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THE POLITICS OF VIOLENCE IN FIVE PRODUCTIONS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *TITUS ANDRONICUS*

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ABSTRACT

The present work addresses the performance of William Shakespeare’s works throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, most specifically his early tragedy *Titus Andronicus*, written in collaboration with playwright George Peele. *Titus Andronicus* had been somewhat neglected by critics and audiences for nearly 300 years until it was famously performed under Peter Brook’s direction in 1955. Thus, the present work analyzes Peter Brook’s production, as well as Deborah Warner’s (1987), Yukio Ninagawa’s (2006), Michael Fentiman’s (2013), and Lucy Bailey’s (2014). The focus of the analyses lies on the relationship between the most violent moments in the play and characters’ submission or resistance to State power. Instead of trying to establish “Shakespeare’s politics” or arguing whether the play is reactionary or revolutionary, the present dissertation, drawing mainly on the works of Thomas P. Anderson, Ewan Fernie, and Daniel Juan Gil, concludes that the play’s relationship to violence reveals complex ideas about power, freedom, and politics. It is precisely in the moments of violence that those ideas can be perceived more clearly. More often than not, such moments are, at the same time, exaggerated, astonishing, dark, and hilarious, but they are far from meaningless.

RESUMO

O problema a ser discutido nessa tese diz respeito à encenação da obra de William Shakespeare nos séculos XX e XXI, especificamente uma de suas primeiras tragédias, *Tito Andrônico*, escrita em colaboração com o dramaturgo George Peele. *Tito Andrônico*, bastante negligenciada por críticos e público por cerca de 300 anos, recebeu maior atenção crítica após ser notoriamente encenada em 1955 sob direção de Peter Brook. Assim, o presente estudo analisa as montagens de Peter Brook, Deborah Warner (1987), Yukio Ninagawa (2006), Michael Fentiman (2013) e Lucy Bailey (2014). A análise focou na relação entre os momentos mais violentos da peça e a submissão – ou resistência – das personagens ao poder estatal. Em vez de tentar estabelecer qual a afiliação política de Shakespeare ou discutir se a peça tem uma postura reacionária ou revolucionária, este estudo, baseando-se principalmente no trabalho de Thomas P. Anderson, Ewan Fernie e Daniel Juan Gil, conclui que a relação da peça com a violência revela ideias complexas sobre poder, liberdade e política. É precisamente nesses momentos de violência que tais ideias podem ser percebidas de forma mais clara. Tais momentos são geralmente exagerados, chocantes, sombrios e, ao mesmo tempo, hilários, mas certamente não carecem de significado.

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1. INTRODUCTION

George Peele[1] and William Shakespeare's early revenge tragedy,[2] *Titus Andronicus*, has been sometimes dismissed by critics as an exaggerated display of violence, whose sole purpose was to entertain a blood-thirsty Elizabethan audience, used to watching public executions, bear-baiting, and other thoughtless spectacles (Foakes 32). Harold Bloom, for instance, views *Titus Andronicus* as an attempt by Shakespeare (Bloom does not accept Peele as co-author) to, at the same time, surpass his rivals on the Elizabethan stage in terms of gore, and get rid of their influence, a necessary step to his further development as the inventor of the human (77-8). Bloom sees this act of taking the revenge tragedy one step further as a way of parodying of Marlowe and thus highlights the possibly comic aspects of the play, such as Lavinia carrying Titus' hand between her teeth. R. A. Foakes, in *Shakespeare and Violence*, points out that his students considered *Titus Andronicus* "Shakespeare's Tarantino play", due to its seemingly gratuitous use of violence[3] (57).

If, at first, in my MA thesis, my concern rested in the effects of violence in *Titus Andronicus*—whether it genuinely caused catharsis, horror, or nervous laughter, as discussed by the Bloom and Foakes—further readings of the play have shifted my focus to a slightly different, and sometimes neglected, aspect of the play: the political use of violence. As shown in the following chapters, recent criticism has been paying sufficient attention to the political effects of violence in *Titus Andronicus*, going beyond the quick dismissal of *Titus* as a piece of comic exaggeration. *Titus* might be, indeed, comically exaggerated, but neglecting that such comic exaggeration can be insightful is a mistake.

Even though *Titus Andronicus* is sometimes excluded from the group of Shakespeare's plays called "the Roman plays", Robert Miola raises a solid point in including *Titus* on the list: it is possible to perceive in *Titus Andronicus* "Shakespeare's growing interest in the processes of Roman government, in the secular problems of power and order, and in the political and moral issues raised by the clash between private interest and public duty" ("Rome" 44). Andrew Hadfield's work in *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics* and *Shakespeare and Republicanism* offers a compelling reading of Shakespeare's drama and poetry guided by his understanding that, in Shakespeare's cultural milieu, drama and poetry were discourses in which political ideas could be freely explored by individuals who were otherwise excluded from such discussions due to the actual dangers of reprisal by the status quo—was it worth it to speak directly about such matters if it put your neck on the line? Francis Barker, however, does not read such republican overtones in *Titus Andronicus*, but rather a validation of State power in oppressing its citizens (190-1). Leonard Tennenhouse also sees the presence of a State ideology in the play, but operating differently from what Barker observes: Tennenhouse sees in *Titus Andronicus* the display of violence, whereas Barker sees the occlusion of violence. Moreover, Coppélia Khan reads the violence in *Titus Andronicus* as intrinsically connected to certain ideas of Roman manliness and gender relations, and, for her, subversive potential is found in the play. More recently, authors such as Thomas P. Anderson and Daniel Juan Gil started looking at Shakespeare's work, including *Titus*, as a site where anti-political discourses are produced. Under the light of like critical views, the present study aims at analyzing contemporary performances of *Titus Andronicus,* bearing in mind the political implications of violence.

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[1] I touch on the issue of George Peele's co-authorship in Chapter 2, as well as the "late addition", i.e. the fly scene, possibly written by Thomas Middleton.

[2] That is, if it can be called a tragedy. In conversation with Shakespearean colleagues the term "tragicomedy" is often employed when talking about *Titus*.

[3] This reading, in my view, does neither justice to *Titus Andronicus* nor to Tarantino's work.

Hence, the present work inserts itself both in the field of dramaturgical analysis, more specifically *reconstitution-analysis*, as Patrice Pavis calls it in *L'Analyse des Spectacles* (6). That is, it aims at analyzing records of five performances, not live performances themselves. Moreover, the present dissertation inserts itself in a paradigm on Shakespearean scholarship informed by James C. Bulman's collection of essays *Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance*, in the sense that it sees performance not as a way of recuperating Shakespeare's text in our modern world, so removed from Early Modern England and its language, but rather as a cultural practice with value and meaning in themselves. Thus, the focus of the present research does not lie on the playtext of *Titus Andronicus*, but rather on modern and contemporary performances of the play. Therefore, the study of such performances does not serve to "better understand the playtext", as if such endeavor were possible by means of contemporary performance, but to understand the operations of very performances I have selected. I would like to stress, however, that through this focus I do not mean to dismiss completely the playtext: I simply see it as one text among many, standing on equal terms beside the corpora, rather than an "inversion" of a previously existing hierarchy in which the playtext dictated the array of possible meanings. One must remember that, after all, it is George Peele and William Shakespeare's text being repeatedly performed on stages that explicitly refer to Shakespeare himself.

More specifically, the present dissertation investigates violence in five productions of *Titus Andronicus*, foregrounding the political significance of such violent acts. Violence is one of Shakespeare's greatest concerns, particularly in his tragedies, even though it is also present in the comedies, histories and romances. R. A. Foakes presents a thorough panorama on the issue, dealing exclusively with violence perpetrated by males, and focusing on what he calls the "random display of violence", which, in his view, much concerned Shakespeare. In this regard, Foakes writes: "I pay special attention in what follows to what I call the primal scene of violence, the deed that seems spontaneous and to have no meaning until we build interpretations into it later" (8).

In sum, the objective of the present dissertation is to analyze the display of violence in five productions of *Titus Andronicus* and discuss the political significance of such a display. As I shall argue in chapters 2 and 3, the display of violence in *Titus Andronicus*, despite what certain critics claim, does not seem to be gratuitous, but rather inserts itself in a rhetoric of politics and serves as a means of discussing relevant topics to Elizabethans. Thus, the performing of the violence in *Titus Andronicus* on today's stage and carries, inevitably, political overtones, not because of a supposed immanence of such themes in the original, but because they comment on our contemporary social reality in ways that are relevant to us just as Shakespeare's images were relevant to his contemporaries.

In order to pursue my investigation, I have chosen as my corpus five productions of *Titus Andronicus*. I have selected four productions by the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), in Stratford-upon-Avon: the now classic staging by Peter Brook in 1955 (1); Deborah Warner's 1987 production (2); Yukio Ninagawa's 2006 production (3); and Michael Fentiman's 2013 production (4). I am also going to analyze Lucy Bailey's 2014 production at the Shakespeare's Globe, in London, a revival of her 2006 successful production that featured in the series "The Edges of Rome" (5). As a Brazilian researcher I would have liked to include a Brazilian production in my corpus, and I did contact a Brazilian company that staged the play. Alas, I have had to exclude the production due to the lack of records. I have decided to begin with Brook's production because of its importance to the history of *Titus Andronicus* in performance. Brook's *Titus* brought the play back to the stages and to the critics' favor. Warner's production, the first to be directed by a woman with the RSC, was also chosen due to its importance to the history of *Titus* in performance in the previous century, staging a successful *Titus*, rather differently from Brook's style. Ninagawa's production was chosen because it dialogues with and pays homage to Brook's *Titus* while setting the play in a Japanese context. Lucy Bailey's production was selected mainly due to its fascinating venue—Shakespeare's (new) Globe Theatre, on the Bankside, in London—and its insertion in the series "The Edges of Rome", foregrounding the political dimension of Shakespeare's goriest play and relating it to the other Roman plays. Michael Fentiman's 2013 production has been chosen because of its recency and also due to its political overtones.

I have come up with the following hypotheses:

1) Barker argues that *Titus Andronicus* presents a "structural positive anthropology". Perhaps, more than that, the play also presents a "positive political philosophy". In performance this positive political philosophy can be revealed through "the political iconography" of the play, as Lennard Tennenhouse puts it, especially in the violent scenes. The presence of Lavinia, for instance, can have the potential to be read as a metaphor of the State, civilization, family, womanhood, and so on.
2) Also, I argue that even the productions that attempt to evade political discussion and focus on family drama end up telling a political story or, at least, hinting at an anatomy of the State. The boundaries between public and private, civilization and barbarism, culture and violence are highly problematic in *Titus Andronicus*, and I think that such questions cannot be simply avoided. This hypothesis, however, does not aim at establishing the playtext as hierarchically superior to the play's productions, a text so powerful that no production can escape its Republican influences, but rather that any production of *Titus Andronicus*, standing as an autonomous work of art, deals with such questions, therefore inevitably producing meaning.
3) *Titus Andronicus* saw a revival in popularity on the stage after the Second World War as the violence in the play did not seem so farfetched to an audience who had the Holocaust and the atomic bombs in their collective memory. Another hypothesis is that, in similar ways as it did back then, today *Titus Andronicus* appeals to audiences due to the generalized representations of violence in the media and the contemporary forms of violence we are exposed to.

The present dissertation is divided into six chapters. Before moving on to the next chapter, this introduction briefly discusses Shakespeare in performance, using mainly James Bulman and W. B. Worthen, especially Worthen's work *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance*. In the second chapter, I briefly discuss *Titus Andronicus*'s history, including issues of reception, authorship, and stage history. In this section, some of my main sources are the introductions to the modern editions of the play, as they thoroughly discuss and summarize relevant scholarship on the play. In my third chapter, I will discuss the issues of violence and politics in more generally in Shakespeare and then in *Titus Andronicus*. Picking up from the closing considerations in the second chapter, in which I discuss R. A. Foakes' *Shakespeare and Violence*, Francis Barker's essay "A Wilderness of Tigers", Andrew Hadfield's work on the republican side of Shakespeare, and Lennard Tennenhouse's notions in *Power on Display*, I delve further into the matter using the bibliography I was able to explore at the Shakespeare Institute, in Stratford-upon-Avon. In the following two chapters, I analyze the five productions in my corpus: two of them from the twentieth century, analyzed in chapter four, and three of them, from the twenty-first century, analyzed in chapter five. Finally, I will consider the aforementioned hypotheses in my conclusion, whether they were confirmed or not.

To begin discussing Shakespeare in performance I would like to invoke J. C. Bulman's introduction to the aforementioned collection of essays entitled *Shakespeare, Theory and Performance*. Bulman highlights that the John Styan's well-known "Shakespeare Revolution"—which succeeded in shifting the focus of Shakespearean studies from text to stage--only did so to reinforce the primacy of the written text. A that point in time, Shakespeare in performance would be desirable insofar as it would allow the meanings supposedly present in the "original" text to be discovered by the actors (1). The precepts in this paradigm are that, as Bulman writes, "Shakespeare's texts are stable and authoritative, that meaning is immanent in them, and that actors and directors are therefore *interpreters* rather than *makers* of meaning" (1). What Bulman attempts to show in his collection of essays, in opposition to the paradigm previously exposed, is "the radical contingency of performance—the unpredictable, often playful intersection of history, material conditions, social contexts, and reception that destabilizes Shakespeare and makes theatrical meaning a participatory act" (1).

I would like to argue that such an approach can be found in *Hamlet* itself, in the play within the play episode: in an exercise of the imagination, if Hamlet himself were in accordance with John Styan's way of looking at theater, he would expect the players to simply make come to life the "hidden" meanings in "The Murder of Gonzago". However, it seems that Hamlet was aware of this "playful intersection" Bulman writes about. As we know, in Hamlet's hands, with no change to the plot and only with the accretion of a few lines, the tragedy interacts with history and politics, becoming an accusation before the whole court. The danger of Styan's goal is to still place Shakespeare at the center of meaning in performance, or to attempt to recover Elizabethan theatrical practices, as if it were possible or even desirable.

Thus, alongside this paradigm, Worthen—who is featured in Bulman's collection—discusses extensively in *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance* "the institutional practices that transform the text into something else—stage *behavior*—and that lend that behavior significance, *force*" (emphasis in the original 3). The use Worthen makes of "force" is derived from Austin and, subsequently, Derrida and Butler. Thus, for Worthen, performance gains its force not from the words in the playtext. In fact, Worthen questions what performance is indeed quoting. For him, performance is usually seen under the light of a print-culture (4).

I would like to stress one point raised by Worthen: Parker and Sedgwick's deconstruction of Austin's argument concerning theater. Worthen writes that

> [t]hey deconstruct Austin's opposition between 'normal' and etiolated performance, the felicitously performative and the theatrical: performative speech cannot be distinguished from the hollow utterances of the stage on the basis of originality, as though nontheatrical speaking were more authentic, less repetitive, than stage speech. Performatives can work 'felicitously' only to the extent that they, like theatrical performance, are reiterable, signifying through a process of citation (6).

Accordingly, Parker and Sedgwick take the "I do" from weddings to decenter the importance of the text itself in a performative act. For them, this performative does not obtain its force from the words "I do", but rather from the whole institutional context (i.e., heteronormativity) it is quoting. Even if they, like Austin, do not regard the theater in this same subversive fashion, their deconstruction of the textual in the performative prompts Worthen to ask an important question: "is it the dramatic text that the citational performances of the theatre cite?" (9). The answer is no: "Plays become meaningful in the theatre through the disciplined application of conventionalized practices [. . .] that transform writing into something with performative force: performance behavior" (9).

I would also like to point out some of the issues raised by Worthen in *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance*, prior to his aforementioned work. In his previous book, Worthen discusses how and “which notions of authority are inscribed in discussions of performance” in an age in which the consensus is that the figure of the author is dead. Such discussion is conducted via Shakespeare due to his standing “at the center of two articulate and contentious traditions—of reading and the criticism of texts; of performance and the staging of scripts” (2-3). In his final chapter, in which Worthen discusses how critics construct authority, he is able to summarize two phases of the performance criticism of Shakespeare’s plays. An initial one, that attempted to legitimate “performance” as a means of critical access to Shakespeare’s plays, and a later phase, engaged in an effort to discover how to read what Isobel Armstrong calls “some symbiosis between theory and performance” in the effort to find a contestable Shakespeare.

There is not a scientific, or pseudo-scientific procedure to guide, step by step, the performance analysis I intend to carry out in this dissertation. The way to proceed with the present investigation is to construct an interpretive, critical discourse based on the records the performances have left behind them. Thus, the main records to be analyzed are the verbal text that was performed, visual or aural records, the show's program, posters and flyers, interviews by director or actors involved in the production, as well as press clips and reviews. My goal is to attempt to understand each production's conception, and then measure such conception against the production's staging and against its critical reception. It would exceed the scope of the proposed work to analyze the performances from beginning to end. Due to time, space, and thematic constraints, I am going to analyze the following scenes: act I, scene I; act II, scene III; and act V, scene III. These scenes have been selected because, in my view, they are not only the most violent scenes but also the most politically relevant ones.

2. THE MOST LAMENTABLE TRAGEDY OF *TITUS ANDRONICUS*: STAGE HISTORY AND CRITICISM

Professor Coleman, a character from Philip Roth's *The Human Stain*, tells his students, in his first class on the classics, that Western literature begins with a quarrel: the quarrel for a young female, Helen of Troy in the *Iliad* (Roth 4). The story of *Titus Andronicus*, arguably Shakespeare's most violent tragedy, could also be said to begin with a quarrel for a young woman, that is, Lavinia, Titus Andronicus's daughter. However intricate the revenge plot of this early tragedy, ultimately, the main conflict is about the control of Lavinia, the aristocratic young female whose body, in a way, symbolizes the Roman Empire. For instance, the play begins with the former emperor's two sons fighting over imperial succession and, subsequently, over the right to marry Lavinia. Also, Lavinia's rape and mutilation by the Goth Empress's two sons consolidate the control Tamora, her sons, and Aaron will have over Rome throughout the tragedy. But the history of *Titus Andronicus*, as a play, is also filled with struggles over authority, readings, aesthetic value, and so on. Did Shakespeare write *Titus*? Did he write all of it? What were his sources? Is it a parody, a tragedy or both? Is it a republican play? Is it reactionary? After all, is it a good play? These are some of the questions I want to address in this chapter, not ultimately to answer them but to expose conflicting points of view and enrich the understanding of the play. The fact that such questions have been asked shows that, independently of the answers, *Titus Andronicus* is a play worth studying. In this chapter I also intend to discuss relevant modern critical interpretations of the play from different standpoints.

2.1 Beauty, shock and authorship

In order to introduce the play and briefly discuss its aesthetic status, I would like to address the question of its authorship. As previously implied, it is not my responsibility to make an aesthetic defense of my object of study, but my goal in foregrounding this discussion is to highlight how the play's aesthetic status and authorship have changed over time, and how considerations on its "beauty" have influenced the question of its authorship. The main sources for this section will be the introductions to modern editions of *Titus Andronicus*: The Riverside Shakespeare, The New Cambridge Shakespeare, The Arden Shakespeare, and The Oxford Shakespeare (see references).

Scholars know that collaboration among playwrights in early modern England was a recurrent practice. For a long time, it was believed that *Titus Andronicus* could not be attributed solely to Shakespeare—he probably had a hand in the play, but only gave it a few "Master-touches". Alan Hughes dedicates a section of his introduction to the New Cambridge Shakespeare edition of the play to the question of its authorship and begins by pointing out that the only evidence at the time—if we can call it that—that the play was not written by Shakespeare was an address to the reader written by Edward Ravencroft, a seventeenth-century writer, in his own adaptation of the story of *Titus Andronicus*. The address, as quoted by Hughes, reads:

> I have been told by some anciently conversant with the Stage, that it was not Originally his, but brought by a private Author to be Acted, and he only gave some Master-touches to one or two of the Principal Parts or Characters; this I am apt to believe, because 'tis the most incorrect and indigested piece in all his Works; it seems rather a heap of Rubbish than a Structure. (qtd. in Hughes 10)

There is nothing scholarly in this address, as the critical criterion used here—gossip—is quite simplistic. As far as Ravencroft was concerned, the play was bad, and therefore it could not be Shakespeare's.

For Jonathan Bate, the motivation behind Ravencroft's remark is to validate his own work in writing an adaptation: he "may have created a fiction about Shakespeare as improver in order to give precedent and warrant for his own practice as improver" (79). Ben Jonson's introduction to his play *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) also helped to start a "denigration process", as put by Eugene Waith, editor of the Oxford Shakespeare edition. Jonson mocks those who still think highly of *Titus Andronicus* as having an old-fashioned taste, since the play was written in the early 1590's, over 20 years before Jonson's. *Titus Andronicus* had been a commercial success, but both its authority and its aesthetic quality were being questioned. This denigration process "continued for many years, and often led to the conviction that the play as we have it could not have been written by Shakespeare. Recognition of its merits and of its close ties with other works by Shakespeare was slow to come. It has been more characteristic of the twentieth than of preceding centuries" (Waith 1).

In the twentieth century, especially the first half, scholars tried to formally question the authorship of *Titus Andronicus*. Bate highlights how some of these scholars compared *Titus Andronicus* to the works of George Peele, trying to establish him as its author, and found several lexical parallels. For instance, we have in *Titus*

Hail, Rome, victorious in thy mourning weeds!
Lo, as the bark that hath discharged his freight returns…
Cometh Andronicus, bound with laurel boughs,
To resolute his country with his tears (Shakespeare qtd. in Bate 81)

And then, in George Peele

Haile, Windsore, where I sometimes tooke delight…
In my return fro[m] France…
Loe from the house of Fame, with Princely traynes accompanied…
I resolute thee here, and gratulate… (Peele qtd. in Bate 81)

It is possible to perceive the parallels in both passages, but, as Bate argues, "there are equally striking parallels with anonymous plays such as *Selimues Emperor of the Turks* and *Edmund Ironside*, with Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, and Thomas Lodge's *Wounds of Civil War*—and of course with Shakespeare's works" (81). Bate reminds us that it was common for Elizabethans to imitate words and expressions they encountered in their contemporaries' works, hence rendering such comparisons unreliable in terms of establishing authorship (81-82). But analyses of other linguistic elements, such as "connectives, articles, prepositions and pronouns [. . .] constitute a linguistic fingerprint as opposed to poetic plumage", and a "computer analysis of these suggests [. . .] that *Titus* is by a single hand and that at this level its linguistic habits are very different from Peele's" (83). Yet Shakespeare's fingerprint on the play is not in the language of the verse, but rather in the spectacular stagecraft. H. T. Price, one of the play's defenders in the early twentieth century and who attributed it wholly to Shakespeare at a time where the fashion was to question his authority over *Titus*, describes the play as "an excellent piece of stage-craft" (qtd. in Kermode 1065).

It turns out that Ravenscroft's claims were correct to an extent, but they were highly exaggerated, and the subsequent dislike for *Titus* on the ground of its questionable authority is unjustified (New Oxford Critical Edition 128). Today, there is overwhelming evidence that the first act and the first scene of the second act of *Titus Andronicus* were written by George Peele. As noted in *The New Oxford Shakespeare Authorship Companion*: "There is strong internal evidence that these 635 lines were originally conceived as a single dramatic unit, a long first scene written by George Peele" (Taylor and Duhaime 69). Moreover, scene 2 in act 3, also known as the fly scene, seems to be an addition by someone other than either Peele or Shakespeare, possibly Thomas Middleton. As is known today, such an arrangement is not exclusive to *Titus Andronicus*, and recent studies show that collaboration was a common practice in Shakespeare's business. Vickers in *Shakespeare as Co-author* presents convincing evidence for George Peele's collaboration with Shakespeare in *Titus Andronicus*, but at the same time defends the play from those who question Shakespeare's authority for the wrong reasons:

> These doubts about Shakespeare's authorship had no scholarly basis, external or internal, but expressed an aesthetic-ethical dislike for the violence and corporeal mutilations that take place both on and off stage. Any attentive and unprejudiced reading of the play could show that the violence is in no way gratuitous, but part of a closely organized depiction of several cycles of harm and counter-harm, in which Titus is both agent and victim. (150)

Thus the dislike for *Titus Andronicus* persisted throughout the twentieth century. For T. S. Eliot *Titus Andronicus* is "one of the stupidest and most uninspired plays ever written… There is a wantonness, an irrelevance, about the crimes of which Seneca would never have been guilty" (qtd. in Hughes 32). Harold Bloom sees the play as necessary for Shakespeare in his maturing years, but not for us (86). For Bloom, its artistic failure lies in the problematic distinction between parody and tragedy in the play. In the two performances Bloom attended, audiences "never quite knew when to be horrified and when to laugh, rather uneasily" (77). Bloom even writes that he would only attend another performance of *Titus* if Mel Brooks, famous for comedies, parodies and farces, directed it (86). Currently, Shakespeare's authorship of the majority of the play is undoubtedly recognized, but certain critics, like Bloom, do not take the play to be a serious effort in writing tragedy. In spite of such negative opinions, *Titus* has seen a revival in its critical appraisal, especially due to its performances after the Second World War.

2.2 Stage History

The performance history of *Titus Andronicus* is special: it "is the only Shakespearean play for which we have a contemporaneous illustration" (Bate 38), i.e., Henry Peacham's drawing (see fig. 1). Whether indeed a representation of a performance or simply a "quasi-emblematical representation" of the playtext, Peacham's drawing is considered by Bate as an "early 'production'" of the play: "even if it is a production in Peacham's mental theatre, it demonstrates how a contemporary of Shakespeare's visualized the play—and such a visualization must have depended on some experience of real theatre" (41). Two features of the drawing are particularly worth noticing: the anachronism of the costumes and the stiff, emblem-like pose of the characters (43). Titus, for instance, is wearing a Roman toga, whereas Tamora's attire is medieval and the soldiers' outfit is contemporary to Shakespeare. For Bate, such anachronisms could be seen as a "precedent for modern productions which are determinedly eclectic in their dress, combining ancient and modern" (43). Concerning their poses, Bate highlights how the characters are drawn in order to, through their stances, epitomize and amplify their emotions (43).

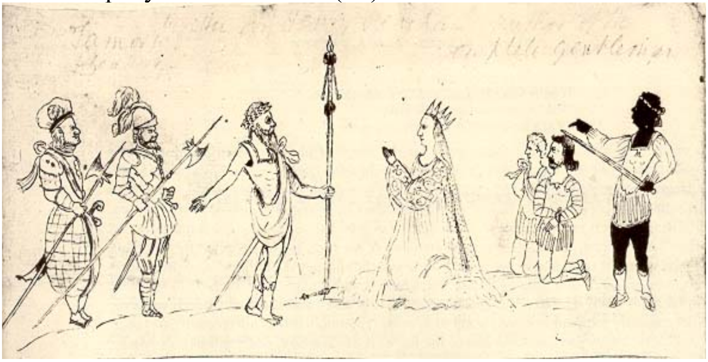

Fig. 1: Peacham's drawing.

Another register of an early performance of *Titus Andronicus* is of a private enactment in 1596, "in the household of Sir John Harrington at Burley-on-the-Hill in Rutland" (Bate 43), presumably by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare's company at the time. Bate mentions that Sir John Harrington "had links with the Essex circle",[4] meaning that political aspects of the play may have interested him. However, the record we have of this performance does not concern its political aspects, but rather its theatricality: "Jacques Petit, a French tutor in the household, wrote home saying [. . .] '*La monstre a plus valu que le sujet*'" (43-44), that is, the spectacle has more value than the plot. It seems that Petit's opinion of the play would thrive throughout out the years.

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[4] The Earl of Essex's circle, as Andrew Hadfield describes it, was a "circle of young, disaffected aristocrats, and the writers they brought in their wake, attached to Essex. Essex and his cohorts [. . .] 'openly discussed [. . .] anti-absolutist ideas, and oppositional views of history' when they gathered at Essex House" (131).

The theater and its audiences changed significantly after the Restoration. "Audiences were smaller, differently composed, and had acquired new tastes", Hughes writes, and "the Restoration playhouse had a proscenium arch and pictorial scenery which imposed entirely new conventions. Scenic neutrality in the Elizabethan manner was impossible; every scene had to be clearly and specifically located" (23). It is in this context that the aforementioned adaptation of the play written by Ravencroft was performed. His distaste for the play—and consequently his need to adapt it—is clearly related to the conventions of the theater of his time, which shows that it is difficult to separate, in this case, literary criticism from theatrical practices. One change concerned the setting in the first act: due to the aforementioned requirement for a specific location to be signaled on stage, Ravenscroft had to cut the opening scene with its swift movements from the Capitol to the family tomb (ibid.). Furthermore, the characters had to become less morally ambiguous, and humorous scenes had to be cut altogether: the audience's and Ravenscroft's own French taste could not tolerate the gray area where tragedy and comedy, good and evil, seem sometimes undistinguishable (24). For instance, Lavinia does not censure Tamora in the woods for her affair with Aaron, and the sacrifice that opens the play is a revenge against the Goths, who in Ravenscroft's adaptation had killed one of Titus's sons whom they had taken prisoner (24).

About the continuation of Ravenscroft's tradition of adapting *Titus* to new tastes, Eugene Waith writes: "From the time of Ravenscroft's alteration until 1923 *Titus* Andronicus seems to have been performed in England only in radically altered versions" (45). The absence of performances of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* is justified by Waith by means of the previously mentioned authority controversy and, of course, the excessive violence in the play, which did not suit contemporary tastes. The American actor Ira Aldridge, known as the "African Roscius" and naturalized English, was responsible for the only known performance of *Titus Andronicus* in the British Isles in the nineteenth century (47). Reviews of this production emphasized Aldridge's outstanding performance as Aaron (48). Aldridge, in conjunction with A. C. Somerset, adapted the play even more radically "than Ravenscroft had done" (49). Waith calls attention to the fact that in this staging "only Saturninus is a truly villainous character"; "the rape and mutilation of Lavinia are omitted, Tamora is chaste [. . .], Chiron and Demetrius are 'dutiful children'" (49). The engraving of Ira Aldridge's Aaron herein reproduced gives an idea of the heroic role he played in this adaptation: he is seen with a scimitar, protecting the baby, who had been stolen from him (see fig. 2). “Once again,” Waith reminds us, “Aaron (however transformed) took over the play” (49). Another century went and the horrors present in *Titus Andronicus* still seemed unfit to be performed in their entirety, with their sheer spectacle and complex characterization.

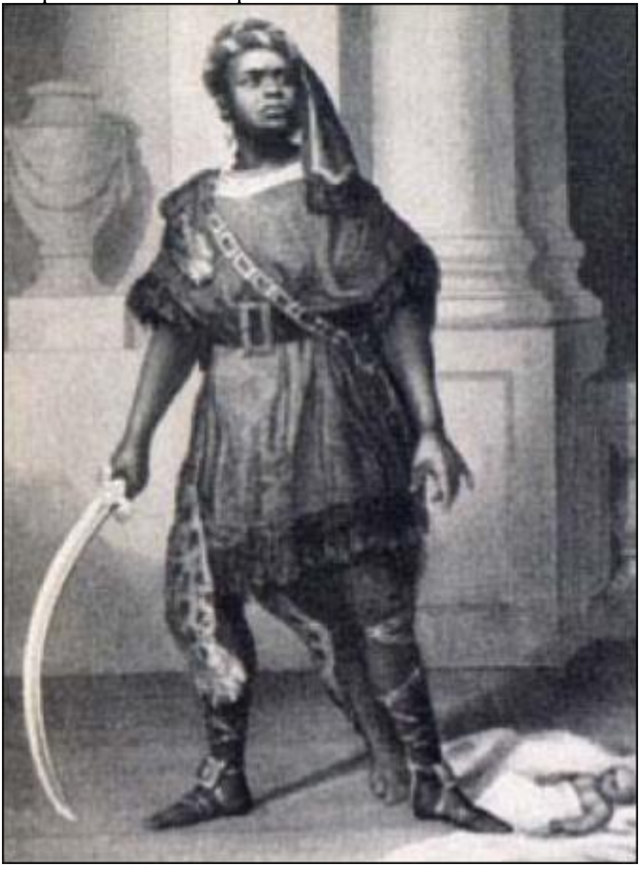

Fig. 2: Ira Aldridge as Aaron, protecting the baby.

Only at the Old Vic Theatre in 1923 would the play be performed again, and for the first time “as Shakespeare wrote it since the early years of the Restoration” (Waith 49). But it was only after the Second World War that *Titus Andronicus* would regain part of its former glory as one of the most successful plays of its time. Hughes highlights the difference in terms of reception before and after the war. Commenting on a negative review of the 1923 production, written by Herbert Farjeon, who thought the atrocities in the play were too exaggerated, Hughes writes that "[o]f course, Farjeon was writing before the twentieth century had shown what it could really achieve in the way of atrocities" (29).

Thus the post-war era brought *Titus Andronicus* back to the stage, as if the atrocities seen and experienced in the war made the play less alien to contemporary audiences. After Auschwitz and the atomic bomb, perhaps, the rape, mutilation and cannibalism present in the play no longer seemed far-fetched. Two *Tituses* performed in the second-half of the twentieth century stand out: Peter Brook's (1955) and Deborah Warner's (1987). So successful was Brook's production that, as noted by Hughes, it challenged critical conceptions about the play itself. Waith notes that *Titus's* "theatrical effectiveness, commented on repeatedly in this century as it was earlier, has undoubtedly been responsible in part for the wider acceptance of Shakespeare's authorship" (51). Moreover, Hughes writes, "literary tradition found it bad," but "Brook confronted [literary tradition] with a production so successful that the consensus was called into question. Scholars began to return to the text" (42).

The success of Brook's production calls attention to the fact that performance is neither entirely subject to the text nor to criticism, but that these factors interact in unexpected ways on an equal level. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Brook's production was the major factor responsible for the increased critical appraisal *Titus Andronicus* received as of the second half of the century. Brook's take on *Titus* was symbolic, and violence was stylized. The most iconic scene in this production is Lavinia's entrance after the rape and her subsequent encounter with Marcus. In his *Titus*, Brook cut Marcus' speech in its entirety and, famously, Lavinia's wounds were "swathed in gauze, with scarlet streamers attached to her mouth and wrists" (Waith 55). Such an approach asserts "the transforming power of costume and lighting for that of metaphor and simile" (55). The visual here overtakes the verbal. So impactful was Lavinia's entrance that "it shaped the predominant theatrical approach to the play for thirty years" (Bate 59).[5]

The removal of Marcus's speech was, it seems, not merely a means to highlight the visual impact of Lavinia's stylized wounds. "Marcus' long lyric monologue was regarded as indecorous," writes Bate, asking himself: "what place has such poetry in the face of such a sight of horror?" (59). In this sense, I agree with professor Emma Smith's claim that realism cannot be expected from this scene: it does not make any sense for Marcus to deliver a two to four-minute speech instead of aiding Lavinia. However, as an audience, we must suspend our disbelief. Marcus' speech is not to be regarded as verisimilar, but rather as an instance of *ekphrasis*, i.e., the verbal description of a visual element. In delivering his speech, Marcus is trying to come to terms with the horrid image of his mutilated niece.

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[5] That is, until Deborah Warner's production.

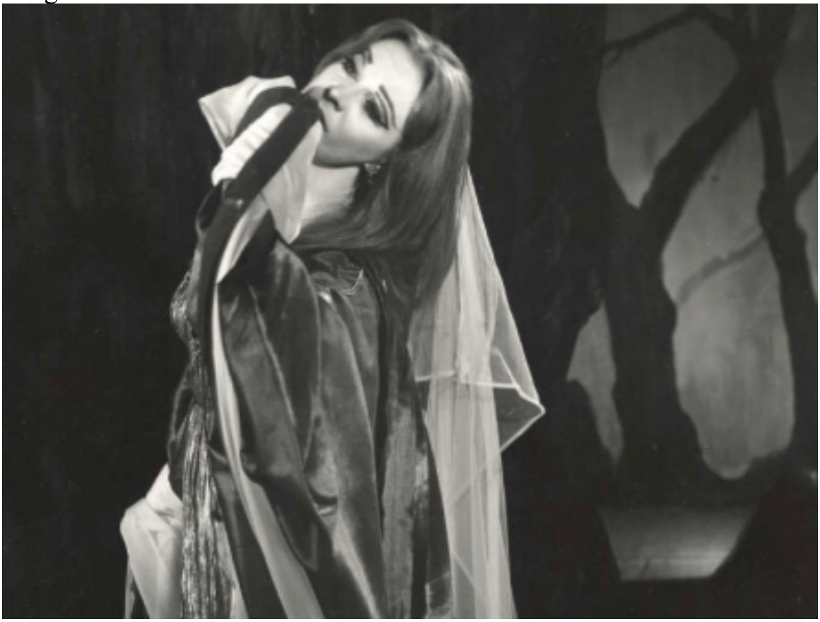

Fig. 3 – Vivian Leigh as Lavinia in Peter Brook's 1955 RSC production.

Marcus' speech was not cut from Deborah Warner's 1987 production at Stratford-upon-avon with the RSC; in fact, the production delivered the text in its totality. Emma Smith argues that in Warner's *Titus* the speech works as a suspension of time, creating a nightmarishly flow of images. If Brook showed that *Titus Andronicus* could be successfully performed again, Deborah Warner showed that it could be performed differently, in a more intimate and less stylized fashion than Brook had done. Stanley Wells thus describes Marcus' monologue in Warner's production:

> Spoken in Donald Sumpter's hushed tones it became a deeply moving attempt to master the facts, and thus to overcome the emotional shock, of a previously unimagined horror. We had the sense of a suspension of time, as if the speech represented an articulation necessarily extended in

> expression, of a sequence of thoughts and emotions that might have taken no more than a second or two to flash through the character's mind, like a bad dream. (Wells 179 qtd. in Bate 62)

But the importance of Marcus' speech in Warner's production has significant contextual relevance. Bate calls attention to the fact that this is the first production of *Titus Andronicus* to be directed by a woman, at least in a prominent venue such as Stratford-upon-avon, foregrounding the issue of rape in our society (63). In this regard, Bate affirms:

> The scene was so powerful to so many members of the audience because our culture is more conscious of rape and its peculiar vileness than many previous cultures have been: so it was that the new words from the 1590 [. . .] worked a new effect in the context of the 1980s. (64-5)

Other productions worthwhile mentioning are Jane Howell's TV adaptation with its ritualistic and, as I have argued in my MA thesis, Brechtian overtones. Howell's *Titus* was part of BBC's ambitious project of adapting all of the plays to television. Several directors worked in this project, and Howell was one of the few to receive positive critical reviews. The trademark of her production is the role played by Young Lucius: it is as if the play is seen through the young boy's perspective in order to highlight the negative impact the violence has on the innocent. By the end of the performance, the boy is the only one to mourn the death of Aaron's baby—presumably killed by the Romans in this production—whereas the survivors reorganize the mutilated empire. In spite of being directed in 1984, Howell's production is taken into account by Bate when he discusses the feminine perspective in Warner's production precisely because of Howell's focus on the boy. Also worth mentioning is Julie Taymor's filmic adaptation, with its rich intertextuality and anachronisms, ranging from Fascist Italy through Marilyn Monroe and Hannibal Lecter.

2.3 Reading *Titus Andronicus*

Having covered in the previous sections some of the controversies concerning the play's authorship and reception, as well as its stage history, I shall now move on to a discussion of the readings of *Titus Andronicus* that will be foregrounded throughout the analysis of my dissertation's corpus. As I have mentioned, the focus of my MA thesis was on the representation of violence in *Titus Andronicus*. Violence is still the focus of my work here, but I am more interested in the politics of the play and its relation to the exaggerated violence we find in *Titus*. I think that political activity is inherently violent, thus the double focus of the present dissertation. In the following paragraphs I review the relevant criticism on the play that deals with the issues: of violence, politics and sometimes both. Ultimately, it seems that the critical controversy concerning the play is whether it is reactionary or not, that is, whether Francis Barker or Andrew Hadfield is right. The question of gender in the play is also addressed here via Coppélia Kahn.

Violence is one of Shakespeare's greatest concerns, particularly in his tragedies, even though it is also present in the comedies, histories and romances. R. A. Foakes presents a thorough panorama on the issue, dealing exclusively with violence perpetrated by males, and focusing on what he calls the "random display of violence", which, in his view, much concerned Shakespeare. In this regard, Foakes writes: "I pay special attention in what follows to what I call the primal scene of violence, the deed that seems spontaneous and to have no meaning until we build interpretations into it later" (8). In *Titus Andronicus*, it could be said that the random act of violence is the sacrifice of the Goth prisoner, but also the killing of the messenger by Saturninus, as this seems to be Barker's opinion.

Unlike Barker, who claims political overtones in the treatment of violence in *Titus*, Foakes tends to agree with Jacques Petit's remark that, in *Titus*, spectacle has more value than plot: "*Titus Andronicus* is disconnected from any moral centre and so appears gratuitous and designed to shock" (57). Foakes's students, upon watching Taymor's filmic adaptation, related it to Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* due to its apparently gratuitous violence. This remark does not do justice to Tarantino's work, as if the violence in his films were everything. Now, more than twenty years after *Pulp Fiction* (1994), I can say that the film is more often remembered by its witty, seemingly mundane and out-of-place dialogue, such as the "Royale with cheese" discussion, than by its exaggerated violence. Tarantino's most recent film, *The Hateful Eight* (2015), presents a violent story, perhaps without a moral center, but one with an intricate dialogue that discusses racial tensions of contemporary America. I do not deny Foakes's relevance in the discussion of violence in Shakespeare; however, the very notions he introduces in his work seem to be forgotten when *Titus* is discussed.

In this sense, I tend to agree with Leonard Tennenhouse's remark, who argues that the exaggerated violence in the play is not gratuitous, but it serves a political purpose: it plays with a certain "political iconography" that displays the power of the monarch. The late

Francis Barker, on the other hand, argues that the extravagant violence in *Titus Andronicus* serves to *occlude* real violence, i.e., state violence against the common people of Elizabethan England. For Barker, ignoring this violence and showing violence as something spectacular, *Titus* serves to legitimize state power. Both readings are diametrically opposed, it seems, but I do acknowledge them because they refuse to dismiss the violence in *Titus Andronicus* on the grounds of "poor taste" or any such notion, but rather tackle violence with their respective critical tools in order to give some explanation to it.

As I briefly mentioned in the first section of the chapter, Lavinia's body serves as a symbol for the Roman Empire itself. Tennenhouse develops this argument further, and at the same time he dismisses the violence of the play to be exaggerated or purposeless. He writes:

> The sheer spectacle of a woman, herself dismembered, herself carrying her father's amputated hand in her mouth has not earned this play a particularly high place in a canon based on lofty ideas and good taste. The mutilation of Lavinia's body has been written off as one of the exuberant excesses of an immature playwright or else as the corrupting influence of another poet. But I would like to consider these sensational features as part of a political iconography which Shakespeare understood as well as anyone else, one which he felt obliged to use as well as free to exploit for his own dramatic purposes. (106-7)

Tennenhouse calls attention to the fact that such representations of the female body were produced in "an age which thought of state power as female. Under such circumstances, these representations—perhaps any representation—of the aristocratic female provided the substance of a political iconography which enhanced the power of the Elizabethan state" (112). If in Elizabethan England "[d]isplaying the monarch's body was so essential to maintaining the power of state" (106), it is difficult to conceive that such representation of an aristocratic female would be gratuitous.

Tennenhouse highlights how Lavinia's rape is treated in an unusual way in *Titus Andronicus*: if rape is associated with penetration and invasion, in *Titus* Lavinia's rape is represented as a form of dismemberment. Tennenhouse discusses the political implications of such treatment. Therefore, Tennenhouse writes, commenting on the aforementioned controversial scene in which Lavinia carries her father's hand: "What is important in this—as in the other scenes where Lavinia's body appears as a synecdoche and emblem of the disorder of things—is that Shakespeare has us see the rape of Lavinia as the definitive instance of dismemberment" (107). For him, this treatment of rape is a "singularly Elizabethan move". Treating rape as mutilation allows Shakespeare to restate Titus's "murder of his own son, the decapitation of her two brothers, her father's self-inflicted amputation, his dicing up of the emperor's stepsons for their mother's consumption, and all the slicing, dicing, chopping and lopping that heaps bodies upon the stage in *Titus Andronicus*" (107-8). Dismemberment makes Lavinia's body the site not of "illicit lust", but rather "for political rivalry among various families with competing claims to power over Rome" (108). Similarly to Queen Gertrude, in *Hamlet*, to have control over Lavinia's body is to gain access to power. It is through access to Gertrude's sexuality that Claudius gains access to power, and it is through Lavinia's rape and mutilation that the Goths consolidate their power over the Roman Empire. Titus can only regain his power and exert revenge after regaining control over Lavinia's body, murdering her (108). One could also say that Aaron's way of obtaining relative power is through his affair with Tamora.

But if Tennenhouse focuses on the display of power in *Titus Andronicus* and the political iconography evoked through Lavinia's rape and mutilation, as previously mentioned, Barker famously claims that what is present in *Titus* is the occlusion of violence. To say that *Titus Andronicus* occludes violence is certainly a controversial claim to make about a play whose performance history is tainted by its exaggerated violence, to the point of preventing the play from being frequently performed. The passage that motivates Barker's reading is the killing of the clown/messenger in act 4, scene 4. As opposed to the other murders in the play, the clown's hanging is "so undemonstrative and marginal that it has consistently escaped notice" (Culture 165). This act "is simply *there*: strange, *unheimlich*, and, I have found, haunting" (Culture 168), writes Barker. As previously mentioned, the killing of the clown seems to be one of those acts of violence R. A. Foakes calls "the primal scene of violence".

But what troubles Barker is that the treatment the killing of the clown receives is blatantly different from the other killings in the play. No limbs are chopped off, no sacrificial ritual is involved; the killing takes place offstage and the clown even exits the scene cracking a joke:

Sat. Go, take him away, and hang him presently.
Clo. How much money must I have?
Tam. Come, sirrah, you must be hanged.
Clo. Hang'd by'lady! I have brought up a neck to a fair end [Exit]
(Shakespeare 4. 4. 39-49 qtd. in Barker 167).

I cannot help but quote Barker's commentary on the Clown's execution and his last word. Barker writes that the Clown's murder

> lacks credence according to the positive norms of behavior the play assumes, but equally it fails to conform to the protocols of deviations from those norms which the play more prominently foregrounds as the reality of Roman life: characters in *Titus Andronicus* may act "barbarously", but their behavior is rarely random or arbitrary, on the contrary it is invariably *ad hominem* and selfishly purposeful. Here the rueful lack of protest in the Clown's last line [. . .] bespeaks an apparently cheerful acceptance, and equally cheerful incomprehension, of what is to be done to him. The poor are happy to be hanged by their betters. (Culture 168)

Thus, the death of the clown led Barker to historical research on the practices of execution in Early Modern England. After carefully analyzing records of executions in several courts in England and Wales, Barker reaches the conclusion that, however high the official number of executions is, the number probably reflects "radical underestimations of people actually put to death, and that the aggregate figures should be very much higher than the ones given" in his research (Culture179). But none of these deaths are "dramatized in *Titus Andronicus*" (Culture 190). The exaggerated violence of *Titus* shies away from depicting these people whose spinal chords were sometimes "snapped at once; or they hung by their necks until they suffocated or drowned; until their brains died of hypoxeia; or until the shock killed them. Pissing and shitting themselves. Bleeding from their eyes. Thinking" (Culture 190). All of this "[i]n defence of property and the established social order" (Culture 190). Barker, thus, in his argument, spectacularizes, aesthetically calls our attention to the deaths of these common people in a way that, according to him, Shakespeare did not. Thus, for him, *Titus Andronicus* endorses "an entire historical culture of violence which it domesticates" (Culture 205).

Humbly I have attempted to read the clown's death in a different way in the conclusion of my MA thesis, inspired by Harold Bloom's reading of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Bloom writes:

> There remains a puzzle of why Shakespeare subjected the pseudo-Falstaff to so mindless a laceration, really a bear baiting, with "Sir John-in-love" as the bear. As a lifelong playwright, always quick to yield to subtle patrons, statist censors, and royal performances, Shakespeare in his deepest inwardness harbored anxieties that he rarely allowed

> expression. He knew that Walsingham's shadowy Secret Service had murdered Christopher Marlowe, and tortured Thomas Kyd into an early death. [. . .] I have to conclude that Shakespeare himself is warding off personal horror by scapegoating the false Falstaff in this weak play. (318)

My reading, thus, is that the Clown's death works in a similar fashion as Falstaff's "torture": it is Shakespeare's way of having a nervous laughter at a serious matter. Comedy is, after all, one way of dealing with tragedy. Perhaps the killing of the Clown, written by a dramatist establishing his career in London, was a way of dealing with the anxiety of being prosecuted by the State, as it happened, unfortunately, to too many, as Barker's historical research shows.

Barker also points out how problematic the relationship between Romans and Goths is, and the binary depictions of civilization and barbarism. If, at first, the play seems to build a "structural positive anthropology" by defining culture and barbarism (Culture 146), such clear-cut notions of culture and barbarism are shattered by the characters' sometimes-paradoxical actions. "[T]he Rome of *Titus Andronicus*", Barker writes, "is a society organized by the signs of the primitive", and "the play foregrounds ritual practices, ceremonial spectacle, and the charging of the sacred by fetishism and taboo" (Culture 144). Such contradictions are most explored by the end of the play. First, in the cannibalism scene, Barker raises the question: who is the true cannibal? Titus, who bakes the pie, or Tamora, who eats it not knowing it is made of her sons' flesh? (Culture 193). And, in Lucius' triumph, the ones who stand by his side are, ironically, the same tribe of Goths who had been at war against Rome, but now join Rome to get revenge on Tamora (Culture 193). Thus, I think that the "structural positive anthropology" that Barker mentions, with all its paradoxes and false dichotomies, reveals a sign of political instability (Culture 146). Such foreign presence in Rome seems to reveal deeper political instability in the Empire. If *Titus Andronicus* is discussed, along *Julius Caesar*, in the chapter entitled "The End of The Republic" in Andrew Hadfield's *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, it seems to be so because of the political and cultural turmoil brought home with Rome's prisoners—although such instability might have arguably been there all along.

Thus, while Barker sees *Titus Andronicus* as a reactionary "document of civilization", Andrew Hadfield in *Shakespeare and Republicanism* reads this early tragedy differently. Hadfield, in fact, points out some of the aspects already mentioned here by other critics:

> hideously choreographed violence; strange and wonderful settings; revenge and Senecan excess; memorable, emblematic speeches and images; moral judgments that allow the play to appear to be an ethical work, while allowing the possibility of more subversive readings; a great investment in wonderful costumes, and carefully planned use of the resources the stage can offer. (155)

Yet, mentioning an issue neglected by the previously discussed critics and going in the opposite direction of Barker, Hadfield argues that "the most significant aspect of *Titus*'s experimental, commercially driven nature, is its republicanism" (155). Thus, Hadfield points out, for instance, how the rape of Lavinia works as a "dark parody of a crime that led to popular outrage and the establishment of political liberty", in a reference to Lucrece (156). In *Titus Andronicus*, however, the rape and mutilation of Lavinia lead to "a further cycle of violence" (156). Such cycle only shows that the Rome of *Titus Andronicus* is "a society that finds it impossible to end conflict and transform itself from a culture of war to one of peace" (158). Thus, for Hadfield, the seemingly gratuitous violence of *Titus Andronicus* is actually the tragedy of a society that rejected Republican values of a "more constitutional form of government, which relies on greater participation from a wider political class" (165). The two contenders to the throne, Bassianus and Saturninus, speak at the opening of the play, before Titus's pompous entrance with the prisoners. Hadfield contrasts the two speeches. Whereas Bassianus "legitimizes his bid for the highest office through an appeal to the citizens at large", Saturninus "appeals to a limited upper tier of the populace" (157). From Hadfield's republican perspective it is clear which *candidatus* would provide a safer and more virtuous government, but *Titus Andronicus*' Rome is a "society dominated by military values" (158). The irony is that Titus, the senior hero who guarantees Rome's stability abroad through his military accomplishments, is the one who supports Saturninus, his political-tragical mistake. Titus "has not made the transition from war to peace and still thinks in terms of strong, aggressive leadership" (159).

Alan Sinfield in *Shakespeare, Authority, Sexuality* does not see the progressive defense of republicanism that Hadfield sees in *Titus Andronicus*. Even though Sinfield recognizes that *Titus* is a play "about forms of government, while being saturated with grotesque violence and corruption" (7-8), he argues that, in *Titus*, characters act in authoritarian, arbitrary fashion, from Titus to the tribunes, "both patricians and the citizens" (8). Sinfield sees no "sign of, among the people or the ruling elite, of where an idea of political amelioration might take hold" (8). I do agree in part with Sinfield's claim. It is difficult to take *Titus*'s ending optimistically, especially given how Lucius' character is flawed: "He sounds more reasonable, but he was prime advocate of the killing of the prisoner in the opening scene, and punishments imposed arbitrarily by him include burying alive and devouring by beasts" (8). However, I take the claim that *Titus Andronicus* cannot be said to endorse "a balanced and mixed constitution" (Hadfield qtd. in Sinfield 8) with a pinch of salt. It seems that *Titus* points the way, in the beginning, to sounder forms of government, but these are attacked both from within and from without. In Hadfield's words, "[t]he ideals of the republic are present in Bassianus's speech, but the forces that dominate the victors reveal that the Romans are really driven by much darker forces, ones that highlight the similarities there are between supposedly civilized Roman society and the Barbarian Goths" (159).

It seems that Sinfield misreads Hadfield's argument: the tragedy of *Titus Andronicus* is precisely that in this fictional Rome republican values cannot flourish. In *Titus*, "[i]mages of hunting start to dominate the play, as an aristocratic culture sweeps aside republican political values". Thus, the "victim of this newly dominant masculine culture is Lavinia" (162). Concerning Lavinia, Hadfield argues that her rape and mutilation have strong political symbolism: it reverts the logic of the classical stories that served as source for the atrocities done to her. If "the dignified suicide of Lucrece led to the establishment of the republic, the survival of the mutilated Lavinia serves as a reminder of the liberties Rome has lost" (163). Similarly to Tennenhouse, Hadfield sees in Lavinia not simply a sensational spectacle of violence, but rather the body of an aristocratic female loaded with political symbolism.

To conclude my discussion of critical readings of *Titus Andronicus*, I would like to focus on Coppélia Kahn's feminist analysis of the Roman plays in *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women* (1997). The fact that a feminist analysis chooses the Roman plays already suggests the tone of its readings: the masculine world of the Roman warriors and its political institutions bears a particular relationship with the feminine in relation to the other plays. Again, the inclusion of *Titus Andronicus* in Kahn's book is worth mentioning, for some critics disregard it as a Roman play, be it due to the aforementioned alleged aesthetic demerits or to the chronological distance from the late Roman plays. Whereas the other Roman plays have a single, identifiable main source grounded in Roman history, *Titus Andronicus* springs from several different and sometimes hard to trace sources. The Rome of *Titus Andronicus* is ahistorical, which, in my view, allows the play to be more easily read as allegory or to be adapted to different contexts. Julie Taymor's *Titus* in particular stands out as an adaptation of the play that explores this Rome's anachronism.[6] In this regard, Coppélia Khan cites T. J. B. Spencer's famous remark: "It is not so much that any particular set of political institutions is assumed in *Titus*, but rather that it includes *all* the political institutions that Rome ever had. The author seems anxious, not to get it all right, but to get it all in" (qtd. in Khan 46-7).

The thesis Khan pointedly supports in her book is that in Shakespeare's Roman plays the very idea of Romanness "is closely linked to an ideology of masculinity" (2). What Khan wants to identify is "the centrality of a specifically Roman masculinity to Rome as represented in these texts" (2). For her, such centrality has been until now neglected by other critics, even those concerned with gender in Shakespeare's work. Following on previous work, Khan shifts her focus away from psychoanalysis—using it as a tool but not relying on it entirely as in her previous works—to see masculinity "less as an intra-psychic phenomenon more as an ideology [. . .] Thus I am concerned here with the social dimension of *virtus*—its interdependence with political constructions of the state and the family, and with the intertextuality of Shakespeare and the Latin authors he read" (2). In this dissertation my focus lies on the former, that is, the interdependence of Roman masculinity and such political constructions.

I believe that Kahn's justification for subtitling the book "Warriors, Wounds, and Women" is the most effective way of presenting her general ideas on Romanness in Shakespeare. For her, these are the "three main *foci* of Shakespeare's problematic of Roman virtue" (15). Firstly, "'warriors' evokes the central motif of the Greco-Roman heroic tradition—the agon, that 'zero-sum game' of rivalry through which the hero wins his name by pitting himself against his likeness or equal in contests of courage and strength" (15). A Roman warrior's worth is measured, of course, not in relation to women, but in relation to other men, his rivals, whom they both imitate and try to surpass in virtue (15). As for the wounds, they "mark a kind of vulnerability easily associated with women: they show the flesh to be penetrable, they show that it can bleed, they make apertures in the body" (16). The wounds are signs of instability—of the feminine—in the male warriors. For instance, Kahn posits that Julius Caesar's corpse "is the feminized object through which the conspirators try to restore their manly virtue as citizens of the republic" (17). In *Titus Andronicus*, Lavinia's wounds also become Titus's, turning him into the revenge hero (17). And then there is women, the last element in Kahn's subtitle and "in Shakespeare's problematic of manly virtue" (18). In Shakespeare's Rome, women are central but subordinated to the patriarchy. Babcock, quoted by Kahn, puts it accurately: they are "symbolically central, though socially peripheral" (qtd. in Kahn 19). It is through these elements—and from a feminist perspective—that Kahn wishes to unveil the underlying ideology of masculinity in Shakespeare's Roman plays.

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[6] Anachronisms are notorious in Shakespeare's plays, but here I am writing specifically about the type of anachronism regarding the several Roman institutions in *Titus,* from republican to imperial Rome, not the occasional Elizabethan element in Roman plays, such as the eclectic costumes seen in the Peacham drawing.

Having studied *Titus Andronicus* previously, I regret not having read Kahn's criticism on the play before, particularly her insights on the image of motherhood in *Titus Andronicus*, insights that I perhaps had in mind, subconsciously. For her, *Titus Andronicus* is a play haunted by the absent, alienated, and uncommonly fertile Roman mother. Absences seem to be one of the critics' most discussed aspects in Shakespeare's plays, for instance, the absence of children in *Macbeth* as argued by Sigmund Freud, or the occlusion of violence in *Titus* as argued by Barker. In Kahn's regard, the absent Roman mother, never mentioned in the play and apparently excluded from the family tomb, is displaced onto Tamora, the Gothic mother (55). In my view, it seems that the play is haunted not only by the absent mother but also by the sexuality of the Gothic mother: the fertile Roman mother is mirrored in Tamora. Her sexuality brought forth her sons Chiron and Demetrius, as well as Aaron, her lover, the main perpetrators of the crimes in the play. Kahn puts it precisely: "One crime spawns another, and the ultimate source of all is the offended, alienated mother" (55).

However, I think that the main point in Kahn's reading is that Lavinia's presence is also disruptive. Lavinia, according to Kahn, the central concern of the play, is "the politics of sexuality" (47) and, at the center of such politics, of course, lies the violated daughter. As previously mentioned, it is through her suffering that Titus, the noble Roman general, is turned into the Titus Andronicus that names the tragedy, that is, the revenge hero, capable of scheming and mutilating in ways he probably had not learned in the fields of battle where he spent most of his life. As Kahn reminds us, none of the crimes committed against Titus put him in this position but the rape of Lavinia (48). His revenge, however, is not only on the perpetrators of the rape but also "on the girl herself, when he murders her". The killing of Lavinia is Titus's way of reinforcing "his title of *paterfamilias*" (48). He regains his ownership over Lavinia's body with her killing, "carrying out that 'symbolics of blood', according to which, Lynda Boosan argues, 'A daughter's virginity is perceived to "belong to" the blood of—and therefore to—the father'" (Boosan qtd. in Khan 48). But Lavinia is not simply an emblem of the daughter in a patriarchal society or a metaphor for political power or the failure of the Republic, as argued by Tennenhouse and Hadfield. Douglas Green, quoted by Khan, writes: Lavinia is "polysemic and disruptive… beyond complete containment by the patriarchal assumptions of Shakespeare's time—and in some ways our own" (qtd. in 48). One must not forget her active participation in the revenge plot. If Lavinia was once the receptacle of Chiron's and Demetrius' semen, she plays this role again later on in the tragedy, but in a radically different position, being the receptacle of their blood. I think that her participation in the revenge plot is not merely helping Titus, but also resignifying the violence she suffered.

To conclude the chapter, I would like to assert that these readings, of course, do not exhaust the thematic possibilities of the play, but what I have hoped to achieve with this section is to show that the text is not supreme in creating meaning or authority: these operate in close relationship with performance and criticism. The playtext has remained the same for these four centuries, but the status of *Titus Andronicus* as a cultural artifact has drastically changed. The fact that such rich variety of criticism on the play is available is proof that the play has been taken seriously, at least by a number of critics. The complexity and difference in their positions also attests that *Titus*, however exaggerated—or precisely because of its exaggeration—is not an easy play to read. How can one interpret the death of the messenger? How can Lavinia be represented? But the main question—and the one to be answered in the present work—is how do contemporary performances signify such acts of violence and their political implications? With the array of criticism I have presented here, I hope to be better equipped to analyze my corpus.

3. ANATOMY MONSTROUS: FRAMING POLITICS IN SHAKESPEARE AND *TITUS ANDRONICUS*

Human beings in a mob
What's a mob to a king?
What's a king to a god?
What's a god to a non-believer who don't believe in anything?
(Jay Z and Kanye West featuring The Dream and Frank Ocean, "No Church in the Wild")

In the previous chapter I have covered, in general and brief terms, more or less 400 years of performance history, controversy, questioned authority, and criticism of William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. In the end, such endeavor tells the story of how *Titus Andronicus*, once the crowd's favorite, became detested for more than 300 hundred years only to be taken seriously again in the 1950s. The telling of such a story is essential to the analysis I intend to carry out in the following chapters. However, it is not sufficient to frame the analyses of productions covering a time span of 70 years. If I intend to analyze the way *Titus Andronicus* in performance in the twentieth century and today produces certain images of violence which evoke—or conceal—political subtexts, contextualizing how the political appears in Shakespeare and in *Titus Andronicus* becomes a vital task, which I carry out in the following pages.

It seems that specifically two questions arise when speaking of Shakespeare and politics. First, where does Shakespeare stand politically? And second, why is that relevant today? The first question has generated a considerable amount of discussion, and many volumes have been published in an attempt to convince the reader that Shakespeare subscribed to this or that view, or even that unwillingly his works, in a way, supported certain political stances. Shakespeare could have been an early supporter of democracy, of republicanism, of monarchy, of State power in general, of anarchism, communism, imperialism, Elizabethan or our contemporary, or perhaps none of this, but rather anti-political. He was skeptic of power yet supported it. He demonized the mob yet had faith in the common men. Such arguments, deliberately exaggerated at this point, only serve to illustrate that, with the aid of a line or two from one of Shakespeare's plays, a myriad of political stances could be attributed to the bard. Putting it in more humorous terms, "a quick scan showed me Shakespeare as royalist, democrat, catholic, puritan, feudalist, progressive, humanist, racist, Englishman, homosexual, Marlowe, Bacon and so on round the bay. I flicked the pages of some of the more improbable ascriptions. The compounded smell of disuse and of evidence rose to my nostrils. I got out and went for a walk" (Raymond Williams qtd in. Peter Smith 21). Some of these positions will be exposed in this chapter, not because I believe that any of them is right but because they can enrich the debate on the issues at hand.

The second question, whether Shakespeare's politics are relevant today, can be as ideologically loaded as the first one. It is possible to argue that Shakespeare's works, much like Machiavelli's—at least in some more favorable interpretations of this oeuvre—provide valuable tips to citizens on how to deal with public affairs in face of tyranny and exploitation. On the other hand, the myth of Shakespeare, or "Shakemyth" as put by Peter J. Smith in *Social Shakespeare*, sees Shakespeare as a symbol of humanity's universal, subjective, and existential struggles, emptying his works of any possible political implications, suggesting the impossibility of any political change. Unlike the first question, however, a satisfactory question may be provided here: Shakespeare's plays acquire political significance today through performance. Even if a significant part of the theory and criticism presented here focuses on the playtext, I will naturally keep in mind that this is a work on performance analysis.

3.1 Shakespolitics

Right in the beginning of his introduction to *Shakespeare and Tyranny: Regimes of Reading in Europe and Beyond*, Keith Gregor writes: "For decades the prevailing *doxa* on the issue is best represented by L. C. Knights's assertion in this 1957 Shakespeare lecture to the British Academy: "Shakespeare, like the great majority of his fellow-countrymen, 'had no politics'" (Knights 1979, 152)" (1). As the title of the collection of essay he is introducing suggests, L. C. Knight's seems far from what the last few decades of Shakespeare criticism have shown. Even if L. C. Knight argues that Shakespeare's works imply a certain defense of a general "wholesome" form of government (qtd. in Gregor 1-2), today, sixty years later, it is impossible to comply with such evading neutrality. On the matter of tyranny, for instance, Gregor quotes Jan Kott's now classic *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*: "Where and when did Shakespeare hear the tyrant's cruel laugh? And if he did not hear it, how did he have a presentiment of it?" (qtd. in 3). Complementing Kott's words, I would like to quote Peter Brook's remark in his preface to *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*: "Kott is undoubtedly the only writer on Elizabethan matters who assumes without question that every one of his readers will at some point or other have been woken by the police in the middle of the night" (ix). Even if Kott's reading of the plays is sometimes considered too conservative due to the seemingly impossibility of change it implies, it is undeniable that he cannot separate the human experience of oppression under a totalitarian regime from his interpretation. Whether Shakespeare was a critic of such tyranny, an accomplice to it, or both, consciously or unconsciously, whether whatever position he held was conditioned by the social energies of the time or were fruit of his own will, is subject to extensive debate, but it is hard to continue affirming that Shakespeare "had no politics".

So central is politics to Shakespeare's plays that Hugh Grady, in "Political Approaches to Shakespeare", writes:

> Shakespeare was keenly interested in the workings of political power. It is no exaggeration to say that power is one of the most prevalent themes of his overall *oeuvre*, along with death and eros. It is *the* major intellectual issue of the histories and Roman plays, and a major if unevenly distributed one in the tragedies and romances. (527)

Being power such a major part of the plays, I would like to begin my exposition from the discussion of where Shakespeare's plays stand politically, whether in relation to their Elizabethan and Jacobean context or to recent and contemporary performance.

Jonathan Dollimore discusses mainly Jacobean tragedies in his groundbreaking *Radical Tragedy*, a title which, as Terry Eagleton points out in the foreword, sounds, in fact, contradictory. On the genre Dollimore discusses, Eagleton writes:

> tragedy has long been regarded as the most blue-blooded of literary forms, disdainfully aloof from everyday life, a question of the downfall of princes rather than the death of a taxi driver. In the hands of conservative commentators, it has become associated with myth and destiny, ritual and blood sacrifice, jealous gods and hapless victims. For this lineage of criticism, tragic suffering is ennobling rather than appalling: it is through anguish and breakdown that our deepest humanity is affirmed, so that we leave the theatre edified and inspired by scenes of carnage and despair. (x)

Dollimore, unlike the "conservative commentators" mentioned by Eagleton and inserted in a booming British Marxist tradition, sees in Shakespeare's and his contemporaries' tragedies a potential for political change and disruption, breaking out of such molds as the edifying tragedy that presents a clear-cut solution to the tragic hero's conflict, thus restoring order and hindering any possibility for change. In opposition to conservative critics such as T. S. Eliot, Dollimore highlights Brecht's instance with the radical possibilities of such theater: "Brecht recognised in Jacobean theatre a prototype of his own epic theatre, one where the refusal and disarray of which Sartre speaks involves a positive rejection of 'order'—in the universe, society and the human subject—as ideological misrepresentation" (6).

A familiarity with Brecht's writings on theater reveals that the German playwright could see in Shakespeare, much like Dollimore, some of the radical elements Brecht himself applied in his own theatrical practice with the intent of "alienating the audience". The sense is not exclude the audience from pleasure, but rather to separate them from the spectacle, thus avoiding total identification with the characters and promoting a more rational reading, one that would allow the events to be perceived historically and within their sociopolitical context.

I have explored such a relationship previously in my MA thesis (2014), in which I argued that Jane Howell's BBC production of *Titus Andronicus* utilized some of the so-called Brechtian devices as a way of coping with the seemingly exaggerated violence in the play. In my discussion of Brecht's views on theatre I highlighted his relationship to Shakespeare's own drama. To Brecht, Shakespeare's plays could easily be performed in accordance to his theories. As I write, "Brecht's references to Shakespeare seem to present a mix of admiration and a wish to update Shakespeare's drama—or maybe to liberate it from 'bourgeois theater'" (43). Dollimore's description of the conventions of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama is aligned with the Epic possibilities of Shakespeare's plays:

> It is, then, a tragedy which violates those cherished *aesthetic* principles which legislate that the ultimate aim of art is to order discordant elements; to explore conflict in order ultimately to resolve it; to explore suffering in order ultimately to transcend it. All three principles tend to eliminate from literature its socio-political context (and content), finding instead supposedly timeless values which become the *universal* counterpart of man's *essential* natur—the underlying human essence. Measured against such criteria much Elizabethan and Jacobean drama does indeed lack aesthetic completeness and ethical/metaphysical resolution.

> But perhaps it has to be seen to lack these things in order to then be seen to possess real (i.e. historical) significance. (8)

I strongly agree with Dollimore's claim: the great tragedies in particular seem to end in rather ambiguous terms, politically or otherwise. In "Radical *Lear* Revisited", for instance, José Roberto O'Shea and I analyze two adaptations of *King Lear* in Dollimore's term and highlight how each director, Akira Kurosawa and Grigori Kozintsev, explored this resistance to closure. The case with *Lear* does not seem to be the exception, but rather the rule.

Somewhat in line with Dollimore's arguments and Brecht's sympathies, Peter J. Smith, in the aforementioned *Social Shakespeare*, offers a critique of the way Shakespeare's tragedies are often read with a focus on their protagonists' "tragic flaws". Even though his anti-psychological bias seems extreme, his argument about the implications of Shakespearean criticism revolving around the flaws is worth considering. Smith argues that the notion of "tragic flaw" is limiting in both political and dramaturgical terms. Dramaturgically "it renders meaningless the dramatic relationships that Shakespeare so carefully constructs" (46). Politically, the fatal flaw encloses the drama, giving the tragic events a single, unifying explanation: it was all due to Macbeth's ambition, Othelo's jealousy, Hamlet's indecision, and so on. Interpreting tragedies via the flaws, according to Smith, "proposes that there is no possibility of social amelioration, that education is a waste of time, that interpersonal relationships are futile and that everyone is self-interested and isolated" (46). Beyond the dramatic and political aspects, what also bothers Smith is how this focus on the flaws mystifies Shakespeare's work, "placing the dynamics of its ebb and flow firmly within the unlit harbor of the protagonist's character" (47). He goes on: "The assertion that the fatal flaw is there at all is extraordinary given Shakespeare's contempt for the abstract" (47).

In opposition to Dollimore, Smith invokes Graham Holderness' voice when arguing about the political implications of the tragic genre, in the sense that, through catharsis, tragedy makes spectators tamer to social reality. The ideology of comedies, with their playful and subversive tones, opposes that of tragedy: "Tragedy for Aristotle was really a form of cultural oppression, a means of ideological coercion by which the audience was invited to sympathise with the tragic hero in his challenging of law, morality or fate; and then required to cleanse that sympathy through an awed contemplation of the terrible consequences of the challenge" (qtd. In 42). After watching a tragedy, spectators leave behind all of their impulses to revolt thanks to the cathartic experience. The experience of performing Shakespearean tragedy in the past decades in particular contradicts this view, as I will show later in the following chapters. Any relationship between text, staging, context, and audience can generate unexpected political and ideological resonances, thus complicating clear-cut associations between tragedy and either conservative or revolutionary forces.

Such unexpected interactions are mentioned by Victor Kiernan in *Shakespeare: Poet and Citizen*, commenting on the social functions of Elizabethan playhouses. He writes:

> The theatre would have a special function in helping to induct into London life the swarm of newcomers always arriving, at first uprooted and bewildered. Altogether, as L.C. Knights said, 'the theatre's success lay in the bringing together and the lively interplay of different interests within a fairly homogeneous society' (11). Harbage observed that what its opponents disliked was this audience itself, rather than the plays they watched. (26)

Thus, the subversive potential of the theater as seen by its opponents lies not necessarily in the thematic elements of the spectacle, but perhaps in its ability to gather this type of audience: "The theatre was a democratic institution in an intensely undemocratic age" (Harbage qtd. in Kiernan 26). Barbara Freedman, quoted by Andrew Hadfield in *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, reminds us of the ambiguously subversive potential of theater: "apprentices would often meet in the theatre, energetic and aggressive young men, conscious of their relative poverty and economic exploitation, more interested in drinking and bear-baiting than watching thoughtful drama" (Hadfield 5). However, I tend to agree with Hadfield in the sense that this issue is too complex, and the theater could operate both as "escapist entertainment" and as "some form of opposition to the status quo" (Hadfield 4-5). But, going beyond this simple dichotomy between reactionary and conservative, Kiernan calls Shakespeare a "conservator", that is, "a cherisher of civilized values deriving from all classes and from generations past and present" (Kiernan 14). Kiernan's contemporary equivalent of this attitude is the socialist writer who, in a defense against fascism, ends up "defending, besides socialism, the best of a liberal tradition on which the heirs of its bourgeois founders were turning their backs; Shakespeare might feel that in drawing some of his portraits he was restoring what was worthy in an old feudal-chivalrous tradition, debased now by courtiers and parasites" (Kiernan 14-15). If

Shakespeare was a conservative, it was, then, a sort of revolutionary conservatism, an attempt to preserve certain values that were being lost in that status quo.

However, the argument on whether Shakespearean tragedy—or even tragedy in general—is a conservative or revolutionary art form, as intriguing and thoughtful as it may be, is, after all, rather inconclusive. What matters, in the end, is not if the genre or the medium in itself are conservative, but rather each individual reading, rereading, translation, adaptation, or production. As argued in Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor's introduction to *Shakespeare Reproduced: the Text in History and Ideology*, every reading is political in itself: "every reading or staging of a play is implicated in ideology in that it produces the play within the codes and conventions sustaining particular, interested constructions of the real. Far from distorting the 'true' meaning of a changing text, however, such constructions *are* the text: it lives in history, which history itself understood as a field of contestation" (4). Thus, their claim is that political criticism is not necessarily only about exposing such and such ideologies contained in the text or in a particular performance, as if the critic were a disinterested observer capable of illuminating the readership with their superior knowledge, but rather about "the critic [acknowledging] his or her own interested position within the social formation, rather than laying claim to an Olympian disinterestedness" (4).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Andrew Hadfield's *Shakespeare and Republicanism* is worth of consideration, especially due to the fact it escapes such dichotomies, instead attempting to provide a "historical and cultural archeology" (13). It would be an exaggeration to argue that Hadfield labels Shakespeare as a committed republican. Rather, Hadfield's intent is to analyze Shakespeare's work in order to "reveal a highly politicized and radical thinker, interested in republicanism" (13). Thus, Hadfield refuses to call Shakespeare a republican, preferring to signal republican interest in his career, rather than claiming a definite affiliation. Due to the commercial nature of Shakespeare's theater, "dramatists—and writers in general—had to produce material quickly, take risks and hope that what they wrote appealed to a wide audience" (4). It is no wonder, then, that in a culture permeated by republican images Shakespeare's and his contemporaries' works incorporated such elements into their artistic production (54). Thus, playwriting and such republican elements interacted in a dialectical way, as Hadfield notes: "Republicanism and early modern literature are interlinked in two fundamental, interrelated ways. Literary texts adopt and adapt stories from republican history and literature. They also contain republican ideas with which they engage" (58).

Considering this association between Shakespeare and republicanism, it is important to define republicanism in terms that can be understood by the contemporary reader. Even if some argue that the Elizabethans could not possibly have a notion of republicanism—this would only be possible after the English civil war (Hadfield 50)—Hadfield's summary of the elements that constituted republican discourse at the time hints that republicanism cannot be seen as "a monolithic concept indicating the participation of all citizens in the political process. Rather, it was a 'Cluster of themes concerning citizenship, public virtue and true nobility'" (52). Hadfield then goes on to enumerate the elements that, in conjunction, produced republican thought. These elements are, namely, "a rhetoric against tyranny", "a strong commitment to the humanist programme of educational reform and a concentration on the study of the classics", "a stress on the need for virtue in government officials or magistrates, often leading to the suggestion that hereditary monarchy was not the ideal form of government", "a keen interest in histories of the republic and enthusiasm for Livy", employment of "the language of natural rights", and, finally, the element that according to Hadfield most appealed to Shakespeare, "the importance of offices and positions of responsibility held by ordinary citizens/subjects" (52-53).

In a more recent study, Gabriel Chanan, an outsider to Shakespearean scholarship, recognizes in Shakespeare elements sympathetic to an open society, something akin to what we refer to as democracy today. Chanan, similarly to Hadfield, is careful to not subscribe Shakespeare "to a particular doctrine, but to ask whether his multi-faceted way of depicting human affairs aligns with an open society" (2). Instead of problematizing Shakespeare's accredited ambiguity concerning his political standpoint, it is precisely this ambiguity that Chanan sees as providing "a special value for democracy" (2). But by this, Chanan is not necessarily positioning Shakespeare as a precursor of modern democracy, but rather admitting that Shakespeare was, "unknowingly, wrestling with its preconditions" (2). The role Shakespeare's work played, then, was not explicitly to promote a progressive, democratic agenda, but "to continually pose the question of how human beings shape their shared conditions" (2). Recognizing that shared conditions such as "monarchies, dictatorships or foreign rulers" are "humanly constructed, and able to be changed" (2) is then the merit of Shakespeare's works to promote an open society, instead of simply endorse such values through sheer propaganda.

Despite a certain naïveté in Chanan's work, I tend to agree with his criticism of some Marxist currents of the 1980s when it comes to the role of democracy in political discussion. Chanan writes that "[t]hey argued that the plays have abundant political content, but that Shakespeare must be understood as an ideologue of the Tudor and Stuart regimes. By definition he cannot be pro-democratic. However, for these radical commentators, democracy is, in any case, merely a smokescreen for exploitative capitalism" (21). But the major problem with this line of thinking is, particularly, its "profound anti-humanism" (22). To this effect, Chanan cites Neema Parvini: "[t]here is something missing here, something individual and unaccountably human… There is something more to people than structural effects…cultural historicism is fundamentally opposed to Shakespeare's own project of humanizing history" (qtd. in 22).

The cultural materialist position has already been presented here, even if not explicitly named so, in Jonathan Dollimore's work. Before wrapping up this section, I would like to conclude this debate offering a summary of two of the major currents in Shakespearean criticism in the last 30 years, particularly concerning political criticism: new historicism and cultural materialism.

In *Shakespeare and New Historicist Theory*, Neema Parvini offers a thorough account of the development of New Historicism, its origins, its *modus operandi*, and its main critics. According to Parvini, the main intellectual influences on New Historicism are Foucault, Hayden White and Clifford Geertz. Foucault's influence stems especially from his later works, such as *Discipline and Punish* and *History of Sexuality* (23), and is reflected in a preoccupation with power and discourse, themes that "seemed a virtual obsession to practitioners of new historicism in the 1980s and early 1990s" (7). Hayden White's touch can be seen in his reading of history, influenced by literary theory, of history as fiction (24). Finally, Clifford Geertz did to culture in general what Hayden White did to history, that is, "textualize[d] all of culture itself" (27) . New historicist criticism, then, finds one marginal or apparently accessory episode or cultural manifestation and then is able to, by means of its analysis, uncover how it reflects and strengthens the ruling ideology and power structures. An example that I have mentioned in the previous chapter is Francis Barker's reading of *Titus Andronicus*, which takes the killing of the messenger as an occlusion of state violence.

Cultural materialism, even if still on the left side of the political spectrum, tends to offer a rather different reading of texts than new historicism. In the words of Jonathan Dollimore, quoted by Parvini:

"Did [Shakespeare's] plays reinforce the dominant order, or do they interrogate it to the point of subversion? According to a rough and ready division, new historicists have inclined to the first view, cultural materialists to the second" (qtd. in 119). But what separates these two critical approaches more than the always present debate between reactionary and subversive Shakespeares, is their method. Parvini sums it up:

> New historicist readings tend to anchor themselves in historical anectdotes and to make connections between texts and official ruling ideologies: they use the details of history and text to weave together "stories". While they do historicize, it seems to me that cultural materialists employ a great deal more time and space dismantling and repudiating previous criticism and scholarship as being both essentialist humanist and ideological. (119-120)

But to conclude this section on the several ways Shakespeare has been associated with one political current or another, whether his plays are reactionary "documents of civilization" in Francis Barker's words or defenses of democratic, republican values, to sum up a few positions, I would like to bring to this discussion Ewan Fernie's recently published *Shakespeare for Freedom* (2017). One of the aims of his book is to make a politically informed defense of the study of the plays, something I borrow for my own work here as a PhD candidate proposing a political reading of *Titus Andronicus* in performance. Thus, Fernie writes: "This book argues that Shakespeare means freedom. That is why the plays matter, and not just aesthetically but also in terms of the impact they historically have had and can continue to have on personal and political life in the world" (1).

Further, Fernie reminds us of a "long lost tradition of associating Shakespeare with freedom which we urgently need to recover" (48). Such a tradition is found even in modern critical thought. Ironically, one late example of this tradition can be found in Foucault—whose aforementioned association with new historicism might almost seem out of place now—who, in a lecture at Collège de France, defends Shakespeare's drama as one of the foundations of modern thought due to its refusal "to sing 'power's ode', dreaming instead of 'the freedom to roam', and of free genesis, self-accomplishment . . . a freedom against the world" (qtd. in Fernie 48). For Fernie, however, this tradition goes way back before Foucault. And the reason to recover this tradition can be found in Walter Benjamin, as invoked by Fernie: "Benjamin argues that to save the future we first have to save the past; if Shakespeare is now typically assumed to be conservative, his association with radical freedom can work as what Foucault calls a ‘counter-memory’, pulling in the other direction” (49).

Shakespeare dramatizes freedom through his major characters. Shakespeare’s greatest men and women struggle for freedom in relation not only to the several institutions that may constrain them, but in relation to one another. To Fernie, the dramatization of such interactions is what “lends Shakespearean drama an inherent political suggestiveness” (7). “How might such freedom be extended”, Fernie asks himself, “even shared out equally—among the *dramatis personae*? What sorts of interaction, on and off stage, tend to promote the freedoms which Shakespeare dramatises?” (7). To sum up the main argument of the book, Fernie posits “that freedom in Shakespeare is always a struggle for freedom” (7). Not only that, it is also a struggle for the meaning of freedom, an unending struggle from play to play, since “Shakespeare makes no attempt to give us an overarching myth. He offers only a series of plays. One comes to an end; another begins. There is no final, definitive synthesis” (7).

In exploring how Shakespeare’s characters embody this struggle for freedom in “both its individual and political aspects” (66), Fernie nods to Andrew Hadfield’s aforementioned thesis that one can find in the plays “a strong Republican strain in Shakespeare” (66). This is done through the interaction between characters who not only are “free artists of themselves”, to quote Hegel, but also “always forged in relation to other characters and their freedoms. This dialectic between the individual and collective is fundamental to drama as interaction and has significant ramifications” (66). Self-realization in relation to other characters’ freedoms dramatized by Shakespeare, to Fernie, takes precedence over the plot. For him, even if a Shakespearean plot is far from progressive, it is through characterization “that the Shakespearean struggle for freedom foretells the great political passion of modernity, amounting to a serial and probing experiment in liberal democracy *avant la lettre*” (67). Thus, “Shakespeare’s plotting is [not] always progressive” but “his characters tend to exceed his plots, gesturing towards a more perfect scenario in which their potential really could be consummated” (65). Fernie beautifully sums it up: “The life that Shakespeare wants for his characters exceeds the life of genre” (65). But even if the plotting itself is less relevant to the advancement of the freedom Fernie identifies in Shakespeare, it is in the tragic genre that such a freedom is explored to its deepest. It is in tragedy that the struggle for freedom is developed to its extreme and characters' selves most fully realized, "because in moving out towards death, the tragic hero also moves liberatingly beyond merely provisional social arrangements. Tragedy affords an opportunity to pursue the Shakespearean vocation for being someone else" (70).

Finally, with his work Fernie aims at leaving behind "the thought-killing cliché that he has no identifiable politics, and to begin to see and understand the real contribution he has made in the past and can still make in the future to personal and political life" (75-76). Even if the plays offer no sense of closure, no "final solution", it is precisely this open struggle for freedom that renders it politically relevant and dramatically compelling. After all, "any formal resolution of the fight would not only put a stop to drama; it would also delimit and deny freedom itself, since freedom is ever-new, inherently dramatic" (75).

I do not want to imply that I have presented in the previous pages most of the positions attributed to Shakespeare's politics—or his absence of politics. Not only are there several other positions that a research could cite, but neither are all of the authors necessarily attributing a clear-cut position to Shakespeare's work. Rather, what I hope to have achieved is a summary of relevant the critical engagements between Shakespeare's works—with a slight focus on his tragedies—and politics, be them via suggestions of freedom, democracy, Republicanism, subversion, containment, conservatism, or approval of State power. In a work with such a scope as this, I cannot stand neutral in such a pressing and particularly crucial issue. In this sense, I stand more closely to Ewan Fernie's position, and also to Andrew Hadfield's. Acknowledging my position does not exclude other readings from being taken into account in my work, for, even in disagreement, it is possible to recognize the degree of insight and brilliancy in them. Also, being able to put together a variety of conflicting views helps to understand the complex phenomenon which is Shakespeare and politics in performance.

3.2. Punishment, Body Politic, and Subjection

In this section I discuss the themes of power, punishment, and the body politic as they appear in Shakespeare's dramaturgy. Naturally, some of these issues will overlap with the questions I have discussed in the previous sections. The themes I discuss in this section partially overlap with what has been previously discussed in the present dissertation. Nevertheless, before proceeding to the last section of the chapter, in which I l discuss some of the political themes in *Titus Andronicus*'s playtext and performance, covering this ground is crucial to enriching the analysis.

Firstly, I would like to discuss the question of power in the plays. In a collection of texts edited in 1998 by Gillian Murray Kendall, *Shakespearean Power and Punishment: a Volume of Essays*, the editor raises the following question in his introduction: "Where, in these plays, does power lie? Are there inherent limits to the exercise of power? Are established power structures stable, or, as certain branches of new historicism might suggest, do processes of subversion and containment cause a constant metamorphosis of those structures?" (7). This question leads to the discussion of punishment in Shakespeare as a means of publicly displaying power. Of course, this resonates with Leonard Tennenhouse's argument in *Power on Display*, but Kendall reads such a display paradoxically: "But there is evidence, too, that the excesses of the state . . . show a fundamental weakness in that state. Like the excesses of revengers and murderers, spectacular state-orchestrated executions full of sound and fury could sometimes end by signifying nothing—or worse than nothing" (8).

Kendall develops this argument further in an essay of his own, "Overkill in Shakespeare". Here, Kendall discusses how exaggerated instances of violence in Shakespeare, again, paradoxically, work not to reaffirm the power of those who perform such violent deeds, but rather to display how fragile and ineffectual this power is. Two of the examples come from Roman plays, namely *Julius Caesar* and *Titus Andronicus*. In the first case, Kendall writes, of course, about the murder of Julius Caesar and how its perpetrators vacillate. This reading of Caesar's murder might sound strange at first, but Kendall's argument is convincing: "Brutus and the conspirators, for example, stab great Caesar repeatedly, as if they had little confidence their violent act could kill him" (175). Ironically, Caesar returns as a ghost and the mob is quickly turned against the conspirators by Mark Antony; the overkilling of Caesar is thus turned against itself. In the second case, Kendall writes about Titus's revenge on Tamora and her sons: "he cuts their throats, grinds their bones to dust, adds their blood to it, and bakes their heads in a pasty, which he feeds to their mother" (175). "Such complete destruction," Kendall writes, "ultimately limits Titus' ability to enact vengeance" (175). Jane Howell's *Titus Andronicus* for the BBC series, for example, goes as far as having Titus reenact the murders, as he cuts Tamora a slice of the pie. To say that he cuts the pie is a euphemism: he stabs it, as if already announcing with his actions that Chiron and Demetrius are baked in that pie before saying so to Tamora after she literally tastes his revenge. But Chiron and Demetrius are already dead, and stabbing the pie, as in the televised *Titus*, achieves effectively nothing. In a note, Kendall quotes Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* to strengthen his point: “A body effaced, reduced to dust and thrown to the winds, a body destroyed piece by piece by the infinite power of the sovereign constituted not only the ideal, but the real limit of punishment” (qtd. In 195). Overkilling, then, “suggests the limits of power—and not only of power that is usurped, but, by analogy, power that *is*, in the context of the play, legitimate” (175).

The extreme violence done to these bodies, particularly in the case of Caesar, moves us to one of the major political themes in Shakespeare’s plays, that is, the recurring metaphor of the *body politic*. This image, “that metaphorical entity made up of all the individual bodies of the commonwealth and headed by the monarch—informs numerous instances of excessive violence” (Kendall 173). According to Bernard J. Dobski and Dustin Gish, in the preface to the collection of essays edited by them, *Shakespeare and the Body Politic*, the metaphor of the body politic, “perhaps the most vivid and enduring image in speech describing political community ever proposed” (x), accounts for Shakespeare’s relevance not only in his own time but also today. So pervasive is the image of the body politic that it infiltrates nearly all aspects of the plays: “The sentiments and consequences of familial affection or romantic love, the longed-for blessings of peace and prosperity, the desire for justice and vengeance, and the spirited pursuit of honor and glory cannot be conceived apart from the limits of the body politic” (xi). And so developed such an image is in Shakespeare’s plays that “there may be no greater account or anatomy of the Body Politic in the English language than what one discovers in Shakespeare’s plays and poetry” (1).

Dobski and Gish argue that, today, the image the body politic invokes in the minds of readers is one of tyranny, associated with the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century, in which considerations about an organic, whole society ended up being attempted to be built at the cost of a severe destruction of individual liberties and human lives (1-2). Nevertheless, for them, it is worth recovering the tradition of the body politic in a wholesome manner, as it can signify the harmony of the whole, with the disharmony of such a body resulting in “diseases” such as a civil war (6-8). In Shakespeare’s own time, the image of the body politic steers away from the absolutism contemporarily associated with it. In line with Hadfield’s thesis, Dobski and Gish highlight the use of the body politic in alignment with Republican ideals:

> The contribution of citizens, especially members of parliament and counselors to the crown, to the inner workings of a healthy body politic complicates the common portrait of

> Henrician and Elizabethan England as an absolute monarchy demanding strict order, the rule of law, and the utter subservience of subjects. In reality, this brief survey of its uses should suffice to show that political thought in Shakespeare's time had recourse to the image of the body politic as a means to explore republican principles and mixed government as well as to sustain or even re-conceive royal authority. (9)

The image of the body politic takes various shapes in the plays, and in order to clarify such uses I will take two Roman plays as example, namely *Coriolanus* and *Titus Andronicus*—not only due to the relevance to the present work but mainly because they illustrate the issue well. Firstly, in *Coriolanus*, for instance, the body politic takes form in the famous metaphor of the belly as a representation of the Senate. The so-called "fable of the belly [. . .] takes on fuller elaboration in the Roman historians, Livy and Dionysus of Halicarnassus, as well as Plutarch—all of which were available to Shakespeare" (10). Menenius uses the fable of the belly in order to dissuade the plebeians from "wag[ing] war against that part of Rome that provides sustenance to the entire body politic" (11). To sum up, the fable of the belly compares the senate to the digestive system, in the sense that all resources are directed to feed it. If the belly/senate sounds a parasite at first, feeding off the resources of the other parts/classes, a closer look at its workings reveals it only does so to later redistribute such resources in order to better benefit the body/society. The effect of this speech in *Coriolanus* is not the same as in one of its sources, namely Plutarch's "Life of Coriolanus", since in Shakespeare's tragedy the populace does not recognize the body politic as united; therefore, such a metaphor holds little valor to them (11).

In *Titus Andronicus* the body politic is completely dismembered, resulting in the decadence of the empire. What Dobski and Gish highlight about *Titus*, however, is a part that is often ignored when speaking of body politic and *Titus Andronicus*, a play so filled with chopping and maiming. They emphasize how Titus ignores a crucial part of the body politic, that is, the domestic head represented by the voice of the people. By deciding to ignore such a voice, "Titus deprives his body politic of the Roman head it lacks and the domestic sovereignty it urgently needs. Shakespeare's Roman works thus illustrate the dangers of failing to invest at least one part of the body politic with sovereignty; one needs to give a part of the community a voice that can speak for the whole and, in doing so, define, order, and preserve it" (15). But the body politic metaphors do not always work in obvious, equivalent ways in *Titus Andronicus*. Katherine Rowe, in "Dismembering and Forgetting in *Titus Andronicus*", calls attention to the paradoxical ways in which dismembering occurs in the play, exploring the body politic metaphor in unusual ways. The bizarre image of Lavinia carrying Titus's hand between her teeth offstage ends up signifying their first step towards revenge (300-301). The lack of hands, a body part associated with effective political action, signifies exactly the opposite of what one would expect: "dismemberment symbolizes loss of effective action in the world, it is clearly the condition of political agency in the play" (303). Missing hands, thus, offer a "false physiological synecdoche" (280), or perhaps an opposite physiological synecdoche. Considering the previous examples, it is clear that Shakespeare was not only acquainted with the body politic metaphor, but used it in unexpected ways, avoiding a "one to one" relationship between body parts and the equivalent in terms of government, society, or political action. Body politic in *Titus Andronicus* will be further discussed in the following section. All in all, the study of the body politic, for Dobski and Gish, shows that Shakespeare's preoccupation with forms of government "is a genuinely philosophical one, which takes its bearings from an experience of politics that is familiar—or at least available—to us all" (22).

To conclude this section, I would like to move from the body politic to what Daniel Juan Gil calls "the life of the flesh". Gil's argument in his *Shakespeare's Anti Politics: Sovereign Power and the Life of the Flesh* relates to the discussion in the previous section, but it takes a unique turn. Gil's argument is that "seeing Shakespeare as a partisan of either absolutism or civic republicanism misses the fundamentally anti-political drive in his literary-political imagination" (1). More than placing Shakespeare's works in one end of a spectrum or another, from conservative to Republican, Gil sees in Shakespeare's plays an "anti-political drive in his literary-political imagination" (1). The plays dramatize how forms of government are "vehicles of sovereign power that seizes the bodily lives of its subjects in order to impose on them a regulated subjectivity and textured social life" and act as "a surprising form of opposition to state power that bypasses the limited terms of the absolutism vs. civic republicanism debate" (1). Therefore, the opposition to state power found in Shakespeare's plays is not necessarily constructed by means of a direct confrontation against tyranny, but rather as "an encounter with raw sovereign power", when characters find themselves "utterly exposed to the arbitrary sovereign power of the state [. . .] lead[ing] to a transformation in self and in the link between self and others" (1). The experience of being exposed and recognizing such an awesome power is what Gil calls "the life of the flesh".

Gil uses modern political thought in order to better understand the "life of the flesh" and the very concept of sovereignty that it is based on. For Gil, an explanation of the workings of sovereign power can be found in Carl Schmitt's theory and, more contemporarily, in the works of the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, who takes Schmitt's work one step further. In Schmitt's view, "no matter how democratic or law-governed a political order, it is always underpinned by a sovereign power that is outside the institutionalized political framework" (2). The sovereign exception is not a rupture in the political order of a liberal government, but rather what structures this liberal order itself, even if by its haunting, unacknowledged presence. Agamben's role is to show how the sovereign exception does not exclusively work in institutional contexts, but "the effects of sovereign power pervade all of social and subjective life" (3). For Gil, Shakespeare is able to anticipate "the Schmitt/Agamben vision and uses it to launch a nihilistic critique of state power and a sustained exploration of a countervailing life of the flesh" (2).

The main implication of such a pervasive account of sovereign power is that there can be no "social life that is *outside of* or *separate from* the institutions of state power, for Agamben sees all forms of social life as products of primordial sovereign power" (4). Therefore, Gil urges contemporary theory to take into account "Agamben's understanding of the role of sovereign power in anchoring an essentially bio-political order" (5) along with the recent debates raised by critical theory, dealing with issues of cultural, ethnic, and, as I would like to add, sexual identity. Even if his work does not tackle the challenge of offering such a synthesis, it starts "with the assumption that there is a complex link between the structures of subjective, relational, and cultural life of early modern England and the historically new form of sovereign power carried by the rising nation-state" (5). Gil believes that this assumption is shared by Shakespeare, whose works are founded on the premises: "(1) that sovereign power structures the political order of the nation-state by being outside of the political order and therefore outside political norms; and (2) that this sovereign power is deeply bound up in defining and maintaining social roles and identities and even personal subjective experiences" (5).

Logically, if the depiction of sovereign power is present in Shakespeare's plays, however critical he may be of it, it is impossible to offer a, let us say, republican solution to this political problem in the plays, since, as Schmitt and Agamben have shown, any alternative to power ultimately relies on sovereign power. Thus, the "civic republican discourse" that some critics claim to be present in Shakespeare's works "is essentially self-annihilating; it criticizes the monarchical order for the demeaning effects of dependence on raw sovereign power without finding a way to define a political and social order that itself escapes being dependent on raw sovereign power" (8). In the end, Gil argues, Shakespeare's plays "teach Agamben's central lesson; namely, that sovereign power stands at the origin of any structured social and political life, that there is no way out of exposure to sovereign power" (9). Perhaps the only way to escape sovereign power is not through freer political arrangements, but as Ewan Fernies argues, through the sometimes-tragic freedom of realizing one's self, of becoming someone else.

3.3 A Civilization of Tigers

After having covered ground on some of the possible intersections between Shakespeare and politics, I would like to turn to some of the political problems found in *Titus Andronicus*. Some of the recent political criticism on the play was already been discussed in the previous chapter, such as Francis Barker's reading of the play as occluding violence, Leonard Tennenhouse's considerations on how power is displayed in the play, Copelia Kahn's discussion on the sexual politics of Rome, and Andrew Hadfield's analysis of the Republican present in *Titus*. Victor Kiernan comments on the recent surge of serious criticism on the play, instead of an easy dismissal of it due to its supposedly poor taste: "Yet there has been of late more willingness than formerly to think it—or most of it—genuine early Shakespeare, in spite of its wild and whirling story and grotesque horrors: a change of opinion which must owe something to our own prodigiously grown appetite for the sensational" (133-134). Thus, continuing the work done in the previous chapter, I will further discuss political aspects of the play, revisiting the aforementioned authors if necessary, and referring to *Titus Andronicus* in performance.

Bringing together the previous discussions on sovereignty to promote an understanding of the politics of *Titus Andronicus*, I would like refer to Thomas P. Anderson's *Shakespeare's Fugitive Politics*, a work that aligns itself with Daniel Juan Gil's aforementioned *Shakespeare's Anti-Politics* in its concern with the sovereign exception (Anderson 8). In one of the essays from *Shakespeare's Fugitive Politics,* entitled "Body Politics and the Non-Sovereign Exception in *Titus Andronicus* and *The Winter's Tale*", Anderson argues that in *Titus Andronicus* Shakespeare wants to explore the "the idea of the dangerous female body with a potency to kill" (139). The question of the body politic, as I have shown, is crucial to understanding the political intricacies of *Titus Andronicus*. Having this metaphor in mind, exemplified in figure 4 by means of a portrait of Queen Elizabeth I, it is crucial do note how Anderson's reading of *Titus Andronicus* (and also of *The Winter's Tale*, although not the focus here), similarly to Katherine Rowe's, avoids obvious equivalences. Interestingly, if Kendall sees in *Titus Andronicus* the issue of overkilling, Anderson identifies in the play quite the opposite, what he calls "overliving". Through the mutilated body of Lavinia (and the statute of Hermione in *The Winter's Tale)*,

> Shakespeare travesties the concept of the king's two bodies central to early modern sovereignty, redistributing agency between subjects to objects and from intentions to effects. In its parody of sovereignty's charismatic survival beyond death, these plays, to different degrees, transform political theology into a feminist politics of overliving in which performing objects . . . evoke the phenomenon of non-sovereign agency that defines Shakespeare's fugitive politics. (142)

If at the same time we have the phenomenon of overkilling, which shows the limits of Titus's revenge, we also have overliving, which "probes the limits of fugitive politics by representing the female body as an object with an agitating force demanding a response to its fragile condition" (149). If overkilling and overliving are both present in *Titus Andronicus*, as noted by Kendall and Anderson, life and time in *Titus Andronicus* seem to be out of joint.

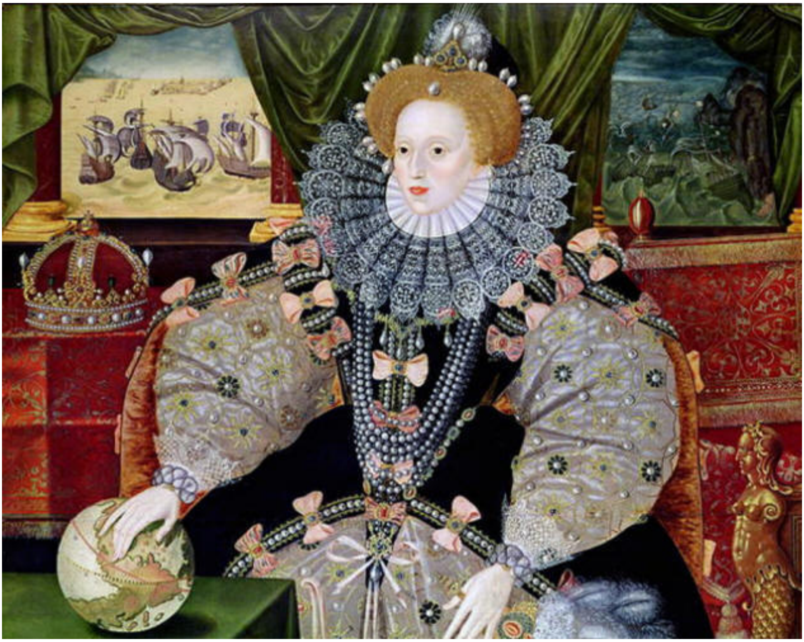

Fig 4: Queen Elizabeth I, reposing her right hand on a globe, illustrating the sovereign's two bodies

Anderson sees in Lavinia's body a redefinition of "the trope of the early modern blazon" (150). Her body is akin to an anatomic blazon on stage, "anatomised and frozen . . . for most of the play after her violent assault" (150). In a play that foregrounds the exchange values of body parts and has "the human body as the central political metaphor for the sovereign state" (150), Lavinia's mutilated body resists the interpretations the male characters try to assign to her. Instead of seeing the dismembered body as a signal of a fractured subjectivity, Anderson highlights Lavinia's body's "tactility, its agitating power that poses problems for the way the play's characters and critics attempt to make sense of Lavinia's physical condition" (152). For instance, Marcus's problematic long speech upon seeing Lavinia for the first time after her mutilation emblazons her body in a literary way. However, quoting Katherine Rowe, Anderson reminds us that "Marcus's initial reaction to Lavinia [is] a 'culmination of a fantasy of *his* own release into expressive tears and anger'" (154). Nevertheless, "Lavinia's body resists becoming a poetic trope". To view Lavinia solely as a spectacle of violence is to miss the work that her body does on stage as language tries unsuccessfully to manage her unruly corporeality" (158-159). The only character that seems to understand or at least communicate with Lavinia is Young Lucius. Titus's desire[7] to interpret Lavinia's signs is "[p]redicated on forgetting the division that defines politics" (156). Even in such a moment of pain, in his logic "Lavinia's agentic capacities must reflect his own desire, and her political dissent must reinforce Roman consensus" (157). Young Lucius, on the other hand, is anchored to his identification with Lavinia, the woman who educated him, as noted by Bethany Packard (qtd. in Anderson 157). His engagement with Lavinia's suffering, therefore, "is not appropriative but intersubjective" (Anderson 157). The interaction between "woman, boy, and text" (Witmore qtd. in Anderson 157) is a sign of "non-sovereign [political] agency" as "the foundation for political action in opposition to dominant forces of oppression such as Roman patriarchy, masculine desire and an ethos of violence enacted on female bodies" (Anderson 158).

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[7] In the chapter "Lavinia as a Blank Page" from *Presentist Shakespeares*, edited by Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes, they highlight how in two productions of the play, namely Julie Taymor's *Titus* and Jane Howell's BBC adaptation, "Lavinia looks like a dog when she has Titus's hand in her mouth; in other words, Titus's hand hangs out of her mouth, replacing and representing her own excised tongue" (133). In the authors' view, the image of Lavinia with Titus's hand between her teeth becomes a metaphor for her subjection to patriarchy. However, I believe this image emphasizes her active role in the revenge plot. Titus's losing of his hand, too, paradoxically signals political power, for it is the loss of his hand that ultimately signals his shift to revenge hero, as pointed out by Katherine Rowe (300-301).

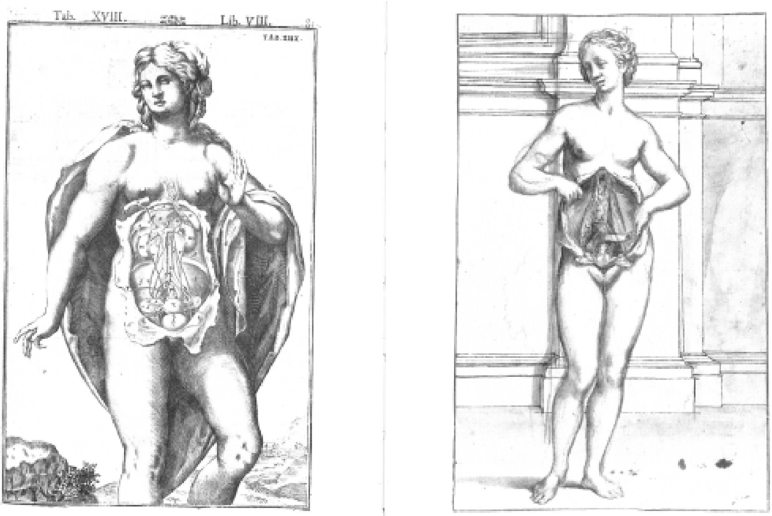
Tab. XVIII.
Lib. VIII.

Fig 5: Examples of early modern anatomic blazons

For Anderson, the recent production that better “captures Lavinia’s non-sovereign agency” is Julie Taymor’s *Titus*. Daniel Juan Gil writes about the film in the already cited *Shakespeare’s Anti Politics*:

> this film transposes the life of the flesh from the particular early modern political-discursive universe that I have examined in this book into the modern political domain. If Shakespeare wrote at the dawn of the era of the nation-state and focused on the discursive underbelly of this new form of sovereign power, then Taymor’s *Titus* transposes Shakespeare’s vision into the era of massively powerful corporate states uneasily caught up in the forces of globalization. (125)

Similarly to Anderson’s argument about “overliving” in *Titus Andronicus*, Daniel Juan Gil sees in *Titus* the overliving of the whole Andronici clan, except that he calls such phenomenon “undeadness”. It is through this undeadness that the characters can transcend the boundaries of state power. Perhaps, such a transcendence by means of undeadness is consonant with Ewan Fernie’s idea that in tragedy, by moving towards death, characters can free themselves. In this sense, it is by moving towards dismemberment and death that they become “victimized to the point of transcending the field of state power altogether” (Gil 128).

To conclude this chapter and link it more directly to the analyses that will follow, I would like to refer to the political significance of *Titus Andronicus* in performance in the twentieth century, and not just revolving around readings of the play itself, but also around the Shakespearean canon and performance practices in general. Dennis Kennedy, in "Performing Inferiority", calls attention to Peter Brook's production of *Titus*. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the reasons for Brook's success in directing *Titus Andronicus* was "that after the war and the mundane terrors of Belsen, the Britain of 1955 was in a position to understand the Elizabethan fascination with cold bloodshed" (66-67). But if *Titus* was successful and relevant[8] in England, it seems to have been in the continent[9] that the production reached its full potential due to audiences' response, especially towards the east. In Brook's words: "this obscure work of Shakespeare touched audiences directly because we had tapped a ritual of bloodshed which was recognized as true" (qtd. in Kennedy 67).

Touring *Titus* in Warsaw, Peter Brook met an Eastern European scholar "in a crowded and smoky . . . nightclub and soon began a discussion about the innate cruelty of Shakespeare's themes" (67). The scholar was Jan Kott, and the book this conversation supposedly inspired was *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*. Thus, the interface between Brook's *Titus*, Kott's criticism, and the already discussed theories of Bertolt Brecht "was to dominate the RSC and most European production for the next generation", and "was created in part by the boldness of Brook's treatment of the most neglected Shakespearean play" (67). "History does not repeat itself, but it does rhyme", says the quote misattributed to Mark Twain. If *Titus Andronicus* was crucial in establishing Shakespeare's playwrighting career in London, it is no exaggeration to claim that Peter Brook's production of this early tragedy helped shaping not only Shakespearean performance but also Shakespearean criticism in the second half of the twentieth century.

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[8] Kennedy points out how "relevance" became a keyword for the foundation of the RSC, hinting that Peter Brook's *Titus Andronicus* was crucial to the company's conception in its early stages.

[9] Brook's production toured in "Paris, Venice, Belgrade, Zagreb, Vienna, and Warsaw" (Kennedy 67).

4. 1955, THE YEAR OF *TITUS*: THE TWO MAJOR PRODUCTIONS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

> "I've known people born 150 years ago. Not all that different from people now. Take that back by 2 spans and you get to about 1580…" (Sir Stanley Wells on Twitter, 6 July 2017)

Appropriately, I begin writing this chapter two days after having seen *Titus Andronicus* performed at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, in Stratford-upon-Avon, directed by Blanche McIntyre, with David Troughton in the title role. So unlike Peter Brook's *Titus* in its treatment of violence, comedy, and the playtext itself, McIntyre's production still felt somehow linked to Brook's great effort in the 1950s. Firstly, in its Lear-like Titus, particularly in act 5 scene 1, also known as the cardboard box scene by my Shakespeare Institute colleagues, and possibly by the rest of the audience members. With a wretched nakedness, David Troughton's flawed, eccentric, and humorous protagonist, but also profoundly sympathetic in his suffering and in his relationship with Lavinia, played by Hannah Morrish, reached the tragic intensity one expects from the so-called great tragedies. Laurence Olivier showed it to be possible in Brook's *Titus*, and on 4 July 2017 audiences saw in David Troughton another great, and relevant, Titus.

But secondly and most importantly, the very effort of directing *Titus* in such a fashion, with bold, confident choices, trusting the text and the power of the play to move contemporary audiences, to speak to them directly not by offering a single contemporary interpretational key, but letting a few allusions speak for themselves—or not—might have been only made possible by Brook's courage in tackling this play more than 60 years ago. Historical speculation is fruitless: what would the stage history of *Titus Andronicus* in the twentieth century be like if the play had not been mounted by Brook? Does that question really matter, since this is the only timeline we have? Several other questions could be asked: what would the stage history of *Titus Andronicus* in the twentieth century be like if the Holocaust had not happened? Or if the Peacham drawing had not survived? The fact is that Brook's *Titus*, as stated in the conclusion of the previous chapter, played a major role in shaping more than *Titus* on stage for decades to come, but also in influencing one of the major works of Shakespearean criticism, and shaking the very notion of a Shakespearean canon in general. In this sense, merely seeing *Titus* being taken seriously today is in part due to Brook's production and the subsequent re-evaluating of the play. Even if the presence of other major productions is felt more strongly in the *Titus* performed at the RSC as of the writing of the present thesis—Deborah Warner's, Julie Taymor's, Silviu Purcarete's, to name a few—I still think that what happened in 1955 was crucial to its genesis. As put by Mariangela Tempera,

> the reasons why this gruesome tragedy was so popular with the Elizabethans thoroughly escaped later generations until Peter Brook's 1955 watershed production set off a process of re-evaluation and re-habilitation which was initially fairly slow, but which has been gaining momentum since the late 1980s. (9)

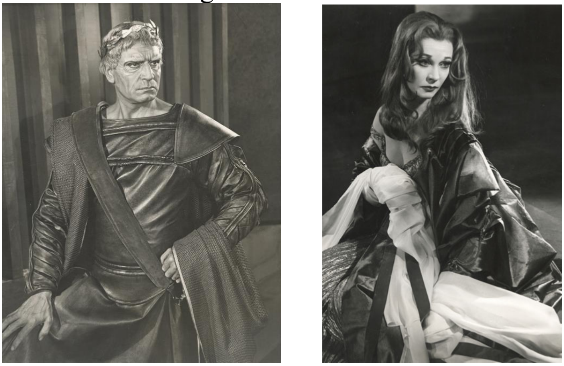
Anyhow, in the following pages I intend to conduct, as mentioned in the introduction, an exercise in what Patrice Pavis calls "theater historiography". The productions under analysis are Peter Brook's, opening in 1955 in Stratford-upon-Avon and then touring London and Europe eastwards, and Deborah Warner's 1987 *Titus*. A reviewer for the 1923 poorly-received production at the Old Vic wrote "if you think you can stand *Titus Andronicus* you had better see it during this week. You may never have a chance of seeing it again if you live to be a hundred years of age" (qtd. in 383). That might have been true for the older members of the audience, but 32 years later the future prospects of seeing *Titus* on stage would have been very different.

Before starting my analysis of Peter Brook's *Titus*, I would like to bring to the reader's attention some of the limitations in this study, and how I plan to overcome them, at least in part. Peter Brook's now iconic *Titus* does not survive in film; sadly, Olivier's magnificent performance—at least according to the numerous reviews, some even claiming it was his best—can only be reconstructed by means of other people's words and photographs of the production. It is precisely about the photographs I wish to write. Such visual resources are obviously valuable to the researcher, but must be considered with a pinch of salt. In this sense, I side with Dennis Kennedy's remarks in *Looking at Shakespeare: A Visual History of Twentieth-Century Performance*. In the theater historian's task of "reimagin[ing] the moment of past performance and to contextualize it with a narrative about its social meaning" (16), photographs and other visual records can be misleading in their representation of past performances.

In comparison to other types of records, such as critical reviews, eyewitness accounts, drawings such as Peacham's, for instance, pale in comparison to more palpable objects such as photographs and pieces of set and costume design. Drawings of set design, for instance, sometimes do not reflect their concretization on stage. Turning what the designer first thought into a three-dimensional object can pose problems and require changes, and these would not be present, thus, in said drawings. The creative work of a designer in its conception, thus, might be misleading and therefore have little to do with the actual performance under scrutiny. Concerning photographs, Kennedy raises the question: "Since photographs are central to this book, the point deserves elaboration. When can we trust a theatre photo?" (20). Since I rely mostly on photographs to analyze Brook's production, I shall follow Kennedy's footsteps in discussing photographs.

Kennedy thus highlights the sort of idealized status photographs hold for us, in the sense that they are taken for granted as representing the true character of what is being portrayed. As an example, he mentions a photograph of his grandfather, "whom [he] never knew, as a young man on a camping trip in the woods sometime about 1890" (21). Such a photograph allowed Kennedy to reconstruct an image of his grandfather, perhaps as an adventurous young man who enjoyed being in touch with nature. However, his relatives who had known the subject of the photograph cannot remember the event nor did they remember him as the type of person to go on such trips. The pertinence of this example is to highlight that "[j]ust as a family memory may be distorted by placing too much stress upon grandfather's enigmatic smile or Aunt Mary's floppy hat, so theatre history can be distorted by improperly emphasizing isolated moments that happen to have been recorded" (21). The same, of course, might happen when analysing photographs of a particular production. For instance, the notorious photographer Angus McBean, "who took photos of most of the important Shakespeare productions in England from about 1937 to about 1964" (21), thus covering Brook's production, brought so much equipment to his shootings and focused mainly on close-ups to capture actors' individualities that his photos, however important and aesthetically accomplished, must be taken with a pinch of salt, but, obviously, not entirely discarded.

Fittingly, one of the examples Kennedy uses in his book to illustrate the point concerning photography is Angus McBean's photo of Anthony Quayle as Aaron in Brook's production. The famous photograph, showing Aaron in a commanding pose, holding a scimitar in his right hand and protecting the baby with his left arm, is able to convey several traits of the character as conceived in Brook's *Titus*: "The character's evil is submerged into the actor's exotic beauty, reflecting Quayle's treatment of the role and Brook's method for the production, but much of what we are likely to read from this photo has been created by the photographer" (22). Other examples can be seen below in Laurence Olivier as Titus and Vivian Leigh as Lavinia:



Figs 6 and 7: Laurence Olivier as Titus and Vivien Leigh as Lavinia

It is possible to notice Titus's costume, the subtle hint of a Roman attire but with a fashionable, leather twist, the stern look —possibly of the accomplished general, not the madman from act 3 on—but that photograph, well-shot and imposing as it is, tells very little about the performance itself. Similarly, it is possible to infer the suffering in Vivian Leigh's face, the veils symbolizing the blood stemming from her hands, but where is she on stage? Is anyone else there? What is her relationship to the other characters in the play?

Therefore, in using photographical evidence in my analysis—and not just of Brook's *Titus*, but I stress this point here since for Peter Brook's production photographical evidence holds a relatively greater value—I will abide by the guidelines laid out by Kennedy. Firstly, "[p]hotos taken from a distance and showing the relationship of actors to the setting are more likely to indicate actual performance conditions than posed closeups". Secondly, "[a] series of pictures, especially when taken at different times or by different photographers, will have authority as records that no single image can have". Finally, in general terms, "relying on pictures alone, without the corroboration of other records, is to be avoided at all costs" (23). "Multiplicity of evidence" (24), thus, is be the key in reconstructing such fleeting events as performances of a play from 60 years ago.

4.1. A Beautiful Barbaric Ritual

My task in this section of the chapter is described by Tempera's comprehensive study of the play in performance in the twentieth century, *Feasting with Centaurs:* Titus Andronicus *from Stage to Text*. In her words, "[t]hose of us who were not witnesses to that memorable playgoing experience are left with the daunting task of recapturing its magic through reviews, comments, photos and promptbooks" (16). However specific the focus of the present dissertation, I intend to start by considering the general conception of Peter Brook's *Titus Andronicus*. Even if, as stated in the introduction and developed throughout the previous chapters, my focus is rather specific, be it through the themes to be explored or the scenes selected, such an exploration becomes necessary before dwelling in the specifics.

In a way prefiguring Barker's reading of the play in his *The Culture of Violence*, Brook describes *Titus Andronicus* as an "eventually beautiful barbaric ritual" (Brook qtd. In Friedman 17). Dennis Kennedy situates Peter Brook's productions as key to the way Shakespeare went on to be performed in the post-war: "Peter Brook has made it his life-long business to apply innovative and avant-garde methods to the mainstream theatres, asking his audiences to rethink classic plays in terms of contemporary life and transcendent images" (164). The keyword was "relevance". According to Kennedy, Brook's saw drama as "[a] true search for values". Brook "believes in the existence of values in drama, and believes that they inhere in the text; and he passionately believes in the importance of searching" (165). Thus, this "beautiful barbaric ritual" presented in *Titus Andronicus*, however beautiful it might have been, did not serve merely an aesthetic purpose. To Peter Brook and his audiences (at least judging from the production's reception), the play mattered because it was able to speak directly to them, and relate to audiences' experiences and emotions. I believe this is particularly true to European audiences, especially eastwards. "There", Brook says, it "'touched audiences directly [because] we had tapped in it a ritual of bloodshed which was recognized as true'" (qtd. in Kennedy 171). This link will be further explored in my reading.

Productions after Brook's *Titus Andronicus* usually choose one of two approaches: either stylization or naturalism. Having the critically unsuccessful 1923 production in mind, Brook believed that stylization was the way to go: performing the horrors present in the playtext to a live audience might generate laughter but, more than that, might shift the focus to melodrama, possibly preventing the audience from taking the action seriously. In order to emphasize the ritualistic and political relevance of the play, as well as elevating Titus's status as a convincing tragic hero, the horrors, both textual and visual, had to be cut or masked (Kennedy 170). In Brook's own words, his *Titus* appealed to audiences in England

and abroad because it "was obviously for everyone in the audience about the most modern of emotions—about violence, hatred, cruelty, pain—in a form that, because *unrealistic*, transcended the anecdote and became for each audience *quite abstract and thus totally real*" (qtd. in Friedman 17). Thus, the trademarks of his *Titus* are the elevated degree of stylization and how Brook controlled nearly every aspect of the production so as to obtain the desired effect. One major example is his use of music: Brook himself "composed *musique concrete* that supported the clash of primitive forces and, like his scenography, rendered it abstract" (Kennedy 170).

But before discussing the production records I have been able to get a hold of, I would like to first comment on the text used in Brook's staging. Just as the violent deeds in the play were stylized or hidden from the audience's view, Brook cut much of the language of the playtext and included a couple of lines. So severe were the cuts that they are often compared to the dismemberments that occur throughout the play itself. As I have already made clear, due to the *Titus*'s status as a low-tier play among the Shakespearean tragedies, such cuts are usually seen in a positive light, since they turn what might be an otherwise mediocre text into good theatre.

Thankfully, it is not needed to reinvent the wheel, in the sense that a comparison between the playtext and Brook's text has already been made in much detail, leaving the task of interpreting such changes to others. William P. Shaw in an article entitled "Text, Performance, and Perspective: Peter Brook's Landmark Production of *Titus Andronicus*" points out the alterations, the cuts, and the accretions in Brook's text. Nodding at those who classify Brook's treatment of the text as a hewing similar to what was done to many of the characters in the play, Shaw calls it "some radical surgery on the text" (31). This surgery was well-received by critics, granting Brook the title of "great bowdleriser", and his production "a far better [play] than Shakespeare's" (32). However pleased Brook must have been with his success at staging *Titus*, he was not happy that his approval often came at the cost of bashing Shakespeare's creation: "it had never occurred to any of us in rehearsal that the play was so bad" (Brook qtd. in Shaw 32). Anyhow, to define the extent of Brook's surgery to the text, Shaw "record[s], scene by scene, how many lines Brook deleted, as well as the percentage deleted from each scene" (32). This was, of course, compared to the edition Brook had used for his production, *The New Temple Shakespeare*, which, according to its editor M. R. Ridley, is a "conservative [text] based on the earliest reliable printed text", but also "include[ing] a whole scene (3.2)" found only in the first folio (qtd. in

Shaw 32). Concerning the raw number of lines, Brook cut 28% of the text he used, namely 717 lines (32).

One of the most remarkable features of Brook's cut is his complete removal of all the asides in the play. Shaw gives three reasons for this: "first, they are archaic [. . .] Second, asides diminish the ability to move the action quickly [. . .]", and third, to give Aaron "a more subtle tone of evil" (34). I agree with Shaw's points, and in the context of Brook's production, removing the asides does make sense. I understand that they can be interesting, theatrical devices, in some cases calling the audience's attention to the illusion of spectacle. The removal of the aside "Aaron will have his soul black like his face" (3.1.206) does remove a layer of Aaron's racial consciousness, but does not eliminate it entirely from the play, and the gain in terms of characterization seems to pay off. Also cut is Aaron's famous speech, certainly a favorite with audiences, in which he lists his evil deeds with pure joy. Similarly to the asides, this passage would heighten Aaron's malignity in an obvious way, something Brook seemed to have been trying to avoid in the production.

But Shaw categorizes this passage alongside others that were cut in terms of their aesthetic qualities. For him, Brook's cutting speeches such as Aaron's, Marcus's speech upon encountering Lavinia mutilated and ravished, the lines filled with parallelism in the exchange between Titus and Tamora, Chiron, and Demetrius disguised as Revenge, Rape, and Murder, and other non-essential passages to the advancement of the action was done to avoid drawing the "audience's attention to their form as much as (or more than) their function" (37). Brook also deletes some of the most problematic lines and scenes from the play: Lavinia carries Titus's hand between her arms, Chiron and Demetrius are killed offstage, and the details of turning them into a pie are removed (38). Such changes highlight that Brook did not want the stylization done in terms of visuals to compete with certain aesthetic exaggerations in the text, hence their removal.

For Shaw, "the major changes occur where Brook reorders events within a scene" (40). Such is the case with scene 1, act 1, where the alteration places "Titus's slaying and entombment of his son, Mutius, before developing the action surrounding Saturninus, Tamora, and the protracted argument with Bassianus over his betrothal right to Lavinia" (40). Act 4, scene 3 is also reordered, giving the Clown more time to deliver his message to Saturninus and Tamora, thus making the action more realistic. It is important to register such changes, since they alter Titus's characterization and the flow of the play, but I do not know in what sense Shaw considers them "major". Another change in the first act is noted by Daniel Scuro: “Brook inverted Saturninus’ proposal do Lavinia with his secret wish for Tamora in order to create an early liaison between the Roman and the barbarian world” (402). I agree with Scuro in his evaluation of such an alteration in the sense that it makes the relationship between Saturninus and Tamora seem less abrupt.

In my view, the major changes in the text are three, all of them related to Marcus: the deletion of Marcus’s speech upon finding Lavinia, and the changes in the fly killing scene. Such changes do not seem intrinsically linked, but I argue that they operate on similar levels and have powerful implications. Concerning the final lines of the play, Shaw writes that it is the only deletion that significantly changes the plot of *Titus Andronicus*. In this scene, Brook deleted “almost 100 lines . . . that point to Lucius’ assumption of power as the Emperor and the prospect of a better future out of the present carnage. Brook’s deletion of these lines forces us to dwell rather on the savage deeds and their consequences without hope or consolidation” (40). It is highly debatable that the removal of the last lines of the play alone would produce such an effect; sometimes, the effect of hopelessness is heightened by the presence of such lines, since many productions show Lucius in an unfavorable light. Even in a production where Lucius is not presented as the proto-fascist he is sometimes depicted as, the mere presence of the army of Goths that helped liberate Rome would serve to foreshadow the impending dissolution of the Roman Empire.

Nevertheless, whether the last lines offer hope or not depends on directorial choices, the production’s context, and the audience’s reception. However, I believe that both the ending lines and Marcus’s speech to Lavinia have something in common: they represent an attempt to use language to fix a state of affairs. Beyond that, however complicated the use of the body as a metaphor for political action in *Titus Andronicus* may be, as previously discussed, I believe that a parallel could be traced between Lavinia’s body and the Roman body politic, which Marcus, in a way, tries to mend with his oratory. In a play where language often works on an ironical level (for instance, *Titus* says he will chop his hands off to join Lavinia in her suffering upon seeing her, and, moments later, ends up chopping his own hand off only to have his sons’ heads in exchange), embellished discourses are often ineffectual. Marcus says:

> O, let me teach you how to knit again
> This scattered corn into one mutual sheaf,
> These broken limbs again into one body. (5.3.69-71)

Can Marcus really teach that? And was this body ever whole? The only character who seems able to put language to an effective use is Aaron, who seduces Tamora, plots most of the violent acts in the play, and, after all that, even manages to save his baby, both in Rome and outside, showing that his wit knows no bounds. However, I believe Marcus's speeches, more than anyone else's, can be made to signify how language fails: how language is incapable of dealing with dismemberment, be it literally in Lavinia's case or metaphorically in the political decadence that Lucius is supposed to revert, further advance, or unable to stop, depending on the reading.

Attempting to reconstruct a logic for this deletion—besides the obvious stylistic reason for deleting Marcus's speech to Lavinia, a passage that would go against Brook's highly stylized production—the conclusion I come to is that, since language is so ineffectual, why not get rid of it entirely, however flourished it may be? Lavinia's pain cannot be eased, her signs cannot be interpreted, and Rome cannot be restored to stability. Moreover, Aaron's evil deeds are not disclosed to the Roman populace, leaving the carnage in the play unexplained. It is as if the new order that was established in Rome cannot be reasonably justified to the public. The future of the baby is also uncertain. It is difficult to look at this final scene with a contemporary mind-set and not think about the baby's destiny, especially bearing in mind the endings we see in productions such as Jane Howell's and Julie Taymor's. In the former, the baby is dead, killed, perhaps, by Lucius, but we cannot be sure. Young Lucius, the production's focalizer, is the only character that seems to care about the baby's death and mourns him. In the latter, Young Lucius takes the baby away from Rome back to 1999 United States.[10] The third change I mentioned gives no indication that Young Lucius would be such a nurturing, noble figure. Brook attributed the killing of the fly to Young Lucius instead of Marcus, leaving "the mind to wonder if Brook was not foreshadowing future bloodletting at the hands of a young Lucius-grown up" (Scuro qt. in Kolin 403).

Considering the amount of attention given to Francis Barker's hypothesis in this work, in which he discusses the stranger killing of the clown under the light of Elizabethan state power, I would like to comment on how the clown is treated in Peter Brook's production. Sadly, I did not find any photographs of the clown in the archives, so my analysis relies exclusively on indirect sources such as criticism and reviews, and on the promptbook available at the Shakespeare Centre in Stratford-upon-Avon. Michael Friedman describes the way Brook uses the clown in his production: “This clown (Edward Atienza) did not merely enter with his pigeons; rather, he descended from the flies in a basket manipulated by an unseen gibbet-maker uncle who served as puppeteer” (20). He goes on: “David (p. 127) observes that ‘here Brook cheated’ by adding this spectacular entrance ‘and writing in a line about ‘fetching down his pigeons from the walks” to make this plausible’, but concludes that ‘it was certainly in keeping, and added a crowning touch of fantasy to a most fantastical invention’” (20). I would also like to mention an interesting alteration in the text. It is possible to see in the promptbook that, when the clown is sent to be executed, the line “Hang’d by a lady” is cut to simply “Hang’d”. It seems that the joke, so problematic to Barker, implying both the clown’s submissiveness towards his “superiors” and a certain sexual pleasure, ends up becoming a dark, nihilistic, remark. Perhaps hanging is indeed a fair end for a neck in a world where most deaths involve cold blooded murder, mutilation, rape, cannibalism, and all sorts of painful spectacles, usually preceded by unimaginable emotional suffering.

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[10] When the film was released this ending probably seemed much more optimistic than it does today. Today we know that the baby would group up to see 9/11, wars in the middle east, economic crisis, unprecedented government surveillance, drone attacks, and, of course, Donald Trump's election.

Also interesting is Tempera’s reading of the episode, contrasting with Barker’s view of the supposed arbitrariness of the clown’s death:

> The swift justice bestowed on the Clown is not out of proportion with the crime of approaching an Emperor with a hidden weapon. In security-obsessed Elizabethan England, the spectators would have appreciated that what they correctly identified as the comic routine of the Clown could easily be mistaken as an attempt on his life by Saturninus. (199)

In the promptbook for Brook’s production, it is signalled that the hidden arrow falls on the ground, the clown picks it up, and hands it to Saturninus. Similarly to Tempera’s reading that the killing of the clown is not that arbitrary, Brook’s production seems to offer an ambiguous moment, in which the presence of the clown can be seen as a threat by Saturninus. Obviously, this is not an endorsement of such a killing, but rather as a way of contextualizing it within Brook’s production. If, according to Tempera, Elizabethan audiences would be aware of the dangerous implications of the clown’s messages and the paranoia of “security-obsessed Elizabethan England”, it is safe to assume that audiences, especially in the European tour, would be aware that, in an authoritarian regime, any suspicious word or gesture towards those in power could result in death. Thus, would audiences be as unaware of State violence as Barker suggests? As a Brazilian researcher, I cannot but think of, for instance, the five working-class young men murdered by the police in Sao Paulo in 2015, who were celebrating that one of them had just got his first pay check, possibly "mistaken" for drugs dealers—in the eyes of the policemen responsible for their deaths, that is the only thing that five dark-skinned men could possibly be doing. We are aware that people are randomly murdered by the State, be it in Elizabethan England or elsewhere.

Needless to say, an analysis of the complete scenes is practically impossible due to the lack of filmed records of Brook's production. However, I will proceed with an analysis of some of the photographs of said production. I have selected them having Dennis Kennedy's guidelines in mind.

Peter Brook's production is known for its stylization of violence, and the most commented aspect of such a stylization is the treatment of Lavinia after she is raped and mutilated by Chiron and Demetrius. The photo below shows some of the extent of such stylization:

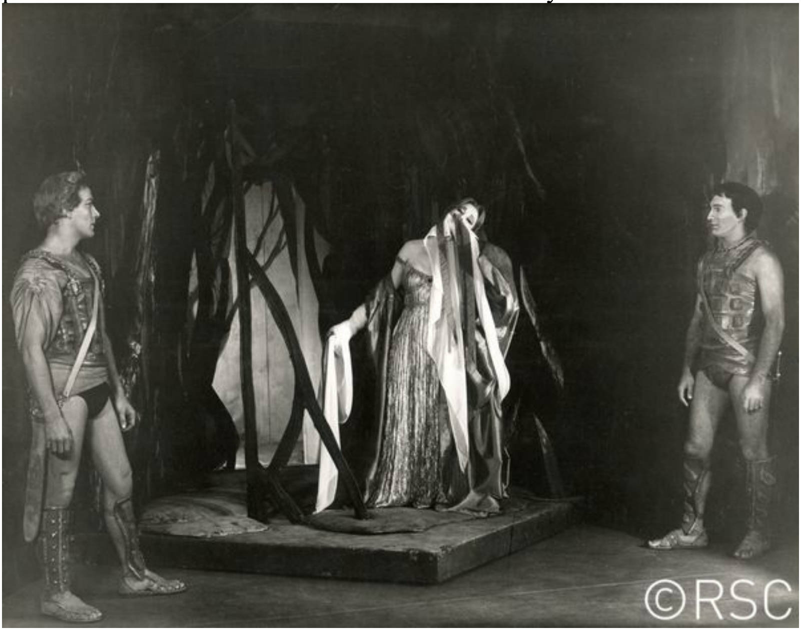

Fig 8: Vivien Leigh as Lavinia after her rape and mutilation

It is striking how evocative the image is, even if violence is toned down by the usage of the ribbons coming out of her mouth and hands, producing a hauntingly beautiful image—something that can be criticized even on moral grounds, in the sense that it beautifies the outcome of the violence done to her. Whereas a more realistic approach might make this image more frightening at this specific point of the play, with fake blood pouring out of Lavinia's mouth and hands, Brook keeps the ribbons on her hands far longer than the usage of fake blood would allow. Thus, the stylized wound may mitigate the obvious graphic violence in the post-rape scene, but it serves as a powerful reminder throughout act 3, scene 1 and later, of Lavinia's suffering. In my view, such a treatment of Lavinia's mutilation seems to be an instance of the "overliving" in *Titus Andronicus*, as discussed in the previous chapter. Also, if Lavinia's presence onstage is normally a reminder of the dismembered political body of a decadent Rome, the ribbons, to a sense, further highlight how wounded both family and State are. They can be contrasted to the treatment Julia Taymor gave Lavinia in her *Titus*: if the branches from her arms seem loosely inspired in Peter Brook's ribbons, later on, Young Lucius gets prosthetics. Of course, her end is just as somber, but this hint of tenderness further highlights Taymor's aforementioned optimistic ending. On the other hand, they are incapable of revealing the extent to which Lavinia was violated, something her male relatives take too long to realize. At the same time the wounds remind us of her sufferance, they also calls attention to the fact that they are unable to convey "her true meanings".

It is difficult to precise for how long Brook chooses to have Lavinia with the ribbons symbolizing her missing hands, but the following image suggests that they might remain for the rest of the play:

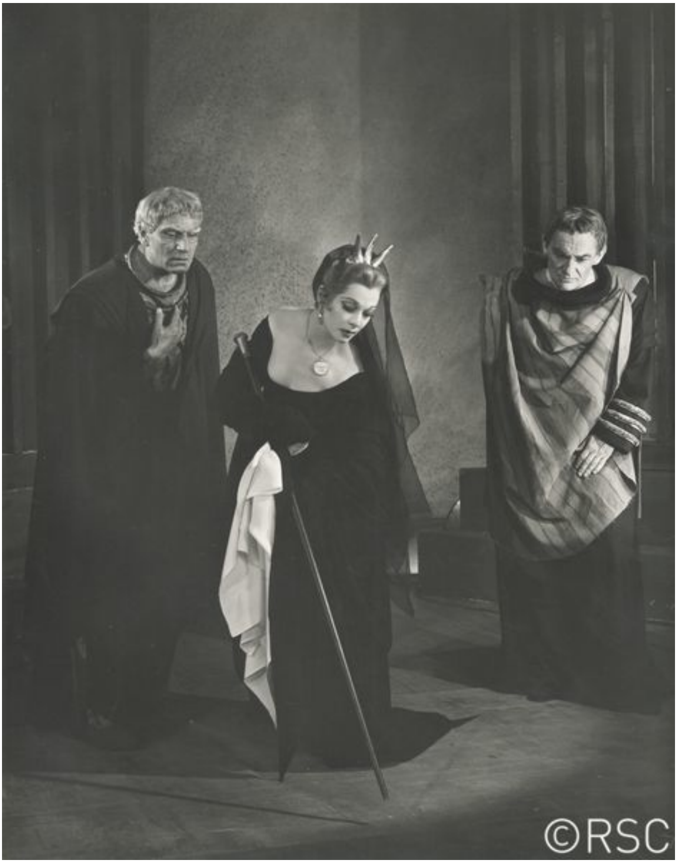

Fig 9: Lavinia writing the names of her rapists

The image also reveals that Brook avoids having Lavinia guide the stick with aid of her mouth—thus avoiding the phallic imagery that could be regarded as poor taste. The contrast between Lavinia's black dress and the white ribbon is stark. Lavinia's ribbon seems to materialize Thomas P. Anderson's previously discussed arguments about her body, in the sense that they are a lively reminder of its "agitating power", an expression that here acquires another layer of meaning due to the materiality of the ribbons and the way they possibly move on stage. Moreover, the following image also shows how Lavinia seems to carry her wound to her grave; dead by her father's side, it is possible to see the white ribbon hanging from her hand.

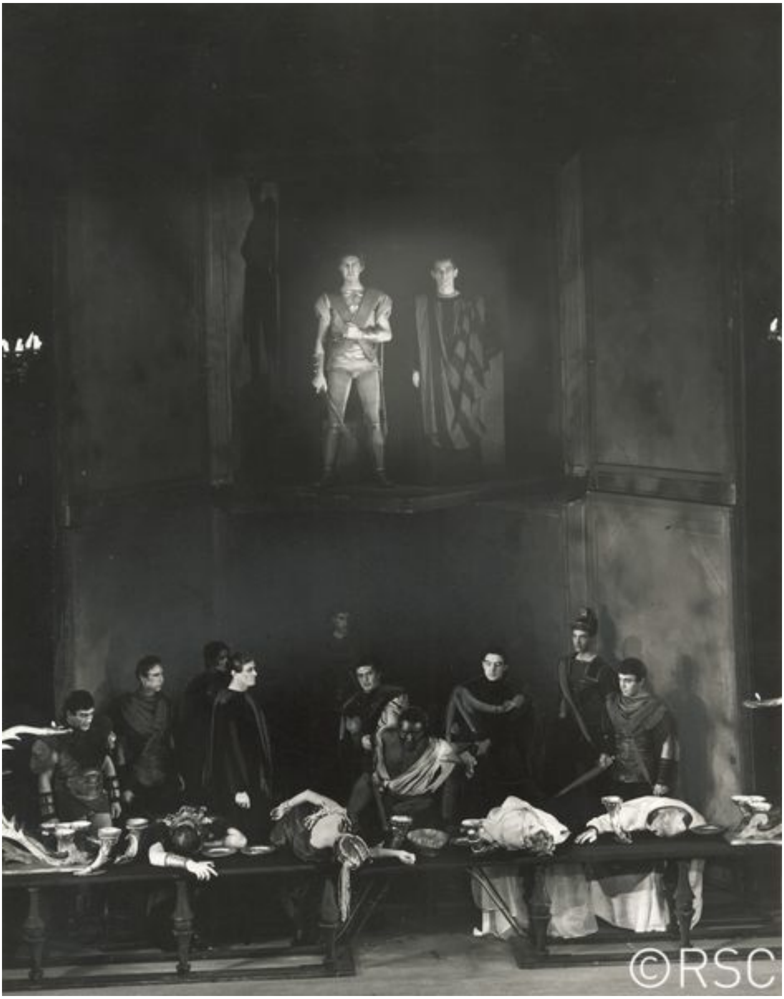

Fig 10: Brook’s final scene

Considering Dennis Kennedy’s remarks on the usage of photographs, the one above is a good example of a valuable photograph for analysis. If the photo seems inaccurate as a depiction of a scene from the actual production due to its quality and general tableau aspect, reviews of Peter Brook’s *Titus* corroborate the use of this photo as evidence. As commented by Evelyn Waugh with a bit of irony, “the corpses that accumulated about the stage were very elegant, particularly the ladies” and were “lying gracefully disposed, all unlike the real debris of carnage”

(The Spectator Archive). Evelyn Waugh provides one of the harshest reviews towards Brook’s rendition, going against the grain of general praise. However, one remark in the review calls attention: the play’s “notorious horrors, repellent to gentler generations, seemed drab today”. However questionable the notion of “gentler generations”, the comment might be revealing of the way audiences at the time related to the violence in the play according to their own context, possibly prepared to handle the horrors on stage since they had to handle the horrors of mass assassination on unprecedented scale.

The outcome of the tragedy is thus laid out vertically on three levels, with the aid of the dining table. On the first level the dead are beautifully put to rest, having the two women killed by Titus in the middle. It is possible to see how the colors of their attires contrast: the Andronici are dressed predominantly in white whereas the royal couple are dressed in darker tones. Lavinia is, this time, dressed in white, as if the white from her ribbons spread to the rest of her costume, as if the physical and psychological wounds have taken over all her body. That is Titus’s thinking, at least, in the sense that the only fate possible for Lavinia is death by her own father’s hand. If Lavinia stands as the major symbol for political power and Rome, Titus “regains” control of her body, as patriarch of the Andronicus family and a powerful player in Roman politics, by killing her, inflicting a wound greater than rape and mutilation. It is only after killing Lavinia that he properly revenges himself, revealing the contents of the pie and subsequently murdering Tamora.

On the second level, it is possible to see the survivors, both Roman lords and Goth soldiers who aided Lucius. It is somewhat difficult to distinguish them, and this seems to go hand in hand with one of the major themes in *Titus Andronicus*, the blurring of lines between civilization and barbarism. Similarly, it is possible to see in the scene Chiron and Demetrius are captured by Titus how their costumes as Rape and Murder feature a Roman helmet. But perhaps the most striking feature in the photo is Aaron, in the middle of the carnage. It is curious to think that “no funeral rites” are to be observed to anyone in the scene—Tamora would not have them anyway, but, considering that Titus and Lavinia are to be buried in the family tomb and so is Saturninus in his—Aaron ends the play more “alive” than ever. Tempera writes that “[i]n a play which opens the issue of succession, the audience would have been only too aware of the political threat represented by the Moor’s access to the body of a queen” (129). Similarly, having Aaron literally in the middle of the dead by the end of the play highlights how real the danger was, so much so that its outcome can be truly appreciated. If normally Aaron survives the play in the sense that his death sentence is decreed but not experienced, here he is barely sentenced, the new order to be established remains unclear, and the corpses are not even buried. Tempera writes about how the failure in observing proper burial rituals in the play leads to the multitude of undead “who populate the play” (110). “What happens when ritual fails?” she asks herself. “The dead linger on”, she answers, and “[w]e see here a major sequence of failed or missing or distorted rituals, so the trapdoor that joins tomb and hell is never properly disclosed” (111). The end of the play with the dead lingering on, as well as Aaron’s presence, cannot be read but pessimistically.

On the top level, we can see Marcus and Lucius, contemplating “the feast of centaurs”. If the issue of overliving is made explicit in Lavinia’s ribbons, the Andronici clan, in Daniel Juan Gil’s view, suffers from the phenomenon of “undeadness”. If the dead in this scene are beautifully arranged and seem even elegant, Marcus and Lucius, on the other hand, seem more undead than ever, confronted with the (perhaps impossible task) of putting together the dismembered social fabric. Saturninus, Tamora, Lavinia, and Titus, amid Goths, Romans, and Aaron, linger on stage, whereas Marcus and Lucius are barely given the space to establish a new order; Lucius is named emperor, but some of the crucial questions of the play are not answered, such as the destiny of Aaron’s baby, how the funeral rites are handled, or how does Lucius behave as the new emperor. Furthermore, the fact that Titus and Tamora remain there, together, emphasizes the problematic difference between Romans and Goths: if one of the things that separate civilization from barbarism are funeral rites, these are denied to both Titus and Tamora, bringing them together in death. If in the playtext her body is treated as “detritus”, as discussed by Francis Barker (233), here she stays within the city walls.

I first wrote that “the lack of resolution of the ending is powerful and leaves interpretation open to a greater extent”. I decided to keep this sentence to highlight that to say that the production “lacks” resolution is a bit “textocentric”, in the sense that to say it lacks resolution simply because it cuts

Shakespeare's final lines would go against some of the main theoretical assumptions of this work concerning how to interpret staged drama. Theoretical discussions aside and striving for a basic conception of resolution, the main revenge plot is sorted out, period, as can be vividly seen in the four corpses at the banquet table. The seemingly lack of conclusion affirms precisely that the new order to be established will be haunted by the corpses, by Aaron's evil deeds (do not they live on, as Mark Antony says?), by a history that will repeat itself. Similarly to Marcus and Lucius, audiences are left to admire the incredible violence of the ending scene. To me, such a contemplation offers a more pessimistic ending than an explicitly pessimistic ending itself such as the one found in Jane Howell's BBC *Titus*, for instance. If in Howell's production the dark ending with a proto-fascist Lucius and a dead innocent baby is mitigated by the compassionate Young Lucius, however powerless he may be at the time in comparison to his then seemingly almighty father, a glimmer of hope still exists. Here, however, I argue that the beautiful contemplation of death and the absence of a clear resolution hints back to the beginning of the play: an empty throne and a bunch of dead children. Thus the ritual of violence is ended. It is not unreasonable to assume that most if not all audience members in Brook's *Titus* had heard of or seen the mass killings that took place from the 1930s well into the 1940s—especially as Brook toured eastwards—in this sense, their position would not have seemed as new or as strange as might be imagined. Evoking again Brook's words, that was a ritual of violence perceived as true. To conclude, my highlighting of a certain line of interpretation does not try to establish it as the single possibility for reading Peter Brook's *Titus*. As Tempera notes, Brook's production "was also remarkable in the way it contained the seeds of future productions" (18). Even if the wording is somewhat problematic, in the sense that it places Brook's production on a pedestal, almost a "source" text in itself to be partially realized by future directors, I acknowledge that his staging played a role in enabling future endeavors in producing the play with its endless until then unexplored possibilities.

4.2. The Wilderness of the Father

Deborah Warner's *Titus Andronicus* at the Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1987 is the other remarkable production of the play in the twentieth century, staged nearly 30 years after Peter Brook's, showing that *Titus*'s relevance was not a stunt that could be pulled out only once, almost as if by chance. In general lines, the story Deborah Warner's *Titus Andronicus* tells is radically different from Peter Brook's. But similarly to its 1955 predecessor, Warner's rendition had a major effect in audiences, with the expected number of fainting spectators having to leave the stage in an ambulance. Well received by critics as well, Warner's *Titus* disappointed director Dainel Mesguich—who went on to direct his own *Titus*—since Deborah Warner's production

> stressed the barbarism in costume and gesture, but in a deracinated way, without reference to the civilization from which this barbarism had departed. Mesguich considered it critical that … *Titus* … shows a late Rome, in which this culture and civilization have created their own barbarism, and a new surge of cruel and elemental forces springing up amid, and in part defined by, the no-longer-understood relics and ruins of the past. This is not a pre-civilized barbarism, but a post-civilized one. When rituals are retained, their "civilized" meanings are forgotten, and they become elemental acts—the symbolical becomes flesh, the cooked becomes the raw. (Carlson qtd. in Friedman 139)

It seems preposterous to criticize a production for what it does not do, rather than to evaluate what it indeed attempts. However normative Mesguich's evaluation of Warner's *Titus* may be, it is accurate in claiming that the interactions between politics, culture, and civilization—extensively discussed in this dissertation—are not the focus of this staging. Warner's *Titus* is a study on suffering; it focuses on family drama and in violence against women, on how humans can cope with seemingly endless suffering. But more than expressing his disappointment with Warner's approach to the play, Mesguich "solved" such problems himself in his own production, in which the action is set

> in a decaying library, where piles of ancient books collapse and disintegrate as the action progresses . . . This is indeed the goriest of Shakespeare's plays, dominated by the "dark, blood-drinking pit", connecting the characters with hell, but it is also a play which represents violence through culture and identifies culture with books. (Friedman 51)

But even if Warner's production shies away from the questions Daniel Mesguich believe are central to *Titus Andronicus*, I would like to argue that there is more than simply family drama in Warner's *Titus*. Mariangela Tempera writes that Deborah Warner "achieved her objective by downplaying the political aspects of *TA* in favour of the intimate family drama. After all, power games played among relatives are not less deadly than those involving the destiny of empires, and a really close look at a single act of mutilation can be a more harrowing experience than the contemplation of a massacre" (22-23). But even if no seemingly identifiable civilization is present in this tragedy of personal suffering and family destruction, I argue that Warner's *Titus* references not a particular civilization set in a definite place and time, but rather the patriarchy in more general terms, the time and place of the father. Reviewer James Fischer sees in this approach a way of emphasizing contemporary violence: Warner "disconnects the play from any obvious allegiance to a historical setting, allowing the play's core of random and meaningless butchery to serve as a temporal metaphor for the violence of our own time" (qtd. in Kolin 451). The director set her Rome with "lots of ladders and a simple wooden structure hardly distinguishable from the floor", making the Roman Empire "a vague reference, a world of majesty and power evoked in the words but constantly belied by the drabness of the surroundings" (Tempra 23). Her being "the second woman ever to direct a play for the RSC" definitely plays a role in her approach, and I would like to argue that she explores this issue going beyond its most glaring element in the play, i.e. Lavinia's rape, but in unexpected ways, establishing relationships between characters that do not seem obvious at first, such as in the male bonding mentioned by Tempera (23).

Differently from Peter Brook, Deborah Warner did not cut the text, nor did she avoid tackling the most problematic stage directions in *Titus*. As mentioned by Friedman, and also quoted in Tempera's work:

> The word repeated constantly among *Titus* personnel was "trust": trust in the script, in the audience, in the Swan (a major component in the success of this show), in each other. What then emerged was a production vastly different from its predecessors that, like Brook's rendition in 1955, had a profound effect upon many playgoers. (62)

And so Deborah Warner and the cast embraced *Titus Andronicus* with all its problems. For instance, Marcus's speech to Lavinia, erased from Peter Brook's *Titus*, is here given in its entirety. Deborah Warner uses lighting to create a dream-like atmosphere; the stage goes dark and a single light source coming from above, generating a contrasting, diffuse focus makes Marcus's speech an exploration of his thought process upon seeing his mutilated niece. Time does not stop, but what is achieved with such a configuration is a different time, as if the audience were able to experience in minutes the anguish Marcus would experience in fractions of seconds after realizing—not entirely, as we know—what happened to Lavinia.

Again unlike Peter Brook, Deborah Warner did not rearrange the order of Titus's entrance, i.e., opening the play with the power struggle between Saturninus and Bassianus, mediated by Marcus. The contrast between the two brothers is somewhat obvious in terms of costume: Bassianus dressed in white and Saturninus in black. Marcus appears as a more favorable character, having his most controversial moment, as discussed in the previous paragraph, as an exploration of the psychology of suffering instead of a potentially out-of-place display of failed rhetoric. His role in the political struggle seen in the beginning of the play is amplified by his moderation in speech and dress. Here no factions accompany the sons of the dead emperor. In Blanche McIntyre's *Titus* they are portrayed as street protestors, wearing hoodies and holding anti-austerity signs, framing the contemporary elements of the production, but in Deborah Warner's it is as if audience members themselves were their supporters.

Titus's entrance with the prisoners and his sons is possibly the most striking moment in Warner's production, serving as an epitome of her minimalist design. Titus and his prisoners enter from behind the stage; they are revealed by the curtains opening. Titus is sat on a sideways ladder, to which Aaron, Tamora, Chiron, Demetrius and Alarbus are tied. Titus is not accompanied by a numerous faction, no pomp, no trumpets sound; nevertheless, his entrance is spectacular in its bare physicality, in the complete subjection of the prisoners who have to carry the aging general on their backs. Political overtones are usually explored in this entrance, as here the military power of Titus and Rome can be displayed, but rather Titus's personal dominance over the prisoners is highlighted, as well as their humiliation. In this sense, Chiron's line, after Alarbus is sacrificed, that they "survive / To tremble under Titus' threat'ning look" (1.1.136-137) has great appeal. The perspective of having Titus as a ruler is terrifying for the prisoners.

Daniel Mesguisch argues that Deborah Warner's *Titus* does not reference the civilization that originates the horrors staged in the play, but I believe Deborah Warner depicts something more primitive than a decadent, post-civilization Rome as Mesguisch would have hoped—and eventually depicted in his own production—namely, a nameless, timeless patriarchal society. Blood, in Warner's production, is often replaced by clay, hinting to a primitive time when humanity was created out of clay. Titus is an old man, his physical weakness—the many years at war have clearly taken a toll on the general's body—is visible, but like a Kafkian[11] father he is able to conjure an unusual strength, as if patriarchal authority is enough to fuel his body with the power to dominate. Tamora has a chain around her neck and Titus pulls her violently, almost in BDSM-fashion. If all the prisoners are equally subjugated to Titus's rule, it is on Tamora's body that his power is exerted. Curiously, upon meeting Lavinia for the first time after his return, Titus holds her and treats her as his property, like he did to Tamora, but with affection instead of violence. One of the most effective moments in creating this patriarchal world is when Saturninus looks at Tamora and praises her physical qualities: "A goodly lady, trust me, of the hue / That

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[11] I am thinking here of the father figure in *The Metamorphosis* and *The Judgement*. The lawyer in *The Trial* could also be listed amongst these.

I would choose were I to choose anew" (1.1.264-265). In Warner's production, Saturninus says this line while standing right next to Titus, who holds Tamora by the leash, and both laugh out loud at the remark. Saturninus's sexual desire for the queen of Goths is approved by Titus, and they bond over objectifying women. Saturninus is always hostile towards Titus, first for fear of losing political power and then due to Lavinia's elopement, but here an unusual sympathy appears, two members of the patriarchy joined in the sport of objectifying Tamora.

In this first act, the ground floor is the domain of the father. This is clear when Lavinia escapes from Titus and Saturninus to marry Bassianus: the ladder used in Titus's entrance now serves to help Lavinia upstage with the aid of her brothers. Going upstage is escaping Titus's rule, and the moment is as symbolic as physically impressive, with Lavinia jumping up the ladder, gathering impulse from her brothers, one by each side. They follow and exit to stage left, and when Mutius is killed he also tries to go to the upper level. However, he collapses midway through the ladder, falls down, and dies. Ultimately, he is unable to ascend and escape his father's authority.

From that space upstage appears Aaron, whom reviewers and critics deemed weak in this production. As typical of such entrances, the lights go off and Aaron emerges out of the shadows. His descending to stage level is physically impressive, but at no point does he seem evil or even threatening. Moreover, Deborah Warner did not cast a black actor for his role, a rather problematic choice on several levels. I am not qualified to discuss such a choice under the light of its implications to identity politics and representation. However, the fact that the sign of difference is not present in this Aaron mitigates the politically dangerous potential of his romance with Tamora, as previously referenced in Mariangela Tempera's remark about Aaron's access to the body of the queen. On a more obvious level, the lines referencing his skin color sound awkward and the subplot of the baby loses strength. It is perhaps too big of a commitment to ask audience members to suspend their disbelief in relation to Aaron's skin color in a production that emphasizes suffering in a direct way.

As previously mentioned, Marcus's speech upon encountering Lavinia is given in its entirety. It is important to notice the role of lighting in creating the atmosphere of the scene: it is similar to when Aaron enters upstage and creates a dream-like atmosphere. As argued by Emma Smith in her podcast about *Titus*, this scene asks for a suspension of disbelief, since realistically Marcus would give Lavinia first-aid instead of standing there, speaking for minutes with complicated rhetoric and allusions while his niece suffers. The lighting contributes with this suspension of disbelief, it tells spectators that what takes place is out of the ordinary course of things. I believe, however, that this effect is counter-balanced by Lavinia's collapsing to the floor when Marcus says "That I might rail at him to ease my mind" (2.4.35), which serves as a reminder of the physical horror she is experiencing. The scene ends with Marcus picking Lavinia up and carrying her offstage "in a nurturing way" (even signalled in the promptbook),[12] emphasizing Marcus's favourable depiction, almost acting as the good father Titus should have been to his children.

Act 3 begins with Titus's plea to the tribunes. As the reader may guess by now, there are no tribunes in this production. The absence of the tribunes in turn may highlight Titus's madness: the fact that he imagines tribunes where there are none from the start of the speech may signal that he is afflicted more by madness than by senility. Titus's and Lucius's interactions with the mutilated Lavinia contrast significantly with Marcus's treatment in the previous scene. Whereas Marcus plays the role of a gentle carer, Lucius and Titus violently hold Lavinia to prevent her from exiting. Again, this is reminiscent of Titus's handling of Tamora as his prisoner.

The hand-cutting scene, one of the most strikingly violent scenes in the play, here achieves sheer brutality by "its stripped simplicity of means" (Hewison qtd. in Friedman 63). This simplicity allows spectators "to feel the terror of a bucket, cheesewire, and a little stage-blood" (63). Aaron plays the figure of Vice, addressing his aside to the audience, differently from Brook's production, in which his asides were removed. Aaron and Titus perform the deed in a corner, downstage, using a bucket to receive the blood. If in 2017 RSC *Titus* the hand-chopping scene occurs in the context of a modern hospital, the hand being removed with surgical technique, here, in this domestic tragedy, household objects are used to perform the mutilation. Lavinia is present onstage for this, and she screams when Titus screams, echoing her father's suffering.

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[12] The promptbook is available for consultation at the Shakespeare Centre in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Friedman discusses in his chapter about Warner's *Titus* one of the major problems the play faces when performed: how to deal with unintentional audience laughter (67). Warner's production is not afraid of unintentional laughter, or, to put it differently, embraces intentional laughter by producing funny moments intertwined with violence and terror (68). After receiving his sons' heads and his lopped hand back, Titus famously laughs—the only emotional response possible to such a bizarre and painful situation—and at this point his physical weakness becomes even more apparent: at this point he is nearly hunchback. But in such a problematic scene, laughter comes from the way Titus casually handles the body parts. They are brought back by the messenger inside bags, and when employing each character to hold a body part, Titus holds one of the bags with a head and simply throws it at Marcus, who has to quickly catch it mid-air. The scene ends with Lucius's speech, given with both strength and sweetness for his family.

In 1987, same year as Warner's production, Stanley Kubrick released his film *Full Metal Jacket*. Divided in two acts, the film tells the story of American soldiers being trained by the ruthless and abusive Sgt. Hartman and their subsequent deployment to Vietnam. Arguably, the cruellest act is the first one: the psychological abuse endured by the recruits—leading to murder and suicide—is more horrible than the war depicted in the second act. What does a film about the Vietnam War have to do with Warner's *Titus Andronicus*? The banquet scene in Warner's *Titus* is similar to the ending of *Full Metal Jacket*. In Kubrick's film, the soldiers march through a Vietnamese field after a battle singing and whistling Mickey Mouse's theme song, producing an unnerving contrast between the childish glee of the song and the brutality of war. In Warner's production, *Titus's* assistants set the table "whistling, in a minor key, the work song of the seven dwarves" (Friedman 74). Mickey Mouse's theme song is followed by a black screen with the credits and is suddenly interrupted by "Paint it Black" by The Rolling Stones. The work song of the seven dwarves is followed by a series of murder and cannibalism. Possibly by coincidence these two major works of art of the second half of the twentieth century were able to put together funny, innocent pop culture references and the brutal reality of violence, showing how both are equally present in daily life. Unlike most of the reviewers at the time, Michael Billington praises the whistling and the nervous laughter it generates. The whistling conjures Titus's madness, his frenzied laughter in scene 3.1, and is consistent with Warner's conception.

Titus's entrance dressed as a chef generates laughter in the audience, as well as his flamboyant, exaggerated behavior. Friedman highlights the parallel between Brian Cox's Titus and Hamlet: "where at times the line between madness and control is very thin, sometimes invisible". Warner aimed at Lear, however, in creating Titus's character, but lacking the refined personality as found in Shakespeare's later works. Michael Billington for instance sees in Titus "a central role that is a trial-run for Lear". The loving but violent patriarch reaches its most tense point in Lavinia's death. Instead of stabbing Lavinia, Titus embraces her and snaps her neck. The following staccato killings are accompanied by stylized reactions of the chorus—formed by the attendants who whistled and set the banquet table. And thus the banquet ends, the chorus leaves, and Marcus and Lucius are left to deal with and explain the carnage.

The last lines in *Titus Andronicus* ask several questions in terms of staging, and the way the characters of Marcus and Lucius are built throughout a given production gains here, in my view, maximum strength. Depending on the way they are portrayed in a given production, the future prospects for Rome can seem radically different. However positively Lucius and Marcus are portrayed in Warner's *Titus*, such questions are barely relevant when ending the play. Lucius and Marcus deliver their speeches to the audience, on a bare stage, and even the other speaking parts, namely Aemilius and the Romans, simply appear as voices coming from backstage. Friedman argues that "even though the moment did work in its own terms, some of the potential political tension was blurred or lost" (75). The loss of political potential is coherent with the conception of the production, but the moment fails precisely because it becomes irrelevant.

I agree with Friedman in the sense that one of the major merits of Warner's production is showing "that, given the right conditions, the 'unplayable' can become the theatrically potent" (75). The cost here is the sacrifice of the political potential of the play. Warner's *Titus* explores the potential for nervous laughter, "the human values under the mountainous horrors" (Billington), as well as the text, used in its entirety, but the political landscape of Warner's *Titus* is as deserted as its bare stage. The story Warner tells could be compared to Laurence Olivier's filmic adaptation of *Hamlet* without a single mention to Fortinbras, but she was able to do so without removing a single line.

5. BETWEEN APOCALYPSE AND CARNIVAL: STAGING *TITUS ANDRONICUS* IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

> We are justified therefore in calling these people barbarians by reference to the laws of reason, but not in comparison with ourselves, who surpass them in every kind of barbarity. (Michel Montaigne, *Les Caniballes*)

Dividing the analysis between twentieth-century and performances and twenty-first-century performances is not simply a matter of dating. Such a division reflects more than something arbitrary like the turn of the century, but rather separates performances before and after Julie Taymor's landmark *Titus* (1999), her adaptation of the play to the big screen. This division is followed by Michael Friedman in his *Titus Andronicus*, but the present dissertation was planned to have the same structure before I came across his work. In the following paragraphs, I briefly comment on Taymor's *Titus* before proceeding to the analyses of Ninagawa's, Fentiman's, and Bailey's productions.

In comparison to the productions analyzed in the previous chapter, Lucy Bailey's shares similarities with both Peter Brook's and Deborah Warner's. Like Peter Brook's, Bailey's shows a stylized approach to violence. Lavinia's mutilated hands, for instance, are represented by branches, making Marcus's metaphors literal. Like Deborah Warner's *Titus*, Taymor's adaptation makes use of black comedy, and going beyond, merging comedy and tragedy to a greater extent than previous relatively known English-language productions. In terms of the text used for the adaptation, Taymor made more cuts than even Brook himself, which is not surprising, considering that the play was adapted to the cinematic medium, which may compensate losses in verbal language by means of gains in visual language.

The televised *Titus* directed by Jane Howell for the BBC Complete Works series also had a major impact on Taymor's film, perhaps more than the previous critically-acclaimed productions. Howell says that she found her way to the violence in the text when reading the fly-killing scene[13]: the image of a boy, Young Lucius, having to witness that exchange prompted her to enhance his role in the tragedy, having him both as a representative of the audience and the play and as the only character in the play to show a degree of humanity. Taymor's *Titus* expands his role further and adding a layer of contemporaneity to the boy.

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[13] Ironically, a late accretion to the play as previously mentioned, possibly written my Thomas Middleton (see Duhaime and Taylor).

The film opens with a boy in what seems to be a North-American suburban house, "playing with robotic warrior toys, an index for the techno-muscular masculinity the film explores, his game presently interrupted by a massive explosion as if from a bomb outside" (Hattaway 4). He is then taken to an anachronic ancient Rome and becomes Titus's grandson. So not only does he help establish the anachronisms found in the film, but he also introduces the politics of *Titus* by explicitly bringing a contemporary element into the action. In this sense, Hattaway uses *Titus* as an example of a certain tendency in Shakespearean criticism:

> More recently, however, the *convergence* of history and tragedy in Shakespearean texts has been a starting point for critical analysis. Tragedy has been characterised not just by conflict between a man of high degree and his destiny or read as a tale of a "flawed" protagonist, but has been seen to evolve from political situation. (4)

Considering this angle, one of the critiques Taymor's *Titus* offers is of violence as entertainment. Chiron and Demetrius, for instance, are seen playing violent videogames, and the place where the political disputes begin and end resembles the Coliseum.

However, *Titus* borrows not simply from previous *Titus*es or other Roman plays, but, as a product of its medium, from the Hollywood Roman epic, "the sword-and-sandal Roman movie" (Fredrick 206), as argued by David Fredrick in "Titus Androgynus: Foul Mouths and Troubled Masculinity". As argued by Fredrick, in *Titus* we see some recurring themes explored in other Roman Hollywoodian movies, such as the sexually ambiguous emperor—who, in *Titus*, mixes androgyny and fascism—the depravity of the court symbolized by an excessive appetite and sexual depravity (both symbolized by a gaping mouth), and a certain objectification of the male body, which becomes object of the female gaze in the figure of a lustful aristocratic female (207; 213; 216-217). The ending of the sword-and-sandal film, in which the protagonist leaves depraved Rome to a better kingdom, is parodied in *Titus*:

> *Titus* is, in visual terms, a long, partly parodic, invocation of this tradition. However, its ending does not reproduce the escape from perverse Rome into a better kingdom. rather, while seeming to reproduce the conclusion of these movies, it measures its distance from their comfortable endings, intimating that the better kingdom of "legitimate" visual pleasures no longer exists. (231)

Not only does the kingdom of legitimate pleasure no longer exist, but also the Rome in *Titus* is too similar to our own kingdom. There we recognize the symbols of our recent history and of our entertainments, from Marilyn Monroe to Dr. Hannibal Lecter, from video games to jazz music, from fascist Italy to corporate America. Today's spectators would even see in Saturninus a foreshadowing of the alt-right activists with their fashionable haircuts. In this sense, I agree with Fredrick as to the general meaning of the ending, but not regarding the character of *Titus*'s Rome, in the sense that perverse Rome is here. Thus, having briefly discussed Taymor's film, I then move on to analyze Ninagawa's, Fentiman's, and Bailey's productions.

5.1. *Titus* Between Brook and *Yojimbo*

Japanese director Ninagawa Yukio had always wanted to direct Shakespeare, and Peter Brook's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* largely impacted Ninagawa as a spectator back in the 1970s. In his *Titus*, the presence of Brook's own production of the play, even if Ninagawa himself did not see it live, can be felt in the stylization of violence. Going back to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Friedman writes that Brook's production of the comedy can be seen in Ninagawa's *Titus*'s "metatheatrical, non-representational staging and its white box set, but he also drew on Brook's 1955 *Titus* for a stylised presentation of violence, particularly the use of red wool threads to represent blood (which, after all, derives from Ninagawa's own Asian theatrical tradition)" (230). Unlike Brook, however, Ninagawa's text is barely cut: in fact, prioritizing a "faithfulness to Shakespeare's text" in the translation commissioned for his production, it retains almost as many lines as Deborah Warner's text (230).

Thus, Ninagawa briefly comments on his approach to the text in an interview published as an appendix to *Performing Shakespeare in Japan*, edited by Minami Ryuta, Ian Carruthers, and John Gillies. In the interview, published five years prior to his *Titus*, Ninagawa is asked about his belief in changes to the text, to which he responds:

> My concept of never deviating from the original text started when I became a theatre director. I wouldn't direct a play just for my own convenience. However, I often rely on my imagination to try to understand something. For me, the most important thing in Shakespeare is the play within the play. *Hamlet* is a good example.

> The final decision to take revenge is made after the play within the play. And in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the revival of love occurs after watching the play within the play. You can't take out the play within the play without damaging the complex structure of dream layers within the play as a whole. So, you just have to be patient. (212)

Ninagawa went on to use the "play within a play" approach in his *Titus*. Even if, unlike *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Titus* does not have the play within the play element, such an approach highlights the illusion of the spectacle about to unfold. Ninagawa achieved this play within a play effect by using his set, as aforementioned, as well as with his prologue: before the play started, it was possible to see the actors getting dressed and warming up for the performance, while a theatre manager gave instructions in Japanese, consecutively translated into English.

Friedman writes that reviewers saw this motion as a Ninagawa's usage of Brechtian techniques to signal the artificiality of spectacle, but the director himself, "in an interview included on the Japanese DVD release of the performance, that he did not intend 'to adopt Brechtian technique'. Rather, he hoped to foreground the intercultural nature of the production" (231). Thus, Ninagawa expects to suspend the audience's disbelief towards the Asian cast playing white European characters. Another problem faced by Ninagawa is the question of racial prejudice against Aaron, played by Shun Oguri, "who is incidentally no blacker than any other of Ninagawa's Japanese cast)" (Billington). Ninagawa, speaking about Othello in the aforementioned interview, says that

> the problem of discrimination within white society and the racial tensions between white and black people makes the play wrong for a Japanese to produce. I used blond hair to symbolize the difference of white society in the play, but I think that was a bad idea. I don't think the problem can be satisfactorily expressed by a Japanese. (217)

Even after recognizing such a problem, Ninagawa tried to use the same technique to convey Aaron's otherness. It is possible that Ninagawa hoped the metatheatrical elements of the production would mitigate his perceived failure of this type of characterization of racial otherness in the context of a Japanese *Titus*. Regardless of Shun Oguri's acting, the mark of Aaron's difference in Ninagawa's production, namely his blonde hair, ends up eclipsed by the lavish set design. In the end, the issue of racial difference is not properly resolved by the opposition between Aaron's blonde hair and the other characters' dark hair.

Before going into proper scene analysis of Ninagawa's production, I would like to, lastly, go back to the comparison between Ninagawa's and Brook's *Tituses*. It has been established that Brook was a major influence on Ninagawa's choices in terms of stylization, but I would like to stress what seems to separate the English and the Japanese directors. Even if both employ stylization, the general view is that Brook's stylization served to mitigate the play's violence and make it accessible to an audience that was not used to seeing *Titus* performed. If Ninagawa revisited some of the techniques employed by Brook, especially the ribbons/scarves substituting Lavinia's wounds, they do not seem to mitigate violence, but rather call attention to its physical reality with the aesthetic power generated by such images. Instead of presenting Lavinia's wounds as less than they are, Ninagawa, using a similar technique, exaggerates her mutilation, as seen in figure 13, highlighting the reality of Lavinia's wounds. As I argued before, Lavinia's wounds are not merely metaphors: they are the result of a mutilation done to her body, a mutilation obviously related to her rape but a separate instance of violence from it. The same technique appears in other instances of violence, such as Bassianus's murder and in the deaths of Chiron and Demetrius. Therefore, even if my focus is on Lavinia due to the obvious comparison to Brook's *Titus*, it is worth noticing that Ninagawa makes use of this technique throughout his production.

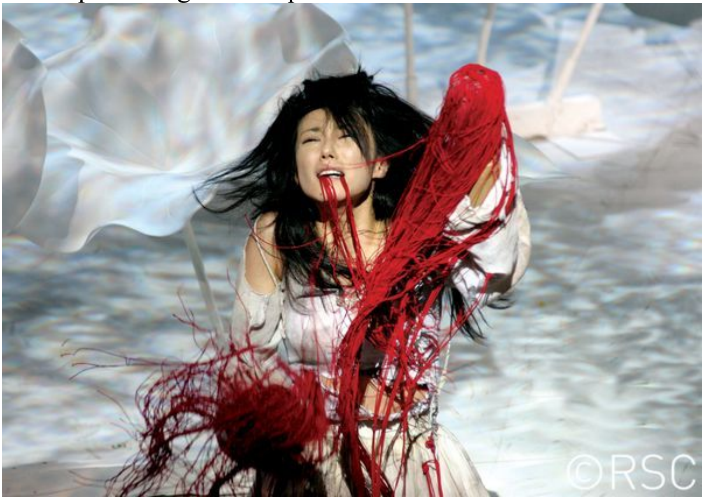

Fig 11: Handless Lavinia in Ninagawa's production

But if the stylization is reminiscent of Brook’s production, the character of Titus, especially in the first act, is reminiscent of Deborah Warner’s production. But Ninagawa’s Titus goes beyond; if Deborah Warner’s patriarch offers a mild tone of humiliation towards the prisoners, Ninagawa’s Titus is a one-man army. He is ready to kill at any moment. His entrance with the prisoners takes the humiliation seen in Warner’s staging even further. The prisoners are beaten and mocked by Titus and his followers, to the point that Titus stranglers Tamora after she pleads for her sons’ lives. Titus laughs at their suffering, and the lines uttered by the Messenger upon returning Titus’s sons’ heads “Thy grief their sports, thy resolution mocked” (3.1.237) could well be applied to Tamora in this opening act. The well-choreographed fighting sequences, furthermore, show Titus not as the feeble old man, way past his prime, as not uncommonly seen in other productions, but as the most skilled warrior in Rome; even his “valiant sons” (1.1.34) were easily overpowered by him. Of course, this turns Titus’s subsequent decadence, as well as his role of mutilated father to a mutilated daughter, all the more striking. It was only through his encounters with sovereign power that Titus was able to learn to play the role of *pater familias* (Anderson 26), instead of the warrior he is in the beginning. While the action unfolds, the statue of the Capitoline wolf stands in the middle of the stage, breastfeeding the founders of Rome, in my view symbolizing the displaced mother figure Copélia Kahn discusses in her work. It also serves “[a]s a symbol of Rome, the fierce sculpture branded the Romans as ‘a race weaned on animal savagery’” (Brantley, 7 qtd. in Friedman 232).

The dispute between Bassianus and Saturninus for Lavinia’s hand shows how Ninagawa’s company can work as an ensemble, as well as their spectacular choreography in the fight scenes. The costumes offer a mix of “Greek, Roman, and Kabuki with fur underneath underscoring the savagery of Rome” (Friedman 233-234). As Titus offers Lavinia’s hand to Saturninus, all the actors onstage react to the unfolding action, even if they are not the focus of the scene, thus creating a tension that, eventually, becomes unbearable. Such reactions remind certain scenes in Akira Kurosawa’s films, particularly *Sanjuro* (1962), where reaction shots are taken to an extreme: instead of seeing one or two people reacting to a line, one sees a group of ten. There is a real sense of danger in this exchange, and when Saturninus frees Tamora and utters the translated version of “A goodly lady, trust me, of the hue / That I would choose were I to choose anew” (1.1.264), again not as an aside, swords are nearly drawn. Lavinia is left aside by Saturninus while he shares an erotic moment with Tamora, but is violently brought back to his arms and forcibly kissed by the newly crowned emperor, prefiguring the further abuse she will suffer. The fighting sequence resulting from Bassianus's elopement with Lavinia could be considered the first major instance of the "spectacular grandeur and eerie cruel beauty of Ninagawa's" *Titus*, as described by Michael Dobson (qtd. in Friedman 263). Considering the build up, Titus's murder of his own son does not seem such an aberration as in other productions. This is an act done by a man who is more than ready to kill, who seems to have been eager to commit a brutal act of violence from the moment he walked onstage, and was finally given a reason to do so, however unjustified it might seem both to the other characters and the audience. Again, the mixture of violence and subtlety reminds me of the final scene in Kurosawa's *Sanjuro* (1962), where one quick, elegant motion can end a fight, and the most beautiful fighting choreography leads to a bloodbath. But even if the movements are quick and elegant, they are far from unpredictable. The spectacular violence of *Titus Andronicus* is here spread throughout the first act, and every moment seems to present the possibility of murder. The nurturing but violent image of the Capitoline wolf sets the tempo of the production. This wolf is not feeding Romans and Goths "the milk of human kindness", but rather the primordial input of foundational violence. As argued by Foakes in *Shakespeare and Violence*, Shakespeare's preoccupation with the foundational act of violence is turned into a physical onstage object in the figure of the wolf, which could also be said to be in accordance with Francis Barker's evocation of Walter Benjamin's thesis that documents of civilization are documents of violence.

The stylization of violence connects characters in a powerful way. The way Lavinia's wound is depicted in not exclusive to her mutilation, and, to further explore this point and continue conducting the analysis, a closer look at the rape scene is necessary. Dismissing the Capitoline wolf, set designer Tsukasa Nakagoshi renders the forest by using gobos, thus creating "a canopy of leaves" (Billington 204). The stylization strategy employed in Peter Brook's *Titus*, as I have mentioned, takes a different dimension in Ninagawa's production. The red wools, reminiscent of Brook's red scarves, are not exclusive to Lavinia's wounds. Upon murdering Bassianus, who could hold his ground in a swordfight against both brothers before succumbing, Chiron and Demetrius pull "copious streamers of wool . . . from his shoulder and his guts" (206). After the rape and mutilation, Lavinia is seen in the white forest with the same streamers of red wool hanging from her mouth and stumps. But the twist in this scene is Chiron and Demetrius's reentrance into the woods, both naked and walking zombie-like, as if mocking with their walk Lavinia’s disabilities, something they also do with their words:

> DEMETRIUS: So now go tell, an if thy tongue can speak,
> Who 'twas that cut thy tongue and ravished thee.
> CHIRON: Write down thy mind, bewray thy meaning so,
> An if thy stumps will let thee play the scribe.
> DEMETRIUS: See how with signs and tokens she can scrawl.
> CHIRON: Go home, call for sweet water, wash thy hands.
> DEMETRIUS: She hath no tongue to call, nor hands to wash,
> And so let's leave her to her silent walks.
> twere my cause, I should go hang myself. (2.4.1-10)

But more than mocking her with gesture and words, they are seen with the same type of red wool hanging from their genitals, “which are entirely obscured by long flowing strands of wool: the vaginal (and oral?) blood of their violated victim showing not on the woman herself, but on the anatomy of her assailants as a graphic reminder of the sexual nature of their crime” (206). This way the relationship between the sexual assault and the forthcoming revenge is visually established. When Chiron and Demetrius are murdered by Titus, under Lavinia’s watch, instead of having their blood collected, it seems that their guts are being pulled out by Titus and received by Lavinia, such is the effect caused by the massive use of red wool. The same blood that was taken from Lavinia and Bassianus is now taken from Chiron and Demetrius. The amount of red wool pulled from their bodies also looks like spaghetti Bolognese, humorously foreshadowing the cannibalistic banquet.

A drastic change in Titus’s personality happens when confronted with his son’s banishment, with the sight of Lavinia’s dismemberment, and with his subsequent mutilation in the hands of Aaron. Titus displays unforeseen tenderness towards his remaining male son and is a healing presence to the mutilated Lavinia: he pulls a bandage to stop her bleeding, particularly what readers and spectators of the play expect to happen, for instance, during Marcus’s infamous speech. Titus move from ruthless warrior to loving father accompanies his move from willing subject to sovereign Rome to mad avenger. However obvious this transition usually is, the contrast in Ninagawa's production is certainly more marked due to Titus's unparalleled mastery in combat, as seen in 1.1. Even if Deborah Warner's production delivered some of that raw physicality in her portrayal of Rome's champion, her production still had glimpses of his fragility before being physically and psychologically mutilated. In Ninagawa's *Titus Andronicus*, the physical transformation drastically accompanies his role from public servant to the Roman state to mad avenger seeking to set his family affairs right. If for Katherine Rowe the lack of hands ends up signifying effective political action, the raw contact with sovereign power animates Titus's whole body in a paradoxical way: not only his obvious mutilation but the entire decay of aging body brings out his strength to effectively play both his role as loving father and revenge hero (however debatable calling Titus a hero might be). The eagerness Titus shows in the first act to get his sword to fight his own sons is now the same to get his sword to chop off his own hand and join Lavinia in her handlessness. His relationship with Lavinia, as highlighted by Billington, is thus one of the strongest features in Ninagawa's *Titus* (207).

Unlike Fentiman's *Titus*, Ninagawa's production does not do anything particularly remarkable with the messenger scene. It seems that this episode is too "ordinary", in the sense that it could not be turned into the choreographed, stylized violence of the other murders and mutilations in the play. This could go hand in hand with Francis Barker's reading of the play, in the sense that, in this production, the death of a common citizen is occluded in favor of the beautifully staged and bright red deaths of characters from a higher social ranking. The scenes in Saturninus's palace, however, have the Capitoline wolf with its ass facing the audience. First of all, the position of the wolf is reminiscent of Aaron's aside "Now, what a thing it is to be an ass!". Displaying the wolf's ass could also be a commentary on the depravity of the court. In Fentiman's *Titus*, Chiron and Demetrius are seen with concubines, but here the degeneration is hinted at. Another possibility to read the wolf's ass is that, as a signifier for Roman values, the wolf has turned its back to the court since it has been invaded by barbarians and lost its supposedly civilized values.

The final scene has the Capitoline wolf again in its original position, but more foregrounded, near the banquet table. The high-tempo of the production must be even more elevated in the final scene, and Ninagawa makes use of extra-diegetic music to enhance the emotional effect. Titus is dressed like a chef, "à la Warner/Cox and Taymor/Hopkins" (Billing, 209) and Lavinia is dressed as a veiled bride.

Again, I agree with Billing that the most effective moment in the final scene is the development of Titus's relationship with Lavinia. Titus removes the veil and gently kills Lavinia, an end clearly agreed upon by father and daughter. This is not simply Lavinia being killed, but rather Titus and Lavinia accepting their own deaths. It is obvious that the extent to which Lavinia was mutilated is unparalleled, but to at least a certain extent, Titus and Lavinia became closer due to their shared condition. Titus went to war with his sons, but it is with Lavinia that he goes to that "undiscovere'd country".

The other significant moments in the final scene are offered by Tamora and Young Lucius. After the staccato killings and the ascension of a new emperor—here similar to Peter Brook's *Titus*, with Lucius giving his speech from an upper gallery—Tamora's corpse is not left to be devoured by beasts and birds of prey, but instead it is left lying by the she-wolf. The image of the empress lying dead by the she-wolf after eating the flesh of her own children is nearly a visual equivalent of Coppélia Kahn's argument about the alienated Roman mother. Now the link between Tamora and the Roman mother is completed, as she is officially connected to the she-wolf, thus highlighting the theme of the blurred boundaries between civilization and barbarism, or even the boundaries between the violent and absurd world of *Titus Andronicus* and today's world, also beset by horrible murders and war. After that, Young Lucius closes the performance with his moment with Aaron's baby, a relationship that has been explored from the 1980s with Jane Howell's BBC production. As all exit leaving Tamora with the wolf, Young Lucius takes the baby from one of the Goth soldiers, holds him in his arms, looks up, and utters several gut-wrenching screams. Ninagawa thus ends his *Titus* with two pairs, Young Lucius and the baby, and Tamora and the she-wolf. The connection between supposed barbarism and civilization reaches its peak as the play ends, to the point they become inseparable.

To wrap up Ninagawa's production of *Titus Andronicus*, it is possible to say that it takes Peter Brook's nuanced, mitigated violence to another level. By using similar techniques but more frequently and in a more exaggerated way, Ninagawa confronts spectators with an unapologetic, aestheticized display of violence, aiming at resonating with today's conflicted world. However, this intention seems too general and ineffective as the production gets lost in eclecticism and forced emotional responses. I do not mean by this that a production needs to be politically grounded in a specific context or event. In fact, most if not all the criticism I practice in this work goes against the tendency of trying to find one contemporary event that somehow ties together a production, as if finding the "original" event which the production, via Shakespeare's theater, is trying to comment would allow the critic to unearth its deeper meaning. Nevertheless, Ninagawa's production is successful in some of its unassuming moments, such as the tenderness between Titus and Lavinia, or in its final moments with Young Lucius and Tamora. It is in these moments that, ironically, the production reaches its political significance, rather than when it shows the over-the-top choreographed violence. In the relationship between Titus and Lavinia, especially considering Titus's movement as a character, it is possible to see Daniel Juan Gil's argument on resisting sovereign power. In the handling of Tamora's corpse, it is possible to read both Coppélia Kahn's and Francis Barker's argument; Tamora first as the estranged Roman mother, then as the blurred boundary between civilization and barbarism. Finally, Young Lucius's cry closes the production with an air of ambiguity, for the cry could be either a manifestation of the pain experienced by the young boy, of a general sense of despair towards existence—something the baby would eventually have to experience—or of desire for further revenge, and the baby should be the next victim.

But perhaps a wider look at Ninagawa's production, considering the show in its entirety, reveals more about a certain approach to Shakespeare and *Titus Andronicus* itself than looking at specific aspects or scenes. The general conception of the production—this overwhelmingly sensorial spectacle that, by means of its sheer beauty, attempts to extract every bit of emotion out of the spectator—emphasizes an idea that *Titus Andronicus* is a good play *if* it can reach traditional tragic intensity, that is, if it can cause pity and fear. Ninagawa's production also makes *Titus Andronicus* marketable to global audiences, eager to have a "new" Shakespearean tragedy performed to them.

5.2. Heil Titus

Michael Fentiman's *Titus Andronicus* was staged at the more intimate Swan Theatre in the summer season of 2013. Fentiman's production played with the two levels of his set and the pit, mixing them with the lighting to further explore the overlapping of characters in the same physical space. The set resembles, at the same time, a medieval church and a mosque, giving the impression that even before the play starts the Goths and the Moor have already taken over Rome. Peter J. Smith links it to "Cordoba Cathedral built within the Great Mosque": "The play is set in ancient Rome but in this staging it has become a palimpsest, a Christianised Moorish temple" (2). This setting seems to be aligned with Paul A. Cantor's claim in *Shakespeare's Roman Trilogy: The Twilight of the Ancient World*[14] that

> what is happening in them [in the Roman plays], culminating in *Antony and Cleopatra*, takes place on an apocalyptic scale—the dissolution of an entire way of life. We are witnessing not just the death of the Roman Republic but the end of the ancient city itself and thus of the ancient world and all that distinguished its way of life from modern alternatives. With remarkable historical insight, Shakespeare realized that the emergence of the Roman Empire marked a fundamental alteration of the human condition and thereby laid the foundations of the modern European world (which is one reason Shakespeare correlates the rise of the Roman Empire with the rise of Christianity). (16)

The tribunes, Marcus included, are dressed as monks, implying that they serve both political and ritualistic functions. Going back to Smith's review, "Friars in long- hooded cassocks people a state whose insignia, an outstretched eagle, is reminiscent of Nazi iconography" (2). The religious elements of the set are mainly created by the use of stained glass on the upper level of the stage. The lighting behind it is altered throughout the performance, either to highlight or occlude the figures on top, or to give way to an upper lighting that puts characters on stage level in the spotlight.

One of the most common alterations productions make to the playtext concerns the ordering of the events in Act 1 Scene 1, namely whether to stage Titus's entrance before or after Bassianus and Saturninus quarrel with the support of their factions in the hopes of becoming the next emperor. Fentiman's *Titus* presents a curious decision to the opening of Peele's act in *Titus* by having Titus sitting in a chair in the dimly lit stage level whereas Bassianus and Saturninus discourse on the upper level against the stained glass. Saturninus, similarly to the emperor's eldest son in Taymor's *Titus*, sports an obvious Nazi look, wearing a black suit and a red band around his arm. Bassianus, on the other hand, wears a light gray suit, quoting the recurrent theme in *Titus*'s stage history of having Saturninus in darker costumes and Bassianus in lighter tones, at least in this initial moment of political dispute. While the brothers speak, Titus sits silently in the shadows, exhausted after spending his life in "weary wars against the barbarous Goths" (1.1.28), while Lucius stands behind him. The corpses of the dead Andronici soldiers can be seen behind them, wrapped in white sheets on hospital beds. Such an arrangement smoothly conveys how both brothers' aspirations to "set a head to headless Rome" (1.1.189) are shadowed by Titus's threatening presence, much favored by the Roman people as the brothers possibly know.[15] It also highlights the cost of maintaining such an imperial head: it needs to be constantly fed corpses, blood, sacrifices (Noble 692-695). The passionate political rhetoric of the suitors hides the costs of the empire in terms of human lives, but the audience can see it onstage, even if dimly lit.

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[14] Cantor discusses *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus* in his book not because he excludes *Titus Andronicus* (and *Cymbeline* for that matter) as a Roman play, but rather that he sees these three plays as a trilogy. In his view, excluding *Titus* is not a problem for his argument, but rather "*Titus Andronicus* confirms what I argue about Shakespeare's understanding of the corruption and decadence of the Roman Empire. Indeed, it shows the Romans of the late Empire becoming indistinguishable from the barbarians against whom they claim to be defending Rome" (5).

But does Titus hear them speak? If he does and still chooses Saturninus as Rome's emperor in spite of the anti-republican views expressed by him, especially in contrast with his less authoritarian brother, then Titus's role in engendering his own family's tragedy is amplified. In this case, his choice is not simply based on traditional succession rules—emphasized by Saturninus, played by John Hopkins, who puts great stress in "I am his first-born son" (1.1.5) and nearly threatens Rome to ascend to the throne— and a general cluelessness from an old warrior who spent more time abroad than at home, but also informed by the pleas both candidates made to their respective factions. If the Nazi armband worn by Saturninus makes his authoritarian leanings rather obvious to contemporary audiences, Titus, without knowing about the history it carries, can probably guess its values and chooses to approve of them. Titus thus refuses to be candidatus and prepares to announce who should be the new emperor while the brothers kneel on opposite sides of the stage. Saturninus's reaction to being "elected" Rome's emperor reflects his previous attitudes and speeches as well as foreshadows his rule: he removes the "palliament of white and spotless hue" (1.1.185) and throws it away violently—contrasting to Bassianus's gesture of doing a cross on the floor when he says he will honor Titus and his family. Throwing away the palliament is throwing away the voice of the Roman people and could be seen as an instance of decapitation as discussed by Dobski and Gish (15), the ultimate mutilation of the body politic, since the palliament is the symbol of people's voices. Ultimately, people's voices return coupled with the "warlike Goths" (5.3.27), and Saturninus is dethroned by both domestic and foreign forces.

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[15] In Act 4 scene 3, Saturninus mentions how he knows that the common people think that "Lucius's banishment was wrongful / And they wish that he was their emperor". This he learned from his walk as a private citizen; thus it is likely that he and Bassianus would know about Titus's preference in the eyes of the plebeians.

The pit is utilized in Fentiman's *Titus* not as a site of proper burial, but rather as the place for sacrifice. The burial of Titus's sons is staged using a resource commonly employed in the murder of Chiron and Demetrius: ropes attached to their feet do suspend them, thus taking them offstage into the ceiling. Alarbus's sacrifice takes place onstage and, although explicit, is not gory. Lucius and his brothers surround Alarbus, raise their swords, and deliver their blows as the pit descends, so that the audience can see that they "hew his limbs and on a pile / *Ad manes fratrum* sacrifice his flesh" (1.1.100-101) but not necessarily any blood or the swords themselves piercing Alarbus's body. In this Christianized Rome, Titus's sons are sent to heaven thanks to their proper burial, whereas Alarbus is sent to hell through sacrifice, and the space of the stage clearly conveys such differences in burial. Alarbus seems to return from the pit, though, by means of his brothers Chiron and Demetrius's deeds. In "'Groaning Shadows that are Gone': The Ghosts of Titus Andronicus", Lindsey Scott argues that *Titus Andronicus* should be regarded as Shakespeare's ghost tragedy; *Titus*'s characters are haunted by the return of the dead who were refused proper burial rites. Blanche McIntyre's *Titus* plays with the idea of the ghosts rather explicitly but here the allusion is less obvious, having a bloody Alarbus enter after Lucius's final speech and attack him, possibly backed by an army of undead, ranging from the nurse killed by Aaron through the clown, Mutius, and others. After Lavinia's rape, she, Chiron, and Demetrius emerge from the pit, as if she was taken to hell and back, or even as if Alarbus himself participated in her rape and mutilation.

But there is another burial in this scene, Mutius's. The killing of Mutius by Titus distances itself from other renderings of this moment in the stage history of Titus. Usually Mutius is killed by Titus's sword, almost as a continuation of the war against the Goths. As discussed in the previous section, Ninagawa's *Titus* has a confrontation of father and son where Titus shows his superior skills in using a katana. In Blanche McIntyre's *Titus*, Mutius uses his sword to bar Titus from reaching the fleeing lovers, but Titus, bearing a resemblance to General Pinochet, draws his gun and shoots Mutius. In Fentiman's production, however, Titus kills Mutius in the way he kills Lavinia in several other productions, i.e., by snapping his neck with a quick motion. Similarly to Deborah Warner's depiction of the Roman patriarch, Titus apparent frailty is contrasted to his physical prowess even in old age. Titus often forgets what he is trying to say, giving the impression that the wars against the Goths exhausted not just his body[16] but also his ability to think properly or articulate his thoughts. After Titus decides to bury Mutius in the family tomb, Mutius's corpse is taken up, like his brothers'. However, differently from his brothers, "none basely slain in brawls" (1.1.356), Mutius's body is not wrapped or covered. Before that, when uttering the line just quoted, Titus kicks Mutius's body. Even if Titus decides to give him proper burial, the lack of decorum of having one's corpse being openly humiliated and then displayed makes his burial strange, an incomplete ritual in comparison to the care put into the burial of the nameless brothers. While he still goes to the family tomb, his corpse is turned into an object to be looked at.

Act 1 scene 1 ends with Titus's invitation to the hunt, and all but Tamora exit. She is upstage and Aaron enters on stage level. At this point Tamora delivers her vengeful aside: "I'll find a day to massacre them all, / And raze their faction and their family, / The cruel father and his traitorous sons" (1.1.453-455). Instead of delivering these lines to Saturninus, implying him in her plan of getting back at Titus for sacrificing her son and humiliating her in public, she delivers them to Aaron. Michael Fentiman's choice to rearrange the lines emphasizes the love affair between Aaron and Tamora, having them not simply as lovers but accomplices in the destruction of the Andronici family. In this sense, Aaron's motivations to plot the evils that befall the Andronici are explicitly related to his love for Tamora, and not just "motiveless malignity". Immediately after Aaron delivers his passionate soliloquy revealing his love affair with the now empress. The way the aside interacts with Aaron's speech and their positioning onstage create an evil parody of the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet*. In the end, Tamora and Aaron also live a forbidden love that ends tragically.

Chiron and Demetrius in a way symbolize the next generation of Saturninus. If the Roman Emperor hints at Hitler and fascists leaders in general, Chiron and Demetrius seem to follow the same line but with ferocity and lacking the sophistication. In the hunt scene they appear looking like “English Defence League thugs with drainpipe jeans and hoodies” (Smith). In general their costumes slightly nod at neo-Nazi fashion with their short hair and wearing combat boots. Emily Oliver remarks how “[t]heir juvenile intoxication with violence and excess was all the more repulsive for being credible—they seemed to have known nothing else in their short lives”. However cruel they are, and unlike in other productions, murdering Bassianus takes some time; the brother to the Roman emperor puts up a fight, resists, but ultimately dies, not without hearing what is about to happen to Lavinia. This piece of stage business heightens Lavinia’s psychological suffering, for she had to watch her husband die with the knowledge that she was about to be raped. Tamora, now in her element, looks resentful but dominant, contrasting to her humbleness in the beginning of the first act. Now, dressed in a sort of chic-urban-Goth attire, she is left alone on stage with Bassianus’s corpse. She reenacts her son’s sacrifice with Bassianus, handling his corpse and sending it to the pit bellow, a metaphor to her dangerous womb.

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[16] Marcus's retelling of Titus's campaign against the Goths reveals that Titus is exhausted not just by his old age, but perhaps mainly from the physical stress he endures in his military conquests: "five times he hath returned / Bleeding to Rome" (1.1.33-34).

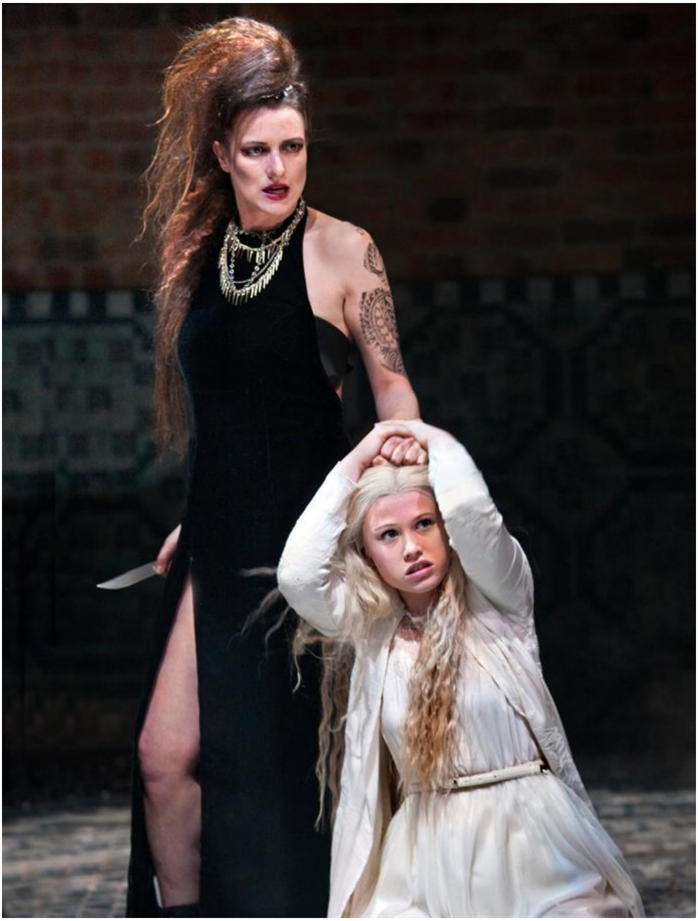

Fig 12: Tamora cutting Lavinia’s hair

In the next act, Lavinia is taken by Marcus to her father. Fentiman’s *Titus* adds another layer to her mutilation: Chiron and Demetrius also cut her long blonde hair and tie her tresses to the stumps, creating a brutal effect that perverts the stylization of violence done by Peter Brook and then Ninagawa. Oliver writes that

> Fentiman chose realism over symbolism in showing Lavinia’s mutilated body: she reappeared from below the stage on a platform, shivering, bloodied and dirty. However, the decision to make it look as though her hair had been cut off was questionable, as it left spectators wondering why Chiron and Demetrius had bothered to give her a

> neat, short haircut and tie her tresses around the stumps of her arms.

I disagree that this is a choice of realism over symbolism; it is a choice of a symbolism that emphasizes the cruelty of the act. Having hair tied to her stumps is far from realistic, but it quotes and at the same time subverts a theatrical tradition that attenuates Lavinia's wounds.

When analyzing a performance of *Titus*, much is said about the way the violence and mutilation is performed onstage. My focus when looking at Titus's mutilation and his two sons' deaths in Fentiman's production is how he reacts to them, precisely his reaction to the body parts. The act itself takes time; Aaron saws Titus's hand off and then "[cauterizes] the wrist in a bucket of boiling tar" (Smith). Aaron takes the hand away and, moments later, a messenger dressed like a working-class man from the 1920s brings Quintus's and Martius's heads, as well as Titus's hand, in a wheelbarrow. Playing the possibilities of comedy in this scene, Titus takes his severed hand, hits his own head with it, and throws it into the air, simply playing around with it. If, as Katherine Rowe argues in "Dismembering and Forgetting in Titus Andronicus", lack of hands ends up being the metaphor for effective political action, here Titus takes the hand metaphor to an extreme. Not only is the severed hand a metaphor for effective political action, it is also a metaphor for his own feelings; his way of dealing with tragedy is through laughter, creativity, and a dark sense of humor. By taking control of his own trauma—and then sharing this control with Lavinia, by asking her to take the hand—Titus is able to make the transition from humiliated war veteran to rightful avenger. In my view, this is the moment in which the Andronici have "an encounter with raw sovereign power" (Gil 1). By defying all norms of expected behavior and literally taking control of his flesh, Titus can, at least for a moment, achieve the tragic freedom discussed by Fernie, by going into death—or at least a degree of "undeadness" (see 3.2). This moment also resonates with Daniel Juan Gil's reading of this same scene in Julie Taymor's film, which illustrates his general argument about sovereign power and subjection. When attempts to resist sovereign power fail, Titus allows "it to transform self and other. This transformative response to sovereign power is marked by an increasingly absurdist quality to the action" (127). Daniel Juan Gil illustrates his argument with the carnivalesque aspect of this scene in Taymor's film, but I argue that the same could be said about Titus's reaction in Fentiman's production.

Titus also employs dark humor when handling his two sons' heads. Before uttering the lines "[f]or these two heads do seem to speak to me" (3.1.270), he takes the heads and puts them near his ear, as if they were telephones ringing with a message from the underworld. The moment causes nervous laughter, but it evokes Lindsey Scott's ideas of the ghosts in *Titus Andronicus*, since "[w]hen these severed body parts return to the space of the stage, their ghostly presence is 'felt' by Titus" (418) . By not being given proper burial, the ghosts of Titus's sons are the ones who, from the realm of the dead, are able to drive him to "find Revenge's cave" (3.1.269). As previously mentioned, Dobski and Gish argue that Titus ignores the voice of the people, i.e., the "head" in the body politic metaphor. Ironically, it is the severed, voiceless head that commands him to exert revenge not just on Saturninus, but on Rome itself, this "wilderness of tigers" (3.1.53).

As discussed in analyses of previous productions, the killing of the clown is of particular interest to this work, considering that Francis Barker's reading of *Titus Andronicus* figures in my critical discussion. The killing of the clown in Michael Fentiman's *Titus*, in my view, highlights the major flaw in Barker's argument concerning this "uncanny" episode as he calls it. To argue that *Titus Andronicus* occludes violence contrasting the killing of the clown to the spectacular killings of the other, often aristocratic, characters is to work with assumptions concerning the performance of the play that cannot be known. If the killing of common people was so pervasive in Renaissance England and the death of the clown is a way of sweeping such a brutal reality under the rug, it is hard to believe that audiences then would not connect the dots. As much as my argument equally hovers to the realm of speculation, it is reasonable to think that the killing of the clown could be performed in a hundred different ways, and the text we have of *Titus Andronicus* as of today is incapable of telling us much about the performance practices of such an episode. Nor does it tell about Peele and Shakespeare's audiences. And, to complicate it even further, the printed text in which contemporary editions are based could be significantly different from the text that was being performed.

What we can know is how the play is performed today, and in Fentiman's *Titus* the killing of the clown is perhaps one of the most brutal moments in the play. This scene opens in a similar fashion to the previous scene set in the palace, showing that life for those in power is filled with pleasures. Previously, when Young Lucius is sent to the palace to deliver the messages from Titus to Chiron and Demetrius, the brothers are satisfying their lust with concubines. Now, Saturninus emerges from the pit in a bathtub, perhaps in a failed attempt to calm himself down after receiving the arrows from the Andronici. Tamora is seen nurturing a seemingly white baby, indicating that Aaron's machination to save his own baby and not compromise Tamora has worked. Enter the messenger, played by a black actor, and one wonders what would have happened to Aaron were he not such a ruthless and scheming figure, being his malignity the only way to survive in a white man's world. Chiron and Demetrius take him to be hanged, and at this point the episode might seem uneventful, but as Aemelius delivers his message concerning Lucius's approaching army of Goths, it is possible to see that Chiron and Demetrius take the clown to the upper stage and his killing takes place on stage against the stained glass. The lighting against the stained glass, highlighted by the lights going off below after the characters exit, emphasizes the figure of the clown being hanged, and finally his body is taken offstage by Chiron and Demetrius themselves. If Barker argues that "[p]ower is not made visible by Titus Andronicus; it is hidden, as we have seen, by other visualities" (Barker "hanging" 257), Fentiman's production shows us otherwise. The death of the clown, however, is not unexpected; to the contrary, the Nazi imagery and Saturninus's obvious disregard for the common people and institutions (as seen in the palliament episode) anticipates the killing of the clown. "'Tis he the common people love so much" (4.4.71), says Saturninus after sending the messenger to be hanged and hearing the news from Aemelius, and seeing the clown being hanged moments after that is the embodiment of Saturninus's despise of the common voice—as well as of his fear of rebellion.

Moving to the banquet scene (5.3), Lucius arrives accompanied by the army of Goths. It is interesting to note that one of the Goths allied to Lucius is a woman—doubled by one of the concubines—apparently the new queen of Goths.[17] Lucius, after leaving Rome by the end of act 3 scene 1, is seen getting rid of his Roman attire and being taken in by the Goths, marked like cattle to the sound of drums, as if entering the heart of darkness, being taken by the all-consuming other. At last he returns to Rome to attend "the Centaurs' feast" (5.2.202), which in Fentiman's production is a gory gala, described by Peter J. Smith as " a formal evening-dress dinner that descends with febrile alacrity into bloody mayhem - from Great Gatsby to Grand Guignol". What follows is not the usual staccato killings, but rather a bloodbath as the killings and stabbings are not restricted to the deaths of Lavinia, Tamora, Titus, and Saturninus. In Emily Oliver's words, "[w]hereas Shakespeare's play calls for four characters to be killed, this sudden release of atavistic energy left the stage littered with corpses”.

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[17] One may infer so from the staging, but the prompt book states that this character is the queen of Goths. Nevertheless, no alteration was made to the text for this effect.

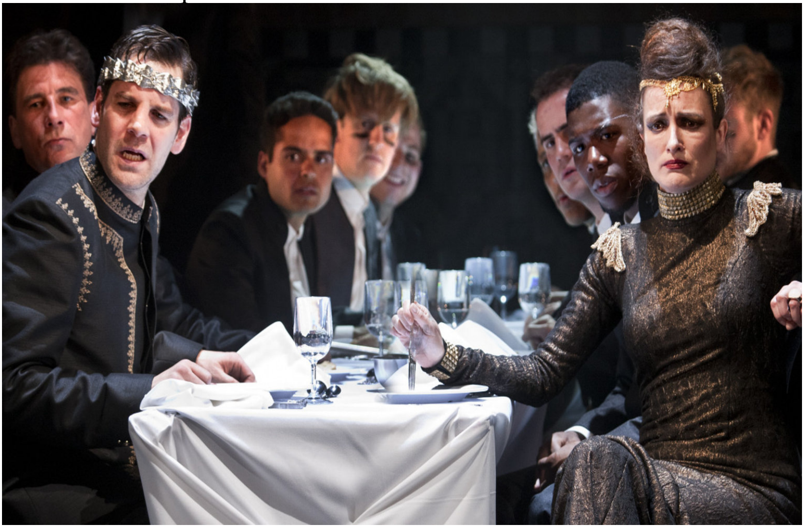

Fig 13: Fentiman’s banquet scene

So enters Titus, who is not dressed as fancy as his guests. If Titus’s entrance dressed as a chef is usually one of the highest moments in terms of comedy in productions of *Titus*, this moment gained even more appeal after seeing Anthony Hopkins play the intertextuality with Hannibal Lecter in Taymor’s *Titus*. But instead of a male chef attire, “Titus is here a ‘nippy’ from a Lyons Corner House, in black dress and white apron, cheerfully dishing out Sweeney Todd pasties” (Smith “savagery”). Titus’s madness is highlighted by such a disruption of gender conventions and is reminiscent of Heath Ledger’s Joker when disguised as a female nurse. Titus’s killing of Lavinia is perhaps the most unnerving moment in the production, differing radically from most stagings. It is usually implied that Titus’s killing of Lavinia works more as a suicide pact, a moment of intimacy between a father and daughter who know that their lives are beyond repairing. The bond established by father and daughter by their mutual suffering and mutilation culminates in their going into death together. But here Lavinia “was clearly not complicit in her death” (Oliver), and her body writhes as Titus struggles to suffocate her. The way her body loses life is akin to the killing of the Clown by Chiron and Demetrius. To Titus, after all, they are the ones who killed his daughter, and the similarity between both deaths follows this logic.

The revealation of the content of the pie triggers an unlikely reaction in Tamora, who fights "the urge to be sick after learning the truth, but then force[s] herself very slowly to take another bite" (Oliver). What this choice entails is a highlighting of the incestuous subtext of the cannibalistic banquet, which now becomes voluntary from Tamora's side. The all-consuming womb, the dislocated Roman mother mirrored in Tamora, as argued by Kahn, willingly eats "the flesh that she herself hath bred" (5.3.61).

The banquet turns into a blood-fest and, as previously mentioned, the killings go way beyond the ones commonly indicated in the playtext. The promptbook consulted has the stage direction "the Goths protect the Andronici family", but it does not seem that anyone, Romans or Goths, survive, other than the main characters. Even Marcus participates in the carnage and ends up being lightly wounded, breaking a whole set of expectations concerning the cerebral, usually constrained tribune. Blood-drinking Rome still requires another sacrifice, and if the beginning of the reasonably populated banquet creates expectations for an acclaimed discourse by Lucius, in the end no one hears him speak, except for his uncle Marcus who is too busy arranging a multitude of corpses. The play closes, again, with the conflation of the political and the funerary, making the relationship between both quite clear: in Rome, order can only be built by means of the sacrifice of human bodies, literally or metaphorically.

The fly-killing scene is cleverly altered so that Young Lucius is the one to kill the fly. The childish behavior of comparing a black fly to Aaron's skin tone makes more sense in Young Lucius than in Marcus, but the significance of such a chance resonates in the closing moments of the production, making the fly-killing scene, in retrospect, a chilling moment. Young Lucius is scolded by his grandfather for killing the fly in a moment reminiscent of Mutius's death, creating a palpable sense of dread; after all, Titus has shown to be capable of murdering his own offspring and seems to be, indeed, mad. But Young Lucius's justification for murdering the fly convinces Titus and is even praised by him. Titus teaches the boy that killing is acceptable, and his further "torture" of the fly teaches that desecrating corpses is equally normal. In the end, after Aaron utters the last words in the play, Young Lucius picks up Aaron's baby and, differently from Howell's and Taymor's *Titus*es, the lights go off as the boy is about to murder the baby. The play began with Lucius sacrificing one of Tamora's sons and it ends with Young Lucius killing another one.

It would be tempting to say that the murder of the baby concludes the cyclical nature of violence, started with the wars against the Goths, brought to Rome with Titus's victorious return, complicated by the political struggles and schemes of the decadent Empire, and relatively resolved by the spectacular revenge exerted by Titus. Rather, violence seems to operate in cyclical terms, yes, but also randomly, popping up in unexpected places for no apparent reason. The killing of the clown has no place in the back and forth power struggle between the Andronici and the Goths, nor does the murder of an innocent by Young Lucius. One possibility when looking at the murder of the baby is to claim that Young Lucius learned violence with his male relatives. I would like to argue that Young Lucius's actions go beyond that. He did not learn violence from his male relatives's bloody revenge against Tamora, but rather he looked at the justified violence and was able to separate its moral justification, however questionable it might be, from its execution and from its effects. It seems that he went beyond learning how to be violent, but he enjoyed the effects of violence, and decided to try it himself to obtain pleasure from it.

5.3 *Titus* back to London

Lucy Bailey's *Titus Andronicus*, first performed at the Shakespeare's Globe in 2006, overlapped with Ninagawa's *Titus*'s run in Stratford-upon-Avon. Subsequently revived in 2014 due to its critical acclaim, Bailey's production contrasts to Ninagawa's in countless ways, and one of these contrasts, namely the space of each production, is a solid point to start discussing Bailey's *Titus* in general. Unlike the other productions discussed in this work, which were staged in Stratford-upon-Avon either at the Swan or at the RST, Bailey's *Titus* took place in a radically different theatrical space, described by Pauline Kiernan as a

> bundle of paradoxes it defies easy categorization. It is a building that has been designed and made on Tudor principles, following historical research into sixteenth-century architecture, craftsmanship and joinery as scrupulously as modern safety regulations will allow. (3)

Thus, as of its opening in 1997, the Globe was described by theater practitioners of its first seasons as "'raw', 'strange', 'exciting', 'energizing', 'dangerous', 'new', 'avant-garde'" (3). The main component of the space, however, seems to be the audience, who participates more actively in the spectacle due to the lack of clear-cut line separating actors from spectators. Therefore, Shakespeare's Globe "offers radical possibilities for shared experiences on the part of the audience. When the yard is packed round with standing groundlings on all sides, the audience can become an angry mob, a fearsome army, a threatening force to those on stage" (4-5). Such an effect is also heightened by another major architectural feature of the Globe, namely its lack of a roof. Director Tim Caroll points out two implications: "The first is that the audience and the actor are in the same light [. . .] The second is that it introduces into every performance an element of inevitable unpredictability" (38). If actors and spectators are in the same light, spectators are susceptible to the actors' gaze as much as the actors are susceptible to the audience's. In Bailey's *Titus* spectators and actors are subject to the same light not due to the lack of roof, but rather due to the "*velarium* that stretches over the yard" (Lee qtd. in Karim-Cooper, 68), creating a dark, gladiatorial space. The stage is also covered in dark drapers, painting the colorful columns black. Characters' exits to the backstage make it seem as if "the night swallowed them up, purely and simply" (Levi 11), similarly to prisoners in Primo Levi's account.

Lucy Bailey's *Titus Andronicus* begins with audience interaction and a comic instance of suspension of disbelief. After Bassianus and Saturninus exit, the actor playing the Captain—but also assigned lines 223-225 (1.1)—appears seemingly drunk onstage, looking more like a Bacchus figure than a Captain, with a glass of wine and grapes adorning his head, asking a groundling where she is from. "Bedford", is her reply, to which the Captain cracks a joke along the lines: "From Bedford to Rome? That's a long trip".[18] Besides the immediate effect of entertaining the audience, the joke establishes something crucial to the production, namely that laughter is an acceptable reaction. Again, director Tim Caroll sheds some light on the issue of laughter and tragedy at the Globe: "laughter from an audience does not necessarily mean, 'We simply found that funny and we do not think anything serious could have happened.' This is what some of our critics, in their shallow way, assumed was happening when the audience laughed at the 'wrong' things" (38-39). The joke also plays with the fact that, of course, the spectacle takes place in London, not in Rome, thus highlighting its own artificiality and asking the audience to pretend they are indeed in Rome. Besides the joke with an audience member, the Captain drunkenly spills some of his drink on audience members and apologizes profusely. If the fourth wall was already shaken by Saturninus and Bassianus' entrance (they entered separately on carts through the yard, pushed by their followers, having the audience move to make way for them), the separation is completely shattered by the drink being spilled.

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[18] One of the advantages of analyzing a production at the Globe is the possibility of having at least some insight into the audience's reactions. One of the issues I faced when analyzing RSC performances was the poor quality of the recording, even in relatively recent productions such as Ninagawa's and Fentiman's. Here, the recording, available on DVD and online, shows the audience reacting in several moments. This is particularly useful to identify the humorous moments in the production.

The first act of Bailey's *Titus Andronicus* is Saturninus's show. In this production, Saturninus is played as a spoiled, insecure, and authoritarian leader who, at the same time, is utterly submissive to Tamora's desires. The exaggeration of such characteristics provides most of the humorous moments throughout the production. Blanche McIntyre's 2017 *Titus* seems to draw heavily from Bailey's approach to Saturninus and resonated with contemporary audiences in an age when one of the most powerful politicians in the world is known for his outrageous Tweets, ranging from megalomania to threats of nuclear war. Saturninus is also the character that interacts the most with the audience, reinforcing the statement that laughter is not only acceptable but encouraged, as he often directs his laughter to spectators, who end up laughing with him. As Saturninus's quality as a comic character is built up throughout the first act, his submission to Tamora's desires becomes humorous, making the "My lord, be ruled by me" line (1.1.445) particularly effective in moving the audience to laughter, relieving some of the tension that their dangerous marriage produces. If Saturninus is authoritarian as a leader but submissive in his relationship with Tamora, it is implied that Tamora can indirectly rule politically by ruling Saturninus domestically.

The severed body parts in act 3, scene 1 are employed to comic effect, and their presentation does not shy away from the explicit display of violence. The ghostlike characteristic of the severed heads of Titus's sons is even more humorous than in Fentiman's production. Here, Titus shushes the other characters so that he can better hear what his sons are trying to say. It is likely that Fentiman's approach to this scene was inspired by Bailey's first run with *Titus Andronicus*, in 2006. Concerning Titus's hand, its chopping is perhaps one of the most shocking in *Titus Andronicus*'s performance history, not because of its visual appeal but rather due to the loud noise of Aaron's axe quickly hitting the wood upon which Titus's hand lay. Finally, when Aaron delivers his aside before exiting, he uses Titus's hand to scratch his own face, driving the audience to laughter. The severed body parts are alienated from the bodies they once belonged, becoming useful objects to the characters.

Aaron has his major speech cut in Bailey's production, but an interpolation between acts 3 and 4 underscores his pleasure in doing evil.

The Bacchus figure who interacted with the audience in act 1 is seen here being carried by an angry mob, commanded by Aaron, Chiron, and Demetrius. The group, carrying torches, beating drums, dancing, and screaming "mortem" sacrifices the clown. Aaron's leading role in the sacrifice reveals both his joy in doing evil—precisely the content of the "But I have done a thousand dreadful things/As willingly as one would kill a fly" (5.1.140-1) speech—and perhaps the powerful influence he is exerting in Rome. The sacrifice of such stereotypically Roman figure may also further highlight Rome's lost values. Another interpretation is that such a sacrifice, which seems barbaric at first, results from what the former prisoners experienced when they arrived in Rome: seeing one of their own inhumanly sacrificed. The two brothers are later responsible for the execution of the messenger, whose neck they snap as they carry him offstage, thus going against the occlusion of violence supposed by Francis Barker.

What Bailey does with the final banquet scene subverts the expectations of those familiar with *Titus Andronicus* and its stage history. The way characters die is not only relevant due to the obvious reason that the plot must reach its conclusion and, for that to happen, revenge must be exerted, but the sometimes subtle variations between productions can produce radically different meanings in terms of how characters relate to one another, what their deaths mean to the future of Rome, what is their relationship with death itself, and so on. Each of these aspects can be covered by a different death, namely Lavinia's, Saturninus's, and Titus's, even though their significance overlaps.

Titus's death is similar to Lavinia's, in the sense that it is nearly suicidal. If Lavinia welcomes death by her father's hands, Titus knows he is marked to die. Upon reading the playtext, Lavinia's and Titus's deaths always seemed almost suicidal. Titus and Lavinia understand that they do not fit in the new age that is about to begin; they belong to an old Rome that no longer exists, and they too must cease existing. Thus, after revealing the contents of the pie and stabbing Tamora, Titus sees the approaching emperor and simply opens his arms, literally and figuratively embracing death. Lavinia embraces Titus, and moments later Titus embraces Saturninus. It is as if they follow again the pattern of their suffering: Lavinia lost her hands and then Titus willingly gives one of his. Again, I stress that Lavinia's relationship with Titus's should not be overlooked. Their mutilation, however inviting of metaphors, must primarily be looked at as what it is: literal handlessness, a wound that connects father and daughter on a palpable level. This motion of relegating the metaphorical aspect of their handlessness to the background seems, at first, to reduce the political significance of their mutilation, since its connection to the State or to political power is mitigated in favor of the actual loss of hands. But both in their mutilation and in their deaths, particularly the latter in Lucy Bailey's production, the materiality of such events is precisely what renders them political, in the sense that they are the result of a particular power structure and of Lavinia's and Titus's contact with sovereign power. In their willingness to accept and embrace death I see both Ewan Fernie's freedom and Daniel Juan Gil's anti-political drive. By taking control of their own deaths, Titus and Lavinia can resist a sovereign power that attempted to seize control of their bodies in horrendous ways. I own much of this idea of seeing some instances of suicide as extreme forms of resistance to my unpublished analyses of the films *La Noire de…* (1966) and *Caché* (2005).

But more innovative, considering the previously discussed history of *Titus* in performance, is Lucius's murder of Saturninus. Before commenting on Saturninus's death itself, I would like to mention one particular aspect of the banquet scene that always seems to be a source of tension for spectators and critics alike: how characters other than Saturninus and Tamora behave during the feast. Do they eat the pie? Does Titus have a different dish served for them? Here Titus motions to serve Lucius a piece of the pie but instead drops it on the floor, exaggeratedly faking a lack of skill to spare his son of the cannibalistic dish. Lucius, however, disappointed and possibly hungry, avenges his father's death by cannibalizing Saturninus, not differently from what Count Dracula might do. If the question of who is the true cannibal in *Titus Andronicus* was a matter of cultural speculation, in Bailey's *Titus* the one true cannibal is neither Titus, the cook, nor the imperial couple, ignorant of the ingredients, but Lucius, who knocks Saturninus on the table and then proceeds to bite his neck. Soon after, Lucius is scouted offstage by both Marcus and his Goth soldiers, and the medieval music gives way to war drums. In Bailey's production, more than in any other, Lucius crosses all the thresholds between civilization and barbarism. As summed up by Lindsey Scott, such is the journey of the revenge hero: crossing the frontier between civilization and barbarism (406). Considering Louise Noble's argument that *Titus Andronicus* deals with Early Modern anxieties about the contemporary practice of consuming human body parts for medicinal purposes, Lucius's choice of murdering Saturninus this way could be a form of medicinal cannibalism; by consuming the flesh of the then Emperor, Lucius could heal the wounded body politic. Louise Noble's argument, evidently, focuses on Titus's strange recipe, but the argument could be made, in Bailey's production, regarding

Lucius's practice, which is less ambiguously cannibalistic than what Titus does. Going back to the interpolation when the captain is sacrificed, perhaps what we see here is not the problematic opposition between a supposedly civilized culture and the barbarian customs, but rather the interaction of two cultures resulting in an even more dangerous and violent hybrid, symbolized by the Roman cannibalistic general supported by an army of Goths.

6. CONCLUSION

In the classic essay “The Death of the Author”, Roland Barthes writes that the domain of the author is also the critic’s, i.e., if the author is the center of the work, the critic, by finding the author, can successfully complete their task of finding the hidden meaning of the literary text. Just like that, the critic wins. Thus, destabilizing the author, according to Barthes, is destabilizing the critic. The good news is that this operation frees the text from the constraints of a single, all-encompassing reading: an emancipated reader can be born, whose critical task is as creative as that of the writer.

Although this seems like old news—rarely do we see among scholars nowadays anyone daring to mention the author’s intentions—it seems that the critical method of finding a center to the text is still often practiced. In performance criticism, especially when the subject of politics is on the table, finding context is the contemporary equivalent of finding the author to Barthes’ targets. By finding the relevant contextual events at the time of a given performance, one can find—better yet, construct—its meaning; since the author is long gone and the playtext is not the source of meaning, context takes their place as the pillar of the critical building. It goes without saying that no work of art exists in a vacuum, but one runs the risk of closing the text—or the theatrical performance as is the case here—just as the nameless critics bashed by Barthes used to. Instead of finding Shakespeare, Brook or Ninagawa, the critic succeeds by finding Auschwitz, the Vietnam War, or the atomic bomb. I arrive at my conclusion with the expectation that the type of criticism I provided could avoid such methods.

Before properly concluding the present work, I believe a summary of the intellectual and even geographical journey involved in its making is appropriate. Just as the change of focus from my MA thesis to my PhD dissertation is explained in the introduction, I would like to highlight what accounted for a broadened focus in this work in comparison to what was initially proposed. Naturally, it is expected that the research activity itself in the Human Sciences might adjust the very hypotheses the researcher is trying to test. At times, in the light of new bibliography, former hypotheses no longer seem so intriguing or worth-testing. This was not the case here, however; what did occur is that, upon encountering more contemporary bibliography—as well as some classic pieces of criticism I had not had access to before—I was able to broaden my hypotheses and deal more adequately with the complexity of the object under analysis. In this regard, my contact with the works of Thomas

P. Anderson, Daniel Juan Gil, and Ewan Fernie (and discussing the connections between their ideas with Fernie himself) broadened my notion of the possibilities of the political theme, rendering it more complex and less centered on the debate, mainly between Francis Barker and Andrew Hadfield, between a reactionary and a republican reading of the playtext.

Thus, the intellectual journey of this work, which coincides with the geographical journey to the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon, allowed me to steer from an either/or view of the possibilities of the productions in terms of their involvement with politics and where they stand in the "Barker-Hadfield continuum". Thus, one of the conclusions I am able to draw from my work is the very approach employed in reading the productions, something I had not hypothesized when I began the research, and which is more general than the conclusions about the corpus itself.

But to go back to one of the main sources used in my previous study about *Titus* and in the inception of the present work--Francis Barker's *The Culture of Violence*--I hope to have convinced my readership that Barker's argument that *Titus Andronicus* occludes violence does not stand the test of performance. The death of the messenger occurred differently in each production, and each caused radically varied effects. It is not absurd to think that, in its first productions, the death of the messenger may have taken the shape of the fugitive politics Thomas P. Anderson writes about: "[t]he promise of fugitive politics is in a rebellious moment rather than a form; it appears as an occasional presence or evanescence 'that may assume revolutionary, destructive proportions, or may not'" (2).

Moreover, I hope to have achieved in this work the sort of struggle for freedom that Ewan Fernie associates with Shakespeare criticism in *Shakespeare for Freedom*: "Shakespeare criticism, whether knowingly or not, has been an intellectual struggle for freedom". For Fernie, some of the major Shakespeareans throughout history "have sought to affirm freedom intellectually by reading, promoting and interpreting Shakespeare" (167). Also, by looking at the recent history of *Titus Andronicus* and analyzing major English productions of this play, I see a struggle for freedom in the making of *Titus Andronicus* itself, as a play freeing itself from a history of neglect, poor reception, and often sheer despise. From the aestheticized scarves in Brook's production to Lavinia's hair in Fentiman's *Titus*, it is possible to see the play freeing itself from nearly two centuries of scorn and pushing the boundaries of what was thought to be possible in terms of theatrical practice.

As mentioned in the introduction, one of my ideas at first was to analyze Brazilian productions of the play. Sadly, this was not possible due to the lack of records. Thus, one of the ways I would like to point to future research depends on the expectation that Brazilian companies keep their records and work more closely with scholars. But to stay in the present, further research should look at *Titus Andronicus* outside the Anglophone world. Although some of such productions are discussed *en passant* in Mariangela Tempera's and Michael Friedman's works, a more thorough analysis of stagings from Romania, Italy, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, to name a few countries where the play has been successfully produced, would enrich the study of Titus's tragedy. I share Mariangela Tempera's concern with performance analysis:

> As directors know only too well, the most important elements in deciding whether Shakespeare was closing his play on a positive note, or leaving it open for a new cycle of violence are not in the text: how do the Goths behave at the banquet? What role does Lucius play in the slaughter? Is the black baby dead or alive? Unlike the editors, they are called upon to answer each of these questions unequivocally, one more reason why documentation of their work is most relevant to any interpretation of the play. (208)

Furthermore, fortunately, for *Titus* scholars, recent Shakespearean scholarship seems to accompany the theatrical attention *Titus Andronicus* has received, and researchers are likely to find a chapter or two about the play in many recent pieces of criticism and theory.

I would also like to conclude that, perhaps, *Titus Andronicus* can teach us a lesson about history and our blind faith in the notion of a continuous journey towards progress. To the contrary, and French director Daniel Mesguich puts it well, *Titus* shows us that we do not always move "forward": he found it crucial to show, when playing *Titus*, "a late Rome, in which this culture and civilization have created their own barbarism, and a new surge of cruel and elemental forces springing up amid, and in part defined by, the no-longer-understood relics and ruins of the past. This is not a pre-civilized barbarism, but a post-civilized one" (Carlson qtd. in Friedman 139). I think that such a position is more clearly seen in Fentiman's and Bailey's production. In Fentiman's due to Young Lucius's end, in which he seems to go beyond the violence he could have emulated from both Romans and Goths. In Bailey's staging, that is shown in the perversion of Roman ritual by the Goths (such as when they sacrifice the Roman captain-clown figure) and Lucius's final act of cannibalism.

In this dissertation, two *Tituses* from the twentieth-century were analyzed: Peter Brook's and Deborah Warner's, separated by more than thirty years. The consensus is that Peter Brook's production brought *Titus* in performance back to life, as if expanding the Shakespearean cannon with an old play, but, at the same time, set the standards too high for future performances, so much so that Deborah Warner's seems to go in the opposite direction of every choice made by Brook. While Brook cut the text extensively, Warner kept every line, even if some were reassigned from minor to major characters.

Analysis has shown that Brook's production ends in a pessimistic note by the very exclusion of the final lines, which set the foundation for the future of Rome, as if the matters of state cannot be settled and more chaos will ensue. The death of the messenger is not occluded at all, but highlighted by Saturninus's politically motivated decision, grounded mostly on an irrational fear. In this production, Lavinia's ribbon, signaling her wound, possesses the "agitating power" mentioned by Thomas P. Anderson and the "undeadness" mentioned by Daniel Juan Gil, both instances of their concepts of fugitive and anti-politics, respectively. The play's closure, I argue, further problematizes the civilization-barbarism dichotomy by playing on Aaron's survival and the lack of ritual practice. Warner's production, on the other hand, keeps the final lines but has them delivered on a deserted political landscape. Rome, in this production, seems to be the ancestral land of the father, with Titus, at least in the beginning, being the epitome of patriarchal power. Here an otherwise politically charged moment becomes an expression of the raw physical power of the father.

In the twenty-first century, instead of avoiding Brook, as Deborah Warner did, theater practitioners seem less afraid of referencing Brook's iconic production. In terms of performance history, one event separates the productions analyzed in each chapter: Julie Taymor's highly successful filmic adaptation, 1999's *Titus*. Ninagawa's production remarkably evokes Brook's and sets the civilizational question at the center of the stage, literally and metaphorically by having the Capitoline wolf onstage in most of the scenes. In the end, Tamora, Young Lucius, and the baby are all connected to a she-wolf. Another apparent concern in Ninagawa's *Titus* is marketing the play as a global spectacle.

Fentiman's more intimate playhouse, the Swan, in Stratford-upon-Avon, mixes Brook's stylization with Warner's brutality by having Lavinia's handlessness represented not by scarves but by her own hair, cut off by Tamora. One of the key scenes in my analyses, the killing of the clown, is one of the most shocking moments of Fentiman's staging, further amplifying the racial tension provided by Aaron's presence. The final banquet subverts the tradition of having Young Lucius as the only sympathetic character remaining (as seen in Howell, Taymor, and Ninagawa), by portraying him as a young killer, perhaps even more ruthless than the adults.

Finally, Lucy Bailey's 2014 revival of her successful run at the Shakespeare's Globe, in London, in 2006 explores both comedy and gore, closing the play with a fantastic cannibalism scene involving Lucius murdering Saturninus with a bite to the emperor's neck. A powerful visual interpolation underscores Aaron's malignity by showing the Moor and the Empress's sons sacrificing the captain in a barbarous-Roman death ritual.

To conclude, I hope to have shown that the usual simplifications about *Titus Andronicus* gratuitous violence do not stand the test of performance and criticism and that a careful look at the play in performance can reveal the subtleties of its violence and the relationship of such violence to complex ideas about power, freedom, and politics. It is precisely in the moments of violence such ideas can be better perceived. True enough, such moments can be, and usually are, exaggerated, astonishing, dark, and hilarious, but they are far from meaningless.

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