

## Repository of Carnivalism in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*

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Received April 07, 2017; Revised July 24, 2017; Accepted July 27, 2017; Published August 10, 2017.

### Abstract

This study is attempt to examine Bakhtin's Carnivalism as international theory in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. The proposed goal in the study concerns with Bakhtin's Carnivalism as the rhizomatic, discriminative, international theory. The major concern of this argument is to historically and internationally goes beneath the surface level of Carnivalism, in order to lay bare the multiple labyrinth of this theory due to historical facts. It supposes that Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* has depicted Carnivalism in trans-cultural ways that erasing the cultural, ritual difference of people, in order to make the cohesive combined hybrid which is visible in the characters of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, such issues bears the various studies in the different fields.

**Keywords:** Carnivalism, Play, Shakespeare, History, Character.

### 1. Introduction

Bakhtin's Carnivalism in the first glance, may expatiate the criticism on a literary work or a society. The Carnival world provides the suitable field of freely expression of ideas, devoid of limitations and discriminations. It is the world gathers the multiple contraries, the carnival world is comparable with resurrection where everybody is the same, there is no social discrimination in such world, in order to delineate everybody same. The carnival world has people with folklore language, devoid of customs and rituals, therefore everybody finds chance to freely expatiate, hence the carnival world abounded with voices and discourses. There is no monologue in the carnival world.

Here, the characters are either imitating or transferring to other characters, who may pertain to the higher or lower classes in the society. The characters contain the features of both classes losing their original features, such characters are hybrid who neither belong to the higher classes nor the lowers classes, however bearing the features of both. It is why a poor fellow plays the role of rich one and vice versa. Carnival world abounds with happiness, laughter, feast and secular festivals and happiness, the carnival world puts Renaissance era on the contrary with the cold, dogmatic middle age.

The carnival fellows are used to satiate their secular desires, including eating, drinking, digesting, and defecting by which they communicate the outward world, like the cycle, or the cycle of life and death (Bakhtin, 1984: 46). The cycle is the same among humans and animals, then

there is no difference between them too. In tandem with Contemptibility, Bristol (1985) uses Bakhtin's concept of carnivalism, in order to introduce a more open model of cultural production, "the second culture opposed to the official culture, one way of describing how subjects might respond to dominant discourses through the modalities of counter-identification or even misidentification" (Bristol 36).

In Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* counter-identification, misidentification and cultural distinctions provide the best field for discussion, for example, the specific protagonist, Aaron fits the center of conflicts, he is called, black Moor, this word evokes the spirit of distinction revealing that he is gradually deflected by other characters, but it is not, because Shakespeare instead depicts him as the strong figure who is even stronger than those who appear as the dominant, governmental figures in the government of Rome. It seems Shakespeare humorously concerns Aaron and degrades these dominant figures, in order to illuminate Carnivalism, because his contemporary people considers black people as Satan, in this sense, Papp/Kirkland(1988) remarks, "people of color from Africa, brought against their will, emerged as slaves and servants. Their color was thought to have been caused by their proximity to living near the sun. The English were intrigued that their black skin could not be washed off" (Papp/Kirkland 51-55).

Therefore, it can be taken that every work is the clash of different voices, which were struggling to domain each other, in order to gain the uni-accentual, social voice which is not possible, unless counter-identification or misidentification occurs, and it is while subjects respond to the dominant voice. In such condition, every voice tries to collide the other voice, therefore there would be some voices that are subject to the other voices, the suppressed voices try to assimilate themselves to the dominated voices, in order to gain the identity(like Aaron). Meanwhile, the same process happens in the dominant voices, and they also lose their own figure, it is somehow humorous, hence Bakhtin called it Carnival, because such process resembles to the Carnival festivals. This phenomenon has a formative influence in the Renaissance and Shakespeare's famous work, *Titus Andronicus* to take the different meanings and connotations in the historical situations.

## **2. Discussion**

### **2.1 Investigating Carnivalism in The Play**

While the play has set up in the castle of Rome among the governmental agents, the play has merely drawn attention to Aaron, or Haroon, a black moor, who is center of conflicts, he manifests misidentification hybridism, because Rome is not his hometown and he should be degraded, but he doesn't, and he is strong, planning to catch a ride on Tamora's coattails who has become one of the most important people in Rome as well as Tamora's lover, the queen of Goths.

While her son's Chiron and Demetrius fighting with one another about which of them is more worthy of Lavinia's love, Titus's daughter, Aaron hatches a plot that they both rape Lavinia and they also agreed, but she is in love of Bassianus, the younger brother of Saturninus. Aaron intelligently mediates between Chiron and Demetrius in the case of Lavinia's love, as well as other governmental agents in Rome, it is very supervising and interesting that Rome agents blindly, ecstatically follow him, it seems as if Aaron weaving webs to capture theses people who are different with his culture, in order to gather them under his own carnival network, to be the same and common. Struggling to find identity in Rome government, he has affair with Tamora, the captured queen of Goths, and the present wife of Saturninus, it is very wonderful how Saturninus

chooses Tamora as his queen, while she's been queen of the Goths before and the enemy of Rome, the reply is not out of Bakhtin's Carnivalism which attracting contraries on the same tie.

Now it is necessary to mention *the historical facts of Goths tribe, in this sense*, Archambault(2002) comments

The Goths were tribe who were frequently referenced for their part in the fall of the Roman Empire and their subsequent rise to power in the region of northern Europe. They are first referenced by Herodotus as Scythians, but it should be noted that Herodotus was inclined to sweeping definitions of people whom he considered "barbarians" and perhaps designated the Goths as "Scythians" (Archambault 56).

Adding to it, Boardman (1991)says, "the Scythians were a large group of Iranian Eurasian nomads who stepped from about the 9th century BC until about the 1st century BC" (Boardman 78). Herodotus(1934) also provides a depiction that

the ancient Persians called all Alans ,the Scyths Σάκαι The name 'Alan' or 'Alani' is an altered form of the Indo-European 'Arya', meaning the 'civilized' or 'respectable'. The name "Alan" is derived from Old Iranian *arya-*, "Aryan," and so is cognate with "Īrān" (from the gen. plur. *aryānām*). Similar to their ancestors, the Scythians, the Alans, were an Iranian nomadic pastoral people of antiquity (Qut.Szemerényi(1980),p.98).

As Szemerényi (1980) also claims, "Alans" were belligerent, "they took service with Romans, Parthians, and Sasanians, Alans was the name for Iranian-speaking East Sarmatian nomad tribes in the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D."( Szemerényi 76).

In tandem with compatibility, it can be perceived that Shakespeare obviously yield readers to know that Tamora, the captured queen of Goths is Iranian, therefore, the play of *Titus Andronicus* contextually expounding the issues pertain to the history of Iran.

Here, it is discernible to mention that Tamora as a name for girls is derived of Hebrew and the meaning of Tamora is "date palm". Tamora is a variant form of Tamara (Hebrew): Russian version of Tamar.(<http://www.thinkbabynames.com/meaning/o/Tamora#V3sEXcFcdcxMI5D5.99>) It is also Shakespearean puns in the name include amor for love and moor as the character was in love with a Moor who is Aaron(Ibid).

It is also discernible to know that Tamora is often called Samira, or Semiramis in the play of *Titus Andronicus*, Samira (also spelled Samirah, Sameera, and Sameerah Persian: (سميرا).Regarding to it, Hugh (1911) expatiates,

it is a female given name which has its various origins in Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic as well as being common to other Semitic languages. In Persian, Samira is the first part of Semiramis's name (Assyrian) who was a Persian princess, a Babylonian warrior, and the legendary wife of King Ninus who succeeded him to the throne of Assyria (Hugh 67).



### Ninus' Empire

With regarding to the historical field and references, the emphasis bestows upon the Iranian, historical context of Shakespeare's play *Titus Andronicus* and we came to this fact that Tamora, as the most potent figure also carries some features of Iranian people, first, whereas she is Tamora, but all through play, she is rarely called Tamora and instead she is called Semiramis or something refers to Goths tribe that both of them contain Iranian potency.

On the other hand, as it was mentioned before, Tamora's name also has pun includes amor for love and moor as the character was in love with a Moor who is Aaron. In similar vein, it indirectly, humorously mentions Iranian people's love for Islam due to historical facts. Whereas Elizabethan career was synchronies with Shah Abas, Safavid Dynasty, who was known as modernized, Iranian ruler who both coined Shi'a Islam as the state religion in Iran and he communicated with European countries. In tandem with this compatibility, Shakespeare has reared the ridiculous concept to Iran in his mind, to mock Iranian approach to Islam, while they were used to be known as the followers of Zoroaster. In addition, Jackson (2013) remarks, "the Safavids claimed to be successors to the Shahs of ancient Persia, whose title had been "shadow of God on earth." (Jackson 98). Aaro's saying approves this idea, when he claims," now, by the gods that warlike Goths adore"(II.i.1)

If strictly speaking, after succeeding Saturninus to throne, he prodigiously chooses Tamora as his queen among many aristocrat women, while she was a captured queen of Goths tribe. Such mismatched marriage is perceptible in Bakhtin's Carnivalism, it degrades king Saturninus. But Tamora is the lover of Moor who exalting Tamora, in order to gain vigor, actual identity in Rome government, though their love expresses counter-identification which is visible in Carnivalism. In this sense, Aaron says, "now climbeth Tamora Olympus' top"(I.i.1), it depicts that Aaron knows about the superior position of her and the suppressed position of himself. He wants to "sit aloft and secure of thunder's crack or lightning flash". Additionally, Roux(1993) claims," She(Samira) was the legendary queen of king Ninus, a Persian princess, a Babylonian warrior, succeeding him to the throne of Assyria from circa 2500 BC to 605 BC, spanning the Early Bronze Age through to the late Iron Age" (Roux 63).

The other carnival figure is Aaron who is neither appropriately Muslim, nor Christian, as matter of fact, he has no religion, he even does not worship any God, instead, he iterates the evil name several times. He has hybrid, carnival identity. Here, it is nice to mention, Bakhtin's(1984) saying,

114 | It is discernible to mention that while Aaron doesn't worship God at all, but after Tamora giving birth Aron's illegal son, he says aside, "Pray to the devils; the gods have given us over"(IV.i.1), then he begs Lucius to take care of his son.

Carnival was above all a culture of comedy, festival and the marketplace, it opposed the official serious culture of the church and feudal court with a culture of feasts, fairs, pageants, clowns, fools, jugglers, profanity, trained animals, monsters, laughter and parody(Bakhtin56).

Along with it, choosing name of Aaron has delusive potency, Aaron, which has been the name of Mose's brother in the history. In the Hebrew Bible and the Quran, Aaron was the older brother of Moses, (Exodus 6:16-20, 7:7; Qur'an 28:34) and a prophet of God. The choice of this name, Aaron rises another question why Shakespeare has chosen the name of such an eminent figure, Mose's brother for him, while he was usually called , black Moor, "who were a group of Muslims were ruling in Spain from 711 to 1492"(Webster dictionary), but his name is the name of Mose's brother who is Judaism, therefore, it is conceived that Aaron has the multiple identity or the multi-culture or the multiple religion.

The other interpretation is covet in pronunciation of the name of Aaron, reminding Aryan, in this sense, Szemerényi (1980) or The name "Alan" is derived from Old Iranian *arya-*, "Aryan," and so is cognate with "Īrān" (from the gen. plur. *aryānām*). Similar to their ancestors, the Scythians, the Alans, were an Iranian nomadic pastoral people of antiquity, the Alans appeared as a nomadic, warlike, pastoral people who were professional warriors and took service, at various times, with the Romans, Parthians, and Sasanians, Alans was the name for Iranian-speaking East Sarmatian nomad tribes (Szemerényi 76).

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Devoid of his multitude identity, it is very astounding that Shakespeare has created such black character in the sublime position, devoid of other black characters such as Othello in other play, he appears very brilliant in his speech and his body, but he is still called barbarous Moor. It rises this question in our mind why Shakespeare has created such vigorous, black character while his contemporary people usually used to degrade the black people in the history and in the literary works especially in Britannia, in this way Shakespeare exerted Bakhtin's Carnivalism, because the main characters play the dejure role, for example while Aaron should play the role of black slave in his society, but he appears as an eminent figure who is able to interfere in the governmental issues, he is so strong that he can hatch the wit plot to trap the other characters of the play while they should play the role of dominant figure such as the agents and the subjects of Roman government such as Titus Andronicus, Tamora, Lavinia, Saturninus, etc. But it seems they are toy play in the hands of Aaron, they are so degraded by Aaron that it seems Aaron plays chess with them. In this sense, Shakespeare has created ironical, Carnival world while his contemporary people are vice versa. Aaron as a black fellow interacts with governmental agents in Roman society (it is still astounding), but because of misidentification, he exerts the clash for the identity, because it seems he is still the follower of his home culture, while he is struggling to match himself with Roman society even in the affair with Tamora.

Like Aaron, Tamora also mediates among the governmental agents who blindly agree her. Tamora supposes to be one of the agents of dominant power in the society, but she does not specifically, scrupulously plays her role of queen and it is the other token of Carnivalism, but her role is d'joue, because she is in love with the black, barbarous Moo and even the other characters

of the play mock her. In this sense, Bakhtin (1984) says, "It (Carnivalism) is transgressive, it transposes, inverts and subverts the roles" (Bakhtin 102).

In the next scene, the hunting party Tamora even soon breaks off from the main hunting party to meet Aaron. She tries to initiate sex with him, but he resists; he's more in the mood for murder. Suddenly, Bassianus and Lavinia come upon the lovers. They mock Tamora for lusting after a black man and Bassianus tells Tamora that he is going to tell Saturninus all about what he has witnessed. Here Shakespeare tends to emancipate the savage features of Aaron's renunciation. The nature of barbarous and civilized behavior is extremely double-edged in Aaron's personality. These lines are the embodiment of Aaron's hybrid culture and identity illuminating Carnival veins. Such Carnivalism network also appears in Roman governmental agents while they avenge to burn Tamora's son, Elarbus, Lucius says.

Away with him! and make a fire straight;  
And with our swords, upon a pile of wood,  
Let's hew his limbs till they be clean consum'd(I.i.6).

By sharing and accentuating brutality between superior (Roman governmental agents) and suppressed (so called Aaron), the other token of Carnivalism is discerned. In this sense, Said(1994) in his famous work entitled *Culture and Imperialism* said:

The notions about bringing civilization to primitive or barbaric peoples, the disturbingly familiar ideas about flogging or death or extended punishment being required when they [Indian, Jamaican, or Irish or Chinese] misbehaved or became rebellious, because they mainly understood force or violence best, they were not like us and for that reason deserved to be ruled(Said 1).

The other important character who should be considered is Lavinia who should appear as one of superior characters in Roman society, but she is not. It is in the middle of Act II that poor Lavinia tore and raped by Chiron and Demetrius, Tamora's sons, she begs Tamora to intervene with her sons, but Tamora refuses, reminding Lavinia that Titus was deaf to her son.

As matter of fact, the rape and mutilation of Lavinia is the key action of the double colonialization, as well as Carnivalism, Lavinia's loss of her hands and tongue, depicts her loss of agency - the loss of her ability to speak or act against manipulation by those who seek to victimize her. Lavinia herself personifies the Roman state - she is even called "Rome's royal mistress" in the first Act - and her rape symbolizes, in the bluntest way possible, the corruption of Rome by the barbarous Goths in the veil of Aaron as the superior. It is also the other sign of Carnivalism, because their role are reversed.

While Lavini's father, Titus Andronicus, knows about the crucial event that has happened for her daughter, then Aaron throws Titus's sons to the same hole where he threw Basianus, Lavinia's fiancé. Titus was deceived by Aaron who tells him, Saturninus has sworn if Titus cuts off one of his hands, they are exonerated, he tries to cut off his own hand, in order to free his sons. He believes his hands should be cut off, because they have fought for the Roman government whole in vain. In tandem with this compatibility, it can be extrapolated, Carnivalistic drama shows how identity can never be permanent as everything can be changed or become something else with passage of time and changing the scenes. It is a fact that Titus drives almost mad after visiting his poor daughter. He "tells his sorrows to the stones" (V.i.7)of Rome, as he says in a particularly moving speech, because his words are meaningless to the Roman elites he might have

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ruled over. Titus' language borders on madness. It is full of repetitions and gruesome puns, and he constantly reminds the audience of Lavinia's mutilation.

These lines remind us of Foucault's sayings, Foucault's notion of power and here, Titus is the docile subject that willingly wants to perform the demands of power in spite of this fact that he is governmental agent. It is the cause that he calls all of his struggles all in vain, besides his language also has become meaningless for others. Foucault (1977) remarks that "individuals working within particular discursive practices that cannot think or speak without obeying the unspoken archive of rules and constraints; otherwise they risk being condemned to madness or silence" (Foucault 45). It is mostly in Titus's speech that you can find the word "mad", and it can be found more in Act IV which is the climax, because it is Titus who resists the exercise of power and according to what Foucault said such people "risk being condemned to madness or silence", there are some phrases of Titus: Is dear Lavinia, dearer than my soul./Had I but seen thy picture in this plight,/It would have maddened me:

Why, Marcus, no man should be mad but I (III.i. 1-12).

Even Aaron also knows about the madness, in the act four, Chiron says, Demetrius, here's the son of Lucius;/He hath some message to deliver us. And Aaron says, Ay, some mad message from his mad grandfather.( IV, ii. 1-4)

Furthermore, Foucault's idea on docile comes true when Aaron informed Titus about the decision of Emperor on his sons, since Emperor has requested Titus to cut off his hand and sent it to him, if he wanted to find his sons alive again. Aaron says,

Titus Andronicus, my lord the emperor  
Sends thee this word,--that, if thou love thy sons,  
Let Marcus, Lucius, or thyself, old Titus,  
Or any one of you, chop off your hand,  
And send it to the king: he for the same  
Will send thee hither both thy sons alive;  
And that shall be the ransom for their fault.( III, i. 1-7)

Here Aaron appears as the agent of power to disperse it all through society in the Carnivalistic ways, and at the first, it is Titus who is at the head in the society, but it is again astounding why and how Shakespeare has chosen a black character such as Aaron to be an agent of power and to disperse it in the society while naturally and historically he should be degraded and others should be dominant, it is again the other sign of Carnivalism. In other words, the emperor's request to chop off Titus's hand means to uncrown him from the summit of power, and it is Aaron who cuts off Titus's hand, though Titus finds his sons disembodied heads, because they are also innocently suppressed by the agents of power. Then he swears to take revenge especially while Marcus (Titus's brother) kills a fly, Titus reprimands him, insisting that any killing is unjust, but after Marcus compares the fly to Aaron, the Moor Titus swats the creature himself. It seems the characters of the play have still the black enmity, despite Shakespeare's injection of Aaron's superiority.

The play rises to the climax in the act four, while Titus knows about Tamora's adultery relationship with Aaron, because she born a black baby, everybody knows it is Aaron's. Aaron, however, rescues the baby, swearing that he will protect his newborn son against the world of

white skin. He instructs Chiron and Demetrius to buy the newborn, white child, in order to gull the emperor into believing his son to be white.

Then Aaron leaves to join the Goths outside Rome's walls, he goes to a ruined monastery (the allusion of dispatched, Iranian religion after revelation of Islam) to speaking with his new born son, planning to find a home for his child. one of Goths happens to find Aaron in a ruined monastery speaking with his son,

villain, thou mightst have been an emperor:  
Where the bull and cow are both milk-white,  
They never do beget a coal-black calf. ( V, i.12-15).

Here, "a ruined monastery" possibly associates some allusive content of Iranian abbey, it emancipates Arab's attack to Iran, in order to announce Islam and "the ruined monastery" is the left tracks of Iranian religion, Zarathustra followers. It also depicts anti-Iranian concept. Here Aaron has taken refuge to this "ruined monastery", to put his heart on his sleeves with his son, it discerns , their congenial relations, but, despite , all of Aaron's struggling to be congenial with Roman governmental agents, here he finds himself miserable while he finds no opportunity to find any position in Roman throne and his aforementioned quotation exactly nullifies his following quotation while his illegal son is born, Aaron says,

Ye white-lim'd walls! ye alehouse-painted signs!  
Coal-black is better than another hue,  
In that it scorns to bear another hue;  
For all the water in the ocean  
Can never turn the swan's black legs to white,  
Although she lave them hourly in the flood (IV. ii.1-6 ).

Along with these line, Vaught (2012) says, temporary misrule, role reversals, and disguises were recurring practices during the space and time of carnival in early modern England. Masks, cross-dressing, and elaborate, hybrid costumes were common. (Vaught 5).

In spite of all of Aaron struggling to join the government member and his exercising the power, it seems, he is unable to change his doomed destiny and in his response to the white characters says: "Is black so base a hue?" (V.iii.7) he asks, before proceeding to unseat the typical Elizabethan tendency to favor white over black. In this sense, Papp/Kirkland (1988) says,

Elizabethans were sensitive to anything foreign including their own countrymen. Regional accents were prevalent and immediately recognized as being foreign. It did not matter at this point what color or nationality one was, only that they were different. "The fabric of English society was woven so tightly that it seemed to exclude anyone who wasn't white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant- and male. The English's inability, or lack of understanding, made it easier for them to reject Black Africans as "not being English, not being white and not being Christian". (Papp/Kirkland 67) .

In this sense, while Titus sets a plot to ask gods to mend the injustice in the society and praying for, Demetrius (Tamora's son) says,

Come, let us go; and pray to all the gods  
For our beloved mother in her pains.



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Then Aaron says,

[Aside] Pray to the devils; the gods have given us over(IV, ii.1).

It seems he has also accepted that it is devils that help him to be superior and he approves English people's ideas about the black people. It is in the middle of the play that Titus' plot for revenge unfolds, then, Lucius has raised an army of Goths to march against Rome and depose Saturninus against his injustice.

At the end of play, the characters actually show, they play role, it is while Tamora who knows about Titus's madness visits him in his house, she introduces herself as revenge and her boys, Rapine and Murder. By discerning their trick, Titus holds a banquet preparing food by Tamora's sons, then he feeds them, such creed also conveys Carnivalsim. When they notice facts, at first, Titus slays Lavinia to purify her ignominy, then he kills Tamora, Saturninus also assassinates himself. Finally, Lucius orders to stone( to death) Aaron and his son. Aaron confesses everything. On the carnivalistic way, Titus's son, Lucius joins their enemy, the Goths, he makes a military succeeding to throne, then he avenges his father.

### 3. Conclusion

At the end, we find Aaron in his right place in the Roman society. In spite of all of his struggles to be a member in Rome, the society leads to the vain, counter-identification and misidentification. Finally, by supporting Goths, Lucius succeeds to the throne and the people accept that Titus' revenge is justified. Lucius orders to hold the funeral for Titus and Lavinia, but nothing for Tamora, whom even called her, "the heinous tiger"(V.iii.5) and "no mournful bell shall ring her burial"(like Christians) (Ibid.7), she will be devoured by birds and wild beasts and Aaron the Moor be buried chest-deep in the ground and starved to death, the method which was known among Arabs. Furthermore, as it is perceived, the play emancipates the cohesive, cultural, Carnivalism hybrid in the historical field, not the actual history, but the history as it was depicted in the characters.

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