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Rich Ornaments and Delightful Engines: The Poetics of Failed Festivity and Figural Automation in William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*

Abstract: The present study focuses on the poetics of failed festivity in William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, tracing analogies between early modern festival culture, in particular the Joyous Entry of the Renaissance prince into the city, and the machinery of the play, which is set in motion by Titus. The principal element of this machinery is the figure of Lavinia, who can be seen as the inverted version of such wonders of occasional architecture and civic pageantry as the automaton, the breathing sculpture and the automatic waterwork. One of the major problems explored is the confrontation of reality and fiction, or human flesh and art, in the manifestly echoic universe of the play, where the objectified automaton-like figure responds to the actions of its animators with its own stirring.

Keywords: William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, Lavinia, automaton, sculpture, automatic waterwork, Joyous Entry

1. Introduction

The opening scene of William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* is set against a rather reductive vista of the city of Rome, whose architecture is limited to the Capitol and the tomb of the Andronici; the austerity of the setting is echoed by the geometric rigour of the arrangement of figures on stage. The play's Rome is thus laden with the symbolic associations of its "white and spotless" marbles (1.1.182),¹ such as political power, timeless grandeur, generational continuity, as well as emotional detachment. The austerity of the space implied is echoed by a sequence of formal

speeches: the self-recommendations of the two brother-candidates for emperors are soon followed by an equally stylised eulogy on Titus phrased by the most uncannily verbose of the play's characters, i.e., Marcus Andronicus. This is the city that Titus, heralded by Marcus as the "gracious triumpher in the eyes of Rome" (1.1.170), enters, his arrival beautified by the train of conquered barbarians.

With its focus on ritualised civic praise of martial accomplishment, the opening section of Shakespeare's *Most Lamentable Roman Tragedy* initially promises to offer some dramatic insight into the values forming the ideological landscape of the ancient triumph.² However, the play soon departs rather far from the standard version of the Roman ceremony. Titus's salutation speech, for instance, addressed to the city of Rome, instantly lapses into a funeral eulogy for his sons killed in battle. In its opening line, the first line Titus delivers in the play, Rome is hailed as "victorious," which would seem to suggest that what will follow will be rather conventional expression of the ancient victor's humility; however, the city is also described as being dressed in its "mourning weeds" (1.1.70). Much in the same vein, the display of coffins of Titus's sons – called, rather prophetically, a "safer triumph" (1.1.176) – far exceeds the conventional allusions to the *memento mori* motif made during the ancient rite of entry into the city, where the victor was often accompanied by a person reminding him of his own mortality. The human sacrifice in front of the Andronici tomb, to move to the play's first scene of dismemberment, is both un-Roman and misplaced: the sacrificial offering crowning the ancient triumph would have been held at the city's main temple and would not have involved the slaughter of men. Most crucially, the sudden death of Mutius at the hands of his own father for "barr[ing] [Titus's] way in Rome" (1.1.291) is an outbreak of violence entirely out of the spirit of the ancient triumph.

On its most basic level, the ancient victor's triumphal entry into the city was a potent exorcism of violence and a precaution against mutiny. As noted by Jacek Żukowski, "The *portae triumphalis* erected in the vicinity of the Porticus Octavia and the temple of Bellona, and then on the Field of Mars performed the function of cleansing warriors, separating the realm of the *militia* from the realm of the *domus*" (79–80; trans. A.Ż.). Actual violence was also replaced with its mere representation: the staging of mock battles beyond the city walls, where they would be safely contained within the domain of fiction. In Shakespeare's play, by contrast, the city is an unwilling witness to a veritable triptych of violence, Alarbus's sacrifice and Mutius's murder flanking the scene of Lavinia's first rape, or kidnapping, which results in the emergence of the uncanny poetics of failed festivity which permeates the entire play. In accordance with the rule of temporal syncretism typical of Elizabethan drama, the tragedy resonates not only with references to the ancient triumph but also with more contemporary allusions to the hauntingly beautiful yet somewhat elusive universe of early modern festival culture.

2. The Joyous Entry

One of the most sumptuous forms of early modern festival, whose spirit – in a rather paradoxical twist – informs much of Shakespeare’s savage tragedy of mutilation and ravishment, is the so-called Joyous Entry. A Renaissance version of the ancient Roman triumph, the *Joyeuse Entrée* was in its very essence a curious blend of civic pageantry, theatre and the visual arts. These diverse disciplines were all employed to celebrate the arrival of a prince or monarch or his spouse into their dominion, “with the people look[ing] on as their representatives enter[ed] into a contract with the ruler which the festival [brought] into being” (Watanabe-O’Kelly 16). Serving to promote what J.R. Mulryne calls “the iconography of power” (1–2), this multidisciplinary spectacle depended for much of its effect on the visual and ideological transformation of urban space, which was largely achieved with the help of the so-called ephemeral architecture erected for the occasion. The early modern festive cityscape was thus punctuated with temporary edifices, made of wood, cardboard and papier mâché, such as triumphal gates laden with emblematic decorations and sculpted or painted likenesses of historical and allegorical figures, parting obelisks, theatrical scaffolds, and platforms for musical ensembles.³ The space of early modern festival was also a particularly welcoming ground for mechanical or pseudo-mechanical contraptions placed atop occasional architecture, such as, for instance, eagles flapping their wings as sign of salutation.⁴ Equally prominent was the presence of live performers in the guise of living sculptures, Hermione-like, who could enter into a tactile relationship with the prince entering the city: a relatively common sight was children as *putti*, suspended on ropes from the tops of triumphal arches, crowning the royals passing beneath with rose or laurel wreaths. Many such automaton-like wonders, whether genuinely mechanical or not, responded to the motion of the approaching sovereign by their own stirring, thus providing the audience assembled along the route of the entry with visible proof of the strength of the prince’s agency, a manifestation of his quasi-divine ability to animate the inanimate. For all the density of its emblematic and allegorical message, the central wonder of the early modern triumph was always the miracle of motion. As stated by Michael Witmore in his study of mobility in the context of English civic pageantry, “extra- or non-allegorical significance that these celebrations may have had for a non-courtly audience [...] stemmed from the interaction of humans with machines – in particular their joint capacity to produce a particular kind of charmed movement” (110–111).

Apart from Titus’s allusion to Rome’s “mourning weeds,” there is no mention in the opening scene of the play of the costume of occasional architecture donned by the city for the purposes of civic pageantry. In the austere universe of Shakespeare’s Roman tragedy, though, where human bodies are reduced to objects, the function of occasional architecture is projected onto the most thoroughly objectified of its figures, namely, Titus’s daughter Lavinia. Already in Act 1 scene 1 she is accorded

a clearly decorative function, as well as being firmly set within the civic context: in Bassianus's words, she is "Rome's rich ornament" (1.1.52). The use of the word "ornament" in the play is, in fact, restricted to Lavinia: in what is one of the most disconcerting images of Shakespeare's tragedy of dismemberment, her severed hands are retrospectively described by Marcus as "sweet ornaments" (2.4.18). The decorative impulse is also present in the lines of Saturninus, who, enraged at Bassianus's usurpation of what he thinks is rightfully his, claims that Lavinia has been won by "him that *flourish'd* for her with his sword" (1.1.310; emphasis mine). More importantly still, Lavinia's presence in the scene of her father's triumph is of a distinctively echoic nature: like Titus before her, she pays homage to her deceased brothers, while simultaneously greeting the victor. Her first line, "In peace and honour live Lord Titus long" (1.1.157) thus echoes Titus's words immediately preceding it: "In peace and honour rest you here, my sons!" (1.1.156).

When Bassianus claims her as his rightful betrothed, Lavinia is also disparagingly called "that changing piece" (1.1.309) – a phrase which, apart from its blatant objectivisation, foretells the transformative nature of the character, who will soon morph into an "object" that "kills" (3.1.64). Throughout the play Lavinia's portrayal will thus shift between the image of the sculpture – an uncanny concretisation of the literary topos of the *signa spirantia*, i.e., a breathing sculpture with only the voice lacking (*vox sola deest*) – and that of the automaton, i.e., a mechanical contraption moving in a seemingly unaided way. A spectacular feat of mechanics with its roots in the classical antiquity, the Renaissance automaton owed much of its popularity to the late 16th-century translations of treatises by the mathematician and engineer Hero of Alexandria, the author of *Pneumatica* and *On Automaton*s. In a number of key scenes of the play the heroine also resembles a combination of the two forms mentioned, namely, an ingenious waterwork, i.e., a blend of the sculpted fountain and the automaton that was to be found in countless early modern gardens. All such *mirabilia* were eagerly exploited by the makers of early modern festival, not least because they depended for their effect on imitating life with its natural processes. One of these natural processes is motion.

Another distinctive feature of the Joyous Entry was the constant fluctuation between fiction and reality: its audience were thus expected to temporarily suspend their disbelief and witness the transformation of their city into ancient Rome⁵; select viewers would also interact with performers in the guise of allegorical figures or personified abstractions. A space of unceasing confrontation of reality and fiction, or, more specifically, human flesh and art, Lavinia's body is thus the principal element of the play's festive machinery. This machinery is set in motion by the figure of Titus; in doing so, he is acting in a manner akin to the self-fashioning of the Renaissance prince, who wanted to be seen as the actual animator of occasional architecture and the driving force behind civic pageantry. Titus's control over the material tissue of the spectacle, however, is rather short-lived: already in the opening scene of the play his power over the "ornament" is fated to be usurped.

Lavinia can thus be seen as the nucleus of the play's larger scheme of festivity that goes awry.

3. The Echoic Principle

Another proof of Lavinia's centrality in Shakespeare's poetics of the failed triumph is the fact that her echoic stylisation, so prominent at the outset of the tragedy, spreads from the figure of the heroine onto the entire fictional universe of the play. The notion of repetition – and the related idea of imitation – is embodied in the echo-device which plays a major part in the “double hunt” (2.3.19) of Act 2, where the wild game is not “the panther and the hart” (1.1.493), as Titus would have it, but Bassianus, Lavinia and the Andronici.

Having announced his intention to “wake the emperor and his lovely bride / And rouse the prince, and ring a hunter's peal, / That all the court may echo with the noise” (2.2.4–2.2.6), Titus is immediately answered by the sounds of hunting, followed by the appearance of the imperial family, Saturnine jokingly chiding the general for rousing brides at so early an hour. For all its repetitiveness, the echoic reverberation inspired by Titus in the hunting scene turns out to be uncannily operative: it propels the emperor and his family into motion, literally making them cross the boundary between the city and the forest and enter “a place [...] by nature made for murders and for rapes” (4.1.55–4.1.58). The machinery of the play's failed triumph is thus activated by means of harsh sound, in a manner not unlike the machinery of the early modern civic pageantry, which jostled into motion at the sound of exploding cannon and the flourish of cornetts or trumpets. The same auditory effects were also part of the soundscape of the early modern hunting ceremony, which was in itself an entertainment of a strongly celebratory nature. As noted by Edward Berry, “the ritual dismemberment of the hart,” the noblest type of game, “may be said to enact human domination over wild nature but at the same time acknowledging implicitly the wilderness in human nature itself” (78). This dual character of hunting also makes itself felt in its Romanised version by Shakespeare; for all its ceremonial appeal, it still adds a visceral element to the seemingly pristine Roman setting. Titus's invitation to hunting is also inherently aggressive; “the uncoupling of hounds and making a bay [...] pushes merriment to the edge of assault. It mimics the final stage of the hunt, when the hounds are released and the exhausted and encircled animal stands at bay to meet its death” (Berry 81).

According to the early modern theory of the senses, sound was capable of probing the deepest regions of the human soul; the sense of hearing was associated with the listener's openness, penetrability, and susceptibility to manipulation (Folkerth 33, 68). As the peal inspired by Titus is not only reverberated by the walls of the emperor's palace but also literally penetrates its interior, the palace, and by extension, the entire city is defined as a site where primary instincts are strongly

at play. The direction of sound in the scene also foretells the future fate of Lavinia, who will soon be violated by Chiron and Demetrius. Just as in the first scene of the play, where Titus's daughter acts out the part of occasional architecture, also in the forest scenes the character of Lavinia is associable with the play's architectural, viz. Roman, setting. In the scenes to come, having been brutally mauled and deprived of her "spotless chastity" (5.2.176), she will still have much in common with the state of Rome – headless at the outset of the play and degenerating through its course, its marbles quickly stained with blood.⁶ Lavinia's scenic presence is thus essentially repetitive, not just in the sense of echoing other characters' words or movements, or even in the more general sense of re-enacting, with some variation, the trauma of Philomel, but also in the sense of being imitative: not just of her mythological precedent but also of the play's settings.

In accordance with the play's poetics of failed festivity, Titus is soon bound to lose control over the machinery of the spectacle, in particular the manifestly artful quasi-architectural contraption of Lavinia's body, in favour of several other characters. These figures are also associable with some of the main actants in the Joyous Entry the way it was conceived of in the early modern period. The principal figure to usurp Titus's command of his "deer" (3.1.91) in the hunting scenes is Aaron, who knows how to, in his own words, "ravish a maid or plot the way to do it" (5.1.129), and advises Chiron and Demetrius on how to proceed with the matter. In doing so, Aaron resembles the principal designer or artificer employed by the city council to give material substance to the iconographic programme of the Joyous Entry, which was usually devised by some of the most prominent writers and scholars of their age. With some notable exceptions, such as Rubens's activity at the court of the governors of the Southern Netherlands, the function of the chief designer was usually assigned to architects, who were expected to produce detailed designs for festive architecture and supervise the joint efforts of painters, sculptors and carpenters erecting it. A notable English example is the architect and joiner Stephen Harrison, whose sumptuous folio entitled *The Arches of Triumph* (1604) documents a group of triumphal arches he designed for the purposes James I's royal entry into London, a spectacular entertainment scripted by Thomas Dekker in collaboration with Ben Jonson.⁷ Given the prominence of festive lexicon in Shakespeare's play, it is hardly coincidental that Aaron's role is summarised in one of its last lines as that of the "chief architect and plotter of these woes" (5.3.121).⁸ Viewed in this context, Aaron-the-designer takes over the function of the animator of Lavinia-as-occasional architecture, a role Titus had envisaged as his own.

4. Automated Sculpture

Aaron's sculptural design results in the emergence of what is one of the most haunting theatrical images to date: "Lavinia, her hands cut off, and her tongue cut

out, and ravished” (2.4). Apart from some rather troubling horticultural connotations, Marcus’s poetically phrased expression of horror at the hands that have “lopped and hewed and made [Lavinia’s] body bare / Of her two branches, those sweet ornaments / Whose circling shadows kings have sought to sleep in” (2.4.16–2.4.19) brings to mind the image of Lavinia’s body as an uncanny *arteficialium*, or a man-made thing which is meant to imitate natural life processes. When set in the context of Renaissance festival culture, the duo Chiron and Demetrius can be seen as a particularly grim version of artists or craftsmen who were expected to give material substance to the chief architect’s design of festive architecture. This makes the names of Lavinia’s maimers gain ghastly ironic resonance, as they are both connected with the idea of the manual handling of matter. The name “Demetrius,” the follower of the goddess Demeter, who was once herself raped by Poseidon in the form of the stallion, can be also associated with the Latin *demeto*, which means to “mow, reap, cut down” (Levith 44). “Chiron” has its origins in the Greek word *kheir*, meaning “skilled with the hands”; the centaur Chiron was credited with inventing surgery (*Theoi Greek Mythology*). In a more artistic vein, still, the name “Demetrius” also invokes the notion of hyperrealism: the ancient sculptor Demetrius of Alopece earned his name for an extreme form of mimeticism of style (Lucian 3:242). Pliny, whose *Naturalis Historia* Shakespeare was thoroughly familiar with, notes that Demetrius’s portrait sculptures were so “lifelike that they were unflattering” (Pliny the Elder; qtd. in Mayor 98). The reductive presence of Lavinia, deprived of the “sweet ornaments” of her hands, and thus reduced to the visual essence of the human shape in its verticality, as well as muted, thus unable to vocalize her inner thoughts, is disconcertingly “lifelike” and “unflattering” in the sense that it draws our attention to the material dimension of the human body, the body as thing. The human flesh is here levelled down to sculpting material – one of the same status as any other organic substance used by sculptors, such as ebony or wood. The emergent object, i.e., Lavinia-as-sculpture, enters the domain of the miraculous or, differently put, the province of the liminal. As noted by Naomi Conn Liebler, “liminality in the form of ambiguity is a conditional premise of Shakespearean tragedy” (122); such liminality, one could add, was also typical of the multidisciplinary realm of early modern festival.

In his discussion of Renaissance civic pageantry as “spectacle of motion,” Witmore notes that, in its very essence, it was a “sequence of push and pull, action and reaction” (117). These words could also be used as a perfect summary of Shakespeare’s depiction of Lavinia, a figure not only constantly oscillating between art and reality, nature and culture, but also fluctuating between stillness and motion. In all of her scenes Lavinia is either set in motion, automaton-like, or described as vigorously moving, to be repeatedly made to freeze, either alone or with some other figures, to the effect that she resembles an independent sculpture or a constituent part of a sculptural group. After the relative calm in the opening scene of the play, where she kneels in front of the family tomb and asks Titus’s blessing, she is seized

by Bassianus and carried away with the help of Marcus. At the outset of Act 2 she is once again passive; in her own words, she has “been broad awake two hours and more” (2.2.17); with a host of other characters, however, she is soon propelled into motion in the hunting scene. Temporarily immobilised by Chiron and Demetrius, who succeed in “pluck[ing] a dainty doe to ground” (2.2.26), towards the end of Act 2 she is seen “fly[ig] away so fast” (2.4.11), only to be stopped by Marcus. She is once again made to move as she is taken to Titus, who trusts her with his severed hand. After some offstage reading in Lavinia’s chamber comes Act 4 scene 1, where she pursues her nephew Lucius, tossing Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, and scribbles the names of her violators in the sand with a staff supported by her stumps. Resembling some form of pseudo-mechanical contraption or automaton, which were set in motion so as to create a lifelike impression, and restlessly crossing spatial and ideological boundaries, Lavinia is thus a vital element of the play’s imagery of failed festivity.

The uncannily festive appeal of the *tableaux vivants* featuring Lavinia is strengthened by the very structure of Shakespeare’s play, where the scenes with the moving heroine are not only set off by moments of relative calm and motionlessness but also flanked by a different type of “stills,” i.e., elaborate speeches addressing the subject of her plight. One of these speeches, which is – perhaps not that paradoxically in light of the play’s treatment of opposites – full of references to motion, is the forty-five-line *blazon anatomique* recited by Marcus upon finding his disfigured niece in the forest. After all the murder and violation of Act 2, this elaborately phrased eulogy promises to offer some relief from the play’s atrocity and dynamism. However, these expectations are soon thwarted. The heroine, who has been “fl[y]ing away” (2.4.11), “straying in the park” and “seeking to hide herself” (3.1.88–89), is once again “plucked to the ground,” i.e., immobilised by the roughly regular metre of the passage, its overtly ekphrastic frame, as well as multiple references to Lavinia’s former beauty and grace, musical and vocal accomplishment and overall perfection. The impression of stasis is further intensified by Marcus’s retelling of Lavinia’s plight:

Fair Philomela, why she but lost her tongue
 And in a tedious sampler sewed her mind:
 But, lovely niece, that mean is cut from thee;
 A craftier Tereus, cousin, hast thou met,
 And he hath cut those pretty fingers off,
 That could have better sewed than Philomel. (3.1.38–3.1.43)

In listing the details of Lavinia’s gruesome ordeal which have already been revealed by Chiron and Demetrius in the preceding scene, Marcus does not say anything the audience – or, for that matter, also Lavinia – would not know. Although his speech is notably tautological in nature, its sheer length is a suggestion that it is meant to serve some other function.

In his linguistic command of Lavinia-as-sculpture Marcus veers surprisingly close to Aaron-the-architect. Marcus's use of some disconcertingly erotic imagery in the description of the ravished female body, for instance, which has been the subject of much critical interest and readerly outrage, is less cryptic in light of the famous classical anecdotes on ancient viewers' passionate responses to lifelike statues, including Pliny's famous tale of a man who so "intimately" embraced Praxiteles' Aphrodite of Knidos that he left "a stain bear[ing] witness to his lust" on the statue (36, 21). Taking into consideration the Aaron-inspired sculptural stylisation of Lavinia in the scene, the puzzling eroticism of Marcus's description can be seen as a distant echo of the Pygmalionesque fantasy of making love to a sculpture or automaton. More importantly still, while the Moor employs Tamora's ruthless sons as his instruments, Marcus resorts to language as an equally potent means of usurping control over the liminal machinery of Lavinia's body. In doing so, he assumes a role akin to the presenter, or explicator, of the wonders of early modern festival. While clearly meant to ravish the general public with its sheer multi-sensory splendour, occasional architecture was also a backdrop for some rather intricate emblematic and allegorical messages, which needed to be elucidated for the benefit of those in the know. One way of doing this was to provide select audience members with festival books or brochures that were often printed prior to the actual entry⁹; another solution was to include such explication in some of the speeches delivered as part of the entertainment; finally, it was not infrequent to have a presenter figure comment on what was being shown. Reverberating with classical allusion, Marcus's presenter-like description of Lavinia in Act 3 scene 1 is not unlike Chiron and Demetrius's lopping and hewing of her body: his *blazon anatomique* imposes another layer of artificiality on Lavinia's flesh, leading to her further objectification, to the effect that her corporeal frame appears to be more of a thing than a living human being.

As observed by Justin Kolb, in Shakespeare's time the word "thing" still retained some of its Anglo-Saxon sense of a collective body of a judicial or deliberative nature, thus being "an object of concern or inquiry," while at the same time denoting a separate entity (56). Lavinia-as-a-thing is, in fact, an object of constant inquiry: the play is punctuated with repeated attempts to divine her meaning: "Alas, sweet aunt, I know not what you mean" (Young Lucius, 4.1.4); "What means my niece Lavinia by these signs?" (Marcus, 4.1.8); "Fear her not, Lucius; somewhat doth she mean" (Titus, 4.1.9); "How now, Lavinia? Marcus, what means this?" (Titus, 4.1.30), to mention just a few examples. The sheer number of such remarks indicates that this wondrous hybrid of life and art is as strange to the figures of the play as she is to its readers or viewers – *strange* in the sense of being alien, but also bizarre, like an item in the early modern *Kunstkammer*, the cabinet of natural and artistic curiosities – and that it ultimately evades satisfactory interpretation.

Marcus's description of Lavinia in Act 2 scene 4 is structured around a set of failed attempts to vocalise his niece, who is the *vox sola deest* type of sculpture.

His queries, “Cousin, a word; where is your husband?” (2.4.12); “Speak, gentle niece” (2.4.16); “Why dost not speak to me?” (2.4.21), are all fated to remain unanswered. In the essentially reductive universe of Shakespeare’s play, mimetic artistry is thus irreversibly associated with voicelessness. This blend of ideas also informs Marcus’s ill-timed praise of Lavinia’s eloquence and the melodiousness of her voice, which morphs into a eulogy to her cut-off tongue:

O that delightful engine of her thoughts,
 That blabbed them with such pleasing eloquence
 Is torn from forth that pretty hollow cage
 Where like a sweet melodious bird it sung
 Sweet varied notes, enchanting every ear. (3.1.82–3.1.86)

While being another allusion to the story of Philomel, the description is also a potent element of Lavinia’s presentation as the automaton. The image of a caged bird, coupled with the word “engine,” can be associated with a particular form of early modern lifelike mechanical contraption, i.e., the avian automaton, which was a frequent visitor to Renaissance gardens and curiosity cabinets. Such artificial birds were equipped with mechanisms that could set them in motion and sometimes also with systems of wind pipes serving to imitate bird’s song. As observed by Wendy Beth Hyman, the avian automaton soon came to be employed by early modern poets as “a metonymy of their own poetic making” (161). As the mechanical bird, or the tongue, is torn out of its cage, or the mouth, its voice – and, by extension, the poet’s voice – is muted. Faced with all the atrocities of the play, poetic language – or, more generally, the language of all art – is no longer capable of grasping the true essence of reality.¹⁰ This is probably one of the reasons why Marcus’s elaborate ekphrastic speeches seem to be so disconcertingly out of place when set beside all the horror that has inspired them.

The conflation of automation and voicelessness is also at the heart of the play’s climax, namely, the garden scene in Act 4 scene 1, where Lavinia scribbles her mutilators’ names in the sand with a staff held in her mouth. In doing so, the heroine transforms into a scenic version of the writing automaton, predating by two hundred years the famous Jacquet-Droz clockwork “writer,” its mechanism “encased within the child-sized figure” (Nocks 34). Despite its strongly dynamic appeal, the garden scene presents the moving Lavinia as a creature devoid of any agency, whose actions are essentially echoic. Her animation in the scene is the kinetic reverberation of the motions of Marcus, who “writes his name with his staff, and guides it with his feet and mouth” (4.1.68) and asks his niece to imitate his motions in an attempt to temporarily mend the broken machinery of her body. The whole routine is preceded by Marcus’s delineation of “this sandy plot” (4.1.69), or the acting area, his instructions for the Andronici to sit down by his side, and, finally, his appeal to the gods for inspiration: “Apollo, Pallas, Jove, or Mercury /

Inspire me, that I may this treason find” (4.1.67). In seeking divine guidance, Marcus is not unlike one of the designers of the early modern triumph asking to be inflamed by *furor divinus*. His voice sounds thoroughly authoritative, and his command over Lavinia-as-automaton is here at its strongest.

For all its automation and seeming dehumanisation, Lavinia’s writing spree in the garden scene is distinguished by a high degree of emotional intensity. Heightened emotionality already makes itself felt in her interaction with another figure acting as the animator of the play’s festive machinery, whose presence in the scene discussed can easily be overlooked, namely, Young Lucius. At the outset of Act 4, he rushes into Titus’s family garden, voicing the following complaint:

[...] my aunt Lavinia
Follows me everywhere, I know not why.
Good uncle Marcus, see how swift she comes.
Alas, sweet aunt, I know not what you mean. (4.1.1–4.1.4)

Not unlike Marcus, who propels Lavinia into motion with his own stirring, Young Lucius also initiates a peculiar kind of kinetic routine which is to be acted out by the female character. However, when set beside Marcus, Titus’s grandson turns out to be a less calculating, more instinctive animator of Lavinia’s body. In fact, he makes her follow the exact route he takes only because he is fleeing from her in panic, which means that he is both manipulating his aunt and being manipulated by her. A fine connection between Lavinia and Lucius can thus be deduced from these lines, a connection which is an echo of a more general parallel that has been drawn between the figure of the child as it was understood in the early modern period and the puzzling presence of the automaton:

What the machine is to motion, childhood is to human being: both child and automaton, in the early modern period, lack a deliberating soul that can be understood to motivate their actions. A cognitive deficit in the agent thus becomes a theatrical asset. Perhaps the child, the machine, has less soul. But it also has more life. (Witmore 117)

For all the reductiveness of the play, Lavinia-the-automaton’s lack of agency is not tantamount to lifelessness, which makes it impossible for readers or viewers at the theatre to fully distance themselves from her bodily presence. This visceral quality, in turn, accounts for the unprecedented emotional appeal of the garden scene.

While being the climax of Marcus’s command over Lavinia’s body, the scene described differs from all the other scenes of interaction of the two characters, which is mostly due to the conspicuous lack of any ekphrastic frame or aestheticizing description that would accompany this stunning spectacle of motion. Marcus’s verbal activity is here limited to a mere several lines; however, his relative silence is a perfect

illustration of the unease experienced by all of the Andronici at the sight of Lavinia's frantic attempts at writing. The same can be said of Young Lucius's wild flight from his aunt. The garden scene is thus a perfect dramatic rendering of what the roboticist Masahiro Mori calls the "uncanny valley effect," i.e., the eerie sensation one experiences as one spirals from empathy into disgust and horror upon one's encounter with a near-to-perfect humanoid; a dip in feelings which results from trying to come to terms with the robot's lifelike appearance and motion (98–99).

5. The Waterwork

Another element of the play's poetics of automation is the mechanised garden waterwork. This type of ingenious aquatic contraption was frequently a variation on mythological subject matter, which makes it a particularly fitting motif for the presentation of Lavinia, whose plight echoes the tale of Philomel.¹¹ Aquatic imagery figures rather prominently in Marcus's *blazon anatomique* in Act 2 scene 4. One-fourth of his speech is actually taken by the description of Lavinia's loss of blood:

Alas, a crimson river of warm blood,
Like to a bubbling fountain stirred with wind,
Doth rise and fall between thy rosèd lips,
Coming and going with thy honey breath.
But sure some Tereus hath deflowered thee,
And, lest thou shouldst detect him, cut thy tongue.
Ah, now thou turn'st away thy face for shame,
And notwithstanding all this loss of blood,
As from a conduit with three issuing spouts,
Yet do thy cheeks look red as Titan's face
Blushing to be encountered with a cloud. (2.4.22–2.4.32)

It should be noted that Lavinia-as-waterwork as pictured by Marcus not only bleeds but also blushes, Shakespeare's lines echoing here the famous description of the blushing cheeks of Lavinia's namesake in *The Aeneid*, and "turns [...] away [her] face in shame" (2.4.28). Her animation in the scene is reminiscent of the animation of constituent parts of early modern automatic waterworks. With its predominance of verbs related to motion, which create the impression of blood running in a closed circuit, this description thus brings to mind the Renaissance garden fountain where mechanical pumps ensured a continuous, circular flow of water. Such contraptions were believed to reconcile the otherwise incompatible forces at work in nature: stillness and motion, steadiness and fluidity, thus making it possible for the owner of the garden to symbolically master time (Davis 174–175). Once again the play's poetics of failed festivity proves to be inextricably connected with the theme of power.

To return to the realm of early modern festival, Marcus's description of the blood-spitting-and-drinking fountain has also been interpreted as "a dark, deviant version of the festive occasional architecture associated with civic pageantry," with Lavinia resembling the "conduits running with wine during royal entries" (Cunin 59). This reading of the tortured female figure helps explain the otherwise puzzling conflation of Lavinia's blood with her "honey breath." *Joyeuse Entrée* would have entailed a special kind of multisensory perception of the wonders of occasional architecture, with rose water and incense being among the favourite fragrances used by the authors of such entertainments.

The affinity between Lavinia and the automatic waterwork is further developed in the scenes where Titus attempts to re-establish his command over the broken machinery of her body. In a striking combination of the poetic and the macabre so typical of the play, he advises his daughter on how to take her own life:

Or get some little knife between thy teeth,
And just against thy heart make thou a hole
That all the tears that thy poor eyes let fall
May run into that sink, and soaking in,
Drown the lamenting fool in sea-salt tears. (3.2.16–3.2.20)

For all its traumatic appeal, Titus's grim fantasy creates the impression of a design for some intricate hydraulic contraption. Not unlike Marcus, whose aestheticising lines succeed in temporarily freezing Lavinia, Titus comes up with a haunting image of his daughter as a fountain in reverse, where the liquid would flow into the device instead of being pushed out of it. Titus's quasi-sculptural design here subverts the ideology of the Renaissance garden, which was to be seen as the earthly reflection of the Garden of Eden, with the Fountain of Life at its centre. The tears soaking into the aperture would here bring death instead of life. One of the key themes in this passage is the motif of boundary-crossing, which is so prominent in the hunting scenes preceding all the play's horrors. The line of demarcation here infringed, however, is not the ideological division between culture, or Rome, and nature, or the woods, but the infinitely more tangible boundary between the inside and the outside of the human body, the intimate barrier between the outer world and the inner self. Still, there is some thematic affinity between the scenes discussed: were Titus's design actually realised, tears soaking into the flesh would be a form of infiltration, not unlike the spreading of sound in Act 2 scene 2. Ironically, by encouraging Lavinia to take her own life, Titus is trying to step back into the role of the animator of her automated self.

One of the reasons why Titus's aquatic design is not executed is that it entails violation of the laws of physics governing the workings of the human organism: tears are supposed to re-enter the body instead of leaving it. By contrast, a more conventional route is taken by the blood of Chiron and Demetrius in Act 5 scene 2, following Titus's announcement of his intention to "martyr" them: "This one hand

yet is left to cut your throats, / Whiles that Lavinia 'tween her stumps doth hold / The basin that receives your guilty blood" (5.2.181–5.2.183). Once again one is presented with an image of a hydraulic contraption, this time involving several figures, where Lavinia functions as a prominent element of the sculptural group, collecting the villains' blood into a vessel supported by her stumps. With the execution of this design Titus finally re-establishes his command of the automated machinery of the spectacle. His manifestation of power, however, does not mean that the broken universe of the play has been mended. The murder of Lavinia in the last scene of the play is shocking but thoroughly in line with Shakespeare's poetics of failed festivity: after the conclusion of the Joyous Entry the short-lived wonders of occasional architecture were always dismantled, some of their costly fabrics torn apart by the crowd, not infrequently in fits of ritualised frenzy.

Notes

- 1 All quotations of *Titus Andronicus* are from the 1994 *New Cambridge Shakespeare* edition by Alan Hughes.
- 2 Considerable sections of *Titus Andronicus*, including Act 1 scene 1, are generally held to be the work of George Peele (see, for instance, Chapter 3 in Vickers 2002). However, the play's collaborative authorship is beyond the scope of the present study, the principal reason being that it does not affect the thematic integrity of the entire text, especially when it comes to its festive imagery.
- 3 The complex interaction between ephemeral and urban architecture is expertly discussed in Mulryne, De Jonge, Martens, and Morris (2018).
- 4 One of the highlights of the coronation entry of Edward VI into London (1547) was the display of automata: a lion befriending a phoenix, and another lion being crowned (Witmore 114–116).
- 5 On the appropriation and adaptation of the tradition of the Roman triumph by the makers of early modern festival, see McGowan 2002.
- 6 Further affinities between Lavinia and Rome are discussed in Smith 1996 (327–328).
- 7 In her discussion of Harrison's lavishly illustrated book, J. Caitlin Finlayson notes the presence of "a draughtsman's compass and/or a rule (or measuring scale) [...] at the bottom of each illustration," further observing that "these architectural tools point towards the drawings as artificer's designs, in proportion and measured [...], thereby establishing the authority of this folio as a visual record of the devices" (179).
- 8 For a comprehensive discussion of the architectural lexicon as used in the play, see Cunin 2012.
- 9 Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly defines early modern festival books as "individual

publications issued by the body organizing the particular festival” (22). For further information on printed records of early modern entertainments, see Watanabe-O’Kelly 2002 (21–23).

- 10 Lavinia’s disfigured body has been described as a “speechless emblem [...] a work of art (made by Shakespeare) designed to show the limits of art and artful language” (Kendall 306).
- 11 Henry IV’s gardens at Saint-Germain-en-Laye (1598), for instance, boasted a grotto with the figure of Perseus descending from the ceiling and killing a dragon, accompanied by the fettered Andromeda and the drinking Bacchus. Salomon de Caus’s *Les Raisons des Forces Mouvantes* (1615), which he dedicated to Elizabeth of Bohemia, contains a plate with a cave with a pan-pipe-playing Cyclops and the goddess Venus seated in a shell drawn by dolphins (LaGrandeur 45).

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