<**TI**>"I Ask Your Voices and Your Suffrages": The Bogus Rome of Peele and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* </**TI**>

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<ABS>Abstract: This essay provides a contextual reading of *Titus Andronicus*, paying close attention to the play's collaborative authorship. Peele and Shakespeare are shown to have manufactured a superficially compelling but in reality utterly fake image of the Roman state as an imaginary laboratory for political ideas, especially the elective principle. Topical allusions and deliberate anachronisms encourage the audience to relate the subject matter to the present, viz., late Elizabethan England in the throes of a succession crisis and rent by confessional divisions. Unlike Peele's solo works, which exhibit a potent anti-Catholic bias, *Titus* remains confessionally aloof. The play invites the audience to reflect on the viability of particular modes of succession without committing itself either way, and shows that it is not institutional structures and processes but those who use and abuse them that make the difference to the state of the polity.</**ABS**>

By the 1590s, debate about the succession to Elizabeth I had ceased to be concerned with what had been generally perceived as a peculiarly British issue that had festered since the start of the reign. Instead, the debate now reflected growing unease about the deepening European crisis of monarchy. In the 1580s and beyond, Portugal, France, and the Netherlands experienced a series of calamitous succession crises, coupled with the fear of foreign conquest, religious civil war, or both. The outcome, unsurprisingly, was that sophisticated thinkers saw the English succession crisis as inextricably interwoven with developments not just in Scotland but also on the Continent.

Because public discussion of the succession had been outlawed by statute in 1571, however, debate had for long been mostly confined to secret documents, scribal publications, and works printed abroad. As I have argued elsewhere, the great exception to this generalization was the commercial stage, which provided the most public of fora for mediating the forbidden topic, and as such an ideal conduit for political information and discussion.[1]

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<FN>[1] Paulina Kewes, "History Plays and the Royal Succession," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's "Chronicles,"* ed. Paulina Kewes, Ian W. Archer, and Felicity Heal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 493–509.

In the extended framework assumed by the succession debate, national historical examples tended to occupy pride of place. What is also notable, however, is growing European fascination with the supranational perspective of Roman historians, above all Tacitus. Elaborate Latin editions and highly charged vernacular translations of Tacitus appeared, such as Henry Savile's English Tacitus of 1591. Intimately familiar to the Latinate classes but novel to the wider public, pagan Rome offered a relatively safe framework in which to dissect changing loci of power, and to relate institutional and legal structures to the moral ethos of a people. *Pace* the more enthusiastic recent exponents of neo-Roman or "republican" strains in Elizabethan thought, however, the dilemma exercising contemporaries—civil and ecclesiastical officers, polemicists, imaginative writers—was not whether England should be a monarchy but what sort of monarchy it should be. And that of course crucially depended on the identity of the next monarch, which explains the widespread fixation on the mechanics of transferring power.[2]

This essay engages with these issues through a contextual reading of George Peele and William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1593–94), only the second surviving Roman tragedy produced on the public stage, and the first which dramatized Roman monarchical succession. Paradoxically, it is also the least "historical" of all the extant Roman plays. Unlike Shakespeare's later solo tragedies *Julius Caesar* (1599), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), and *Coriolanus* (1608), all of which drew extensively on Plutarch's *Lives*, *Titus* has no identifiable historical source beyond a few details gleaned from Livy and Herodian.[3] Its characters and events are all invented, and its

[2] On the oblique application of Roman history to the question of succession in other forms of writing, see Paulina Kewes, "Henry Savile's Tacitus and the Politics of Roman History in Late Elizabethan England," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 74 (2011): 515–51, esp. 542–49; "'A Fit Memoriall for the Times to Come. . .': Admonition and Topical Application in Mary Sidney's *Antonius* and Samuel Daniel's *Cleopatra*," *Review of English Studies* 63 (2012): 243–64; "Romans in the Mirror," in *Mirror for Magistrates in Context: Literature, History and Politics before the Age of Shakespeare*, ed. Harriet Archer and Andrew Hadfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 126–46; and "Translations of State: Robert Persons, the Succession, and Roman History," forthcoming in *Ancient Rome and Early Modern England*, ed. Paulina Kewes.

[3] Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 8 vols. (London: Routledge, 1957–75), 6:3–33; on the play's debt to Herodian and Livy, see G. K. Hunter, "Sources and Meanings in *Titus Andronicus*," in *Mirror Up to Shakespeare: Essays in Honor of G. R. Hibbard*, ed. J. C. Gray (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 171–88. For further discussion of the influence of Livy, see Peter Culhane, "Livy and *Titus Andronicus*," *English* 55 (2006): 1–13; and of Herodian, see Naomi Conn Liebler, "Getting It All Right: *Titus Andronicus* and Roman History," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45 (1994): 263–78. Shakespeare and Peele may have been inspired to turn to Herodian by John Higgins's use of the same historian in in *The Mirour for Magistrates . . . newly imprinted, and …enlarged* (London, 1587): see Kewes, "Romans in the Mirror."

chronology elusive. Are we in late imperial Rome, her imminent conquest by the barbarians prefigured by wars against the Goths, or does the yoke apparently newly imposed on the Goths suggest that territorial expansion is in full swing? Invoked on numerous occasions, Tarquin, Lucrece, Virginius, and Coriolanus seem figures from a distant past; allusions to Ovid and Virgil imply that the action postdates the Augustan era; but then references to "popish tricks and ceremonies" and "a ruinous monastery" startlingly conjure up a post-Reformation context.[4]

The political structure of this fictitious Rome is equally perplexing. "It is not so much," T. J. B. Spencer observed long ago, "that any particular set of political institutions is assumed in *Titus*, but rather that it includes *all* the political institutions that Rome ever had."[5] Modern critics have taken Spencer's witticism too literally. In fact, the play does not include every political institution that Rome produced, for it lacks consuls, decemvirs, or a dictator. But it does anachronistically present the emperor alongside senators and tribunes even though as Peele and Shakespeare well knew at no point in Rome's history had all three coexisted. Peele and Shakespeare's emperor is occasionally addressed as king and there are anachronistic references to "king and commonweal" or the knighting of valiant soldiers,[6] further evidence of the play's historical eclecticism which blends associations with early Roman kingship and the empire of the Caesars, with medieval and contemporary England and Europe.

Strikingly confirmed by the famous "Peacham drawing" of several characters from the play wearing commingled modern, medieval, and antique costume, *Titus*'s hybrid historicity does not, I think, signify ignorance or ineptitude in either Peele or Shakespeare.[7] The mishmash of chronological and political frameworks is surely a deliberate ploy to heighten relevance and

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[4] *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Jonathan Bate, Arden 3rd series (London: Routledge, 1995), 5.1.76 and 21, and introduction, 16ff. Unless otherwise specified, all further references will be to this edition.

[5] "Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Romans," *Shakespeare Survey* 10 (1957): 32.

[6] In the first quarto, *The Most Lamentable Romaine Tragedie of Titus Andronicus* (London, 1594), stage directions and speech prefixes promiscuously label Saturninus sometimes as king, sometimes as emperor (see sig. E1^{r} for an instance of each), a point erased (and unrecorded) in Bate's edition which uses the prefix "Saturninus" both before and after his elevation to imperial dignity.

[7] On Peacham's drawing, see Bate, introduction, 38–43. For a perceptive analysis of the two writers' differing engagement with *romanitas*, see Paul Hammond, "Shakespeare as Collaborator: The Case of *Titus Andronicus*," in *Collaboration and Interdisciplinarity in the Republic of Letters: Essays in Honour of Richard G. Maber*, ed. Paul Scott (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 195–210.

encourage transhistorical and transcultural comparisons while deflecting all too likely criticism if this were a "real" story.

In *Titus*, I argue, Peele and Shakespeare manufactured a superficially compelling but in reality utterly bogus image of the Roman state in order to create an imaginary laboratory for political ideas and practices, above all the elective principle. They also structured their fake Roman story in a way which directed viewers' thoughts to the thorny problem of the succession and its corollary of mounting confessional divisions. For *Titus*'s seemingly abstract and detached treatment of the proprieties of regime change is rendered resolutely topical by suggestive imagery, explicit if ambiguous adumbrations of antipopish rhetoric, and, in a few instances, nods to recent events.

Recording the takings from the London performance of *Titus* on January 24, 1594, the theatrical entrepreneur Philip Henslowe marked it as a "ne" (new) play.[8] Nevertheless, scholars have long disagreed about the date of *Titus*. Some discount Henslowe's entry and date *Titus*'s composition as early as 1592 or even earlier; others, notably Jonathan Bate, maintain it was indeed written towards the end of 1593 and premiered in January 1594. If we accept Bate's cogent case, for which this essay supplies further contextual evidence, a review of political developments during 1593 will make the play's remarkably close engagement with current affairs far more intelligible.

<H1>I**</H1>**

Modern readings of *Titus* have suffered on two counts. First, although George Peele's contribution to the play was conclusively established by 2002 and mooted long before then,[9] critics continue to approach *Titus* as if it were Shakespeare's solo creation, neglecting to consider his collaborator's works, to which, we shall see, it is signally indebted. Second, politics and religion in *Titus* have

[8] *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. R. A. Foakes and R. T. Rickert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 21.
[9] See MacDonald P. Jackson, "Stage Directions and Speech Headings in Act I of *Titus Andronicus* Q (1594): Shakespeare or Peele?," *Studies in Bibliography* 49 (1996): 134–48; Jackson, *Defining Shakespeare: "Pericles" as a Test Case* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 195–203; Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 169–80.

been treated separately from one another and without due attention to the historical circumstances which produced the play.

Titus has often been read alongside other plays and poems by Shakespeare, especially *Julius Caesar*, *Lucrece* (1594), and *Richard III* (1591–93). However, it has virtually never been studied with reference to the writings of Peele, a University Wit with connections to the City and Court whose Protestant fervor contrasts sharply with Shakespeare's more enigmatic ideological stance. Yet Peele's solo plays throw invaluable light on the near-contemporary *Titus*. This is equally true of those dramatizing England's past, *The Troublesom Reign of John, King of England* (1589–90), only recently attributed to him,[10] and *Edward I* (1591–92); the Ibero-African conflict, a "modern matter full of bloud and ruth," *The Battle of Alcazar* (1588–89);[11] and Old Testament history, *David and Bethsabe* (1592–94).

Titus shares key characters, themes, and motifs, and not just diction, with Peele's independent works. For instance, the figure of Aaron the Moor, typically traced to Marlowe's Barabas in *The Jew of Malta* (1589), has considerable affinity with the Machiavellian Moor, the Negro Muly Hamet, in Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*;[12] Tamora Queen of the Goths recalls not only Shakespeare's Queen Margaret but also Peele's earlier bloodthirsty and lustful foreign royal consort, the Spanish Catholic Queen Elinor in *Edward I*, who, like Tamora, has given birth to a bastard; the rape of Lavinia, like that of Thamar in *David and Betshabe*, sets in train a bloody revenge plot; and the gruesome on-stage deaths of Chiron and Demetrius mirror and surpass the horrific end of the London Mayoress in *Edward I*, who, chained to the stake, is killed by a serpent sucking her blood. There is nothing comparable in Shakespeare's history plays to that date, whether *1–3 Henry VI* (1588–92), of which the first was also a collaboration, or *Richard III*.

[10] For the attribution to Peele, see Brian Vickers, "*The Troublesome Reign*, George Peele, and the Date of *King John*," in *Words That Count: Essays on Early Modern Authorship in Honor of MacDonald P. Jackson*, ed. Brian Boyd (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 78–116, and Charles R. Forker's introduction to his edition of *The Troublesome Reign of John, King of England by George Peele* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 6–30.
[11] Prologue to *The Battle of Alcazar*, in *The Life and Works of George Peele*, ed. Charles Tyler Prouty et al., vol. 2 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1961), line 50.
[12] Ibid., line 7.

Titus's preoccupation with regime change echoes not only the thematic concerns of the first tetralogy, but also the abiding interest in succession politics and international relations that runs through Peele's works. Inter alia, Peele transposed the recent Portuguese succession crisis on to the North African civil war in *The Battle of Alcazar*, which also condemned the Hispano-papal interference in Ireland; meanwhile, he brazenly glamorized England's military efforts on behalf of the Portuguese pretender Dom António in the encomiastic *Farewell*.[13] In Part II of *The Troublesome Reign*, King John's struggle against the baronial revolt and French invasion masterminded by the papal legate served as a lens through which to view both the Holy League's invidious meddling in the dynastic and confessional politics of present-day France, and the twin dangers confronting Elizabethan England: Catholic treason at home and renewed Spanish onslaught.[14] Far more upbeat, Peele's *Edward I* showed the eponymous hero triumphing over Welsh rebels—a screen for contemporary Irish Catholics—and the Scottish king, and creating his first-born son the first ever Prince of Wales. Tracing the sensational fortunes of the House of David, *David and Betshabe* concluded with the propitious nomination of David's youngest son, Solomon, as the next ruler of Israel, a timely gesture given the customary analogy between Elizabeth and King David.

Modern studies of religion in *Titus* variously search for evidence of Shakespeare's supposed Catholicism or else irenic disposition.[15] Besides, they often rest on a rigid opposition between Protestant and Catholic which obscures the complex and contingent spectrum of religious identities in 1590s England. Scanning imaginative literature, especially drama, for clues to the author's

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[13] Hugh Gazzard, "'Many a *Herdsman* More Disposde to Morne': Peele, Campion, and the Portugal Expedition of 1589," *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 57 (2006): 19–24.
[14] Kewes, "History Plays and the Royal Succession," 499–502.
[15] For "Catholic" readings, see John Klause, "Politics, Heresy, and Martyrdom in Shakespeare's Sonnet 124 and *Titus Andronicus*," in *Shakespeare's Sonnets: Critical Essays* (New York: Garland, 1999), 219–40; Lukas Erne, "'Popish Tricks' and 'a Ruinous Monastery': *Titus Andronicus* and the Question of Shakespeare's Catholicism," in *The Limits of Textuality*, ed. Lukas Erne and Guillemette Bolens, Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature 13 (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2000), 135–55; Anna Swärdh, *Rape and Religion in English Renaissance Literature: A Topical Study of Four Texts by Shakespeare, Drayton, and Middleton* (Uppsala: Studia Anglistica Upsaliensia, 2003), 76–132. For sensible counters to confessionally partisan interpretations which are nevertheless rendered problematic by their neglect of *Titus*'s collaborative provenance, see Robert Miola, "'An Alien People Clutching Their Gods'? Shakespeare's Ancient Religions," *Shakespeare Survey* 54 (2001): 31–45; and Nicholas R. Moschovakis, "'Irreligious Piety' and Christian History: Persecution as Pagan Anachronism in *Titus Andronicus*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 53 (2002): 460–86.

confessional stance, especially one as elusive as Shakespeare, can be a problematic enterprise, and in this case it is further complicated by the tragedy's joint authorship and Peele's noted Protestant allegiance. Instead of trying to expose Shakespeare as a papist or crediting him with tolerationist sympathies, it makes sense to ask how *Titus*'s handling of religion compares with that in the two collaborators' solo works, and assess its function here.

Peele routinely gave vent to his anti-Catholic animus. Not only are there antipopish jibes in his plays, and a hit at Catholic plotters and would-be assassins in his pageant *Descensus Astraeae*, but he may also have authored a Latin poem narrating the Parry Plot, *Pareus* (1585).[16] Characteristically averse to such overt—and bombastic—demonstrations of either religious conviction or national prejudice, Shakespeare toned down Peele's anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish antics when adapting *The Troublesome Reign* in his *King John* (1596). Although *Titus* does touch on contemporary confessional strife, it does not advance a coherent religious outlook. Ambivalent and ambiguous, even its sporadic anti-Catholic outbursts would have been susceptible of directly contradictory applications.

Recent accounts of *Titus*'s politics have been equally inattentive to Peele's part in its gestation. Whether keen to recover Shakespeare's political thought or simply fashion him into a republican, they have also been resolutely secular, overlooking the play's intriguing evocation of the post-Reformation era and, more generally, the Protestant state's effective institutionalization of the idiom of revenge in the aftermath of the Bond of Association (1584) and Act for the Queen's Surety (1585). Assimilating the fictional polity to a particular stage in the development of the Roman state, they impose familiar historical templates on the unruly and emphatically unhistorical Rome Peele and Shakespeare created in the play. Thus the historian Eric Nelson discerns in *Titus*, which he insists "is set during the late fourth century," "the travails of the late empire," and the

[16] C. F. Tucker Brooke, "A Latin Poem by George Peele (?)," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 3 (1939): 47–67; *Oxford Poetry by Richard Eedes and George Peele*, ed. and trans. Dana Ferrin Sutton (New York: Garland, 1995).

literary critic Andrew Hadfield a "transitional Rome, caught between empire and republic."[17] The point, though, surely is that this imaginary Rome is sui generis and demands to be recognized as such. After all, both Peele and Shakespeare were perfectly capable of sticking to the historical record when it suited them, as evidenced by their various solo plays. Indeed, by throwing out promiscuous references to iconic figures such as Tarquin, Lucrece, or Coriolanus, *Titus* repeatedly intimates analogies with distinctive constitutional transitions such as the abolition of kingship or erection of the tribunate only to frustrate them. For Saturninus is no Tarquin, and his murder leads not to the foundation of a republic but abrogation of traditional electoral processes and ascendancy of another potentially unsavory ruler—the regicide Lucius.

<H1>II**</H1>**

Before looking closely at Peele and Shakespeare's treatment of regnal transitions, it is important to remind ourselves of the state of play with respect to the succession in the years and months preceding *Titus*'s appearance. After the execution in 1587 of the chief dynastic claimant, the Catholic Mary Queen of Scots, the controversy revolved around, first, the claim and suitability of her Protestant son, James VI of Scotland, and of any alternative candidates, and, second, the advisability of leaving the matter unsettled.[18] Should James's or any other claimant's title simply be recognized as hereditary? Or should he—or anyone else—be admitted through a statutory determination, whether in Elizabeth's lifetime or after her death, that could be construed as a kind of parliamentary election which potentially limited royal power? Was the queen entitled to nominate her successor?

[17] Eric Nelson, "Shakespeare and the Best State of a Commonwealth," in *Shakespeare and Early Modern Political Thought*, ed. David Armitage, Conal Condren, and Andrew Fitzmaurice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 260n26, 256; Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 132.
[18] See Paulina Kewes, "The Puritan, the Jesuit, and the Jacobean Succession," in *Doubtful and Dangerous: The Question of Succession in Late Elizabethan England*, ed. Susan Doran and Paulina Kewes (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 47–70.

The answers did not simply reflect confessional affiliations, for divisions within and across the Catholic and Protestant camps escalated, as did factional tensions at court. Whereas Hispanophile exiles led by the Jesuit Robert Persons pinned their hopes for a Catholic succession on a victorious armada, many coreligionists at home looked to James, hoping that he might convert or at least grant them toleration. Nor was there unanimity among Protestants of various stripes—conformists, Puritans, separatists—as they contemplated possible English contenders of different reformed hues alongside the foreign and religiously ambidextrous James.

Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex, vocal advocate of aggressive anti-Spanish policy and rising royal favorite with a following across the religious spectrum, embarked on a secret correspondence with the Scottish king in 1589 and then worked to secure a parliamentary declaration of his title. However, the increasingly bitter rift between Essex and Elizabeth's chief minister, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, and Burghley's son and political heir, Sir Robert Cecil, meant that the Cecils and their adherents were unlikely to follow suit. Meanwhile, the queen always remained averse even to having the succession addressed, let alone formally settled in parliament.

The Parliament which assembled in February 1593, less than a year before *Titus*'s premiere, illustrates a nexus of political and religious concerns, both domestic and foreign, that in one way or another inform Peele and Shakespeare's depiction of Rome. Indeed, this very session and its repercussions may well have inspired them to write the play. For the calling of Parliament provoked the most conspicuous attempt since Mary Stewart's beheading to place the succession on the agenda and have it determined in line with the elective principle. Furthermore, the government's push for a hefty subsidy to assist the Huguenot Henry IV in his war against the Holy League brought the French succession crisis to the fore, reminding those assembled that the Catholic-dominated Estates General were seeking to install a coreligionist with a weaker hereditary claim than Henry's on the French throne. Meanwhile, the session witnessed a clash between advocates of further reform and Protestant conformists who saw radical dissent as a threat at least as great as popery. Ultimately,

Parliament toughened laws against religious nonconformity, whether Protestant or Catholic.[19] Pamphlet literature and manuscript reports provide a useful gloss on these developments, illuminating the complex ways in which religious belief and political allegiance intersected.

As I have shown in detail elsewhere, the Puritan MP Peter Wentworth's illicit campaign for the 1593 Parliament to choose Elizabeth's successor had been harshly foiled by the government. The incarceration of Wentworth and his associates was widely reported, and at least some scribal copies of his daring succession tract *A Pithie Exhortation to her Maiestie for establishing Her Successor to the Crowne* (ca. 1587) got abroad. Indeed, the far from pithy missive may already have been in circulation, for back in 1591 Wentworth had been imprisoned for trying to pitch it to Essex, the chancellor Christopher Hatton alleging that copies of the tract "came owte of coblers & taylors shoppes."[20]

Wentworth's abortive venture gained instant notoriety. Lambasting it forthwith in a letter to the queen, Sir Walter Raleigh tried to ingratiate himself further by supplying a blueprint for a ruthless refutation of such motions. Insisting it is prudent for Elizabeth to keep a lid on the matter, Raleigh's memo, rife with references to "choyse," "partye," "faction," "cumpeteter," "elder," "younger," "multetude," insists that any attempt at "election" would inevitably lead to division and conflict, each confessional community declaring for a different candidate.[21] Ready for the press by September, the Jesuit Robert Persons's *The Newes from Spayne and Holland*, an all-out pamphlet attack on the Protestant establishment cleverly exploiting the Wentworth imbroglio, served as a taster for Persons's even more audacious treatise completed later that year, *A Conference about the Next Succession to the Crowne of Ingland* (1594/95).[22] Clearly, the succession was a hot topic when Peele and Shakespeare were preparing, or perhaps had already begun, to draft *Titus*.

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[19] T. E. Hartley, ed., *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I*, 3 vols. (London: Leicester University Press, 1981–95), 3:1–176; Glyn Parry, *The Arch-conjuror of England: John Dee* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), chap. 19.
[20] Wentworth to Burghley, TNA, SP12/240/21.i; Kewes, "The Puritan, the Jesuit, and the Jacobean Succession."
[21] Pierre Lefranc, "Un Inédit de Raleigh sur la Succession," *Etudes Anglaises* 13 (1960): 38–48.
[22] ([Antwerp,] 1593); Kewes, "The Puritan, the Jesuit, and the Jacobean Succession," 60–63.

It was also a topic which recent events in France had made all the more inflammatory.[23] Here was a country torn by civil war, its dynastic succession being cynically undermined in the name of religion. Burghley's notes towards a speech for the 1593 Parliament blasted the machinations of the Catholic League and its patron, Philip II of Spain, designed to bypass the rightful heir, the Huguenot Henry of Navarre, and through "corrupcion to gaine the multitude of voices" either for himself or for his daughter, the Infanta.[24] Ironically, within months of the subsidy being granted, in June 1593, Henry sacrificed religious zeal on the altar of political expediency and converted to Catholicism, thereby thwarting the election of a countercandidate by the Estates General. The repercussions of Henry's apostasy in England would be hard to overestimate.

Ominously, the perennial problem of religious dissent at home flared up with particular ferocity at around the same time. To those committed to further reformation, the ceremonial of the Church of England no less than its Episcopal government had always savored of popery. Their loud opposition meant that Elizabeth's reign was bedeviled by acrimonious disputes about clerical dress, prophesyings, church discipline, the Book of Common Prayer, and ecclesiastical government, which came to a head in the Marprelate Controversy (1588–89) and the desperate attempt to overthrow the political and ecclesiastical establishment by proclaiming as messiah the mad reformer William Hacket (July 1591). Tellingly, the Clown scenes in *Titus* evoke memories of the Hacket affair.[25] By the early 1590s, the growth of Puritanism and of other sectarian movements which regarded the Puritans themselves as woefully conformist prompted merciless application against them of laws originally aimed at Catholic recusants and of other legal (or, according to some, illegal) measures as well as a polemical counteroffensive.[26]

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[23] Lisa Ferraro Parmelee, *Good Newes from Fraunce: French Anti-League Propaganda in Late Elizabethan England* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1996); Paulina Kewes, "Marlowe, History, and Politics," in *Christopher Marlowe in Context*, ed. Emily Bartels and Emma Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 147–52.
[24] Hartley, *Proceedings*, 3:12.
[25] Patrick Collinson, *Richard Bancroft and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Alexandra Walsham, "'Frantic Hacket': Prophecy, Sorcery, Insanity, and the Elizabethan Puritan Movement," *Historical Journal* 41 (1998): 27–66; Nicholas R. Moschovakis, "Topicality and Conceptual Blending: *Titus Andronicus* and the Case of William Hacket," *College Literature* 33 (2006): 127–50.
[26] Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967), 428ff.

Conducted from the pulpit, the stage, and in print, the latter culminated in 1593 with two anonymously published missives by Richard Bancroft, canon of Westminster, and one of Archbishop of Canterbury John Whitgift's household chaplains at Lambeth. Based on Bancroft's sermon of 1589, *A Survay of the Pretended Holy Discipline* was a vigorous apology for the episcopacy. Naming Wentworth in several places, *Daungerous Positions* furiously excoriated all manner of religious nonconformity. For Bancroft, Geneva was every bit as bad as Rome, "the lewd and obstinate course, held by our pretended refourmers, the Consistorian Puritanes" on a par with "the divelish and traiterous practises of the Seminary Priests and Jesuites."[27] The hanging on April 6, 1593, when the Parliament was still in session, of two separatists, Henry Barrow and John Greenwood, to which *Titus* seems to be alluding at 4.3.80–82, demonstrates that Bancroft's heady brew of antipopery and anti-Puritanism worked to uphold the line taken by the powers that be, for the two men were tried and sentenced under the terms of a 1581 statute targeting Catholic recusants.[28]

Government crackdown on Puritan sectaries coincided with adoption of increasingly harsh measures against Catholics. Triggered by the launch of the Jesuit mission in 1580–81 and discovery (or fabrication) of various popish conspiracies, the anti-Catholic offensive gathered momentum in the aftermath of the Armada. Burghley's *The Execution of Justice in England*, a tract published anonymously in 1583, reprinted in English, Latin, and various Continental vernaculars in 1584, and reproduced in toto in the second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1587), insisted that English Catholics were being punished not for their religion but for disloyalty to the Crown. One wonders whether Saturninus's denunciation of the "Sweet scrolls" flying "about the streets of Rome" as "libelling against the senate, / And blazoning our injustice everywhere" (4.4.16, 17–18) might not have been understood by some as an oblique allusion to the toxic Catholic rejoinders to Burghley's *Execution of Justice*, not least given that the word "justice" recurs no fewer than eleven times in this

[27] *Daungerous Positions and Proceedings published and practised within the iland of Brytaine, vnder Pretence of Reformation, and for the Presbiteriall discipline* (London, 1593), 3.
[28] Patrick Collinson, "Barrow, Henry (*c.* 1550–1593)," *ODNB*; Michael E. Moody, "Greenwood, John (*c.* 1560–1593)," *ODNB*; Jina Politi, "The Gibbet-Maker," *Notes and Queries* 38 (1991): 54–55.

and the preceding scenes alongside a reference to the goddess of justice Astraea, one of Elizabeth's foremost iconographic alter egos, for instance in Peele's aptly named mayoral pageant *Descensus Astraeae*.

Burghley may have been mendacious; but we should remember that there was indeed a sizeable community of "church papists" in late Elizabethan England who, if only outwardly, conformed to the established church and as such lived fairly unmolested lives, and that divisions among the Catholics were becoming in many ways no less pronounced than those among the Protestants.[29] The upshot of the regime's policy towards nonconformity, moreover, was that both those dedicated to Roman Catholic beliefs and ceremonies and those violently opposed to them could be—and often were—treated as political subversives by the state.

As this brief contextual sketch demonstrates, rather than harping on *Titus*'s incipient republicanism, as several recent critics have done, we would do well to explore how the play deals with specific arguments about the succession, notably the elective principle, which had gained unprecedented currency in both England and France by the time of its composition.[30] As for religion, we should avoid misleading dichotomies pervasive in modern discussions of *Titus* which blithely equate the Romans, notably the Andronici, with Catholics and the Goths with reformers.[31] Instead, when approaching the play we need to bear in mind the range and complexity of confessional positions in early 1590s England.

<H1>III**</H1>**

[29] Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England*, Royal Historical Society Studies in History 68 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1993); *Catholics and the "Protestant Nation": Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England*, ed. Ethan H. Shagan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).
[30] Kewes, "History Plays and the Royal Succession"; Kewes, "Parliament and the Succession in Elizabethan England"; Richard A. Jackson, "Elective Kingship and Consensus Populi in Sixteenth-Century France," *Past and Present* 44 (1972): 155–71; J. H. M. Salmon, "Catholic Resistance Theory, Ultramontanism, and the Royalist Response, 1580–1620," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700*, ed. J. H. Burns with the assistance of Mark Goldie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 219–53.
[31] See, for instance, Swärdh, *Rape and Religion*, 76–132, and Bate, introduction, 19–21.

With its suggestive setup and resonant vocabulary, the first act, now reliably attributed to Peele, brings to the fore the intertwining of politics and religion. The fraught interregnum following the death of an unnamed Roman emperor evokes the power vacuum likely to ensue upon Elizabeth's demise were she to leave the succession unresolved; the religious observance by Titus and his sons of "our Roman rites" (1.1.146), a euphemism for human sacrifice, speaks to contemporary perceptions of Catholic—and for some also Church of England—worship, and points to confessional divisions more generally. But does the play merely allude to problems facing the country or does it also propose a way out?

Although most Englishmen would have preferred the queen to settle the succession in her lifetime, there were those who either genuinely believed or else pretended they did that it was prudent for her to procrastinate. In terms of adjudicating among the claims of the various competitors, dynastic titles inevitably came up against real or imagined statutory impediments, religion often trumping both. Though at odds on most points, Wentworth and Persons were at one on the profound ambiguity of the title to the English crown; and both foretold a bloody civil war should the succession remain unresolved at the queen's death. However, whereas the old Puritan urged Elizabeth not to leave England "headless, as a dead trunk,"[32] the Jesuit mischievously argued that it was wise of her not to act.

In *Titus*, the newly "headless Rome" (1.1.189) seems on the brink of civil war. Everyone wants a new head: there is no suggestion that monarchy should be abolished and republic restored. Rather, the question is who should succeed and on what terms, precisely the dilemma facing late Elizabethan England. Locked in bitter struggle for the crown, the deceased emperor's sons, Saturninus and Bassianus, enter at opposite doors with armed followers in tow. This powerful emblem of division might well reflect the reality of events in France or portend fulfillment of grim predictions such as those of Wentworth and Persons. Certainly, the timely vocabulary of "pure election," "successive title," "desert," "competitor," "choice," "common voice," and "faction"

[32] Wentworth, *Pithie Exhortation*, 8.

encourages the audience to draw comparisons with the here and now (1.1 *passim*). Yet, surprisingly, civil war is averted; and Saturninus, the elder of the two, peacefully ascends the throne thanks to the support of Titus Andronicus, seasoned general and candidate of the people who transfers to him their "voices" and "suffrages" (1.1.222).

Modern critics typically interpret the opening sequence as a clash between republican and monarchical forms of government and rules of succession. Lorna Hutson contends that we witness "Rome's rapid fall into imperial, hereditary rule," Andrew Hadfield that "the republic is reverting to the bad model of the tyrannical monarchy enforced by the Tarquins, foolishly surrendering the liberty it has gained of its own volition."[33] Hutson, Hadfield, Heather James, and Jonathan Bate further posit a stark contrast between the two princes: the tyrant-in-the-making Saturninus, who looks for support to the patriciate, and the good republican and man of the people Bassianus. James refers to the latter's claims as "republican-minded." Hadfield, forgetting that with Bassianus on the throne Rome would still be a monarchy, calls him "the would-be republican ruler." According to Hutson, Bassianus stands "for the principle of popular election." Saturninus, argues Bate, "abuses the electoral process."[34] All would have been well, it seems, had Titus cast his weight behind Bassianus.

This approach to *Titus* entails several misconceptions. First, Peele and Shakespeare's Rome is, at least nominally, an elective monarchy. The deceased emperor, we are led to believe, had obtained the throne by election. His sons, too, ultimately submit to what appears a time-honored ritual, donning a customary robe or "palliament of white" (1.1.185), a word Peele coined in *The Honour of the Garter* (1593), a poem characteristically fusing ancient, medieval, and contemporary frameworks, where the English king's robe is "like a Romaine Palliament."[35] The victorious

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[33] Hutson, "Rethinking the 'Spectacle of the Scaffold': Juridical Epistemologies and English Revenge Tragedies," *Representations* 89 (2005): 44; Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 161.

[34] James, *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 52; Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 163; Hutson, "Rethinking the 'Spectacle of the Scaffold,'" 45; Bate, introduction, 18. For a discussion of Rome's political system in *Titus*, see Nelson, "Shakespeare and the Best State of a Commonwealth." Nelson does not address the contextual relevance of the political structures he surveys.

[35] In *The Life and Works of George Peele*, ed. Charles Tyler Prouty et al., vol. 1 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1952), line 92.

Saturninus thanks Titus for his support "in our election this day" (1.1.239), and even Titus's son Lucius's coup at the end of the play is given a veneer of legitimacy since, apparently, the "common voice do cry it shall be so" (5.3.139) albeit the established electoral protocols had not been followed. Second, there is in fact little difference between the two princes. For Bassianus is no less ready than Saturninus to spill Roman blood to seize the crown, and his commitment to the ideal of public good is at best suspect. Like his elder brother who calls on his allies to "plead my successive title with your swords" (1.1.4), Bassianus enjoins his supporters to "fight for freedom in your choice" (1.1.17). He also speaks of "my faction" (1.1.218), an acutely opprobrious term in our period "conveying the imputation of selfish or mischievous ends or turbulent or unscrupulous methods."[36] Nor does Marcus Andronicus, tribune in charge of the election, admit of any distinction between the brothers: on the contrary, dangling the crown before them, he accuses both of ambition and factiousness (l.1.18ff.).

Third, the tribune himself compromises the electoral process when he urges his reluctant brother Titus: "thou shalt obtain and ask the empery" (1.1.204), a "revealing inversion of the normal sequence of elective politics," notes Oliver Arnold, since "one first asks for and then obtains an office."[37] Marcus's underhand bid to secure the crown for his kinsman by manipulating the popular vote is instantly exposed by Saturninus in a language that mirrors the tribune's earlier admonition to the princes, "Proud and ambitious tribune, canst thou tell?" (1.1.205). While the impulsive Saturninus is ready to fight, the politic Bassianus tries to win the all-powerful Andronici to his side, promising ample reward if advanced by their means. In the end, Titus plumps for the elder prince and before long mayhem ensues; but *pace* Hadfield and others, there is no guarantee that the accession of Bassianus—or for that matter Titus himself—would have been any better for Rome. The object of the sequence is to make the audience ponder alternative scenarios, not to endorse any one of them.

Fourth, the critics named above neglect to explore Peele's contribution in relation to his

[36] *OED*, s.v., 3a.
[37] Arnold, *The Third Citizen: Shakespeare's Theater and the Early Modern House of Commons* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 153.

independent work. The latter's near-contemporary biblical romp *David and Bethsabe*, replete with rape, revenge, rebellion, civil war, and foreign war, furnishes an instructive comparison with *Titus* in terms of the politics of succession and status of the monarchy. In fact, David's nomination of Solomon in the final scene of this daringly allusive play appears to endorse Wentworth's plea that Elizabeth emulate the example of David and name an heir before it is too late.[38]

Given the prominence of election in Peele's first act and references to it elsewhere in the play, it makes sense to ask what the audience are invited to think of this mode of succession, and of elective kingship generally. The proprieties of succession were sharply contested at this time. Scripture and history provided fodder for arguments for and against any and all political systems, as well as source material for literary works. Yet, however widely contemporaries ranged in their search for political models, ancient Rome remained the textbook example of the rise and fall of political formations. This in turn makes Peele and Shakespeare's deliberately counterfeit Rome all the more intriguing.

No one thought that there was or could be a single abstract inviolable rule, transcending all immediate political circumstances that might determine who the legitimate successor was. Most arguments about the succession have an opportunistic and ad hoc quality, even if their proponents pretended otherwise. Nonetheless, prose pamphleteers strove for maximum coherence and consistency in the application of past examples. By contrast, imaginative writers, even those with an axe to grind, were far more likely to dwell on fissures and contradictions. They did so not just to protect themselves. Driven by conflict, drama is uniquely suited to articulating competing moral and ideological positions, as also to eliciting complex and often ambivalent responses from the audience. With its countless atrocities and bizarre melange of literary and historical associations, *Titus* is a perfect case in point. Does the fact that it is the evil Goth queen who denounces Titus's "cruel, irreligious piety" (1.1.133) or the villainous Moor who derides Lucius's "popish tricks"

[38] *Pithie Exhortation*, 13ff., 47.

(5.1.76) mean that we should not share in the sentiments? Is the failure of election to secure Rome a good ruler a sign that hereditary succession is better?

As all grammar-school-educated Elizabethans were aware, for instance from reading Livy, early Roman kingship had been elective although other factors too had come into play. Tarquinius Superbus, the last Roman king, had killed his predecessor and usurped the throne; and the ensuing reign of terror only ended when, incensed by his son's rape of the virtuous Roman matron Lucrece, the populace led by Lucius Junius Brutus deposed Tarquin and expelled both him and his family from the city. What, though, of the principate and empire? Whether those should be regarded as hereditary or elective monarchies was much disputed in Elizabeth's final years[39]—Wentworth, for one, argued that in imperial Rome succession was determined by the outgoing ruler in a form of nomination-cum-adoption.[40] His proposal for England was a statutory provision approved by the queen; by contrast, Burghley and Thomas Digges's plans predating the execution of Mary Stewart had called for a Roman-style interregnum after Elizabeth's death and a one-off parliamentary election even if they did not quite call it that.[41]

No one saw free election of the kind lately adopted in the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania as the optimum means of settling the succession. Even Persons, who sought to undermine James Stewart's dynastic claim in his *Conference,* would recommend a combination of heredity and choice, "for by succession we do remedy the inconueniences and dangers before mentioned of bare election,"[42], while essentially denying not just the desirability but the very possibility of applying a strict hereditary rule, given the historical reality of usurpations and the tangle of conflicting claims they created. Acknowledging the merits of election in the abstract, Persons's Scottish adversary, the civil lawyer Thomas Craig, retorted that in practice hereditary succession offers a surer guarantee of

[39] As J. G. A. Pocock notes, the principate was in fact neither (*Barbarism and Religion*, vol. 3, *The First Decline and Fall* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 27).
[40] *Pithie Exhortation*, 23.
[41] Patrick Collinson, "The Elizabethan Exclusion Crisis and the Elizabethan Polity," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 84 (1993): 51–92, and Collinson, "The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I," in *Elizabethan Essays* (London: A. & C. Black, 1994), 31– 56; Kewes, "Parliament and the Succession."
[42] Persons, *Conference*, Pt. 1, 230.

peace and national good.[43] The historian and civil lawyer John Hayward, too, stigmatized the dangers of Persons's political innovation which confounded established principles of succession, leading to turmoil and violence: "For where one claimeth the Crowne by succession, and another possesseth it by title of election; there, not a disunion onely of the people, not a diuision in armes, but a cruel throat-cutting, a most immortall and mercilesse butcherie doth vsually ensue."[44]

The urgency of succession crises in early 1590s England (and France) helps explain why Peele and Shakespeare shaped their decidedly unhistorical Rome the way they did: *Titus* certainly scores high in topicality stakes. It does not, however, provide clear-cut answers. Or, rather, it demonstrates that specific political structures sometimes work and sometimes do not. Take the opening act. The confrontation between the dead emperor's sons seems to underscore the instability of elective regimes where the identity of the next ruler is determined only after the death of the previous incumbent. It further calls attention to the precariousness of a state in which the very criteria of election are disputed and political rhetoric bent to selfish ends. Saturninus, the elder of the two princes, claims the throne by primogeniture; the younger Bassianus affects to uphold "pure election," all the while brazenly advertising his royal lineage and pitching for allies wherever he can find them; and the tribune Marcus Andronicus extols the patriotism and piety of the people's candidate who just happens to be his older brother and whom he illicitly assures of victory. Titus's subsequent refusal to stand because of his age drives home that with each successive emperor's death—and his own would come only too soon, the country will be once again gripped by election fever (1.1.190–95). The botched election of Saturninus, presided over by the two Andronici brothers, Titus and Marcus, ushers in an ugly spell of imperial tyranny, and we could be forgiven for deducing that election is no panacea for a succession crisis. Except that if the succession in Rome went by blood alone, the outcome would be no different. Human volatility and fallibility intrinsic to electoral politics are ironically underscored when Saturninus has second thoughts about marrying Lavinia, having fallen for Tamora: 'A goodly lady, trust me, of the hue, / That I would

[43] Craig, "*De Jure Successionis Regni Angliae, Libri Duo*" (1602), published in English as *Concerning the Right of Succession to the Kingdom of England, Two Books*, trans. James Gadderar (London, 1703), chaps. 5 and 6.
[44] Hayward, *An Answer to the First Part of a Certaine Conference, Concerning Succession* (London, 1603), sig. O1^{r}.

choose were I to choose anew' (1.1.265-6). Here is a premonition of Titus's regrets about the elevation of Saturninus: 'Ah, Rome! Well, well, I made thee miserable / What time I threw the people's suffrages / On him that thus doth tyrrannize o'er me' (4.3.18-20). Primogeniture that involves election too gets short shrift, Chiron and Demetrius's scuffle over Lavinia re-playing in a darkly comic key Bassianus and Saturninus' contention for the throne. We recognize close verbal echoes of that earlier scene – 'elder', 'competitor', 'plead', 'sword', 'choice', as Demetrius asserts priority being the elder; Chiron counters with 'I am as able and as fit as thou'; and a fratricidal duel is only forestalled when the Machiavellian Aaron, like another Marcus, assumes the role of umpire and persuades the two competitors to put up (1.1.525-635).

The curious thing is that we never learn Saturninus and Bassianus' family name even though both to varying degrees emphasize their dynastic title. No relations—siblings, uncles, mother, or wife—are mentioned; and when Saturninus dies, his body is to be placed "in his fathers grave" (Q1, sig. $K4^{v}$), not a familial tomb.[45] The contrast with the Andronici, whose name resounds throughout, could not be more vivid. Not only are senior members of the clan in positions of power at the start of the play, Titus in command of the military and Marcus in possession of civil authority. Titus's many sons are distinguished soldiers, other relatives are prominent patricians, and even his little grandson has a public role to play. The hegemony of the Andronici is what prompts Tamora's vow of revenge against the whole family (2.2.188–89), and why Bassianus twice attempts to forge alliance with them (1.1.52, 218). Without their support, no emperor's position will be secure for long, as Saturninus finds to his cost.

The Andronici have been influential in Rome's affairs for generations, their imposing monument which "five hundred years hath stood," and which Titus has "sumptuouslie reedified" (1.1.355, 356), a physical embodiment of their status and nobility. This too may be a vehicle for contemporary comment. As Malcolm Smuts has recently reminded us, "for all its emphasis on communal self-government, Elizabethan society habitually associated power and authority with

[45] Bate's emendation, "his fathers' grave" (5.3.191), obliterates the distinction between the Andronici and the unnamed line of Saturninus.

great men and great lineages."[46] The language of heraldry and dynastic ties, Smuts shows, merged seamlessly with the humanist discourse of Roman citizenship that was in turn inflected by religious partisanship.

And indeed, what further marks out the Andronici is their piety and devotion to religious ceremonial in which some critics have discerned associations with Roman Catholicism. The play reveals little about the beliefs of anyone else, with the exception of the self-professed atheist Aaron. The few references to the gods of the Goths are too superficial to suggest reformed leanings. That a Goth gazes upon a "ruinous monastery" (5.1.21) which is apparently on Roman territory gives scant clue about his own religious persuasion, and, if anything, evokes a sense of wistfulness and loss rather than gloating satisfaction at the destruction of popish past. As for the Romans, other than the Andronici only Saturninus's call for a "priest" with "holy water" to perform the wedding rites possibly savors of popery (1.1.328).

Far from drawing a firm dividing line between supposedly Catholic Romans and reformed Goths, the play seems merely to imply that the Andronici might be adherents of the old religion, perhaps—but only perhaps—so as to gesture towards England's ancient Catholic nobility. Significantly, although Tamora's vow that she will "find a day to massacre them all" (1.1.455) and the description of Lavinia as "martyred" (3.1.82) invoke the contemporary context of religious persecution, both references are sufficiently equivocal to allow for diametrically opposed confessional applications. Besides, the Andronici do not suffer for their beliefs. Rather, Quintus and Martius are condemned by law for the murder of the emperor's brother, and Lucius banished for trying to save them. There is perhaps a whiff here of the Elizabethan regime's dubious policy towards Jesuit missionaries and seminary priests—and Catholics in general—typically charged with sedition and treason not heresy, as per Burghley's *Execution of Justice*. Again, however, the play refuses to yield more than that. The Ovidian tag Titus deploys to castigate Saturninus's tyranny, *Terras Astraea reliquit* (4.3.4), almost certainly alludes to Elizabeth. Even so, its meaning remains

[46] "State Formation, Political Culture and the Problem of Religious War in Britain, *c*. 1579–1610," unpublished manuscript. I am grateful to Professor Smuts for sending me a draft of his study before its publication.

ambiguous. That justice has left the earth could either point to a disastrous aftermath of Elizabeth's death or else—a less likely possibility—signal disaffection with her increasingly authoritarian rule.

Though at one point the fall of the Andronici seemed all but inevitable, *Titus* concludes with their astonishing resurgence. After the gory climax, Lucius and Marcus address the Romans in a quasi-forensic *éclaircissement*. They are ready, they say, to hurl themselves to their deaths if judged guilty of any wrongdoing. Perhaps won over by the force of their eloquence, perhaps swayed by the silent but portentous presence of the Goth army under the younger Andronicus, no one demurs; and Lucius, the late outcast and traitor and now king-killer, is proclaimed "Rome's royal emperor" (5.3.140). Critics who see this as a good thing have noted that he is the namesake of King Lucius, the first Christian ruler of Britain. Yet, as Felicity Heal and other historians have taught us, Elizabethan Protestants and Catholics waged a fierce battle over King Lucius, each side using him for its own ideological ends.[47] So here we have another conundrum which cuts across political and confessional fault lines. Lucius will either, as he promises, "heal Rome's harms" (5.3.147), or else, as the brutal "doom" (l. 181) he has meted to Aaron and Tamora presages, turn into another imperial despot.

Depending on which scenario we prefer, Lucius's careful observance of ritual obsequies for his kin and simultaneous denial of burial rites to Tamora emerge, respectively, as (Roman Catholic) piety and stern justice or (popish) superstition and vengefulness. Revealingly, Elizabeth was warned by none other than Peter Wentworth that if she failed to secure the succession, in the inevitable chaos following her death those left behind 'shall not possiblie have one howres leisure to attend, nor once thinke of your burial, or will: and then it is to be feared, yea, undoubtedlie to be judged, that your noble person shall lye upon the earth unburied, as a dolefull spectacle to the worlde'.[48]

[47] Heal, "What Can King Lucius Do for You?: The Reformation and the Early British Church," *English Historical Review* 120 (2005): 593–614, and Heal, "Appropriating History: Catholic and Protestant Polemics and the National Past," in *The Uses of History in Early Modern England*, ed. Paulina Kewes (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library Press, 2006), 105–28.
[48] *Pithie Exhortation*, p. 102.

"Shakespeare," Blair Worden has noted, "gives little time to the machinery of politics or the workings of constitutions."[49] However, in *Titus*, a play whose opening sequence features the most overt staging of election to the throne in all of Elizabethan drama, the concern about political structures and processes is more pronounced than anywhere else in the canon. That, of course, was probably due to Peele who dealt with dynastic troubles of one sort or another in virtually all his serious plays, and who experimented with royal election in *The Troublesome Reign*, where it was tarnished by association with popery.[50] Even so, *Titus* remains deeply skeptical about the efficacy of constitutional mechanisms. Its religious politics, too, are hard to fathom. Conversely, Peele's *David and Betshabe* reads like a theatrical realization of Wentworth's *Pithie Exhortation*. Fervently Protestant and no less fervently anti-Catholic, the play advocates that in accordance with both God's will and human counsel the aging prince should nominate a successor, if need be bypassing primogeniture, to assure the nation's peaceful future..

There is no evidence that either Peele or Shakespeare was familiar with Wentworth's *Pithie Exhortation*, though given London's well-oiled news and rumor mill they could not but have known of the brouhaha surrounding the old Puritan's foiled intervention and swift imprisonment. What appear to be thematic or verbal parallels between their works and his may be purely accidental. Reading them side by side, however, reveals just how much of its moment *Titus* was even if, in contrast to Peele's solo plays or the prose succession tracts by Wentworth and others, its politics and confessional stance remain frustratingly doubtful and ambivalent. Unique in all of Elizabethan drama, *Titus* gives its socially promiscuous audience the chance to scrutinize the proprieties of a custom-enshrined popular election even if it does so by fabricating a Rome that never was. As such, the piece offers a fascinating counterpoint to both the aristocratic elections we find in the *Troublesome Raigne*, *True Tragedie of Richard III*, and *Edmond Ironside* and the makeshift electoral politics of *Julius Caesar*, as also to the loaded portrayal of elective monarchy in *Hamlet*'s faux medieval Denmark.

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[49] "Shakespeare and Politics," *Shakespeare Survey* 44 (1992): 7.
[50] Kewes, "History Plays and the Royal Succession," 499–502.