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“Lawes of the Forrest”: Mapping Violence on the Female Bodyscape in *Titus Andronicus*

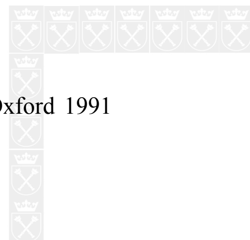
Every state is born of violence, and [...] state power endures only by virtue of violence directed towards a space.

Henri Lefebvre[1]

Abstract

This paper discusses the definition of the forest as a space regulated by the repetitive act of appropriation on the part of the royal authority as well as the correspondences between the rhetoric of forest possession and the construction of another *locus communis* for the political use of nature, i.e. female body. Spatialization/naturalization of the female body in William Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* is introduced with the use of the interlocking imaginary topographies of “feminized” topography of Rome and that of the forest as a whore. It is between these two that the politicized female bodies of Lavinia and Tamora oscillate, mapped in language as bodyscapes, onto which violence of “lawes of the forrest” is inscribed.

Keywords: bodyscape, law, *Titus Andronicus*, violence



[1] H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, transl. D. Nicholson-Smith, Oxford 1991 (1974), p. 280.

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The metaphorical use of the body has been long established as an axiom for the Renaissance thinking on the world and social relations within it. The neo-platonic law of sympathy between micro- and macrocosm has its potent implications for the reading of the female body as a landscape of social relations in the cultural geography of Shakespeare's dramaturgy. As J. Douglas Porteous attests in *Bodyscape: The Body-Landscape Metaphor*, the metaphor itself is gendered, as the body read as landscape is usually female;[2] this has been established by the landscape tradition within topography as a representational practice, whereby the metaphor of body/land has found its use as an ideological tool legitimizing colonizing discourse as well as the subjugation of both women and environment to the patriarchal rule.[3] My aim is to treat geography as "as an articulation of human perspective, [...] suggesting how the most striking perspective-affirming conventions of ancient geography – those pertaining to privileged centres and enclosing edges – might be understood in precise "poetic" or dramaturgical terms", as well as an expression of the political ordering of the Renaissance world.[4] As Charlotte Scott writes, it is impossible to fashion the forest into one, unified landscape, as it must be seen as a space inhabited by a multiplicity of voices echoing in a space that is marked by its liminality and cultural ambiguity.[5] What is brought to the fore within this understanding of the arboreal in cultural geography, is the function of the forest on the Elizabethan stage, specifically its use as a linguistically constructed site for violence[6] against women that we witness in *Titus Andronicus*.

At least since Northrop Frye's 1965 analysis of the "Green World" in Shakespeare's "forest comedies" the forest has been read in metaphorical terms as a space opposed to the city, a site of transformative power and renewal. In modern scholarship it has been predominantly noted as a symbol of human psyche and its passions[7]. But the forest offers more than a promise of freedom on the margins, as it is also that dangerous place at the borders

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[2] J.D. Porteous, *Bodyscape: The Body-Landscape Metaphor,* "The Canadian Geographer" 1986, no. 30/1, p. 2–12. It has to be noted, that my understanding of the term itself differs from that offered by Nicholas Mirzoeff in his seminal study on the subject, who defines bodyscape as a metaphysical and transhistorical representation; from my point of view bodyscape is a historically situated, localized cultural construct, whose continuity depends on the larger socio-economic forces, such as patriarchy. See N. Mirzoeff, *Bodyscape: art, modernity, and the ideal figure*, London 1995.

[3] C. Nash, *Reclaiming vision: looking at landscape and the body*, "Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography" 1996, no. 3.2, p. 149–170.

[4] J. Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference*, Cambridge 1994, p. 7.

[5] Ch. Scott, *Dark Matter: Shakespeare's Foul Dens and Forests*, "Shakespeare Survey" Goldsmiths Research Online. Available at: http://research.gold.ac.uk/3725/, p. 2.

[6] For the purposes of this article I concentrate on violence as the actual application of unwanted physical force and as a power relation taking different, overt and covert forms.

[7] It will suffice to mention here such works as Robert Pogue Harrison's *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*, Jeanne Addison Roberts's survey of the pastoral and Virgilian-inspired "mixed" and "wild" forests in Shakespeare's works or David Young's *The Heart's Forest: A Study of Shakespeare's Pastoral Plays*.

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of civilization that has to be contained and controlled. In the present study I would like to capture the ideological force of the forest as an anthropocentric construct on the one hand, and as a site of transgression that can be expressed in bodily terms on the other. This will serve me to suggest that the violence inscribed into the notion of possession of land is intricately interwoven with the violence that takes the form of a trespass of land/ rape of the female body: both of these are forms of forced trans-action, where body/land is objectified and fashioned into a commodity.

The first part of the article concentrates on the definition of the forest as a space regulated by the repetitive act of appropriation on the part of the sovereign. In the second part of the paper I analyze the correspondences between the rhetoric of description and possession of the forest and the construction and description of another *locus communis* for the political use of nature: the female body. Spacialization/ naturalization of female body is an integral element of the metaphorical language in William Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* written approximately around the same time as John Manwood’s treatise *A Treatise and Discourse of the Laws of the Forest*. Shakespeare’s drama offers three interlocking imaginary topographies: a. a “feminized” topography of Rome as a lady, b. that of the forest as a whore, and c. the politicized topographies of female bodies of Lavinia and Tamora that oscilliate between the two.

John Manwood’s major collation of statutes on forest jurisdiction[8] provides an often-quoted expression of the Elizabethan assumptions concerning landscape as such and forests in particular. As a space discrete from the city, the forest presents itself in the treatise as literally everything that is *outside* (etym. *foris*): not only the woodland but also the cultivated and uncultivated land defined predominantly in terms of its exclusionary ownership by the sovereign:[9]

> A Forest is a certain territory of woody grounds and fruitful pastures, privileged for wild beasts and fowls of forest […] to rest and abide in, in the safe protection of the king, *for his principle delight and pleasure*, which territory of ground, so privileged, *is meered and bounded, with unremovable marks, meers, and boundaries*, either known by master of record, or else by prescription (italics mine).[10]

What is of paramount importance for Manwood’s definition of forest is the exclusive authority held over it by its royal owner, and its the aim, which is to please the proprietor; the land “so privileged” is demarcated, its limits secured

[8] First circulated in 1592 and first published in 1598, John Manwood’s *A Treatise And Discourse Of the Lawes of the Forrest* is a part of a larger debate on the stewardship of forests: it defends the monarch’s exclusive rights in the royal forests at the time of what can be called a deforestation crisis.

[9] Ch. Scott, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

[10] J. Manwood, *A Treatise and Discourse of the Lawes of the Forrest*, London 1598, p. 40–41.

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officially, in writing.[11] The sense of a strictly ordered space that pervades this definition is striking: everything has its own place in this harmonious universe that seems to present itself as a garden of delights. The privilege of the king is his sole: the property right to the forest is exclusive and relational, as it is held against others who are considered strangers in the forest. The rules that Manwood points to as a part of the king's prerogative encompass all forest activity from cutting timber and hunting to less obvious occupations such as building on the grounds of royal forests and raising crops. The breaching of the carefully outlined and confined property becomes conceptualized in terms of loss, degradation and corruption; the loss of the Edenic bliss of the densely forested England is a cause for nostalgia that has to be alleviated and counteracted with the use of strict legal measures. Even though the treatise itself does not reflect the factual state of royal forests in the kingdom, its strictly regulated and hierarchically-oriented approach towards land property suggests that the stress on property rights may be read as a marker of deep-seated cultural anxiety, as land ownership is never given, but always mediated via acts of trespass/violation and subsequent punishment, along the lines of constant transgression/reaction/legitimation of the *status quo.* As Manwood explains, his aim in writing the treatise is corrective, for "so many do daily so contemptuously commit such heinous spoiles and trespasses therein, that the greatest part of them [forests] are spoiled and decayed".[12] The material or symbolic (i.e. effected in writing) enclosure of land imagined by Manwood in his appeal for the return of the laws of the forest, serves as a clear indicator of its appropriation enacted upon a distinct material space, and becomes therefore a repeated regulatory performance: an exercise in power.[13] Indeed, the alternative etymology of the word *forest* suggests its link to *forum*, a court or judgment:

> […] the laws of the forest, the reason and punishment, the pardon, or absolution of offenders, whether the same be pecuniary or corporeal, they are differing from other judgments of the laws of the Realm, and are subject unto the judgments of the king, to determine at his will and pleasure […] Reason, Punishment, and Pardon shall not be tied to the order of the Common Law of this Realm, but unto the voluntary appointment of the prince; so that the same which by this law in that behalf shall be appointed or determined, may not be accounted or called absolute justice or law, but justice or law according to the laws of the forest.[14]

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[11] Here I disagree with Chris Besant arguing that what Manwood suggests in the treatise is to define the forest law as a proto-form of environmental law; instead I see it as an attempt at a legal justification of the authority of the sovereign over the land Cf. C. Besant, *From Forest to Field: A Brief History of Environmental Law*, "Legal Service Bulletin" 1991, no. 16, p. 160–164.

[12] J. Manwood, *op.cit.*, p. 2^{r}.

[13] More on the link between landscape and power, see. S. Nail, *Preliminary Chapter: Woodlands as Landscapes of Power* [in:] *idem*, *Forest Policies and Social Change in England*, Berlin 2008, p. 7–37.

[14] Manwood, *op.cit.*, p. 1^{r}.

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The forest becomes here a fantasy of authority, the sovereign prerogative to rule "at his will and pleasure"; as such it forms a political tool constructed around the notion of power over the paradigmatic wilderness maintained as a distinctive entity by the penetrative faculties and actions of the princely mind: "Reason, Punishment, Pardon". Forest here is an object, an object prized and privileged, but an object nonetheless: order within it is dependent solely on the "voluntary appointment of the prince". The forest has no rights, but is instead seen a site for differentiation of common law and the law of the forest that is codified in Manwood's treatise as an amalgam of ancient tradition and historical precedence for the benefit of the king. In the words of Nicholas Blomley: "property regimes can easily appear to be simply part of the landscape [...] and as such their violences can appear to be of the order of things".[15] Thus, the laws of the forest construct a larger politics of wilderness, a social construction regulating the protection of nature and its use for the sole delight of the sovereign that takes a tangible form in Manwood's treatise. Forest law-making is indeed intricately tied with the notion of permanent privilege that is guarded and unapproachable: the social value of royal forest is the value of exclusive use, even though its boundaries are all the same the ground for contestation and violence from disparate groups: criminals, common folk, gentry and nobles, who would vie for its social, material and cultural wealth. The paradigm underlying the construction of the law of the forest is that of legal subjectivity defined as seizing and holding of what is deemed one's own and its potential transfer to another; this view of law stems from a gendered coding of property that can be grasped and appropriated. As Jeanne Addison Roberts concludes in *The Shakespearean Wild: Geography, Genus and Gender*: "Manwood's […] description of the forest overwhelmingly stresses that it is for "the princely delight and pleasure" of the King – offering a variant form of the *droit de seigneur*. It is inviting and inspiring, but it is also female – to be enjoyed and controlled."[16]

The fantasy of exclusive right and ownership as well as the rhetoric of description and forceful possession of the forest corresponds to the construction and description of the female body in the Elizabethan patriarchal discourse, where the regime of property is articulated as clearly a in Manwood's treatise. Spacialization/naturalization of female body is especially visible in the sphere of its social functioning as an object of use and abuse, whose common denominator is the sense of male entitlement. Symbolically, female body is pruned and trimmed through the codification of proper female behaviour, in prayer books, practical guides and popular romances, through subjugation to the set of hierarchical relationships ensuring its absolute compliance. In the

[15] N. Blomley, *Law, property, and the geography of violence: The frontier, the survey, and the grid*, "Annals of the Association of American Geographers" 2003, no. 93.1, p. 121–141, p. 134.

[16] J.A. Roberts, *The Shakespearean Wild: Geography, Genus and Gender*, Lincoln and London 1994, p. 41.

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transitional period between the demise of feudal communities and the late seventeenth-century onset of the participatory monarchy "the pre-existing patriarchal aspects of internal power relationships within the family"[17] were reinforced by both state and Church, rendering the project of mastery over female bodies a task both metaphysical and political at once.

In the performative space of *Titus Andronicus* these relationships are articulated from the very onset of the play, with the metaphor of the cultured, feminized *city*scape occurring already in Act I. The two contenders to the throne of Rome, Bassianus and Saturninus, are presented as "suitors" vying for their "right" (1.1.1) to Rome,[18] whose attributes ("virtue", "justice, continence and nobility" (1.1.15) are personified as these of a noble lady, whose "readiest champions" (1.1.154) are the Andronici. Bassianus words his speech in the terms of courtship:

> If ever Bassianus, Caesar's son,
> Were gracious in the eyes of royal Rome,
> Keep then this passage to the Capitol,
> And suffer not dishonor to approach
> The imperial seat, to virtue consecrate,
> To justice, continence and nobility;
> But let desert in pure election shine,
> And, Romans, fight for freedom in your choice". (1.1.9–17)[19]

This extended metaphor is further strengthened by Saturninus who in his turn addresses Rome in abstract, and yet gendered terms, interlacing a possible direct stage cue ("open the gates") with a sexual innuendo:

> Rome, be as just and gracious unto me
> As I am confident and kind to thee.
> Open the gates and let me in.(1.1.63–65).

The association of city gates with vagina is a common one, and the possibility of forceful entrance is inscribed into the scene through the gender metaphor of Rome as a lady. Rome's body politic is female (and therefore, seems to need a male leader as a seat of reason), and can be courted, but also assaulted and plundered, just like its female inhabitants. The city is portrayed as a matron "victorious in [her] mourning weeds" (1.1.73), very much like Titus's daughter, Lavinia, awaiting the mournful arrival of the triumphant procession,

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[17] L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800*, New York 1979, p. 94.

[18] Rendering the history of cities in terms of a gendered allegory is obviously an old practice, observed already in the Bible and the classical tradition, but in Shakespeare it is used together with the arboreal allegory to produce the effect of fluctuating bodyscapes transformed by violence.

[19] All the quotations come from the Arden edition of *Titus Andronicus*. W. Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. J. Bate, London 2010.

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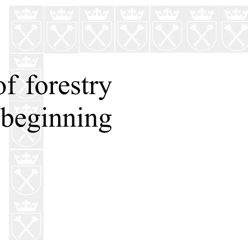
led by her victorious father, Titus, but also carrying the bodies of her dead brothers. As the daughter of Rome's general and emperor elect, Lavinia herself seems to function in a metonymical relationship to Rome, as her living extension, "Rome's rich ornament" (1.1.55): control over her body is directly tied to control over the city. Symbolically speaking, Saturninus loses the hold over Rome the moment he loses Lavinia to Bassianus in the first, symbolic rape of Lavinia, who is kidnapped by her fiancé upon his hearing the news that the emperor chosen by Titus to govern in his stead wants Lavinia to become his wife.

Lavinia's body is initially alluded to in architectural terms: her chastity (etymologically akin to Latin *castellum*, castle) is her "treasury" (1.1.631) that Tamora's "sons make pillage of" (2.2.44). Very much like Saturninus and Bassianus vying for Rome, Demetrius and Chiron argue for Lavinia's favour, with Aaron sporting a question that is a direct outcome of the first rape (i.e. kidnapping). Lavinia has allowed herself to be seized, which already puts her chastity in question. The violence inscribed onto her body by kidnapping has transformed her, "opening her gates" for other suitors: "What, is Lavinia then become so loose…/ That for her love such quarrels may be broached/ Without controlment, justice or revenge? (1.1.564–566) Once there has arisen the very possibility of pulling her out from the *castellum* of her chastity, she immediately becomes transformed, first in language, and then in action, into a thing of whoring nature. Upon her leave from the scene of the literal rape, the mother of the rapists, Tamora, reiterates this logic of violent possession and de-culturation stating "Let my spleenful sons this *trull* deflower" (2.2.191, italics mine). Lavinia's rape by the Goths functions as a prefiguration of Rome's ultimate fate at the end of the play, where ascension to the throne by Lucius, the last of the Andronici, does not really guarantee the return to the original state of affairs, constructed as the state of innocence, as the city has become "the wilderness of tigers" (3.1.54).

The symbolic movement from the enclosed space of virginal *castellum* to the open space of whoring nature that is forcefully brought under male control is visible already in the exchange between Aaron and Tamora's sons when they start designing their murderous, raping plot. Demetrius responds to Aaron's astonished stipulation of Lavinia's potential promiscuity with a telling comparison that takes Titus's daughter out of the cultured cityscape, placing her figuratively in a more sylvan habitat, among things natural, mastered, transformed and taken by force:

> What, man, more water glideth by the mill
> Than wots the miller of, and easy it is
> Of a cut loaf to steal a shive, we know […]
> What, hast not thou full often struck a doe
> And borne her cleanly by the keeper's nose? (1.1.585–594)

Demetrius's poaching metaphor displaying a keen knowledge of forestry laws and an awareness of violence inscribed in the hunt, marks the beginning



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of the raptorial language, in which Lavinia is first likened to Lucrece (1.1.608) and then to "the dainty doe" (1.1.617) to be "struck home" (1.1.618) in "a solemn hunting" (1.1.612). When Aaron agrees to aid the brothers and suggests the approaching hunting as the opportunity for rape, he underlines the fact that it is an occasion ceremonial both because of the emperor's attendance, but also because metaphorically speaking it is a repetition of a patriarchal patterning narrative of gendered violence. The forest which he fashions into an ideal space for the act initially gives a sense of a real place cultivated and controlled, but at the same time generically suited to become a site of crime by its very lack of human presence:

> The forest walks are wide and spacious,
> And many unfrequented plots there are,
> Fitted by kind for rape and villainy. (1.1.614–615)

While the schemers' plan takes shape, the forest transforms into "The woods [that] are ruthless, dreadful, deaf and dull" (1.1.626). Aaron's arboreal fantasy is coupled later on by Tamora's artful description, in which she reconstructs as a threatening trap the same space she had previously described to her lover in caressing detail. Saturninus in turn describes the forest in which Bassianus is killed and Lavinia raped first as "this pleasant chase" (2.3.255) and "this gaping hollow of the earth" (2.3.249), but his perception of the woods changes once his brother's body is discovered within. The image of the forest created in Aaron's, Tamora's and Saturninus' words may be read as a projection activating in the imagination of those addressed (the characters and the audience alike) the deep-seated distrust of the *out*land as well as the cultural presuppositions concerning the danger secluded and remote plots pose for those, who do not possess the land. As the site for the hunt, both literal and metaphorical, the forest here becomes the place, where "Reason, Punishment, and Pardon shall not be tied to the order of the Common Law of this Realm, but unto the voluntary appointment" of those who have more power: and this is "law according to the laws of the forest".

Once Bassianus's body is discovered by Lavinia's brothers, the link between female body and the forest becomes steadfast. Quintus' description of the "subtle hole" underlines the significance of the "abhorred pit"/ "secret hole" as the tomb/womb of both Bassianus and the Andronici, a site of barbarous nuptials, or a coital cradle to the grave. "This detested, dark, blood-drinking pit" (2.2.224), whose "ragged entrails" (2.2.230) are lightened only by Bassianus' ring, acquires a predatory life of its own in the imagery used by the brothers. Martius begs Quintus to help him "Out of this fell devouring receptacle" (2.2.235); Quintus responds in like terms, fearing that he "may be plucked into the swallowing womb" (2.2.239). This image of the pit-as-tomb/ womb is ultimately molded into an emasculating *vagina dentata* that performs the function of "Cocytus' misty mouth", a river-like entrance to hell.

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This language of lethal, feminized bodyscape is reflected back onto another female body, which with the progress of the play gradually loses the markers of civility and becomes a monstrous thing. Already in the gallant rhetoric of Bassianus (2.3.57) who discovers Tamora in the forest, the empress transitions into the wilderness. In his elegant and yet seemingly ironic address Bassianus assumes as a logical improbability that “Rome’s royal empress” should move “unfurnished of her well-beseeming troop” (2.2.55–56). His flattering but inadvertently fitting comparison to Diana, whose natural habitat is the forest, is picked on by Tamora, who alludes to the goddess’s unmitigated cruelty, detailing the divine analogy with the gruesome picture of a hunt gone terribly awry, suggesting yet another sylvan patterning narrative, that of Acteon and his hounds. In the exchange Saturninus is hinted at as a stag, but Bassianus is indeed transformed into one, just like Lavinia into a doe before him. The grim Ovidian precedent portending Bassianus’ fate does not function only as an elaborate literary ornament,[20] but suggests that a truly bloody sport in forestry is in order, with Tamora among its principal orchestrators. When Demetrius and Chiron arrive onto the scene in the passage preceding Lavinia’s rape, Tamora portrays herself as a victim, unjustly accused by Lavinia and Bassianus of being a “foul adulteress/ Lascivious Goth” (2.2.110), as foul as the forest around them. She constructs the image of the forest in terms of a sterile womb-like landscape that is capable only of spawning monstrosities: “[a] barren detested vale… Overcome with moss and baleful mistletoe”, in which “nothing breeds” (2.2.93–96), but fiends, snakes, swelling toads and urchins – and these in thousands. The landscape which seethes with natural, but monstrous element, is ultimately figured as an externalization of Tamora’s inner self and as a sign of the reproductive anxiety over female body, realized later in the play, when Tamora does indeed give a monstrous birth to “the babe, as loathsome as a toad” (4.2.68). Monstrous maternal (de)generation and frightening fecundity, which stand in a direct opposition to the societal expectations of appropriate female behavior, become distinctive markers of the forest and the corrupt female body.

The pit and by extension the whole forest may be read as visible signs of a destructive female agency, but just like the city they seem to function in a double loop of landscape as female body and female body as landscape. Tamora’s own threatening “secret hole” is fashioned into a site of infestation, as her own fertile maternity and unrestrained sexuality destabilize the Roman *ordo* and influence “judgments of the king, to determine at his will and pleasure” (Manwood 486–487). The Roman body politic is rendered unstable and polluted by Tamora’s quasi-incestuous relationship with Saturninus (as she is “mother to his youth”) and her miscegenational affair with Aaron, once “the base fruit of her burning lust” is read as a proof of her depravity and a sign of her monstrosity (5.1.43). The Queen of Goths is repeatedly referred

[20] On the importance of Ovidianism in the construction of the play and its language, see C. Fox, *Ovid and the Politics of Emotion in Elizabethan England*, Basinstoke 2009.

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to in terms of carnal desire and downright bestiality: admonished by her sons to have a heart "as unrelenting flint" (2.2.141), she is likened by Lavinia to a tiger (2.2.142); and the raven (2.2.149); she turns a deaf ear to Lavinia's pleas just like the forest does. Indeed, when Lavinia cries out: "No grace, no womanhood? Ah beastly creature,/ The blot and enemy to our general name" (2.2.182–183), she underlines the implicit tension between civilized and controlled cultural construct of femininity incarnate in the abstract notion of Rome as a lady and Lavinia as its ornament, and the primeval bestiality within Tamora that ostensibly materializes itself when she fulfills her heart's desires, becoming a chaotic force of destruction, *materia prima* incarnate that in the shape of chtonic Revenge comes to Titus only to return to the earth, its proper element: "Like to the animal the earth swallow her own increase" (5.2.191).

The counterproductive, corrupt womb of whoring nature seems to function as a direct counterpart to the pure, bountiful and controlled image of female cityscape that should serve as a legitimate source of offspring, of plenty and of wealth. However, the revivifying potential of Lavinia is marred in the overall corruption of Rome with Tamora acting as its catalyst. With the progress of the play natural imagery appears in the language used on the stage with ever increasing frequency, with people and their relationships likened to the non-human elements of the rural and forest landscape. Titus is not looking for justice or consolation at the court, as it has become infested with wilderness, but in the ocean and in the depths of the earth (4.3.4–17), only to conclude: "we are but shrubs, no cedars we" (4.3.33), while addressing his grandson as a "tender sapling" (3.2.50). Saturninus word his sorrow in terms of plant life: "These tidings nip me and I hang the head/ As flowers with frost or grass beat down with storms" (4.4.69–70).Vulnerable bodies of the victims become transformed when spoken of in arboreal terms, once they are lopped and trimmed at the "will and pleasure" of those, who control them: Bassianus' corpse becomes a "dead trunk pillow "(2.2.129–130); Lavinia is jested about her "stumps" (4.4.4) by her rapists and then lamented upon by Marcus who mourns the ruin of her in almost hortological categories ("what stern ungentle hands / Hath lopped and hewed and made thy body bare/ Of her two branches, those sweet ornaments/ Whose circling shadows kings have sought to sleep in", 4.4.16–19), likening the blood flowing from her mouth to "a crimson river of warm blood/ Like to a bubbling fountain stirred with wind" (4.4.22–23), her "lily hands/ Tremble like aspen leaves upon a lute" (4.4.45), all suggesting a "map of woe" (3.2.12), or a landscape touched – and defiled – by trespassers. Lavinia, once rid of her "honey" in a barbarous collecting in the woods, figuratively turns into a useless "wasp", that can "sting" (2.2.131–132); and her tears are "drops of rain" (2.2.141). It is as if nature herself invaded Rome with the ceremonial hunt for Lavinia, the transformation that she undergoes in the rhetoric of other characters and the installation of Tamora on the imperial seat.

Poetics/politics of the forest in Shakespeare's play is that of disenchantment with humanity. The sensibilities of *Titus Andronicus* may seem Arcadian,

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but only in the sense that it is a play about a return home and the sentimental reunion of a father with his daughter. However, this idyllic beginning is only a prelude to a dystopian vision of Rome as a wilderness of tigers. Shakespeare’s story is a narrative of the fall into corruption, decay and death that occurs through dramatic action, but is given its emotive strength owing to the dynamic use of the arboreal/ urban bodyscape imagery. Ultimately, the *ordo* of the civilized cityscape turns out to be illusory, as social bonds are broken by Titus at the very beginning of the play, with the sacrificial killing of Tamora’s captive son. Even though nature is repeatedly accused of being foul (Marcus: “o, why would nature build so foul a den,/ Unless the gods delight in tragedies”, 4.1.59–60), its vileness is a human construct, just like Tamora’s desire for destruction and death becomes a direct outcome of Titus’ ruling to eviscerate Alarbus. It seems that contrary to the prevailing critical thinking, *Titus’* tragedy does not “lie at the edge of the city, ready to consume its waste”[21]: it resides in the movement between landscapes and bodies that occurs in the metaphorical language of the play.

Just like the law of the forest, the rules governing female bodies in the play are fantasies masking their own constructedness. Accordingly, the arboreal female bodyscape is fashioned into an ideological space that links particular characters’ agenda with nature: this tangled topography is multi-faceted and reaches well beyond a simple spiritual allegory. As Jeffrey Theis writes in *Writing the Forest in Early Modern England*, “it is time to see the forest for the trees” (263) and analyze landscape in all its metaphorical and performative complexity.[22] It is important to note that the forest is not mutable *per se*, but as a site of projection it is a performative space, onto which the desires of its temporary inhabitants are grafted. The sexual innuendos inscribed into its presentation in words obfuscate the forest as a real, representational space, fashioning it into a changeable construct controlled by the rhetorical work performed on it both by Shakespeare’s characters and Manwood in his treatise. As Charlotte Scott argues, “The forest is never secure or stable; it is never essential or consistent but rather a map of the desiring or diseased mind”.[23] This map may well be read as a “map of woe”, a region charted by the violence that is ingrained into the “law of the forest”. The metaphor of landscape as female body and of female body as landscape provides a transgressive ground for interrogating the conventional associations between nature and femininity, mapping the territory ruled by desire that governs the bonds between the owners and their property; between oppressors and their victims; between men and women.

[21] Ch. Scott, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

[22] J. Theis, *Writing the Forest in Early Modern England: A Sylvan Pastoral Nation*, Pittsburgh, PA, 2009, p. 263.

[23] Ch. Scott, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

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