PERFORMING THE OTHER: FUNCTIONS OF ALTERITY IN *DOCTOR FAUSTUS* AND *TITUS ANDRONICUS*

BY

WILLIAM BRYANT PRIGGE

(Under the Direction of Fran Teague)

ABSTRACT

Evidence of human imposition of Other-Self binaries abounds throughout history, as men constantly vilify that which they perceive as different. This sort of alterity, this inherent difference, presents especially meaningful theatrical performances, as they portray social and spiritual relationships in a way that engages the audience with the surrounding society. Staging Otherness is culturally specific, sociopolitical context often informing production choices such as casting and costuming. I seek to examine five specific productions that engage powerfully with the notion of alterity. The first two, RSC performances of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, introduce the notion of spiritual Othering. For the other three, productions of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* ranging from 1849 to 1995, I will examine racial alterity and its influence on the performances within their specific cultures. Performances of alterity such as these ultimately expose the false construction of Other-Self binaries, revealing the notion of an Other to be an imposed reality.

INDEX WORDS: Alterity, Othering, Performance, Shakespeare, Titus Andronicus, Marlowe, Doctor Faustus, Race, Ira Aldridge, South Africa, England

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*For Grendel, Mephistopheles, and Aaron*
*In memory of Ira Aldridge*

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# Introduction

In the summer of 1852, Ira Aldridge embarked on a Continental tour of Europe, collecting along the way one of the most impressive arrays of honors any actor has ever seen: the Gold Medal for Art and Science (bestowed by Friedrich Wilhelm IV, King of Prussia), the Grand Cross of the Order of Leopold (given by Emperor Franz Josef of Austria)—he was even given the title of Chevalier Ira Aldridge, Knight of Saxony, by Duke Bernhard of Saxe-Meiningen. That he was an African-American actor, however, makes him even more noteworthy considering the time in which he lived. Born in Manhattan in 1807, Aldridge travelled to England as a teenager to pursue the professional acting career he would have had no chance of achieving in the United States. In 1825, at only seventeen years of age, Aldridge made his London debut as Othello on the East End, from which point his career dramatically skyrocketed. As a part of his touring repertoire, he frequently followed *Othello* with a comedy skit featuring a bumbling, drunken black servant named Mungo. Scholar and Aldridge expert Bernth Lindfors suggests that this generic juxtaposition promoted audiences' awareness of the artificiality of racial stereotypes, as Aldridge's characterization of Mungo was just as much an act as that of Othello (v.1 22). Lindfors's claim highlights the potential benefits of performing alterity, especially since Aldridge himself is racially Othered. In addition to playing Othello, Aldridge took on many other dark-skinned roles that were popular during the nineteenth century, "especially in such antislavery plays as *Oroonoko*, *The Padlock*, [and] *The Revenge*" (Cowhig 128). He even portrayed Aaron in

his own adaptation of *Titus Andronicus*, in which the hate-filled character of Shakespeare became a noble and virtuous hero.

Though he referred to himself as the descendant of a princely Senegalese bloodline, casting an exotic aura around him and therefore separating him from the "average" man of color, Aldridge and his acting nevertheless served as a bridge between his alterity and white European audiences throughout his career. Addressing the crowd at the end of one of his Dublin runs, he declared "Here the sable African was free / From every bond, save those which kindness threw / Around his heart, and bound it fast to you" (qtd. in Ross). Such an oration underscores a bond between Other (Aldridge) and Self (the Irish audiences).[1] This development of a relationship between Aldridge and his audiences is furthered by a Russian critic who, on seeing Aldridge perform in 1858, wrote, "From Othello is torn the deep cry, 'Oh misery, misery, misery!' and in that misery of the African artist is heard the far-off groans of his own people, oppressed by unbelievable slavery and more than that—the groans of the whole of suffering mankind" (qtd. in Ross). For this critic, Aldridge's performance links the actor not only with others of his skin color, but also with any human being who has experienced suffering. Aldridge therefore chooses to allow people to identify him as tightly linked to a character, a specific physical embodiment of a generalized racial Other, knowing that audiences will extend that identity—and yet he also continually insists upon himself as a unique individual. He simultaneously serves as representative of a people and indicative of the artifice of such simple notions of alterity that divide people into supposedly neat categories.

Dramatic performances such as Aldridge's, those dealing with alterity, attempt to enhance this Otherness—whether of individual characters or entire cultures—in order to portray social

[1] The Irish are themselves an Othered people in relation to the English, so their status in the racial majority complicates the "binary" of alterity in this historical moment.

and spiritual relationships in a way that engages the audience with both the play's society and that of the audience members themselves. In a play, characters and their relationships have a quality unlike that in any other mode of storytelling—even films do not possess the immediacy and proximity of experiencing real human beings on a stage. A unique bond therefore exists between characters and audience, for at least as long as the play lasts, incorporating audience members into the action occurring onstage. In performances that are specifically (or generally) concerned with characters of alterity, this link between performer and watcher is especially potent, the former speaking volumes more than merely scripted lines and the latter (possibly) seeing much more than just the play's surface plot unfold. Such performances have the potential to communicate on an individualized level with members of an entire culture, both to relate and to problematize the nature of things as they are at present.

Staging Otherness is furthermore culturally specific, as a culture's contemporary attitudes toward religion, race, class, or gender—whatever characteristics are judged to be different and, in many cases, lesser—influence countless aspects of production. As scholars such as Stephen Orgel and Irene Dash have amply demonstrated, changing cultural attitudes toward gender roles and women-as-Other have the power to influence performance substantially. This influence manifests itself in changes to scripts, costuming choices, even altered performance conventions. Likewise, David Bevington, Ralph Berry, and Laura Stevenson have covered changes in the performance of class distinctions. I, however, seek to focus on portrayals of religious and racial alterity specific to performances of, respectively, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* in modern Western cultures. To do so I will examine two productions of *Faustus* and three productions of *Titus*, all of which engage powerfully with the dynamic

between Other and Self; the former two depict a sort of spiritual Other while the latter three deal with notions of racial alterity.

One of the most important considerations in examining *Doctor Faustus* in performance is the changed nature of religion over the past four centuries. Specifically in Great Britain, where the two chosen productions took place, the face of religion has transformed significantly since Marlowe first wrote his play. Once a popular community experience integrated into laws, social institutions, and everyday life, the Anglican faith largely lost its force in England following the First World War. In the wake of Freud and his system of psychoanalysis, Western cultures as a whole began to experience a new fascination with psychology and the individual will as an impetus for behavior, as opposed to occult or supernatural forces. (I would also argue that the rise of the novel as a form further contributed to the focus on an individual's power to alter his or her fate.)[2] While Elizabethans attributed power to extracorporeal forces, this inward shift of the human locus of control parallels a shift in the performance and portrayal of these otherworldly beings. In a play like Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, then, modern society appropriates formerly strictly Christian entities. Because the culture puts less stock in the power of demonic conjuring, the previously solely spiritual antagonists come to represent threats not to one's soul, but to one's mind. This intellectual evolution manifests particularly noticeably in the 1974 and 1989 productions of *Doctor Faustus* put on by the Royal Shakespeare Company: Mephistopheles and his cohorts, in being associated with the interior of Faustus's mind, become extensions of the magician's psyche, projections of his hopes, dreams, and fears. These occult beings, once powerful over all of humanity, in the twentieth century come to be subsumed into the mind of the individual, with the power to torment mentally and emotionally on an individualized basis.

[2] Walter Benjamin discusses the patent isolation of both the novel writer and the novel reader. See Benjamin pp. 87 and 100.

I should note that these spiritual Others in performance are not confined in modern productions to strictly psychoanalytic interpretations. Costume design and other production choices offer myriad possibilities for interpretation. A Mephistopheles in black makeup, for instance, or played by a person of color, introduces new aspects of alterity both to the character and to the production. I selected the *Faustus* productions mentioned, however, as exemplars of the relationship between Other and Self that I hope to elucidate. In both performances, the fear originally associated with the demonic characters becomes internalized, pointing to their respective cultures' fear of not being in control of their own destiny. Such internalization of potentially destructive forces furthermore underscores a key link between what is deemed Other and what constitutes the Self (both individual and collective).

*Titus Andronicus* presents somewhat more complex issues, specifically those associated with the long history of Africans and those of African descent within Western cultures. Aaron—designated "the Moor" in the list of roles and frequently discussed (by others as well as by himself) in terms of his skin color—serves as the centerpiece of the play's racial dynamics, and as such provides myriad opportunities for dramatic interpretation and implication. In 1849, for instance, Ira Aldridge's radical rewrite of *Titus* presented a hopeful imagining of post-slavery society, dealing with issues specific to England's recent abolition of slavery (in 1833). By putting on such a production, Aldridge actively negates the significance of his own (and Aaron's) racial alterity. Despite this noble depiction of Aaron, however, the complexity of racial relations between Africans and Europeans also provides for much less favorable representations of Shakespeare's first villain. The apparent ubiquity of tensions between races lends *Titus* the capacity to function in radically different sociopolitical environments, as is evidenced by two powerful South African productions: Dieter Reible's in 1970 Cape Town and Gregory Doran's in

1995 Johannesburg. Both of these performances (which coincidentally straddle the abolition of apartheid) engage with the harsh racial landscape of South Africa, presenting Aaron both as Other and also as a member of a community, despite the sociopolitical differences of the two receiving communities. Race, too, then, provides many ways to approach alterity in performance, as each production to be examined occurs in a vastly different sociopolitical context. While they may differ remarkably, all three nevertheless engage with the racial issues at work, ultimately highlighting an integration of the Other, in one way or another, into the contemporary performing culture.

Dramatic performance, then, offers a way both to view and call attention to the nature of conflicting or contrasting cultures in which it appears; it offers a meditation on the diversity and unity of human experience and what that means to the construction of identities. By forcing a physical embodiment of Otherness, the very nature of performance underscores the complex relations at work in both the play and the larger performing culture. All five productions examined respond to the desire for self-definition by representing a close bond between the portrayed Others and the community or individual resisting them—effectively pointing to the artificiality of such binary constructs. Performing alterity ultimately lends to a more comprehensive understanding of both the individual and the communal Self.

# CHAPTER I:

## Mephistopheles & Company: Examining Doctor Faustus's Inner and Outer Demons

The first known performance of Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* was put on by the Lord Admiral's men on September 30, 1594, at the Rose Theatre in London. The diaries of Philip Henslowe record six more performances of 'docter ffostose' before the end of 1594, three more in January and February of 1595, four in the remainder of that year, and seven in 1596. Such prevalence highlights its popularity and success for the company (24)—but what element of the play warranted such a reputation, what attracted audiences? The premise of Marlowe's play derives from European folklore based around the German magician Johann Faust, thought to have trafficked with the devil (Sofer 4). The Faust legend—and Marlowe's dramatic interpretation of it—permeated a society completely different from today's, one in which supposed witches were hanged and demonic possession was a legitimate fear. This fear, this understood reality of such supernatural forces to audience members, was probably responsible for the audience's "pleasurable terror" reported in several accounts of the time (Bevington & Rasmussen 50). In fact, stories of "one too many devils" appearing onstage during a performance of *Doctor Faustus* circulated for decades after its inception, evidence of the excitement that accompanied the play in production (Sofer 2). The enthusiasm in *Faustus*'s early days therefore centers on the demons and devils, the beings set apart and condemned by their very nature. More than four centuries later, the play's demons continue to fascinate English performers and audiences alike, evident in the treatment of such

characters in modern productions. The cultural and religious mindset is undoubtedly altered, a fact that shows through in the directorial choices made in contemporary *Faustus* performances. More recent productions, notably at the Royal Shakespeare Company, have focused on Faustus the man as opposed to Faustus the great magician, lending more to an individualized tragedy than to a broadly applicable moral tale. The devils, too, receive different treatment; gone is the excitement of their quasi-blasphemous presence, and instead they appear as more personalized Others, specific to Faustus and his singular mind. In this chapter, I will look at the performance of Mephistopheles—the ring-leader and most direct interlocutor to Faustus—and other demons in two modern productions of *Doctor Faustus* that engage specifically with the construction of this Other-Self relationship; I will ultimately examine them as modes through which to understand more completely what it means to be human in the cultures in which they were performed, taking into consideration textual and other factors that affect performance.

Before getting to the specific productions, one must first grasp a basic understanding of the notions of religion and demonology in Renaissance England. That witchcraft and possession were taken seriously, not only by religious authorities but by government officials as well, testifies to the relationship between identity and outside forces during this time period. In fact, a tendency in Renaissance England to attribute certain personality traits to larger, extracorporeal powers—be they angels, demons, or astrological entities—saturates the historical record. The sense of the individual, autonomous being did not exist yet. Moreover, invoking the supernatural was a common occurrence and would have been familiar to a Renaissance audience—Andrew Sofer notes that even "Queen Elizabeth consulted her own court astrologer, John Dee" (3). A hierarchy to the practice of magic nevertheless existed, just as hierarchies were applied to many other aspects of life during this time. David Riggs discusses the distinction between acceptable

'white' magic and the blasphemous, potentially dangerous 'black' magic: "The passage from this so-called 'natural' magic to idolatrous or 'black' magic occurred when the practitioner employed talismans, symbolic utterances or ritual practices in order to operate a demon (spirit, intelligence or demigod) that embodied an occult force" (176). Though "the boundary was imprecise," audiences would have been attuned to the fine lines between a noble, scientific pursuit (e.g., alchemy) and other, more perilous activities (177). Despite the perhaps unclear line, Faustus's conjuring no doubt crosses into the realm of black magic. He does, after all, employ symbolic utterances in order to control Mephistopheles. Good or bad, however, all Renaissance magic seemed to have acknowledged the inherent power of the words spoken, as opposed to the power of the speaker himself.[3] "For Elizabethans, the power to conjure inhered in the utterance itself . . . rather than in the will or intention of the speaker. Magic spells were *perlocutions* (the performance of an act *by* saying something) rather than *illocutions* (the performance of an act *in* saying something)" (Sofer 4). That the words held the power made the conjuring scene in Act I, scene iii all the more exhilarating to the audience in the Rose Theatre. Sofer goes on in his article to argue that the "conjuring poises on the knife-edge between representing (*mimesis*) and doing (*kinesis*)," threatening to "blur the distinction between theatre and magic" (2). This intrinsic verbal power explains the tales of one too many devils appearing onstage during the conjuring—at some level audience members believed that the actor playing Faustus (Edward Alleyn in the 1594 premiere) was indeed summoning a dark spirit to the playhouse.[4] Such beliefs clarify the extent to which Elizabethans attributed power to forces outside the human will, even (somewhat paradoxically) ceding power to the words concocted within a human brain.

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[3] This intrinsic magic within the words themselves is what allows Robin and Dick (or Rafe, in the A-text) to conjure Mephistopheles and perform what little magic they do; such a distinction may be unclear to modern audiences.

[4] David Bevington notes that "The hope of such an event [the Devil actually appearing] was possibly one fascination that drew audiences to the play, in somewhat the same fashion as spectators flock to the circus wondering if the high-wire artist will fall and be killed" (249).

Over time, however, religious and moral attitudes evolved; not many modern audiences fear demonic possession or eternal damnation in quite the same way a Renaissance audience would have. The beliefs and customs of Elizabethans, when juxtaposed with a modern society's ideology, naturally lead to an ideological gap between the play's text and modern audiences. As Margaret Shewring notes, Marlowe's play presents "a conception of man and his destiny that stands at a considerable remove from any myth that the modern theatre and its audience might find convincing" (22). Twentieth- and twenty-first-century directors therefore face the task of creating a more culturally powerful product in putting on the play, of attempting to employ the text and the performance in creating the same sort of electric magnetism the original production reportedly had. In many modern productions, notably the 1974 and 1989 performances at the Royal Shakespeare Company, the play is updated and given a sort of facelift. Even if the production sticks largely to Marlowe's text (either the A or B version), reinterpretation nevertheless occurs—as it must in order to maintain cultural relevance—and new performance aspects receive emphasis. Most noteworthy of these newly emphasized production aspects is the psychological focus on Faustus's mind, a trend towards exploring the psyche of a single man glutted with fear and power. While it is true that "these various productions by the Royal Shakespeare Company were for performance in a society that, at least formally, acknowledges a Christian tradition," they clearly took place in an altogether changed world (Shewring 230). I hope to evaluate the nature and degree of that change by examining the two RSC productions of *Faustus* as exemplars of a social psychology, indicative of changed notions not only of religion, but also of the human identity.

In addition to the evolving conception of demons and other supernatural elements, I must also briefly discuss the play's text, as it is arguably the very basis of a performance. And in the

case of *Doctor Faustus*, two texts exist under the authorship of Christopher Marlowe, whose relation to one another remains largely unknown. The 1604 version, also called the A-text, is significantly shorter than the 1616, or B-text, version—almost 600 lines shorter (Geckle 152). Though scholarship initially eschewed the A-text in favor of the longer, 'more complete because longer' B-text, a recent countertrend has emerged in which scholars embrace the 1604 quarto as more thoroughly Marlovian—or at least more worthy of study and performance. That the A-text's plot is more concise and lacks many of the pranks seen in the B-text could contribute to this new scholarly shift. In a review for a performance that adhered to the 1616 text in its entirety, Michael Billington writes, "We cannot help thinking that eternal damnation is a pretty high price to pay for a lot of academic prankishness" (qtd. in Geckle 151). Billington's candor here demonstrates the value that has come to be placed on tragedy, on the grand fall of the hero that Aristotle describes in his *Poetics*. Furthermore, the A-text illuminates what George L. Geckle purports to be one of the major themes of *Faustus*: "the swift passage of time and life on this earth" and the resultant disgrace of wasting said time (152). The B-text, on the other hand, gives Mephistopheles and his devilish companions more agency, most evident in the confession of his role in Faustus's damnation during the final act:

> 'Twas I that, when thou wert i' the way to heaven,
> Damm'd up thy passage; when thou took'st the book
> To view the scriptures, then I turn'd the leaves
> And led thine eye.
> What, weep'st though? 'Tis too late. Despair, farewell! (5.2.97-102)

In productions using the 1616 version of the text, then, Mephistopheles (and those that incorporate this line into the A-text) bears the responsibility for Faustus's damnation. Faustus is

predestined to suffer in hell. The choice of the text, then, indicates to a certain extent a production's intended message to the society in which it is performed, whether the goal is to emphasize man's power or Mephistopheles's, the tragic aspect or the moral implications. This shift towards the A-text coincides with the increased valuation of the individual in modern society. Ultimately, however, the production must be viewed as a whole, with textual and cultural considerations taken alongside directorial and performance choices.

During the 1974-5 season at the Royal Shakespeare Company, John Barton put on a production that exemplifies this newfound value placed on the (human) individual, playing many of the supernatural characters with puppets as opposed to real actors. Of the demons only Mephistopheles and Lucifer were played by actors (Shewring 229). Initially, however, Barton planned to play Mephistopheles with a puppet as well, and Ian McKellen (Faustus) described learning how to throw his voice in preparation for dialogue between himself and his constructed demons (McKellen). These details of the performance reveal at least pieces of its initial goals, its message relating to individuality and inner, self-constructed demons. Furthermore, the entire action of the play was set in Faustus's cluttered study, emphasizing the journey of this solitary man. Failing to change the set even when the action's locale is specified as different in the text moreover lessens the grandiosity and import of Faustus's adventures, essentially presenting a child playing games with his imagination. This notion of Faustus as child—or at least Faustus as delusional—heightens when he plays the part of the Good and Bad Angels while contemplating his decision; that the Angels were hand puppets whose lines McKellen supplied reduces Faustus to a dithering idiot, "a mental invalid, nursing a diseased ego and confronting in his studies the dilemmas of his intellectual arrogance" (Bevington & Rasmussen 58). A cartoon interpretation of

the production by William Hewison of *Punch* magazine (given below) captures the fallen glory of the eponymous tragic hero.


Fautus is relegated to the far corner of his own mess, gazing absentmindedly at the Good and Bad Angel puppets while an hourglass nearby counts down his remaining time. The image perfectly encapsulates a sense of time wasted, opportunities thrown away in favor of more trivial pursuits.

Perhaps even more telling than Faustus's diminution in the cartoon is the prominence of Mephistopheles's visage. Though Emrys James (who played Mephistopheles) is less physically imposing than Ian McKellen, he here appears larger than life in his monk's vestments, even occupying the center of the cartoon stage. This representation of the two main characters highlights the status and power Mephistopheles holds in John Barton's production. That he is responsible for controlling and speaking for his puppetized demonic companions—Helen of Troy and the Deadly Sins were life-sized marionettes that Mephistopheles carried onstage—

demonstrates his power as puppeteer and manipulator in tormenting Faustus[5]. Further, Mephistopheles's operation of his fellow spirits serves to emphasize meta-theatrically the emptiness and falseness of that which tortures Faustus's conscience. "Spiritual debate and the lusts of the flesh were thus illusions of the theatre, though no less real for being perceived from the inside of Faustus's brain" (Bevington & Rasmussen 59). Such constructions of personal prisons—further underscored by the production's setting—resonate with Mephistopheles's own line, "this is hell, nor am I out of it" (1.3.74). The mind, this production seems to suggest, can hold just as many demons as Renaissance England.

The other demon—or, perhaps, Devil—that appears in corporeal form in Barton's production is Lucifer, "Arch-regent and commander of all spirits" (1.3.65). While he does not, in fact, command the other spirits around him as Mephistopheles does—a curious choice—he does take over the lines of the Chorus several times[6]. Most notably, he speaks the final Chorus spelling out the lesson of Faustus's spiritual failure. This chorus comes at the end of an entirely new scene John Barton wrote for the production (which can be found in its entirety in the Appendix), in which Beelzebub (a puppet), Mephistopheles, and Lucifer enter the study "besprinkled with blood" and exposit what has happened to Faustus (qtd. in Shewring 229). That the demons impart these final words—Beelzebub mentioning "the history of Faustus, out of which example all Christians may learn to fear God and the Devil equally"—complicates the once simple binary of Good and Evil by giving the final voice of reason and moderation to these spirits who have just conned a man out of his soul. Not only does Barton add to the text; he amalgamates the A and B versions and cuts extensively in an attempt "to deglamorise his

[5] It can be argued, however, that Faustus was tormented by his own inner demons before Mephistopheles even appeared, as he 'consults' the Good and Bad Angels before the conjuring scene.
[6] The Choruses are divided between all the demons as opposed to having an actual Chorus or Chorus-figure (Bevington & Rasmussen 59).

protagonist" (Bevington & Rasmussen 58). He moreover removed most of the farcical elements in order to achieve a "unity of tone" echoed in the unity of location in Faustus's study (58). These textual decisions contribute to the notion of Faustus as a sort of fallen hero. Ultimately, then, Barton's final scene—as well as the entire production—functions to deconstruct the binary of Good and Evil, suggesting as an alternative the possibility for the existence of both traits within the singular human psyche.

Fifteen years later, in 1989, the RSC put on another production of *Doctor Faustus*, this time under the direction of Barry Kyle. This production likewise presents a psychological examination of the individual and his relationship with the Others he constructs. That Faustus himself conjures Mephistopheles and essentially welcomes the demons into his life lends to an interpretation of self-constructed demons that applies to both productions. Mephistopheles, played by David Bradley, is mentioned in almost every review of the production as standing apart from almost every other character in the performance. Not only was Bradley noticeably older that the rest of the actors (with the exception of Gerard Murphy, who played Faustus); he is also described as having been incredibly subdued, often coming across as impassive or, when feeling found its way into his face, exhausted. According to the *Daily Telegraph*'s Charles Spencer, "his voice is drained of expression except when he speaks of the misery of hell. When Bradley is on stage, infinitely weary, divorced from any possibility of happiness, the idea of everlasting damnation seems horribly plausible." Furthermore, he enters during the conjuring scene not as a demon, but as Christ, complete with the stigmata and a crown of thorns (Geckle 154). This gimmick effectively demonstrates the reduced value of religion in modern society, in addition to (possibly) recreating the awe that Marlowe's original production inspired in audiences. As the play progresses, though, it becomes clear that Mephistopheles is no mere

mischievous demon bent on blasphemy for the sake of blasphemy. Bradley's "cadaverous looks survey with anxiety the headlong plunge of Faustus to perdition. As a long-time resident of the nether regions, he is impressively baffled by the sight of a human being willfully planning to join him there" (Shulman). In effect, Bradley's Mephistopheles provides a sort of balance to the headstrong Faustus, a quiet sense of reason similar to the moral devils of Barton's earlier production.

In addition to Gerard Murphy and David Bradley, Kyle enlisted an all-male Chorus that played the remaining roles, including Faustus's would-be wife and Helen of Troy. The presence of this young, fit ensemble further contributed to the entwinement of Faustus and Mephistopheles's characters, as their age binds them in their separation from other cast members. The Chorus members were always onstage, writhing and groaning half-naked as "acolytes, illustrations of the Seven Deadly Sins, ominous devils and brooding angels" (Shulman). Often termed "balletic," many reviewers mention the young men's overt physicality in performing their various roles, no doubt a stark contrast to Mephistopheles's persistent sobriety and reserve. While their "metatheatrical omnipresence underscored a sense of an inner unreality," in their constant groaning responses to lines spoken by other characters, their cacophony reportedly increased in tandem with Faustus's mental agitation, thus simultaneously distracting from the action and enhancing it (Bevington & Rasmussen 60, Hiley). That all of the Chorus members at one point or another participated in this background action suggests a coalescence of them into one entity, contrasting the individuality of Faustus and Mephistopheles as non-participants. Faustus and Mephistopheles also purportedly spend large pieces of the play in close proximity to one another, further underscoring their dissociation from the choral collective. Thus, Kyle's

production, like Barton's, illustrates a close relationship between man and demon, pointing to the dissolution of such notions of Otherness in an attempt to define the Self.

In a world where every year the percentage of the population practicing Christianity decreases, it is a wonder that a play such as *Doctor Faustus* has maintained its star status. No longer do the masses fear demonic possession or believe in astrological intervention. Why, then, continue to perform *Faustus* long after it seems to have become irrelevant? Or does Marlowe's play contain something else, something relevant and important to modern societies? In 1974, John Barton's RSC production argues that it does. He takes the same play that once appealed so impressively to a society that defined its identity in the collective sense and fashions it into a work able to communicate with a vastly more individualistic culture. In giving both Mephistopheles and Faustus the power to control spirits in the form of puppets, Barton comments on the construction of demons—but this choice also speaks to the artifice of the notion of control. The performance repeatedly asks the audience who has the power. Is Faustus in command, as his conjuration and subsequent management of Mephistopheles suggests? Or is Mephistopheles actually pulling all the strings, leading Faustus into a trap from the beginning? In addition to these questions, one must ask whether the demons tormenting Faustus, literally tearing him apart, are even real. Their existence after his death, in Barton's final scene, would suggest that they are, but one can never be sure that they are not merely extensions of Faustus's mind. That the demons present the moral lesson, however, deconstructing the traditional binary of Good and Evil, is ultimately the most important issue. In doing so, they allow for the deconstruction of another binary in the play, that of man (the Self) versus demon (Other). Barry Kyle's 1989 production of *Faustus* achieves the same end by establishing a distinctive connection between the characters of Faustus and Mephistopheles, creating a new sense of self

constructed from the notion of underlying similarity between Other and Self. Kyle, like Barton, deconstructs traditional notions of what demons should be by creating a rational, lucid, almost human Mephistopheles. In tearing down the boundaries between conventional definitions of man and demon, Kyle effectively points to their having more in common than originally believed. While this dissolution of binaries may not have far-reaching implications in its most literal of senses—I do not intend this piece as a movement for befriending supernatural entities—it does relate to the process of self-discovery common across literature and history. Both of these productions point to the potential similarities between Other and Self, and as such indicate that the notion of Other is merely an illusion constructed so as to better understand oneself.

## CHAPTER II:

## "Is Black So Base a Hue?" An Examination of Aaron and Racial Dynamics in *Titus Andronicus*

In 1687, Edward Ravenscroft declared Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* "rather a heap of Rubbish then a Structure" (qtd. in "*Titus Andronicus*" 437). He was not alone in his aversion, as critics have denigrated the play repeatedly throughout the centuries; T. S. Eliot notoriously deemed it "one of the stupidest and most uninspired plays ever written" (Eliot 31). Ravenscroft, however, was one of the few naysayers to go so far as to write his own adaptation, fervently believing and ardently proclaiming that William Shakespeare could not possibly have been the true playwright behind *Titus* ("*Titus Andronicus*" 437). In his appropriation, Ravenscroft attempted to circumvent as much on-stage violence as possible, as that was his (and continues to be many other critics') main complaint regarding the play (Dessen, Aebischer, & Kennedy). Even in today's society, where slasher and horror films are spit out *ad infinitum*, the unmitigated smorgasbord of body parts *Titus* presents nevertheless complicates its production (Dessen 24). But possibly more important—and definitely more interesting—than the downplayed gore was Ravenscroft's decision to expand Aaron's role, giving the Moor additional lines in the first act, as well as moving his dramatic confession to a more climactic position following Lavinia's death ("*Titus Andronicus*" 437). Such focus on Aaron, the racial Other who revels in his Otherness, brings to light an important matter in the text (and therefore performance) of *Titus Andronicus*: this play establishes a racial binary of sorts, through which the character of Aaron can either exemplify or break certain 'black' stereotypes, for different reasons, depending on how he is

treated by different directors and different productions. Although the aforementioned atrocities tend to obscure other aspects of the play, that does not mean they are the only features worth noting. Pascale Aebischer comments on this very fact when she asserts that "modern productions of *Titus Andronicus* have been discussed mainly in relation to their representation of the 'horrors,' leaving the uncomfortable question of race aside" (112). In this chapter, I will examine Aaron as an instrument and exemplar of racial alterity in three productions of *Titus Andronicus* that engage powerfully with race and will then consider the cultural implications of each.

The first and arguably most interesting of these productions was created by the renowned Shakespearean actor Ira Aldridge, potentially the first actor of African descent to play Aaron and definitely the first person to produce *Titus* in over one hundred years. In 1849, he and Irish playwright Charles A. Somerset made sweeping changes to Ravenscroft's earlier adaptation, ultimately developing an entirely new and almost unrecognizable work. They removed even more violence than Ravenscroft had, leaving a play with an unblemished Lavinia and decidedly less decapitation; even the "gross language which [occurs] in the original" is eliminated, leaving "a play not only presentable but actually attractive," at least according to critics (qtd. in Shakespeare/Bate 55). Unfortunately, the text itself has not survived to the present, but several reviews do survive detailing its specifics, the first of which records:

> [W]e found that the piece represented was a very common-place melodrama, having little relation to the original work. . . . Aaron is made a model of valour and magnanimity; Tamora virtuous and womanly; Lavinia suffers no greater wrong than having her husband Bassanio [*sic*] killed, and being seized by Chiron and Demetrius, who are both enamoured of her, but she is honourably treated, and subsequently liberated by Aaron the Moor, who has been chosen King of the

> Goths. Aaron is made the lawful husband of Tamora, by whom he has a child, which is thrown by order of the Emperor Saturnius [*sic*] into the Tiber, while Aaron is chained to a tree, from which he breaks by main strength, leaps into the river and saves the child. . . . The life of Aaron's child is saved by Lavinia, who promises the dying Moor that she will be a parent to it while she lives. (qtd. in Lindfors 163-4)[7]

This review clearly demonstrates the degree to which Aldridge and Somerset changed their Shakespearean source material. That Aaron becomes not only magnanimous, but a sort of focal tragic centerpiece curiously aligns him with another of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, one whom Aldridge had played many times by 1849. Unlike Othello, however, this Aaron remains morally uncorrupted from start to finish, dying in an act to rescue his son from the evil Saturninus. Another review, from later in the play's run, similarly relates that:

> Aaron is elevated into a noble and lofty character. Tamora, the Queen of Scythia, is a chaste though decidedly strong-minded female, and her connection with the Moor appears to be of a legitimate description; her sons Chiron and Demetrius are dutiful children, obeying the behests of their mother and – what shall we call him? – their 'father-in-law'. . . . (qtd. in Aebischer 112-3)[8]

Obviously "Aldridge's rewriting seems to have set the play in an ideal post-Abolition society that tolerates mixed marriages and acknowledges the potential nobility of black subjects" (Aebischer 112). Also rather obvious is the fact that this production, in doing so, treats Aaron's race in a wholly unique way. By promoting his status as well as eliminating the vilification of Shakespeare's and Ravenscroft's versions, Aldridge virtually makes race a non-issue; Aaron

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[7] *Sunday Times*, March 21, 1852, 3.
[8] *Era*, April 26, 1857. Quoted by Marshall and Stock, *Ira Aldridge*, p. 172.

functions merely as any other character, one whose identity is not tied to his skin color, but to his deeds and the nobility he exhibits therein. His label as 'the Moor' becomes less of a dichromatic defining attribute than just another characteristic of a human being. As such, this production successfully eradicates the racial binary by breaking with conventional stereotypes associated with those of African descent, making a statement about Aaron's—and, by extension, Aldridge's—identity as black. Though Aldridge's Aaron affirms his identity as Other, the play itself ultimately declares the insubstantiality of any such label.

Aldridge's *Titus* was well received in London, and throughout England (Lindfors 351); it should be noted, though, that the Slavery Abolition Act ended slavery in the United Kingdom almost sixteen years before the production opened. The very fact that Aldridge could maintain a successful career as a stage actor in London and throughout Europe at this time demonstrates the comparative tolerance of his European audiences when viewed alongside other nations such as the United States. Other countries were not quite as accepting of Aaron or of the play's racial themes in general, for that matter, most notably South Africa, the location of the next two productions to be discussed. That Aldridge performs a socially accepted Aaron in an accepting society contrasts sharply with the more primal Moors that appear in the two South African productions.

Over a century after Aldridge's last performance, *Titus Andronicus* was presented again, this time in a country whose racial landscape was much harsher than that of England. In 1970, the Cape Performing Arts Board (CAPAB) invited German director Dieter Reible to direct a Shakespeare play of his choosing at the Hofmeyr Theatre in Cape Town, South Africa. He chose *Titus*. In a 1985 interview, Reible commented that he "thought it would be interesting for South African audiences: a black man gets involved in a love story with a white princess and they have

a coloured kid…. [he] thought it would be a good story for South Africans" (qtd. in Quince 34). Particularly interesting to note that *Titus* was chosen largely because of the character of Aaron; Reible describes the play's crux not as an old man's tragic disillusionment with his nation, but as a forbidden love between a black man and a white woman—almost evoking a skewed comparison between Aaron and Romeo. This forbidden love in *Titus*, however, was likely of particular interest to Reible due to the cultural context in which he planned to perform the play: 1970 in South Africa was a time of absolute apartheid, with laws prohibiting interaction between the various races and ethnic groups that inhabited the country. The Immorality Act specifically "forbade sex across the colour line," and was strictly enforced throughout the nation (Quince 34). Thus, by putting on a play whose characters blatantly flout strictures that apply to the audience members watching them, Reible himself not-so-subtly flouts the pro-apartheid regime, in addition to highlighting the curious relationship between the world of the play and the world in which it is performed. And solely by viewing Aaron as pivotal and worthy of the spotlight despite his status as villain,[9] Reible affirms and exemplifies the importance and value of South Africa's racial Other in his production.

Due to the system of apartheid in place, the mixing of races in either casts or audiences was strictly outlawed; as a result, Aaron was played by a white Afrikaans actor. While some may consider this decision merely an adherence to the rules of the time (in Reible's not wanting to be arrested), one might instead regard the casting as a bold directorial choice. Reible knew going into the project the consequences of choosing a play that contained a black character. He could just as easily have decided to produce *Romeo and Juliet* or *Hamlet*, or any number of Shakespeare's decidedly white-populated plays. But he chose *Titus Andronicus*. He chose to

[9] Reible's production used a Boer (Afrikaans) translation of Shakespeare's 'original' text; Aaron is therefore quite evil, unlike Aldridge's character.

comment on the Othering and violence of South Africa by putting on a play just as troubled as the country in which it was performed.

As for the production itself, having a white actor play Aaron[10] allowed for the projection of stereotypes onto the actor—on the part of the director, the audience, and the actor himself. While some might consider this assumption of baseness in Aaron—as well as his inherent baseness given by the play's text—a negative due to the fact that it fed into many South African stereotypes regarding blacks, the white characters in the production are painted to be just as vile, if not more so. Another blank canvas of sorts was the set, which was made up of one white oblong room with several white blocks arranged as columns across the stage (Quince 35). Critics were quick to pick up on the symbolism, as one describes the barren stage as representing "a prison; a Roman palace; a home; Wall Street; the White House" (qtd. in Quince 35). Just as a sense of cruelty and bloodlust is projected onto the actor playing Aaron, so too is the air of violence and oppression projected onto the set surrounding Aaron—in addition to the physical realization of that violence and oppression in the form of gallons of stage blood and heaps of mangled body parts (Quince 36). Furthermore, Aaron's isolation in his color in the midst of the all-white cast and all-white set gives a sense of the oppression at work, not only in the world of the play, but in the audience's world as well.

This brutality, this sense of cruelty and betrayal and bloodlust on both sides of the racial divide, is exactly what Reible and the CAPAB creative team hoped to convey in the Hofmeyr's production. Although there was evident pressure from the government's Board of Censors[11], the

[10] It should be noted that the actor was wearing black stage makeup. There is no mistaking, however, that his accent (and language, for that matter) associated him with white South Africans.

[11] Rumors circulated that the Board was insisting on certain cuts, and at one point the Cabinet discussed banning the production altogether; this prohibition did not come to fruition, however, because officials "were warned of an adverse reaction if Shakespeare were banned" (Quince 35).

production team held their ground, determined to tackle the 'race issue,' among others. In a program note, the CAPAB artistic director Pieter Fourie said the following of the production:

> It will serve the essence of theatre: to confront mankind, society or civilization with itself. And it will, because the monster of cruelty and revenge is always everywhere under the thin skin of civilization. A South African production is of special interest. Since the turn of the century we have become more and more aware that we are part of this troubled continent. . . . The bloodshed, rape, cruelty and political revenge in Africa today make this play look like a conventional report in a daily newspaper. (qtd. in Quince 35).

Fourie's quotation suggests that Reible and the CAPAB sought to expose the violence of South African society, to make clear its ridiculousness, and according to reviews, it succeeded.[12] Reible's message, however, was not purely for white South Africans. "The first performance was a special preview for the black stagehands and their families, their presence being forbidden at an official performance" (Quince 35). According to Reible, the crowd was deeply moved by Aaron's portrayal, standing and screaming with enthusiasm when the Moor proclaims he will make his son a warrior (4.2.182); women ran towards the stage holding up their babies to the actor (Quince 36). It was truly an electrifying moment. Reible's production of *Titus Andronicus* therefore explored two different audiences' racial ideologies regarding a black character in a successful effort to highlight the heinous social crimes underpinning the apartheid system. Reible and the CAPAB actively exemplified the processes of Othering that strengthen apartheid-like systems. Furthermore, by portraying Aaron as a white actor who speaks the same language as the

[12] *Star* 1 October 1970: Owen Williams called it "a metaphor of slavering beasts, of images of blood and mangled flesh, of life in a universal human abattoir" (qtd. in Quince 36)

upper echelons of South African society, the production points to the artificiality of constructed notions of alterity.

Twenty-five years later in 1995 Johannesburg, director Gregory Doran had a similar goal in mind, trying as Hamlet did to "hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature" (3.2.22). He, too, wanted to confront South Africans with their historically violent nature by putting on a production of *Titus Andronicus*. A key difference between this production and Reible's 1970 version, however, is its political context. Apartheid legislation was repealed in 1990, the first universal elections were held in 1994, and Nelson Mandela was subsequently inaugurated as the nation's first democratically elected—and black—president (Seeff 1). South Africa was on the cusp of social transformation, the likes of which it had never before imagined. Then why would Doran decide to perform a play about the atrocities committed among warring cultures? In the book *Woza Shakespeare!*[13] that he and his partner Antony Sher (who played Titus in the performance) wrote about the creative process behind this production, Doran notes that "the acts of violence, instead of being gratuitous or extreme, seem only too familiar" due to the decades of brutality witnessed by South Africans (150). But if the violence was indeed in the past, it seems tasteless to dredge it up when the nation is on the road to recovery. Jonathan Holmes agrees, arguing that Doran admits in *Woza* that he is "just a tourist" without the experience of growing up in South Africa; Holmes further argues that "Doran reasonably doubts the integrity of his connection with the socio-political otherness of South Africa" (278). Perhaps, then, his dream of confronting the issue of race as it relates to violence was a bit misguided, but that is not to say that the production was without merit or unworthy of closer examination—it is not even to say that he failed completely in his goal.

[13] "Woza" is Zulu for 'come.'

In fact, many aspects of Doran and Sher's *Titus Andronicus* patently highlight the separation of races. In casting the Romans and the Goths, Doran sought to recreate the tension that South Africa had experienced for decades; as such, the Romans appeared as extreme right-wing Afrikaners[14] while the Goths became *tsotsis*, black township gangsters. In an incongruous move, however, Doran anomalously cast Tamora as a white actress (Seeff). While this directorial decision creates quite a symbolic relationship between Aaron and Tamora, it reduces the impact of casting the rest of the Goths—even Tamora's sons—as either black or mixed-race actors because they are ultimately led by a white woman. (Perhaps, though, Doran's goal was indeed to illustrate that the *tsotsis* were incapable of leading themselves, a curious possibility.) Further dividing the many cultures presented in the production was the language of the characters; though Doran opted to perform the entire play in English, he made use of South Africa's many dialectal accents in order to distinguish between characters' race and rank. As Seeff notes, "all accents employed in the production flagged class and race identities in stereotypical ways for the [South African] listener" (2). Thus, the Romans spoke in the "characteristic almost German-accented English" of Afrikaners, while the Goths verbalized a "heavily accented 'black' English" that served to doubly Other them (Seeff 3). This Othering of the *tsotsi* Goths, in addition to their subjugation to the white Tamora, ultimately comes across as less enlightened than Doran might have hoped. He establishes a clear racial binary, but does nothing with that division; indeed, the use of stereotypical 'black' accents could even be viewed as racist, supporting and confusing the binary instead of attempting to break it down.

Doran's *Titus* is especially notable when examining it in terms of Aaron and his race, however, as he is importantly played by the black actor Sello Maake ka Ncube. The power that

[14] Seeff notes the comparison of Antony Sher's Titus and the rest of the Romans to the leader of the white supremacist parliamentary party, Eugene Terreblanche. Dubbed the Afrikaner Resistance Movement, the party rose to notoriety in the early 1980s, "vowing to fight for the survival of the white tribe of Africa" (see Notes: 4).

Aaron finds in his skin color, though, is more than slightly diminished in this production when taken alongside Doran's decision to cast the Goths as the black and mixed-race *tsotsis*. "Surrounded by other black South African actors, his fellow Goths, it must have been a challenge for this Aaron to maintain his star status," as this directorial choice undercuts specifically the character's "black power" speeches in Act IV, scene 2 (Seeff 4). Lines such as "Coal-black is better than another hue; / In that it scorns to bear another hue" seem limp and inappropriate when spoken to characters that are also black (4.2.101-2). Doran and Sher did, however, understand the power behind these speeches, evident when they discuss in *Woza* the quest to find a suitable actor for the role; they describe Aaron as "the dark heart of the play," the dastardly but alluring instigator (Doran and Sher 54). As in Reible's production, Aaron is viewed as central to Doran's entire vision. He even compares the character to both Othello and Iago[15], bolstering the reputation of this "most problematic of Shakespearean plays" (Doran and Sher 54; Kennedy 63). This bolstering, though, ultimately falls short of success when taken alongside the production's entirety. Whereas Reible's Aaron contrasted starkly with every other facet of the CAPAB production, Doran's villain seems to blend into the chaos around him instead of rising to the forefront of said chaos. Though he works "to expunge all otherness and difference from [his] writing in favour of a universal humanist sameness," Doran's final product is, in reality, "the province of a few western Europeans" (Holmes 278)[16]. Thus, in feeding into audience expectations regarding racial stereotypes, this production of *Titus Andronicus* unfortunately fails to produce as powerful an impact as that made by Aldridge and Reible's productions. There can

[15] In trying to convince actor Sello Maake ka Ncube to take the role of Aaron over the role of Othello (that he had been offered by the CAPAB), Doran notes that Aaron is a "rough sketch" of both Othello and Iago, and that playing Aaron would aid immensely in the portrayal of Othello (Doran and Sher 54).

[16] It should be noted that Doran's production was received much more enthusiastically when it transferred to London later in 1995.

be no doubt, though, that Doran's production nevertheless speaks to the South African culture, reflecting the complicated nature between Other(s) and Self in the post-apartheid society.

To quote Doran and Sher again: "Surely, to be relevant, theatre must have an umbilical connection to the lives of the people watching it" (34). All three directors mentioned above understood this reality, each interpreting the text of *Titus Andronicus* to suit a particular sociopolitical audience. Ira Aldridge took strides toward true equality by elevating Aaron's status and nobility without erasing his race. One hundred years later, Dieter Reible sought to confront the divide that still existed in South African society by turning a mirror on the violence and oppression of apartheid practices. Gregory Doran's production provided a glimpse into a nation's muddled past with an Aaron who does not stand alone in his Otherness. Despite the range of these interpretations—from Aaron as protagonist to a focus on absolute segregation to a somewhat unclear reflection on the arbitrary nature of race—each production draws attention to the artificiality of racial constructs and ascribes such constructs to society as a whole. All three moreover attempt to define the racial Other—or to put forth society's definition of Other—and in doing so ultimately speak to the identity of the Self that is the culturally dominant race. Logically, identifying the Other and clarifying what characteristics do not constitute the Self aids in the definition of what and who do comprise the self-constructed Self. While none of the productions is remarkably illuminating in regards to Shakespeare and his text, the three performances do speak a great deal to cultures' use of Shakespeare to valorize their own beliefs. Each speaks both to and about the societies in which they were performed. And so this "most problematic of Shakespeare's plays" appears much less inadequate than Mr. Eliot originally branded it (Kennedy 63), as it allowed for three separate productions to speak to temporally and

geographically separate audiences about fictional racial binaries in an effort to point out the very real binary just beyond the stage.

## Conclusion

Over a millennium ago, the Anglo-Saxons recited poetry and set down prose demonstrating the human tendency toward creating and maintaining systems of alterity. Evident in the very fabric of Anglo-Saxon society, these systems manifested as a literary and literal fear of exile from one's community, leading to a tangible "us versus them" mentality. Perhaps one of the most informative Others that appears in the Old English literary corpus is Grendel, that terror of Heorot in the *Beowulf* poem. An alleged descendant of Cain and definite eater of men, Grendel curiously presents an Other in both spiritual and physical terms, as he is separated from the Danes by his colossal disfigurement, which is itself the result of his damned lineage. He furthermore represents a state of psychological alterity in actualizing the fear of severance from a culture's heart that permeated Anglo-Saxon communities. That Grendel maintained his status for so long within the performance of the epic poem speaks to the persistence of such notions of Otherness; they are not easily eradicated or forgotten.[17] The same is true of the Othered characters in *Doctor Faustus* and *Titus Andronicus*, as even centuries after their first performances, the Other-Self relationships they present continue to be relevant and enlightening for modern audiences.

The Royal Shakespeare Company's productions of *Doctor Faustus* focus on the psychological process of this Othering, depicting an interiorized, individualized Other created by the mind's construction of binary divisions. Textually speaking, Faustus reveals in the play's first

[17] Only recently, thanks to the trend of revisionist fiction, has anyone started to consider the implications of alterity on Grendel himself. See: John Gardener's *Grendel*.

scene that his ultimate goal is self-knowledge, as attempting to make a name for himself equates to defining himself for the world—and by extension for himself. In this quest to understand himself, Faustus directly confronts a physical embodiment of that which is Not Him. Mephistopheles, through his association with forces beyond Faustus's (or Man's) control, represents a threat to the eponymous doctor and his mind, body, and soul. John Barton and Barry Kyle's productions of the Marlovian tragedy highlight the significance of the interaction between these forces: the man, the mind, and the perceived threats. In 1974, the puppets that Mephistopheles employs in tormenting and taunting Faustus characterize the magician's fears and desires as ultimately insubstantial without actual action. As this production takes place entirely within Faustus's study, true action outside the realm of thought is in the end impossible for the tragic hero. By presenting these psychological Others, all with varying degrees of life-likeness, Faustus becomes the focal point, around which all other characters rotate. In 1989, Kyle similarly ties together conjurer and demon—instead of portraying a surreal or unreal Mephistopheles, however, Kyle's production puts forth an ultra-realistic (read: humanized) anti-hero. This performance therefore suggests that self-discovery and enlightenment come through understanding and relating to, whether consciously or not, one's Other. Because Faustus never truly understands, or even heeds, Mephistopheles—instead clinging to his perceived power over the spirit—he never reaches enlightenment, self-acceptance, or life. Mephistopheles, then, typifies the interior (or interior*ized*) Other with whom one must grapple in the pursuit of self-discovery.

Aaron, on the other hand, exemplifies the exterior implications of such interiorized Othering. *Titus*'s text and the productions I have discussed provide insight into the creation of identity for a community at large as opposed to that of an individual. Many times, as Reible and

Doran's productions display, this identity is created by another, more dominant culture and then applied to the marginalized community. Both South African *Titus*es, however, point to the artifice of such imposed identities and suggest that such Othering, essentially finger-pointing, actually says more about the finger-pointing culture than the one being vilified. Aldridge's Aaron attempts to break free of such monochromatic boundaries and, for the most part, succeeds—that this Aaron dies, though, and his son is raised by the white Lavinia nevertheless indicates an impossibility for complete binary deconstruction, at least in Aldridge's contemporary moment. Joyce Green MacDonald notes that, within the text, Aaron "boasts of his blackness's resistance to incorporation within other racial or social orders" when he declares (MacDonald 145):

> 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. (4.2.101-5)

In making such a declaration, Aaron actively resists the coalescence of Other and Self, black and white, seeking a place for himself wholly outside of the monochromatic racial binary. Both South African productions depict at least the possibility for this dismantling of traditional Other-Self modes. Reible's creates a stark visual contrast between white and black, while just beneath the surface (of the paint) is an actor virtually interchangeable with any other member of the cast. Doran's, the only *Titus* with more than one actor of color, demonstrates the complexity of racial dynamics in the real world, the simultaneous difficulty of neatly categorizing human beings and refusing to acknowledge the existence of a racial binary. While the goal of true freedom from Othering is only questionably achieved in performance, the three productions of *Titus*

nevertheless effectively illustrate the artifice of such racial (or racist) notions, ultimately revealing the complex natures of the respective performing cultures.

Whereas the *Faustus* productions examine what it means to be a human, *Titus* zooms out to interrogate what it means to be black or white, to be part of a larger community. Both plays look at the formation of Other-Self relationships and the resultant creation of self-identity that occurs, ultimately attempting to demonstrate Hamlet's goal of theatrical verisimilitude. That humans innately create groups and Others within their heads is a given, supported by millennia of human experience. What these productions seek to illustrate, however, is the potential of such Othering to speak to the culture identifying as Self. Each through its "umbilical connection to the lives of the people watching it" employs that connection to confront audiences not only with fictional characters, but with themselves (Doran and Sher 34). Barton's and Kyle's productions of *Doctor Faustus* both link Mephistopheles and Faustus, presenting the Othered demon and his difference as potential constructions of Faustus's own mind. Aldridge's *Titus Andronicus* conversely attempts to ignore the conceived racial binary, but without erasing Aaron's race. As an engraving from the performance reveals (below), Aldridge wore what appears to be a leopard skin; this costuming choice ties him to Western notions of traditional African attire while he concurrentlyperforms a noble and virtuous Aaron.


Reible, in an attempt to confront the apartheid regime, depicts a completely isolated Aaron, ultimately speaking to the oppression imposing itself on people of color from every side. Doran's production, finally, replicates the intricacy of systems of alterity, especially in a culture like South Africa's. He and his performers in Johannesburg effectively point out the inaccuracy of simplistic binary concepts, but the coincident trouble with attempting to remove them completely. Performances of alterity such as these ultimately expose the false construction of Other-Self binaries, revealing the notion of an Other to be an imposed reality and prompting audiences to action—lest, like Barton's Faustus, they succumb to the authority of their own fictitious demons.

# Appendix

## John Barton's Scene Thirteen

(*Enter* Lucifer, Beelzebub and Mephostophilis)

(Beelze.) And so it happened between twelve and one o'clock at midnight, the house of Faustus was environed with smoke and fire, together with a noisome stench.

(Mephosto.) But when it was day, the scholars arose and went into the room where they had left him, which they found all besprinkled with blood and his brains cleaving to the wall: for Lucifer had beaten him from one wall against another. Then sought they for his body, and at length they found it in the yard, lying upon horse dung.

(Beelze.) In the house they also found this history written by him, saving only his end, the which was after by the Scholars thereto added. And thus the history of Faustus, out of which example all Christians may learn to fear God and the Devil equally.

(Lucifer) Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight
And burned is Apollo's laurel bough
That sometimes grew within this learned man.
Faustus is gone: regard his hellish fall.
Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise
Only to wonder at unlawful things:
Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits
To practice more than heavenly power permits.

(*Exeunt*)

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