

Speechless Complainer: A Derridean Reading of *Titus Andronicus*

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ABSTRACT

The Roman tragedy of Titus Andronicus (1588-1593), the first and perhaps the least popular play of Shakespeare, depicts a non-Aristotelian tragic hero who is gradually decentred from his role and loses sympathy. Despite the fact that the play has been harshly criticised by many critics, Titus has regained its Elizabethan popularity in recent decades, and under the influence of postmodernist readings that focus on the play's fragmentary manner is well-matched with the fragmented contemporary time. This study is an attempt to present a detailed analysis of the language of Titus and the play in general. Using Derridean ideas, it will be argued that Shakespeare, through decentring the dualities of proper/improper language and speech/writing, decentres his protagonist and fills the play with chaos. It will be shown that the presence attributed to speech in Western thought is undermined by Shakespeare, for Titus' ineffective speech makes him resort to writing which leads to even more chaos in the play. In other words, the Derridean logo centric presence is undermined both in Titus' spoken and written languages and he can, either through neither speech nor writing, express his intentions. By and large, by decentring his protagonist, Shakespeare has endeavoured to distract the audience's attention from Titus and foreground Elizabeth's lack of a successor reflected in the play.

Keywords: Titus Andronicus; Derrida; aporia; binary opposition; logo centric presence.

INTRODUCTION

Speechless complainer, I will learn thy thought;
In thy dumb action will I be as perfect
As begging hermits in their holy prayers: (III. ii. 39-41)

Titus Andronicus, co-written by William Shakespeare and George Peele the author of the bloody *Battle of Alcazar*, is the first and perhaps the least popular Shakespearean play compared with such great and much-discussed tragedies as *Hamlet* or *King Lear*. The play was first published in 1594 under the title, *The Most Lamentable Roman Tragedy of Titus Andronicus*. The story of the play, unlike *Coriolanus*, sets at the twilight of the Roman Empire. The play seems to be the young and inexperienced Shakespeare's attempt at the popular and well-known genre of revenge tragedy pioneered by Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* in the Elizabethan era. Contrary to other Shakespeare's Roman plays, the story of *Titus Andronicus* does not have any historical background and Shakespeare's sources for the play are unknown. It is noteworthy that "the final product of revisioning literature is an amalgam of compliances and contradictions: figures, elements, and motifs which a revisionist author borrows from the precursor, and those ideas and themes which he develops from a different, sometimes, antithetical perspective" (Safaei & Hashim 2013, p. 182). Shakespeare was obviously influenced by the story of Tereus and Philomela from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

in which Tereus rapes Philomela, who is his wife's sister, and he cuts out her tongue so that she cannot tell her story. Philomela weaves a tapestry that reveals her story to her sister, Procne, who in revenge kills her own son by Tereus and serves his meat as a meal to her husband. Furthermore, *Titus Andronicus* and its characters anticipate Shakespeare's later works and characters. For instance, Titus echoes King Lear's anger; Tamora, in ways, anticipates Lady Macbeth and Aaron can be taken as the prototype for Shakespeare's later villains such as Iago.

Many critics have called *Titus Andronicus* the worst play Shakespeare ever wrote. Edward Ravenscroft called the play "rather a heap of rubbish than a structure" (as cited in Palmer 1972, p. 320). However, Palmer at the end of his study concludes that *Titus* is "a highly-ordered and elaborately-designed work" that is "rich in dramatic and stylistic invention" (p. 338). According to T. S. Eliot's *Seneca in Elizabethan Translation*, Titus is "one of the stupidest and most uninspired plays ever written, a play in which it is incredible that Shakespeare had any hand at all" (1932, p. 82). Jorgen Wildt Hansen in his essay *Titus Andronicus and Logos* makes the point that it overlooks of "godlike reason" or logos responsible for the chaotic situation of the play for "it must be reason employed to virtuous ends." He states, "In the Rome of *Titus Andronicus*, logos is neglected" (1976, p. 110-111). Emma Smith argues that *Titus* is a tragedy "which has caused critics the most aesthetic difficulty until very recently." She called the play a 'cocktail of sex, mutilation, and madness'.

According to Smith the play seems to have no hero as Titus is not a great or noble man and associated to his "lack of moral or personal greatness is the lack of sympathy the play generates" (Smith 2007, p. 96-98). Despite the harsh criticisms towards the play, *Titus* has regained its Elizabethan popularity in recent decades when it went on stage several times in the light of Bakhtinian ideas and poststructuralist theories. Reflecting on the grotesquerie and contradictions of the play, Peter Holland's *Shakespeare in the Twentieth Century Theatre* introduces a production of *Titus Andronicus* in 1987 in the light of Bakhtinian carnivalesque in which the costumes from different periods and contexts are mixed together: "the victorious Titus on his entry wore Roman breastplate and modern trousers; for the final scene he appeared [...] in all white chef's hat and starched white overalls" (2001, p. 199). The play's being popularised in recent decades has been to some extent due to its contradictory and fragmentary manner that is congenial to the audience of our times; a chaotic and anarchic time identified with contradiction, gap, grotesquerie and fragmentation. One reason that makes *Titus* compatible to the contemporary time in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, as Kingsley Smith argues, is "the process of fragmentation that continues to define the play,": in terms of violence, *Titus* experiences "a vexed relationship with real violence in the late twentieth century" (Smith 2008, p. 107-8). The play's contradictory and grotesque manner makes it worthy of analysis in the light of some postmodernist critical approaches. Indeed, every play of Shakespeare is a tragicomedy in which the boundaries between tragedy and comedy are blurred and therefore postmodernist readings of his plays seem justified. In this regard, Janette Dillon argues that "the inclusion of some element of comedy is a feature of Shakespeare's tragedies" and in common with his many contemporaries (2007, p. 33).

Using the Derridean ideas of aporia and binary opposition, this study will show that Shakespeare in *Titus Andronicus*, through decentring and deconstructing the binary opposition of speech/writing, creates an aporetic situation in the play that consequently makes the Rome of *Titus* a chaotic society. It will be argued that the transcendental signified in this binary opposition is undermined and therefore speech is no longer privileged since writing is also mutually involved; and even sometimes because of the powerlessness of spoken language, writing is valued over speech. The mutual involvement of writing in *Titus* becomes associated

with a sort of absence –contrary to speech that is associated with presence –that in turn increases doubt and uncertainty throughout the play and is responsible for the chaos of the play and the Roman society as well. Likewise, the binary opposition of proper/improper language is reversed and unlike Aeron, who uses the most proper language of the play, Titus as Shakespeare’s tragic hero employs an improper language that leads to his improper behaviour and eventually pushes him away from the centre of the play. In other words, the consistence and stable structure of the play and the Roman society in *Titus* is brought under erasure through the aporetic language of the play.

DISCUSSION

“Historically, in the latter half of the 20th century, new schools emerged with the belief that a good linguistic description should go beyond sentence, and pointed to the fact that there are certain meanings and aspects of language that cannot be understood or embraced if its study is limited to the syntactic analysis of sentences” (Khan & Bughio 2012, p. 25). Poststructuralist criticism refers to critical approaches that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s, partly, in response to earlier structuralism, like deconstruction. Deconstruction involves a critical strategy of close reading of a text but unlike formalism avoids resolution for the paradoxes and ambiguities as well as “any appeal to organic unity in the literary text” (Booker 1996, p. 56). J. Hillis Miller argues that deconstruction demands “an interrogation of the notion of the self-enclosed literary work and of the idea that any work has a fixed identifiable meaning” (as cited in Booker 1996, p. 56). Structuralism and post structuralism share the anti-humanistic tendency, and for them the system of the language has the leading role in understanding human nature and the world, since “humans approach everything through language” (Booker 1996, p. 56). The most important figure of deconstructionism is Jacques Derrida whose well-known dictum that “there is nothing outside of the text” is often quoted by critics (Derrida 1976, p. 158). Derrida’s deconstructive ideas pose a serious challenge to the notion of “logo centrism” of the Western philosophy that seeks “an ultimate centre and ground to philosophical truth” (Booker 1996, p. 57). Derrida's emphasis is on “the creative potential of language,” for he believes “the human subject is created in and through language rather than existing prior to and independently of language” (Booker 1996, p. 57). Moreover, Derrida argues that language –both written and spoken –is unreliable since the meaning of every single word depends on other words. The hallmark of Western philosophy noticed by Derrida is “Aristotle’s principle of non-contradiction” which demands, among other things, that “a thing cannot both have property and not have property.” For Derrida this Aristotelian principle involves an “either-or logic” which in turn will lead to the idea of “dualistic thinking” (Booker 1996, p. 59). Derrida also observes that this dualistic thinking leads to a sort of “hierarchisation” by which “one pole of a binary opposition [is] valued over the other.” In contrast, according to Derrida the two poles of a binary opposition are not “diametrically opposed but mutually involved” (Booker 1996, p. 60) that is, the traditional valuing of one pole over the other is undermined by Derrida.

Likewise, Norris states that, deconstructive reading “consists, not merely in reversing or subverting some established hierarchical order, but in showing how its terms are indissociably entwined in a strictly undecidable exchange of values and priorities” (1987, p. 55). By privileging one pole of binary opposition over the other, meaning also becomes fixed since “meaning depends on difference, and the fixing of meaning is the fixing of difference as opposition” (Belsey 1980, p. 177). In other words, insisting on the fixity and stability of binary oppositions and the meaning is in fact “a way of reaffirming existing values” (Belsey

1980, p. 177). However, in terms of the meaning of a text, Derrida argues, “no context can determine meaning to the point of exhaustiveness” (Derrida 1993, p. 9). One important binary opposition discussed by Derrida is the speech/writing opposition. In Western thought, speech has always been privileged over writing because spoken language is more associated to “its originating speaker” and therefore is more “similar to the Word of God” (Booker 1996, p. 61). Indeed, the valuing of spoken language is due to “the immediacy of speech over the seeming secondariness of writing” (Booker 1996, p. 265). This binary opposition is decentred in Derrida; for Derrida the duality of speech/writing is sustained by aporia which demands “no opposition between two sides” (Derrida 1993, p. 20). In this opposition, on the one hand, speech comes before writing to avoid aporia, but on the other, aporia is a necessary condition “to the very constitution of speech and writing as opposition” (Lucy 2004, p. 1). According to this last argument Derrida deconstructs the speech/writing opposition and argues that it is writing that comes before speech as the two are mutually involved. Accordingly, Lucy argues that in speech there is “the presence of the speaker [which] guarantees the truth of what is said” (Lucy 2004, p. 118). In contrast, writing is associated with absence, which in turn can increase doubt, uncertainty and aporia since its origination is unknown. However, Derrida decentres both logo centricism and presence, and points out that the logo centric presence, which the Western philosophy ascribes to speech, is in fact in the writer’s or the speaker’s mind, prior to and beyond the language, and can never be expressed truly either through speech or writing. Hence, for Derrida, presence is an illusion that undermines speech and equals it to writing; therefore, both speech and writing are unreliable forms of language which never directly lead to reality.

One of Shakespeare’s better-known aporias or silences, which provide the audience with different alternatives and choices, occurs at the end of *Measure for Measure*. As Emma Smith notes “the ending of *Measure for Measure* gives us the option” (Smith 2007, p. 23); at the end of this comedy the Duke proposes marriage to Isabella but there is no vividly mentioned evidence to show Isabella’s acceptance or rejection. This situation, through Shakespeare’s so-called “simultaneous interpretative possibilities,” can be interpreted by the reader or the audience in either way and thus, “Isabella’s silence or aporia,” as Smith points out “is precisely neither acceptance nor rejection but the chance to do either” (Smith 2007, p. 24). In a similar way, in *Titus Andronicus*, Titus’ silence or refusal to speak in some crucial times –particularly at the opening scene and in the cooking scene at the end of the play – creates some aporetic moments which, through uncertainty and doubt, help to increase the play’s chaos which is reminiscent of Iago’s silences and the chaos that dominates *Othello*.

Shakespeare in *Titus* instead of introducing one climax provides the audience with climaxes, “with a multiplicity of fearful events and high sounding words.” The language of the play therefore, “seeks[s] to replace clarity and definiteness by multiplicity” (Clemen 1951, p. 25). Shakespeare, in a puzzling way, opens the play with uncertainty and doubt. At the very outset of the play and after the triumphant return of Titus from war some political questions arise to which no clear answers are given: who will be the deceased Emperor’s successor? Should it be the Emperor’s sons or Titus? The result of these unanswered questions and created uncertainties is to be chaotic and somehow aporetic since the audience is left to choose between different alternatives. *Titus* is uncertain at its beginning because “no one with authority takes charge and all the rivals have powerful supporters” (Brown 2001, p. 11). Likewise, there are several other questions throughout the play associated with doubt, undecidability and aporia, which is “a rhetorical term for doubt or difficulty in choosing” (Royle 2003, p. 92). One of these plentiful aporias occurs in Act V, Scene I and involves the fate of Aaron’s infant that is the result of Tamora’s “raven-coloured love” (II. iii. 83).

Although Lucius swears to take care of it, the child's fate is uncertain, as no trace of it is observable in the last two scenes. Accordingly, Marcus' words in seeing the bleeding mutilated Lavinia are questions: "who is this? My niece, that flies away so fast! / Cousin, a word, where is your husband?" (II. iv.11-12) and his response to these questions is "to doubt the reality of what he sees" (Palmer 1972, p. 321). In this painful encounter and to answer his questions he doubtfully cries that, "if I do dream, would all my wealth would wake me! / if I do wake, some planet strike me down, / That I may slumber an eternal sleep!" (II. iv. 13-15). Moreover, *Titus* is saturated with some rhetorical questions which make the play less dialogic than monologic for, "a rhetorical question is a question which expects no answer and awaits no answer, a question which is put for its own sake" (Clemen 1951, p. 29): "What fool has added water to the sea / Or brought a faggot to bright-burning Troy?" (III. i. 68-69). To be more precise, in *Titus* no real communication or dialogue occurs between the characters and if anything they pretend to have dialogue with each other. On the other hand, rhetorical questions implicitly show that the questions are important rather than answers.

CHAOS IN *TITUS ANDRONICUS*

Such uncertainties, aporias and silences along with binary oppositions' decentring are in part responsible for the chaos in *Titus*. The chaos of the play, which shows itself from the very outset of the play, is in one way or another because the rivals do not vividly and authoritatively announce their claims. In this rivalry between the late Emperor's successors, the Emperor's sons, Saturninus and Bassianus, are struggling over the throne by means of a poetic rhetorical language and somewhat eloquently:

Saturninus. Noble patricians, patrons of my right,
Defend the justice of my cause with arms;
And, countrymen, my loving followers.
Plead my successive title with your swords:
I am his first-born son, that was the last
That wore the imperial diadem of Rome;
Then let my father's honours live in me,
Nor wrong mine age with this indignity. (I. i. 1-8)

Meanwhile, Titus remains silent and it is Marcus, his brother and the tribune of people, who speaks for him and declares that Romans "by common voice" (I. i. 21) have chosen Titus to be emperor. In other words, Titus' silence or aporia, which leaves the audience as well as other characters with different choices, is responsible for the chaos of the play that starts from the very beginning. Indeed, the only person who has the authority to be the emperor is Titus but his refusal to declare this claim provides Saturninus with the opportunity to take "the Roman empery" (I. i. 22) while he is the wrong person for this position. Accordingly, the most chaotic moment of the play, which occurs in Act V, is again due to Titus' silence. In the second scene of this act Titus appears in the guise of a cook, who seems somehow clownish, to feed Tamora –the Goth queen –with "the flesh that she herself hath bred" (V. iii. 62). This scene is the most chaotic one throughout the play and to some extent in a "danger of becoming unmanageably comic, rather than solemn and frightening" (Brown 2001, p. 30). It is worth emphasizing that the chaos of this scene is not only due to Titus' silence as Titus here "has no words with which to declare his purpose" (Brown 2001, p. 30) but also due to the decentred binary opposition of noble hero/clown, since Titus appears while dressed like a cook who seems humble, clownish and even grotesque. This

scene is so grotesque and extravagant that makes the play seem like a burlesque of a revenge tragedy rather than a pure tragedy in itself.

Along with the earlier binary opposition, there are many other binaries throughout the play that decentralize or undermine the current values and introduce an element of chaos into the play. One of these decentred oppositions is civilization/barbarity, which Shakespeare, through villainous behaviors of Titus and putting some blind spots on the binary, suspends; thus blurring the boundary between the civilized Romans and barbarous Goths. The civilized Romans are shown as barbarous as the Goths and sometimes even more barbarous; Chiron, Tamora's son, says the Goths have never been “half so barbarous” (I. i. 131) as the Romans. In Act II a shift from court to forest occurs that represents a reversion from civilization to barbarity or “the law of the jungle” (Palmer 1972, p. 329). However, from the crimes taken place in the previous act and by the Romans, it can be concluded that the Roman court resembles the barbarian forest. In other words, the opposition of civilized/barbarity in the two first acts is influenced and sustained by aporia, which according to Derrida “stems from the fact that there is no limit. There is not yet or there is no longer a border to cross, no opposition between two sides” (Derrida 1993, p. 20) and it is shown that civilized Romans also can be as brutal as barbarous Goths. While the forest stands for Goths' barbarity and their crimes are committed in the forest, the court stands for Roman barbarity. In this regard, the most barbarous action of the play is committed by Titus in the final act when he kills his daughter and engages Tamora in cannibalism –eating her own sons' meat –that is obviously out of proportion with her crimes: “So, now bring them in, for I'll play the cook, /And see them ready against their mother comes” (V. ii. 205-6). Although Tamora engaged in many crimes against Andronici, it should be remembered that scarifying Tamora's son, Alarbus, by Titus at the opening scene, “confirms our sense of inhuman cruelty” (Palmer 1972, p. 327) was responsible for all of these misdeeds. It is worth mentioning that it is Titus' improper use of language that leads to his improper behaviors throughout the play.

Accordingly, the most important binary oppositions related to the language of the play and sustained by aporia are the oppositions of proper/improper language and more significantly the speech/writing opposition. The action of the characters, particularly Titus, is reflected in the language of the play as the poetry of the play is hardly human and the language is improper which in turn influences the improper acts of the characters. According to the Renaissance conventions a noble hero should be a paragon of virtue whose virtuous demeanor shows itself in his proper and direct use of language that consequently will lead to the stability of political authority of the play. However, Titus' improper use of language that causes him to be improper and virtue less is incongruous with these conventions. In this regard, Booker, by reflecting on the binary opposition of proper/improper use of language, explains that there is a “distinction between proper and improper use of language” that is central to “the opposition between proper and improper conduct” (1996, p. 179). A proper language is a language that is direct and natural, and follows the standard rules of language. In contrast, “the dense, punning ambiguities of Shakespeare's language” that is driven from “the non-standardized state of the English language at the end of the sixteenth century” make his language indirect and thus improper, since, puns –“a play on two meanings of a word” –makes language unnatural, indirect and difficult to understand (Smith 2007, p. 77). The crucial point about Shakespeare's plays is that this duality is decentred in his plays when the boundaries between proper and improper languages are blurred and his noble heroes employ an indecent language that is either amalgamated with curse, like Coriolanus' language, or silence and the indirect speech of Titus which can be interpreted in different ways. Titus' language is indirect and improper since one time he employs puns abundantly –puns make meaning unstable –and in another

time it is full of passion that neglects logos or reason and paves the way for his virtue less conduct, it is logos “which enables [man] to learn virtuous conduct” (Hansen 1976, p. 111). In other words, passion or the lack of reason in Titus’ speech along with “punning ambiguities” of his language will eventually lead to the chaotic state of his society, and will propel both him and Rome into destruction. Furthermore, his silence or aporia, discussed earlier, can be considered improper because it makes multiple interpretations possible.

TITUS’ PASSIONATE LANGUAGE

In terms of passion that makes Titus behave improperly, Emma Smith called the play “a tragedy of sensation [...] rather than a tragedy of introspection” (2007, p. 96). Similarly, Clemen, reflecting on “the terrific outburst of passion” in *Titus*, attributes the pleasure of the play to the “impassioned forms of expression” that causes a “derivation from the organic structure of the drama” (1951, p. 21). The passionate language and manner of Titus in the course of the play is, in one way or another, responsible for his improper actions and for the Roman society’s chaos as well as for his tragedy. From the opening scene he speaks and behaves more passionately than reasonably, but specifically after Lavinia’s being raped and mutilated, his passion developed a degree of madness or to use Wilson’s words “the rising tide of hysteria” that is in obvious contrast with “the voice of common sense” heard from Marcus (2009, p. iv). The following lines provide the witness:

Marcus. O brother, speak with possibility,
And do not break into these deep extremes.
Titus. Is not my sorrow deep, having no bottom?
Then be my passions bottomless with them.
Marcus. But yet let reason govern thy lament.
Titus. If there were reason for these miseries,
Then into limits could I bind my woe: (III. i. 215-21)

Passion for Titus is in fact a way of dealing with his bottomless grief and misery but since it is too extreme it paves the way for his most barbarous action in the final act. Although Titus is “environ’d with a wilderness of sea” (III. i. 94), that is with external forces and unlimited chagrins, it is his passion from within that pushes him towards annihilation. Unlike Titus whose authority and humanity are influenced and smashed by his passionate, aporetic and punning language, it is the proper use of language in Aaron that introduces him as the hero of the play and calls the audience’s sympathy with him.

Likewise in *Macbeth* witches are presented as the play’s antagonists since they deconstructive play with language and manipulate Macbeth: “fair is foul, and foul is fair, / Hover through the fog and filthy air” (I. i. 10-11), in *Titus* also it is Aaron, who through playing with words and manipulating other characters by his rhetorical and effective speeches, seems to be introduced as the hero instead of Titus. In early modern period, blacks were introduced as demonic, savage, unintelligent and lustful creatures. This attitude is somehow undermined in *Titus* because, although Aaron has many of the same characteristics, he is depicted by Shakespeare as the most intelligent character in the play that by means of his playful and proper language persuades others and gradually is superseded by Titus as the play’s hero. This takes place because, Aaron unlike Titus does not remain a villain until the last moments of the play and the audience comes to see some “glimpses of Aaron’s humanity” (Levin 2006, p. 207) when in Act IV his baby is delivered to him by its nurse. Despite Tamora’s and the nurse’s detestation of the baby, Aaron tries to protect him and as Levin notices the protection is “a defense and validation of both his blackness and his humanity”

(Levin 2006, p. 207). While protecting his baby, Aaron through using an eloquent and rhetoric speech and in an effectual manner, argues that black is beautiful:

Coal-black is better than another hue,
In that it scorns to bear another hue;
For all the water in the ocean

Can never turn the swan's black legs to white,
Although she lave them hourly in the flood. (IV. ii. 99-103)

In this act Aaron is turned to a sympathetic black hero who can arouse the audience's sympathy. Moreover, Aaron's pride in his black color challenges the white authority of both the play and Elizabethan era that is known for its severe racism at this time, when blacks were identified with evil. The sympathy with Aaron even increases more and reaches to its climax in the final act when in exchange for his infant's life he unregretful confesses to his crimes that:

I have done a thousand dreadful things
As willingly as one would kill a fly,
And nothing grieves me heartily indeed,
But that I cannot do ten thousand more. (V. i. 141-44)

In this regard, Barthelemy makes the point that although Aaron does not repent finally, his “uncompromising paternal devotion does soften the otherwise harsh and vile portrait of him” (1987, p. 97). That is, in Aaron angelic strains dominate gradually and he is finally humanized and changed to the play's hero since the audience comes to sympathize with both him and his baby. In contrast, from the first scene Titus is represented to be less than a human when he kills his own son, ignores “a mother's tears in passion for her son” (I. i. 106) and orders the death of Alarbus, and as the play goes ahead his beastly aspects are developed and culminate in the cooking scene. A noteworthy point about the language used by Titus and Aaron is that while both of them employ puns, it functions differently in their speeches.

Accordingly, Emma Smith notices that the pun, “a figure of double sense, can itself be understood doubly, both as a positive symbol of unexpected mutuality and as a negative image for violently disruptive semantic energy” (2007, p. 79). Hence, using puns in *Titus* serves two distinctive functions; while in Aaron it positively influences his language and makes his speech more eloquent, manipulative and effectual, in Titus part it functions negatively. For Titus the eccentricity of his language makes the semantic energy of the words be released and therefore the Saussurean circle of the language in which every signifier leads only to one transcendental signified is decentred. In other words, because of his punning ambiguities, his language is no longer closed and conclusive but open-ended, aporetic and ambivalent and thus ineffectual that makes the multiplicity of narrations and interpretations possible. That is, while punning in Aaron leads to fluency, persuasion and generally to “the power of speech,” that makes it possible for Aaron to turn his deterioration into “his moment of glory” (Palmer 1972, p. 337), it makes Titus’ speech ambiguous, improper and ineffectual. Therefore, in part of him the naturalness and directness of spoken language is replaced by the indirectness of written language in Act IV when disappointed with earthly justice Titus asks his kinsmen to shoot arrows wrapped with written messages to heavenly gods “for justice and for aid” (IV. i. 15). In fact, several times throughout the play –Lavinia’s writing upon the sand and Titus’ written messages in the fourth act, and the anonymous letter found in the second act – the binary opposition of speech/writing is reversed as the spoken language is replaced by the written language that is identified with doubt, uncertainty and absence. At the end of this part, it should be noted that, the eccentric quality of Titus’ language pushes him away from

the centre of the play and no longer is he the play's hero since he is frequently "jostled from the central role in his own play" (Smith 2007, p. 98). Doing this, Shakespeare has attempted to distract the audiences' attention from Titus in order to make them focus on the issue of Elizabeth's successor reflected in the play. The speech/writing opposition needs further clarification.

SPEECH / WRITING DUALITY

According to the traditional view beginning from Plato, speech always comes before writing since "we all learned to speak before we learned to write" (Lucy 2004, p. 118). Spoken language is more natural and superior than written language because speech "emanates from the mind and bodies of living speakers who mean what they say and say what they mean without recourse to prosthetic or technological devices (Lucy 2004, p. 118), that is, in speech as the speaker is present what s/he says is guaranteed. Likewise, according to Saussure writing is not as natural and reliable as speech and "constitute[s] an originary break with nature" (Derrida 1976, p. 36); In other words, in writing "a natural phonetic mark" is superseded by "an artificial graphic mark" (Lucy 2004, p. 119). Moreover, in writing, during the act of writing the reader and during the act of reading the writer are absent. Saussure also argues that "dazzled by the visibility of writing, we are blind to the pre-eminence of speech" (Lucy 2004, p. 120). In this regard, Derrida states that in the Saussurean system of language associated with "phonetic-alphabetic writing," the metaphysics of logocentrism is produced which determines "the sense of being as presence" (Derrida 1976, p. 43). Derrida's ideas challenge this notion of logocentrism in the Western thought which demands an ultimate centre for every philosophical truth. Therefore, Derrida's intention in discussing the speech/writing opposition has been to undermine this logocentric presence and hence the notion of being-as-presence determination. According to Derrida's deconstructive ideas the presence attributed to speech is a metaphysical illusionistic concept and has no direct contact with reality. For Derrida the speech/writing opposition is persistently sustained by aporia which makes the two poles of the binary mutually involved and thus writing can come before speech implying that deconstruction is based upon graphocentrism rather than logocentrism. To be more specific, for Derrida speech is a form of writing and neither speech nor writing is reliable since in both presence is an inexpressible illusion.

Likewise to Derrida, in *Titus Andronicus* Shakespeare presents a challenge to the speech/writing opposition. In some parts of the play there is a serious tension between the written and spoken languages with Shakespeare's privileging writing over speech that aims at increasing the play's tensions and aporetic mode. When Chiron and Demetrius – Tamora's sons – rape and mutilate Lavinia, they tell her:

Demetrius. So, now go tell, an if thy tongue can speak,
Who 'twas that cut thy tongue and ravished thee.

Chiron. Write down thy mind, bewray thy meaning so,
And, if thy stumps will let thee, play the scribe.

Demetrius. See, how with signs and tokens she can scrawl.

Chiron. Go home, call for sweet water, wash thy hands.

Demetrius. She hath no tongue to call nor hands to wash,
And so let's leave her to her silent walks. (II. iv. 1-8)

Similarly, Titus lamenting his mutilated daughter says that "thou hast no hands to wipe away thy tears / nor tongue to tell me who has martyred thee" (III. i. 106-7). In Lavinia's case it seems that the traditional view in which speech has always been valued over writing is

undermined, since, despite the fact that neither can she speak nor write, Lavinia finally tells her story through writing and it is Marcus who shows her how to tell the story of her being raped and mutilated through what Brown calls “her painful writing in the sand” (2001, p. 26). Lavinia, as Marcus suggests, writes the name of her assailants upon the sand by grasping a tree branch between her teeth. However, from a feminist point of view as it is proposed by Marcus, it is a patriarchal action, for according to Jacques Lacan who has so much in common with the works of Derrida regarding the language, the symbolic order of language, especially the written language, is a masculine process that symbolically “presupposes possession of the phallus” (de Lauretis 1987, p. 80). Although, in Lavinia’s case writing is effectual and uncovers some hidden facts about her rapists in Titus it is associated with absence, doubt and uncertainty since plural meanings may be drawn from his written messages which in turn increase the play’s chaos.

Alike to Lavinia who has lost her tongue, Titus also cannot speak properly and in an effectual manner in order to save Rome from being corrupted or symbolically raped by the Goths. After being disappointed from the justice of the tribunes to reconsider their unjust judgment and “refuse to drink my dear sons’ blood” (III. i. 22), in the next act he makes his kinsmen shoot some arrows at the heavenly gods “petitioning them for justice” (Palmer 1972, p. 334). The shot arrows wrapped by the written messages to the goddess of justice and other gods along with Lavinia’s writing upon the sand signifies both deafness to and dumbness of the spoken language. That is, while Lavinia writes since she cannot speak, Titus’ employing written language is either due to the deafness of the tribunes to his speech, or the ineffectiveness of his spoken language. In other words, written language for Titus substitutes his speakable but unheard complaints because “for these, tribunes, in the dust I write” (III. i. 12), yet in Lavinia’s case writing is a substitute for her unspeakable miseries and afflictions. Indeed, both Lavinia and Titus, because of their speechlessness and unheard speeches, have to use artificial and technological devices or according to Palmer “signs and analogues” (1972, p. 337) to speak for them. That is, for both of them the direct, reliable and natural speech is replaced by the indirectness of writing which according to Saussure presupposes a break with nature. When the arrows with wrapped letters are shot into the Roman court they make Saturninus furious and add to the play’s tension since the letters accuse the Roman court of injustice, and seek out the justice of the gods:

And now he writes to heaven for his redress!
See, here’s to Jove, and this to Mercury,
This to Apollo, this to the god of war:
Sweet scrolls to fly about the streets of Rome!
What’s this but libelling against the senate,
And blazoning our injustice every where? (IV. iv. 13-16)

However, these messages along with another personal letter delivered to Saturninus by a clown only a few lines later –“I have brought you a letter and a couple of pigeons here” (IV. iv. 43) –raise many questions regarding the real intentions of Titus, for they carry with them the Derridean absence of the sender, and writing is “characterized by absence and secondariness” (Royle 2003, p. 52). In other words, Derridean absence is the necessary condition for multi-voicedness, which makes multiple narrations possible regarding Titus’ plans and intentions. Indeed Titus is seeking vengeance but the messages to his opponents, as Brown argues, “could be counterproductive by warning that he intends to revenge” (2001, p. 26). In fact, what he plans and the extent of his revenge is not revealed in his written messages until the final act when he kills Tamora and is killed by Saturninus. A similar case takes place

in Act II when Bassianus is murdered by Tamora's sons but in an anonymous letter brought by Tamora it is mentioned that Titus sons have murdered him for a bag of gold hidden in the very place: "Then all too late I bring this fatal writ, / the complot of this timeless tragedy" (II. iii. 264-65). Again associated with the absence of its writer, the letter in its own way contributes to the play's aporia and non-conclusiveness as it has never revealed for the other characters that Chiron and Demetrius have been the murderers. In these two cases a written message is read and during the act of reading is deconstructed, that is, its metaphysics of logocentrism and univocal realm are broken down and in the process of reading –as the writer is absent and his intentions opaque –plural meanings and possibilities are created. However, it should be noted that Derrida does not give primacy either to speech or to writing; instead he believes that both in speech and writing meaning is absent and outside the logic of either-or. Accordingly, in *Titus Andronicus*, the ineffectiveness of his speech makes Titus to employ writing but neither the former nor the latter can express and reveal what is in his mind.

CONCLUSION

At the last quarter of the twentieth century and under the influence of such figures as Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida, Aristotelian either/or logic and the former unity of the text were brought under suspicion and no longer unity, wholeness and fixity of meaning were the essential characteristics of a literary work but rather "a result of decisions made in the act of interpretation" (Grady 2001, p. 32). Jacques Derrida as the "father" of deconstruction believed that language, essentially, is multiple in its meaning and therefore interpretation of a literary work will never come to the point of exhaustiveness. Derrida's ideas challenge the logocentrism and hierarchization of Western philosophy and Aristotelian either/or logic, which demand an ultimate centre to any philosophical truth, and privilege one term of a binary opposition over the other. Derrida rejects "the centrism of language in general" (as cited in Royle 2003, p. 16) in the favour of a "postmodernist anti-hierarchical impulse" (Grady 2001, p. 29). In this regard, aporia is a very important concept in Derrida that decentralizes binary oppositions and thus no longer one term is privileged over the other. Reflection of Derrida's ideas can be observed in *Titus Andronicus*, which according to Clemen "replace[s] clarity and definiteness by multiplicity" (1951, p. 25).

Among several decentred binary oppositions in *Titus* the dualities of proper/improper language and speech/writing are in close relation with the language of the play. Through decentring the former opposition Shakespeare makes an effort to jostle Titus away from the centre of the play intentionally to draw the audience's attention to a social issue –the question of succession in the play refers to Elizabeth's lack of a successor in 1592 –instead of to a single person as a hero. Actually Shakespeare has intended to draw the audiences' attention to this socio-political issue to warn against the problem of succession England would encounter after Elizabeth's death, and to this end has employed some techniques to decentre the play's protagonist. In this regard, Dillon points out that *Titus* "is not the tragedy of one man or even of one family, but of Rome" (2007, p. 38); likewise Emma Smith states that the play has no hero, since Titus is not a great moral man who can arouse the audience's sympathy. The improper and passionate language Titus uses is the cause of his barbarous actions throughout the play, in one way or another.

In contrast, Aaron uses proper language in the play as a means of rhetorical and eloquent speech to manipulate others, and finally it is his proper use of language that leads to his glory and success as he gradually is humanized and elicits the audience's sympathy. That Aaron succeeds in his affairs whereas Titus fails, is due, in parts, to his ability to talk

eloquently. His playful, rhetorical and proper language, to use his own words, is used in such a way “to torment you with my bitter tongue” (V. i. 150). In other words, there is a vivid contrast between Aaron’s artful speech and Titus’ heroic action. The ineffectiveness of speech in Titus makes him use writing in some parts of the play and hence a serious challenge is posed to the speech/writing opposition in which speech has always been privileged over writing. By Shakespeare’s privileging of written language that is identified with secondariness and absence of the speaker, the metaphysics of logo centrism is decentred which increases the play’s tension and alters Rome to a chaotic society. Indeed through decentring these binary oppositions and traditional hierarchisation, Shakespeare attempts to show that ignoring logos and reason will eventually lead to anarchy. Accordingly, in the final scene Lucius and Marcus, by an appropriate speech, bring order back to the plagued and corrupted Rome, since “these two,” to use Dillon’s words, “present themselves as appropriate leaders of the state” (2007, p. 39).

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