Tamora, Seriously Evil Queen: Excerpts from *Titus Andronicus*

For each section of dialogue or monologue, generally “translate” the lines (you can pretty much summarize chunks of about 5 or 6 lines at a time). Mark any literary devices used and make notes on how those impact the text.

*Titus Andronicus, Roman general, returns from ten years of war with only four out of twenty-five sons left. He has captured Tamora, Queen of the Goths, her three sons, and Aaron the Moor (a northern African).*

**Act I, Scene 1**

**Tamora.** Stay, Roman brethren! Gracious conqueror,

Victorious Titus, rue the tears I shed,

A mother's tears in passion for her son:

And if thy sons were ever dear to thee,

O, think my son to be as dear to me!

Sufficeth not that we are brought to Rome,

To beautify thy triumphs and return,

Captive to thee and to thy Roman yoke,

But must my sons be slaughter'd in the streets,

For valiant doings in their country's cause?

O, if to fight for king and commonweal

Were piety in thine, it is in these.

Andronicus, stain not thy tomb with blood:

Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?

Draw near them then in being merciful:

Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge:

Thrice noble Titus, spare my first-born son.

*In spite of Tamora’s pleading, and in obedience to Roman rituals, Titus sacrifices her eldest son to his own dead sons, which earns him Tamora's unending hatred and her promise of revenge. Tamora is made empress by the new emperor Saturninus, who has been rejected by Titus’s daughter Lavinia, who loves Saturninus’ brother Bassianus. Saturninus has been offended by Titus and wants revenge of his own. Tamora publicly suggests that Titus be merciful, but then she privately assures him that she will take care of the revenge business herself.*

**Act I, Scene 1**

[Aside to SATURNINUS] My lord, be ruled by me,]

be won at last;

Dissemble all your griefs and discontents:

You are but newly planted in your throne;

Lest, then, the people, and patricians too,

Upon a just survey, take Titus' part,

And so supplant you for ingratitude,

Which Rome reputes to be a heinous sin,

Yield at entreats; and then let me alone:

I'll find a day to massacre them all

And raze their faction and their family,

The cruel father and his traitorous sons,

To whom I sued for my dear son's life,

And make them know what 'tis to let a queen

Kneel in the streets and beg for grace in vain.

[Aloud]

Come, come, sweet emperor; come, Andronicus;

Take up this good old man, and cheer the heart

That dies in tempest of thy angry frown. *To get back at Titus, she schemes with her lover Aaron to have Titus's two sons framed for the murder of Bassianus, the emperor's brother. Titus's sons are beheaded. Unappeased, she urges her sons Chiron and Demetrius to rape Titus's daughter Lavinia. She reminds them of the cruel treatment she has received at the hands of Titus and other Romans. Lavinia denounces Tamora’s cruelty and begs for mercy, asking Tamora to murder her rather than shame her with rape, which to her is worse than death.*

**Act II, Scene 3**

**Tamora**. [*To her sons*]Revenge it, as you love your mother's life,
Or be ye not henceforth call'd my children.

. . . . . . . .

**Lavinia.** [*To Tamora, in horror*] nay, barbarous Tamora,

For no name fits thy nature but thy own!

**Tamora**. Give me thy poniard; you shall know, my boys

Your mother's hand shall right your mother's wrong.

**Tamora**.*[To her sons]* But when ye have the honey ye desire,

Let not this wasp outlive, us both to sting.

**Lavinia**. O, let me teach thee! for my father's sake,

That gave thee life, when well he might have slain thee,

Be not obdurate, open thy deaf ears.

**Tamora**. Hadst thou in person ne'er offended me,
Even for his sake am I pitiless.
Remember, boys, I pour'd forth tears in vain,
To save your brother from the sacrifice;
But fierce Andronicus would not relent;
Therefore, away with her, and use her as you will,
The worse to her, the better loved of me.

**Lavinia**. O Tamora, be call'd a gentle queen,

And with thine own hands kill me in this place!

For 'tis not life that I have begg'd so long;

Poor I was slain when Bassianus died.

**Tamora**. What begg'st thou, then? fond woman, let me go.

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| **Lavinia.** 'Tis present death I beg; and one thing more That womanhood denies my tongue to tell: O, keep me from their worse than killing lust, And tumble me into some loathsome pit, Where never man's eye may behold my body: Do this, and be a charitable murderer.**Tamora.** So should I rob my sweet sons of their fee: No, let them satisfy their lust on thee. |

**Tamora.** Farewell, my sons: see that you make her sure.
Ne'er let my heart know merry cheer indeed,
Till all the Andronici be made away.
Now will I hence to seek my lovely Moor,
And let my spleenful sons this trull deflow'r.

*Tamora’s sons rape Lavinia, and then, to prevent her being able to accuse them later, they cut out her tongue and cut off her hands.*

*Tamora continues her mission to destroy the entire Andronicus family. Finally, even Titus's last surviving son Lucius is banished from Rome; he subsequently seeks alliance with the enemy Goths in order to attack Rome. Each new misfortune hits the aged, tired Titus with heavier impact. Eventually, he begins to act oddly and everyone assumes that he is crazy.

Tamora tries to capitalize on his seeming madness by pretending to be the figure of Revenge, come to offer him justice if Titus will only convince Lucius to cease attacking Rome.*

**Act V, Scene 2**

**Tamora:** Know, thou sad man, I am not Tamora;

She is thy enemy, and I thy friend:

I am Revenge: sent from the infernal kingdom,

To ease the gnawing vulture of thy mind,

By working wreakful vengeance on thy foes.

Come down, and welcome me to this world's light;

Confer with me of murder and of death:

There's not a hollow cave or lurking-place,

No vast obscurity or misty vale,

Where bloody murder or detested rape

Can couch for fear, but I will find them out;

And in their ears tell them my dreadful name,

Revenge, which makes the foul offender quake.

*Titus, having feigned his madness all along, tricks her, captures her sons, kills them, and makes pie out of them. He feeds this pie to their mother in the final scene, after which he kills both Tamora and Lavinia, his own daughter. A rash of killings ensue; the only people left alive are Marcus, Lucius, Young Lucius, and Aaron. Lucius has the unrepentant Aaron buried alive, and Tamora's corpse thrown to the beasts. He becomes the new emperor of Rome.*

Lady Macbeth Vs. Tamora

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| Explanation/Evidence | Lady Macbeth | Tamora |
| Motivations |  |  |
| Methods |  |  |
| Results |  |  |

Discussion Questions:

1. What theme(s) is Shakespeare developing through each of the women’s actions?
2. Can you think of women in modern society (TV, movies, books, politics, etc) that mirror either of the women? List and explain!