, as he "can't imagine, in this life, not being Lucy's father." David is initially not ready to give up his role as father and become a grandfather. He cannot accept that, as Lucy tells him, "I have a life of my own, just as important to me as yours is to you, and in my life I am the one who makes the decisions," yet he does concede linguistically to the language of "the child" (198). His language reflects acceptance of Lucy's decision, yet he must let go of sanctioned views of kinship in order to be a part of their lives. David's constant struggle with Lucy's choices shows just how much choice she actually has: all of it because it is *her* body and no one else's, and David must accept those in order to maintain a relationship with her.

Moreover, like Lavinia, Lucy is both targeted because of her body and uses it as leverage to protect herself, but in a very different way. In Cixous's terms, we might see her as having, "constituted herself necessarily as that 'person' capable of losing a part of herself without losing her integrity" (888). This feminine logic, the logic of *not* losing oneself to another (a baby), does not compute for David until Lucy explains it: "I will [love]. Love will grow… I am determined to be a good mother, David. A good mother and a good person. You should try to be a good person too" (Coetzee 216). Her pregnancy is not the end for Lucy, nor does she view it as a loss. Alternately, she views it as a gain, as a way to not only be good to her child, but to others—and

she suggests that David follows suit. This is the first time she outright acknowledges that he is not a good person, but she does so in a way that is open, that encourages him to become better. We know he respects her decision because he refers to himself as “a grandfather” and sees a future for Lucy and the child, “solid in [their] existence, more solid than he had ever been” (217). This is a space that Titus never even imagined for Lavinia, whom he viewed as ruined beyond repair. This ending is uneasy, however, as part of Lucy’s choice that David must accept includes marrying Petrus—who already has two wives (certainly a relationship that is far from normative to white Westerners)—in order to secure not only her personal safety, but also the home she intends to live and raise this child in. As Paustian points out, Lucy “senses that her land is being reclaimed through bodily seizure, and thus she extracts her body from the equation by releasing her claim upon the land. Giving up territory is a way of disarticulating her body from it,” and yet no longer owning the land does not mean that she will no longer live on it and benefit from it in some way (113). Although Petrus, a Black man, will gain the benefits of land ownership and a new wife, Lucy too will gain the security of the home she *wants* to raise her child in. To simplify this decision to “white guilt” is to negate the action Lucy takes not only towards decentering her trauma, but also towards a liveable future—one that requires negotiation with others. This decision is reminiscent of the concept of *ubuntu*, a term made famous by South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission that essentially means that “a human being is realized through his or her being (human) through human beings” (Rose 194). Lucy must acknowledge her role as a beneficiary of colonialism as a landowner, the way her Black neighbors have been negatively impacted by this, and how negotiating the terms of her presence on that land will open the door for a life there with her child. Moreover, not only does she redraw kinship lines in a way that will allow her to safely be a good mother to her child, but she does so in a way that will also force

David to contend with the racism that he has been so oblivious to from the novel's first chapter. He will have a mixed race grandchild, a Black son-in-law, and his daughter will be related to one of her rapists by marriage. If he wants to be a part of Lucy's life, he will have to accept the terms by which she will continue to live it.

What David sees as a loss, Lucy sees as an opportunity for a new beginning. She and David both agree that "it is humiliating," but Lucy adds that "perhaps that is a good point to start from again… To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing" (205). To avoid humiliation, Lucy would still have to address a long history of violence and to lose something: her privacy, her land ownership, her home and her life in the country, the child, and perhaps some aspect of her emotional/physical well-being (she does say that she cannot go through with an abortion *again*). Her "nothing" in this context, is as Gayatri Spivak argues,

> the casting aside of the affective value-system attached to reproductive heteronormativity as it is accepted as the currency to measure human dignity. I do not think this is an acceptance of rape, but a refusal to be raped, by instrumentalizing reproduction. Coetzee's Lucy is made to make clear that the "nothing" is not to be itself measured as the absence of "everything" by the old epistemic-affective value form—the system of knowing-loving. It is not "nothing but," Lucy insists. It is an originary "nothing," a scary beginning. (21)

Abortion and/or relocating would allow Lucy to start over "with nothing but" her dignity. What if she sacrifices her dignity instead? Lucy seems to understand that restoration, or what Paustian refers to as "social transformation," is "messy, painful, and unsettling" (110). Rather than terminating the pregnancy, she chooses to end "life as she knows it" in order to harbor a new experience of it. David, also learning to live without the dignity he had imagined for himself,

acquiesces to the idea that "there may be things to learn," to "a new footing, a new start" (Coetzee 218). Most importantly, his new start includes staying with Lucy and being involved in her life, even if he is not completely comfortable with it. He must decenter himself, take his cues from her. Like David, we may not agree with Lucy's choices, but we do have to accept them, which then forces us to be open to the alternate possibilities—and alternate ways of finding integrity—available in her future.

While Åström argues that "Narratives that depict female suffering, but which direct the audience to focus on male emotions rather than female bodies, invite the audience to distance itself from the suffering" (127), I would argue that the attention paid to male emotions in *Titus Andronicus* and *Disgrace* actually creates such an intense discomfort with Lavinia and Lucy's suffering that it forces the reader to consider the possibility of living with it and beyond it in a myriad of ways. Moreover, it also makes the fathers' centering extremely distasteful, something ugly to be rejected. The brutal rape and mutilation of his only daughter does not decenter Titus Andronicus's obsession with honor, who lives and dies a vengeful warrior, a natural extension of the patriarchal order. When David Lurie's daughter endures a similarly brutal attack, however, her refusal to acquiesce to him creates the conditions for David to ultimately be open to an uncertain future in a way that Titus is not for Lavinia. David's eventual, even though reluctant, acceptance of Lucy's choices and openness to learning in comparison to Titus's staunch denial of Lavinia's agency demonstrates how the patriarchal preoccupation with "dignity" and "honor" precludes various alternate possibilities for living, no matter how troublesome we may find them. Both works force the reader to consider what it looks like to live a life that is so radically emotionally and physically altered that there is no way to retain dignity without significant loss.

While *Titus* completely forecloses the possibility of life after, *Disgrace* makes it uncomfortably, even painfully, possible—but possible nonetheless.

Works Cited

Anker, Elizabeth S. “Human Rights, Social Justice, and J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*.” *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 54 no. 2, 2008, pp. 233-267.

Asp, Carolyn. "'Upon her wit doth earthly honor wait': Female Agency in *Titus Andronicus*." *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays*. Ed. Philip C. Kolin. Garland, New York, 1995, pp. 333-346.

Åström, Berit. “Referred Pain: Privileging Male Emotions in Narrative Instances of Female Physical Suffering.” *Journal of Gender Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2011, pp. 125–37.

Attridge, Derek. “Age of Bronze, State of Grace: Music and Dogs in Coetzee's ‘Disgrace.’” *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2000, pp. 98–121.

Barnard, Lianne. “The politics of rape: Traces of radical feminism in *Disgrace* by J. M. Coetzee.” *TYDSKRIF VIR LETTERKUNDE*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2013, pp. 19-29.

Boose, Lynda E. “The Father’s House and the Daughter in It.” *Daughters and Fathers*, edited by Lynda E. Boose and Betty S. Flowers, The Johns Hopkins UP, 1989.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter*. New York, Routledge, 2011.

Catty, Jocelyn. *Writing Rape, Writing Women in Early Modern England: Unbridled Speech*. Palgrave, 2011.

Cixous, Hélène. “The Laugh of the Medusa.” *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, edited by Vincent B. Leitch, Norton, 2001, pp. 2039-2056.

Coetzee, J. M. *Disgrace.* London, Vintage, 2000.

Dickinson, Philip. “Feeling, Affect, Exposure: Ethical (In)Capacity, the Sympathetic Imagination, and J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*.” *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2013, pp. 1–19.

Du Toit, Albert. “Finely tuned novel set in new SA.” *Eastern Province Herald*, 11 August 1999: 4.

Fawcett, Mary Laughlin. “Arms/Words/Tears: Language and the Body in *Titus Andronicus*.” *ELH,* vol. 50, no. 2, summer 1983, pp. 261-277.

Foyster, Elizabeth. *Manhood in early modern England: honour, sex, and marriage.* London, Longman, 1999.

Friedman, Sharon. “The Gendered Terrain in Contemporary Theatre of War by Women.” *Theatre Journal*, vol. 62, no. 4, December 2010, pp. 593-610.

Gowing, Laura. “Women, Status and the Popular Culture of Dishonor.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 6, 1996, pp. 224-234.

Graham, Lucy Valerie. “Reading the Unspeakable: Rape in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*.” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2003, pp. 433–444.

Herron, Tom. “The Dog Man: Becoming Animal in Coetzee's ‘Disgrace.’” *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2005, pp. 467–490.

Lopez, Maria. “Can We Be Friends Here? Visitation and Hospitality in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*.” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36:4, 2010, pp. 923–938.

Mardorossian, Carine M. “Rape and the Violence of Representation in J. M. Coetzee's Disgrace.” *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 42, no. 4, 2011, pp. 72–83.

Moses, Diana C. “Livy’s Lucretia and the Validity of Coerced Consent in Roman Law.” *Consent and Coercion to Sex and marriage in Ancient and Mediecal Societies,* edited by Angeliki E. Laiou, Dunbarton Oaks, 1993, pp. 39-82.

Mulvey, Laura. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, edited by Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl. Rutgers

UP, 2007, pp. 438-448.

Panek, Jennifer. “Shame and disgust in *Titus Andronicus*.” The Renaissance Society of America, 2019, Conference Presentation.

Paustian, Megan Cole. “Living Beyond Apartheid: The Territotial Ethics of Reconcilation.” *Safundi*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 101-122.

Robertson, Karen. *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*. Palgrave, 2001.

Rose, Jacqueline. “Apathy and Accountability: South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.” *Raritan*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2002, pp. 175–195.

Royster, Francesca T. “White-limed WAlls: Whiteness and Gothic Extremism in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*.” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 51, no. 4, winter 2000, pp. 432-455.

Rubin, Gayle. “The Traffic in Women: Notes on a ‘Political Economy of Sex.” *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory,* edited by Linda Nicholson, Routledge, 1997, pp. 27-62.

Sedgwick, Eve Kofosky. “Gender Asymmetry and Erotic Triangles.” *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, edited by Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, Rutgers UP, 2007, pp. 507-531.

Shepard, Alexandra. “From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500-1700.” *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 44, no. 2, April 2005, pp. 281-295.

-- *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England.* Oxford University Press, 2003.

Shakespeare, William. *Titus Andronicus*. London, The Arden Shakespeare, 2018.

Sigsworth, Romi. “‘Anyone Can Be a Rapist’: An Overview of Sexual Violence in South Africa.” *The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation*, November 2009.

Smith, Henry, 1550?-1591, and Thomas Fuller. *The Sermons of Mr. Henry Smith: Together With a Preparative to Marriage, God's Arrow Against Atheists Certain Godly And Zealous Prayers, Etc. Printed According to His Corrected Copies In His Lifetime.* Kessinger, 2010.

Sperrazza, Whitney. "Granular reading: Texture, language and surface marks in *Titus Andronicus*." *Titus Andronicus: The State of Play*. Ed. Farah Karim-Cooper. London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2019. 179-200. *Bloomsbury Collections*.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Ethics and Politics in Tagore, Coetzee, and Certain Scenes of Teaching." *Diacritics*, vol. 32 no. 3, 2002, p. 17-31.

-- *In Other Worlds : Essays in Cultural Politics*. Methuen, 1987.

Starks-Estes, Lisa S. *Violence, Trauma, and Virtues in Shakespeare's Roman Poems and Plays Transforming Ovid*. Palgrave, 2014.

Tassi, Marguerite A. *Women and Revenge in Shakespeare.* Susquehanna UP, 2011.

"The Rape of Lucrece." *OpenSourceShakespeare*, George Mason University, 2019.

Vives, Juan Luis. "Selections from *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*." *Daughters, Widows, and Wives: Writings by Men about Women and Marriage in England, 1500-1640*, edited by Joan Larsen Klein, U of Illinois P, 1992, pp. 97-122.

Willis, Deborah. "'The Gnawing Vulture': Revenge, Trauma Theory, and 'Titus Andronicus.'" *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 1, Spring 2002, pp. 21-52.

Yancy, George. "Colonial Gazing: The Production of the Body as "Other"." *Western Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2008, pp. 1-15.