"We give you a bloodbath": Bloodless Violence in Jude Christian's *Titus Andronicus*

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In the Sam Wanamaker performance of *Titus Andronicus* in 2023, directed by Jude Christian, a curious taming of the material occurs. From its position as the notoriously grisly Shakespearean tragedy, Christian alters it into a cabaret-style show that reduces one of Shakespeare's bloodiest plays to a bloodless affair, using wax candles carried by each character as a substitute for the body. These candles are meant to withstand the violent acts of *Titus Andronicus*—being snapped, cut in half, chopped, and finally literally snuffed out even as the characters' lives are snuffed out metaphorically. As the Sam Wanamaker Theatre is a candlelit theatre, these candles serve both as lighting and bodily metaphor, removing the bloodshed from this bloody play.

By using Christian's production as a case study, and considering the implications of the waxy metaphor used by Jude Christian, as well as by removing the shed blood—a metaphorically rich and coded substance signifying race, identity and kinship—I argue that blood becomes something that frequently *must* be spilt in some more concretely bloody way for violence to have impact.[1] Wax succeeds as a bodily metaphor, connecting to an early modern sensibility regarding the connections between wax and flesh, but wax struggles to convey the violence and bloodshed which are demonstrated by bodily mutilation, especially for a modern audience. Metaphorical bloodshed is one thing, but removing

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blood and relocating violence away from the body creates too many complicated visual issues. Blood, a key element in playacting pain, adds verisimilitude in a way that watching a candle be snapped in half does not. In a play so "self-consciously histrionic"[2] as *Titus Andronicus*—labelled in the opening song as a "bloodbath"—we require a bloody spectacle that is intrinsically graphic and violent, whether that spectacle is metaphorical or literal.[3]

I want to first briefly consider the theatrical landscape of *Titus Andronicus* in the period in which it is written to better understand Christian's good faith intervention. Wax had a part to play in the Elizabethan psyche in regard to malleability and the uncanny nature, in particular, of dead flesh. Therefore, Christian's use of wax as a bodily substitute has early modern grounding and merit. Wax is, in fact, an apt material for an early modern concept of flesh, as Elizabeth Harvey notes:

> Wax is like flesh in its responsiveness to touch: it warms and changes shape, it seems almost to respond to touch as if it were flesh. It is, then, an ideal medium in which to fashion bodies made to be touched.[4]

Wax was incredibly popular in creating wax figures of the human body, especially those of saints, but this began to fall out of favor in the mid 1600s, as wax, in another link to flesh, decays over time, creating an unintentional dismemberment of saints, as noted by Hanneke Grootenboer.[5] In the 1590s, however, wax was still a common medium for relics in particular, owing to their tactility for pilgrims and believers alike, as well as the flesh-like properties that Harvey notes.

The purity of virgin wax also aligns it metaphorically with the chaste female body, as Lynn M. Maxwell suggests, which has interesting implications for the debasement and defilement of Lavinia's body.[6] In Christian's interpretation, Lavinia's defilement has no waxen substitute, with no damage being inflicted on the candle, only wax covering the hands that she has lost. Her rape has not been figured in wax as damage, and the wax used to show harm is from the melted remains of previous candles; there is no virgin, untouched wax to fashion for the unsullied body, which has deeper implications.

In regard to the early modern desire for accuracy in violence, Christine Woodworth writes that

> Elizabethan plays were riddled with stabbings, decapitations, and disembowelments, calling for props as simple as "sponges of vinegar" and as complex as bladders filled with sheep's blood and entrails.[7]

This adds credence to Michael Caines's note about *Titus* being a play of the "horror-mad 1590s,"[8] for the play lends itself well to the realistic theatrical interventions of early modern stage violence.

This is not to say that bloody depictions of *Titus* necessarily create the desired tone; as Lucy Munro argues, "stage effects involving blood and body parts can often create an uncertainty of tone—it does not take much for grand guignol (a sensationalistic horror show) to tip into parody or even farce."[9] Overkill, in the eyes of the audience, ceases to horrify and starts to amuse unless handled carefully. However, a play labelled as a "bloodbath" that does not deliver on its bloodiness quickly creates a disconnect between text and action, and in Christian's production moments that have been written as affecting an audience—so much so that prior performances of this play have been riddled with "fainting, vomiting and escaping audience members"—become farcical, dramatically altered to the point of non-efficacy, and simply stripped of their affective power.[10] "It is the symbolic value of the acts that instills a nightmarish terror in the play," posits Stephen Gregg, but these visual symbols have been altered or removed.[11]

In the modern day, war is commonplace, and violence is increasingly ubiquitous in the media in the same fashion as the early modern public executions were a commonly attended event. The difference is that while the early moderns aimed for verisimilitude by substituting actual violence and bloodshed with simulated pain and animal blood, the modern theatrical sensibility stages *Titus Andronicus* using techniques ranging from stage blood, to red ribbons (in the case of Peter Brook in 1955) and scarves, to even more abstract methods of conveying pain and harm. Christian's approach stands out as a method of conveyance that not only removes the concept of blood in any form, but also alters the site of violent acts.

Natasha Tripney contrasts Christian's production with Serbian director Andraš Urban's production of *Titus Andronicus* for the Yugoslav Drama Theatre in Belgrade in the same year. She says of Urban's production that "Most of the violence isn't enacted

on stage, rather we see blood splatter on plastic sheeting—lots of it—but it's still visceral."[12] Katy Stephens, who plays Titus in Christian's production, has argued that stripping out the violence allows more room to concentrate on the relationships.[13]

The violence is positioned not on the body, but on candles that the actors carry. These serve as metaphors for their bodies, while also being physically present onstage to be touched, grabbed, and so forth. Lives are extinguished by snuffing out candles. The one character who is not physically present onstage is Aaron's infant son, who is only ever onstage in the form of a tiny candle, carried by the nurse, cradled by Aaron in his hands and then placed on a shelf for safety. The reduction of violence to the minimal—gouging wax out of a candle to replace a hand, melting a candle to simulate blood for the ill-fated sons of Tamora, who are blended into a waxy paste for the pie—creates issues for Titus's characterization. The violent acts that he bears witness or is victim to are nowhere near as affecting as in previous performances. The reduction in harm and increase in humor that such attacks on wax generate reduces the plausibility of Titus's mad state by the end of the production. The maddening sight of his maimed daughter who cannot tell him of her experience, and the mirroring of Ovid's Philomela, who loses her tongue, is lost, and his motivation for revenge along with it, as I will explore later. Ovid does not shy away from the grotesque; Philomela's tongue is described as "writh[ing] convulsively," trying to return to her "like a snake's tail"[14]; the sight Titus encounters is nowhere near as affecting as this, and hence, wax quickly becomes a problematic medium to substitute for the mutilated body.

Rosie Elnile, one of the set designers for Christian's production, says of the candles that "The flame feels like the consciousness, the wax the flesh and the fat [and] the wick the bones."[15] The waxy nature of the injury in this performance, as well as the fact that every death is punctuated by the dead character dipping a ring of wicks into a vat of wax before exiting—creating new candles even as theirs is destroyed—does punctuate the cycle of violence that continues through the play. Playing off of their venue, the candle-lit Sam Wanamaker Theatre, it also links to the waxy nature of *The Duchess of Malfi's* prop victims, built to horrify the Duchess in another of the Wanamaker's oft-performed plays. In inserting this metaphor for bodies, "it means that there's real violence performed

on stage—to the candle," says actor Lucy McCormick who plays Saturninus in the production. She continues, "but it's also leaving a lot to the imagination, which can be even more disturbing and terrifying and cruel than just watching a choreographed violent scene."[16] I argue, however, that as an audience member, I was neither disturbed nor terrified more by seeing a candle be mutilated than I would be witnessing flesh being treated in this way. It fails to satisfy as a bodily metaphor when subjected to violence in this play, in part due to its stylistic impact being softened. As the late Sarah Kane, a modern writer presenting similarly grotesque subject matter puts it, "Take the glamour out of violence and it becomes utterly repulsive. Would people seriously prefer it if the violence was appealing?"[17] By making the wax a surrogate body, it becomes too glamorous, to use Kane's phrasing, and hence doesn't have the same effect.

The distinct difference between flesh and wax is that the body cannot suffer nearly as much violence without breaking and bleeding. Especially at body temperature, wax becomes entirely malleable, able to be punctured without issue, making it symbolically important as Maxwell writes, whereas flesh, if alive when the injury is suffered, will necessarily bleed when such force is inflicted upon it.[18] The gouging of fake flesh in this case feels like second hand violence, dislocated from the body because there is no bodily reaction to being maimed, tortured, or killed save actors' behavior. These "bodies" are not being touched by others when violence occurs but are instead being taken away from the physical body without any kind of bleeding or other visceral proof of harm. This deadens the impact upon an audience; Michael Caines writes that Christian's production has "the bitter matter of the play's bloody absurdities held at arm's length," and notes that "there isn't a bloodbath at all, in fact, at least not here at the Globe," as Christian chose to challenge the expectations of blood in *Titus*.[19] (An understandable expectation, given that Lucy Bailey's production, also for the Globe, released 156 liters of fake blood during its 52-show run, and is not unusual in its use of so much blood.[20])

As noted in the introduction to *Blood Matters,* "Wounds register the vulnerability of the human body, reminding us how easily the skin, which ought properly to contain our blood, can be

ruptured," but these wounds are not serving that function.[21] The skin of candles *can* be ruptured, but it is not vulnerable to puncture or tearing in the same way, nor does it create a sense of empathetic discomfort when it is punctured, torn or dripping, nor can it generate five-star reviews for being a "brutally powerful, blood-soaked nightmare" as the Telegraph dubbed the RSC production directed by Max Webster in 2025.[22] As an insensate object, wax cannot feel pain or express pain. An actor embodying pain that is not being inflicted upon them struggles to maintain the necessary verisimilitude for empathy, sympathy, or much reaction beyond humor.

In contrast to the warming, semi-sensate nature that Harvey describes in his concept of wax as a flesh substitute, is the deadening of flesh with waxen substitutes that Christian's production explores. By dipping his hand into the vat of candle wax, Titus can remove his hand without maiming his hand. Similarly, Lavinia's mutilated hands are dipped in wax, to simulate their removal. From that point onward, that hand is dead, removed from the body metaphorically and unable to be used due to the thick coating of wax. Having Titus pinned down, acting as if in pain with a candle sawn in half beside him, becomes darkly humorous as Titus writhes in pain that is not being inflicted upon him. It lessens the sacrifice he makes so that his family does not have to mutilate themselves. The action is cheapened to a moment of humor, with no visible bloodshed on the body, and hence no required emotional investment from the audience. Christian's *Titus* becomes "all about the "funny business"[23] and misses Shakespeare's intended engagement with relationships that are breaking down.[24]

The ephemeral nature of markings on wax is noted by Maxwell, who remarks that there is great potential for wax to be wiped clean and re-used in the form of wax slates because of its malleability.[25] However, the body does not have this potential, and it is partially due to this that the use of candles as signifiers for the body fails. The human body, especially in *Titus Andronicus,* is permeable and vulnerable to damage, but any damage inflicted is permanent by design. The revenge that Tamora and Titus seek for the attacks against themselves or their families is designed to be lasting. Its effects cannot be removed, and any healing only lasts until the next onslaught of violence or mental trauma disfigures the body

anew. Hence, the metaphorical nature of wax as bodily surrogate is faulty, and the affective power of such bloody acts is nullified.

Blood and affect

Christopher Behnke et al. quantify affect as "locat[ing] the production of emotions in interactive relationships, in chains of interaction, that […] can also carry individuals away in the sense of a mutual entrainment," which is particularly useful in contemplating the affective nature of *Titus Andronicus*.[26] In witnessing the violent spilling of blood, we enter an interactive relationship with the victim of violence. The audience frequently reacts to violence through visceral reactions, such as gasps, shouts, and screams, or at least facial reactions of consternation as I experienced when watching this performance in March 2023. The spilling of blood brings into contention the line between sensate being and insensate object.[27] Having the bodily surrogate of candles serve as a buffer between violent action and the body, as well as between the actor's body and the audience, the interactive relationship loses its immediacy. The insensate object becomes shorthand for the sensate being, making the transition from living person to dead flesh less clear. This becomes problematic when the production emphasizes the "bloodbath" nature of the play, as callously hewing people apart, an intrinsic feature of this play, does not occur.

Katherine Rowe, writing on dismemberment in *Titus,* makes this very salient point: "Read as grotesque and abstract, aesthetically engaging and distancing, dramatically pivotal and superfluous, the severed hands, heads and tongue [of *Titus Andronicus]* have always had a profoundly equivocal status in the critical and theatrical reception of the play."[28] While severed flesh does straddle the line between extremes, it also exists as a straightforward marker of dead flesh and a visual reminder of harm inflicted. Bloodshed is also a marker of being alive; the dead do not bleed. Where the distinction between dead and alive is so marked—Titus's twenty-five sons are decimated to only five living children by the start of the play, and only one surviving heir, Lucius, by the end—the demarcation of who is living and who is dead becomes crucial in ascertaining the stakes for Titus and Tamora. Whoever has more to

lose has a higher stake in not being the "loser" of this competition of excessive violence, and the ability to bleed marks their family as being damaged or destroyed bodily. It also serves as a marker for the audience to recall the score in the form of bloodstains and bodily injury that can be visually read upon the characters in a naturalistic portrayal. In the case of a wax substitute, little can be read upon the characters, clad in pastel pajamas, in terms of their traumas, as these have been made metaphorical or internalized.

As Katherine Craik notes, "blood reveals the difficulties involved in determining where one person's identity starts and another person's ends."[29] It is a crucial effluvium in self-identification, and the identification of kin; by removing the blood from this production, Christian belies the importance of blood as kin and as visually important viscera textually in *Titus Andronicus.* The word "blood" appears thirty-six times in this play, from Tamora pleading with Titus to "stain not thy tomb with blood" (1.1.119) to Lucius grieving his dead father, shedding "sorrowful drops upon thy blood-stain'd face" (5.3.153).[30] As Albert Tricomi notes,

> The figurative language, in fact, imitates the gruesome circumstances of the plot, thus revealing that Shakespeare subordinates everything in Titus, including metaphor, to that single task of conveying forcefully the Senecan and Ovidian horrors that he has committed himself to portraying.[31]

The metaphors and graphic imagery, however, are not being matched by stage action. Titus's speech regarding Lavinia's broken body, for example, has graphic references to the sheer bloodiness he sees:

> a crimson river of warm blood,
> Like to a bubbling fountain stirred with wind,
> Doth rise and fall between thy rosèd lips,
> Coming and going with thy honey breath. (2.4.22-25)

No such river is in existence in any capacity, metaphorical or literal, and hence, this vivid image falls flat, losing some of its potential to affect an audience. It also fails to lend credence to the unravelling of Titus's mind and Marcus's anger in response to this sight. The natural imagery in this speech, the bloody river included, creates a textual link to the hunt already witnessed, where Lavinia's husband is slaughtered, as well as linking to Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* By removing the image that comes with the speech, which remains

textually intact in Christian's staging, there comes a disconnect. Cutting parts of the speech would have dulled the emotional outburst, but would have gelled with the theatrical desiccation of the bloodbath.

Within the context of other, gorier recent productions both prior to and following this production—including Lucy Bailey's 2006 production for the Globe Theatre that was revived in 2014, and Max Webster's 2025 *Titus Andronicus* for the RSC, with "gallons of blood"[32] requiring a wet room set and a drainage system to clear it—Christian's stands out as anomalous for bloodlessness, even as it emphasises the bloodiness of the play in its auxiliary songs.

Blood and the shedding of blood not only stand as markers of bodily harm, something that there are twenty-seven different instances of, compassing fifteen deaths, but also heredity, kinship, and comradery. The latter is something that the Roman sensibility of *Titus Andronicus* requires to push it along narratively, creating the reciprocal retaliation culture between Titus and Tamora that devolves into a bloodbath in the final scene. Without the rivers of blood and bodily harm referenced, there is no impetus for further action as retaliation for filicide, and there is a weakened expression of the Roman sacrifice.

Bilal Tawfiq Hamamra argues that "the family [in *Titus Andronicus*] is a site of emotional distress and instability manifested in the discourse of disowning (fathers and mothers severing their relations with their children verbally and physically) that paternal and maternal figures employ, and, further, this discourse is fulfilled through murderous violence."[33] While there are indeed key moments of violent disowning in *Titus,* in particular in the murder of Lavinia by Titus, as well as the disowning of his sons who will not commit violence in his name, I argue that this emotional distress and instability instead comes from the discourse of violence and reciprocal bloodshed between Tamora and Titus. These escalating displays of violent power target the other party's family, rather than the destruction of their own line. While Tamora first targets the societally weakest and most vulnerable of Titus' children—his only daughter, Lavinia—and inflicts sexual and physical harm upon her, Titus begins with the "proudest of the Goths"—Tamora's eldest

son, Alarbus, who is hewn apart and burned. Lucius declares upon arriving home to Rome:

> Give us the proudest prisoner of the Goths,
> That we may hew his limbs and on a pile,
> *Ad manes fratrum*, sacrifice his flesh
> Before this earthy prison of their bones,
> That so the shadows be not unappeased,
> Nor we disturbed with prodigies on Earth. (1.1.96-101)

By sacrificing Alarbus in the name of their dead brothers' spirits, they both reinforce the barbarism of Roman ritual in the Elizabethan imagination and set in motion the bloody nature of the play, although not always as onstage violence. In Jude Christian's staging, they sacrifice a snapped candle to the fire. As well as being a more alienating image for an audience to connect to the loss of a life, it becomes a cumbersome metaphor; candles are designed to burn, tidily without extrusion and beneficially, to create light and heat. Similarly, they are more adapted to smoke "like incense" and "perfume the sky" (1.1.145) in a way that entrails are not and are routinely employed in ritual in their usual guise as illumination. This reduces dramatically the horror of this sensory input, robbing the burning entrails of their disgusting replacement for ritual incense and confusing the significant sacrifice of flesh that creates an eye for eye retaliation.

This sacrifice of Alarbus mirrors the hewing apart and cooking of her last remaining two sons, Chiron and Demetrius, in the last act to make the grotesque banquet Titus serves to Tamora. As Munro puts it, "stage blood and violence against the human body represent in vividly theatrical fashion both the exercise of tyranny and attempts to control or pre-empt it."[34] This pie is the epitome of Titus's retribution against the tyranny Saturninus and Tamora have inflicted upon him and his children, whether in their murder, their mutilation, or their mental suffering. As well as being a grotesque stage image, it becomes an emblem of Tamora being forced to relive the hewing apart and burning of her oldest son in the butchering, cooking, and consumption of her youngest.

The creation of this pie in particular creates problems of legible stage imagery when the proceedings are so bloodless. A wax-filled pie stretches the believability of so dramatic a violent climax and creates a weakened sense of horror. Cedric Watts notes:

"In Shakespeare's day, the pastry of a pie, we are reminded by the text, was called 'the coffin'; never so aptly as here: the pastry in this case being made from blood and powdered bone, to contain the cooked human flesh."[35] In this case, the pie is not made from flesh and blood at all, but wax. To chew a pie made of wax, while difficult to contemplate due to the presumably terrible taste of candle wax, does not disgust an audience like the image of a meat pie, made of blood both in filling and casing, would. She is not fulfilling the image of Revenge consuming Rape and Murder as in the masque she presents for Titus, or of the mother consuming her young that the metatheatrical play about Mrs. Rabbit warns of. It is inserted into the play to foreshadow this gruesome feast, and hence it becomes weaker as an affective stage image.

While I am not convinced of Stephen Gregg's assertion that Tamora's consumption of her sons is "a form of incest" in "representing the climax of nightmarish transgression in the play,"[36] I am convinced that it is a climax of transgression, both in the consumption of her own children and the consumption of human flesh, rather than just the mutilation of flesh that we have seen to date.[37] This transgression also parallels the starvation of Aaron with the excessive consumption that deceives Tamora. Through the divorce of violence from flesh in Christian's play, this transgression becomes entirely metaphorical and hence loses a good portion of its impact and its ability to shock and appall audiences. Alienated from its meaning, as well as its ability to escalate the emotional stakes by escalating violence, the many violent acts in Christian's *Titus* become a weakened stagnation of violence that can only result in humor and the release of tension it has not generated.

From starving Aaron to eating Chiron and Demetrius, flesh can be consumed, reduced, punctured, torn, or removed entirely. The waxen substitute for the body becomes even more malleable and vulnerable to attack. Yet, it fails to bleed, to react in pain, or to give violence any kind of visceral weight. The fascination for flesh, for the hidden that is revealed in the slasher's violence, is not sated. What is hidden inside bodies remains hidden, and what is so viscerally alive becomes dead. Lavinia's removed tongue, for example, does not serve as the permanent removal of agency that the play represents in this iteration. Nor does it prove the last straw for Titus's struggling sanity, as she is only partially maimed

in addition to being sexually defiled, something that is truly the last taboo.

Thomas A. Oldham convincingly argues in his article on Lucy Bailey's staging of *Titus Andronicus* for the Globe in 2006 and 2014 that "violent stage effects were used to invite prolonged engagement with and meaningful consideration of Lavinia."[38] Bailey's production, notoriously gory, creates a bond between Lavinia and the audience so that her mutilation has an affective effect on onlookers. It generates pity for her, and bolsters Titus's desire to avenge her mutilation by creating an audience reaction to the graphic violence inflicted upon Lavinia, who remains innocent in the actions her father takes against Tamora. I argue that by taking this display of bloodshed away from Lavinia's entrance after the attack, we remove her power to move the audience to pity and to a desire for retribution against her attackers. Indeed, in this production, she becomes her own revenger, and while this is empowering, it destabilizes the emotional reactions from this point forward.

Jude Christian's production is punctuated at the start and end of acts with songs written by Bourgeois & Maurice and arranged by Jasmin Kent Rodgman, thematically relevant to the play's progression. We are promised "men killing men, killing men, killing women killing men" and after Lavinia is led on, weeping, choking and trying to hide her lost (wax-covered) hands, her mouth unmarked but firmly closed, a song starts that Lavinia joins.[39] Her glossectomy is reversed for the span of one song, where she lays out the vengeful acts she wishes to inflict upon those who have harmed her, before returning sadly, and silently to being mute and choking on invisible blood. Unlike any other Lavinia, she is given the chance to express herself one more time after she is mutilated. Bjork's assertions to the contrary, this Lavinia does indeed have autonomy, in that she can make it known that she wants to take revenge on Chiron and Demetrius as much as Titus and Marcus do, though perhaps not to the same (now) melodramatic extent.[40]

What results is a Lavinia unlike some of the other characters who slip into farce in this staging, overreacting to cartoonish violence such as feeding candles to a mincer to represent the butchering of Chiron and Demetrius. Lavinia is instead incredibly convincing as someone who, if not the instigator of the revenge,

wishes it to be carried out. She gets some kind of justice for herself by aiding in the murder of her rapists, blocking their path, and staring them down until they sink to their knees, waiting for the deaths Titus has promised them. Empowered as it may be, it creates a Lavinia who does not serve her narrative function as a "cipher of loss" and "a body riddled with holes."[41] Instead, she becomes another revenger, unbloodied and externally mostly intact.

As a result, Marcus and Titus have little to react to, and their beautifully eloquent speeches about the loss of Lavinia's ability to speak and her desecrated beauty become nonsensical, at least on a physical level; we have heard her speak not a minute ago and she is facially unchanged. The implied rape of Lavinia remains untouched, so on this level she is desecrated, but this is never staged in any production, nor should it be, and is not numbered among the bloody acts the audience has to stomach. Unlike the other mutilations of the Andronicus or Goth families, Lavinia's body is upheld as a lasting image, a desecration of beauty and innocence. The entrance of Lavinia, mutilated, has become an iconic moment for this play, even becoming the focus of the subtitle, *The Rape of Lavinia* in a Restoration adaptation.[42] The image of her bloodied and traumatized body haunts the rest of the narrative even while she is alive, frequently becoming the promotional materials' focus as well as the impetus for Titus to slowly lose his wits, and without this image, the narrative impact is softened immensely.

As Oldham warns, if not correctly handled, Lavinia's trauma "could disappear into metaphor or become reduced to trope," and while Christian's Lavinia does not become a trope, it potentially does disappear into metaphor, as the wax candle metaphor becomes a hindrance to affective power.[43] Maybe if Lavinia had been gagged by wax in the same fashion as when Titus's hand is removed, the metaphor of wax as deadened flesh, useless to its owner, would have been carried through the play, and the image of her brutal silencing would have made some sense of the dramatic reactions and soliloquies written in response to more brutal acts. To end on Solga's rhetorical question of "what gets lost when critical eyes turn away from *Titus Andronicus* as … of and for a culture that increasingly saw itself in terms of performative acts undertaken in the public realm?", I argue: a great deal.[44]

Notes

1. This idea has been explored by Farah Karim-Cooper during a past conference at Shakespeare's Globe. See Farah Karim-Cooper, "Stage Blood: A Roundtable," The Globe Theatre, 13 July 2006, 37, https://archive.shakespearesglobe.com/CalmView/GetMultimedia.ashx?db=Catalog&type=default&fname=05%5C303ff7-01cf-4ea1-b1e2-0e1488590372.pdf.

2. Kim Solga, *Violence Against Women in Early Modern Performance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 43.

3. Lucy Munro, "'They Eat Each Other's Arms': Stage Blood and Body Parts," in *Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance*, ed. Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2014), 76.

4. Elizabeth D. Harvey, *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 101-102.

5. Hanneke Grootenboer, "Introduction: On the Substance of Wax," *Oxford Art Journal* 36.1 (2013): 1–12, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxartj/kct001.

6. Lynn M. Maxwell, *Wax Impressions, Figures, and Forms in Early Modern Literature: Wax Works* (Cham: Springer, 2019), 6.

7. Christine Woodworth, "'Summon up the Blood': The Stylized (or Sticky) Stuff of Violence in Three Plays by Sarah Kane," *Theatre Symposium* 18.1 (2010): 11.

8. Michael Caines, "An All-Female, Mess-Free Titus Andronicus," *TLS*, 10 February 2023, accessed 8 February 2026, https://www.the-tls.com/arts/theatre/titus-andronicus-sam-wanamaker-playhouse-arts-review-michael-caines.

9. Munro, "'They Eat Each Other's Arms': Stage Blood and Body Parts," 76.

10. Holly Williams, "'We Are Doing Gallons of Blood': The Ultra-Violent Shakespeare Play That Makes Audiences Faint," *BBC*, 23 April 2025, https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20250422-the-gory-shakespeare-play-that-makes-people-faint.

11. Steven Gregg, "Titus Andronicus and the Nightmares of Violence and Consumption," *Moveable Type* 6 (2010): 2.

12. Natasha Tripney, "Blood on the Boards—How Realistic Should Onstage Violence Be?", *The Stage*, 16 February 2023, https://www.thestage.co.uk/opinion/blood-on-the-boards--how-realistic-should-onstage-violence-be.

13. Tripney, "Blood on the Boards."

14. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Mary M. Innes (London: Penguin Books, 1955), 149.

15. Rosie Elnile, qtd. in Pete Messum, "A World in Which Candles Represent Life: Designing *Titus Andronicus*," Shakespeare's Globe, 2023 https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discover/blogs-and-features/2023/02/02/a-world-in-which-candles-represent-life-designing-titus-andronicus/, accessed 25 July 2023.

16. Holly Williams, "*Titus Andronicus* 'Unplugged': How the Globe Is Staging the Gory Play in a New Light," *The Stage*, 11 January 2023, https://www.thestage.co.uk/features/titus-andronicus-unplugged-how-the-globe-is-staging-the-gory-play-in-a-new-light.

17. David Benedict, "Disgusting Violence? Actually It's Quite a Peaceful Play," *Independent*, 22 January 1995: 3.

18. Maxwell, *Wax Impressions*, 11.

19. Caines, "An All-Female, Mess-Free *Titus Andronicus*."

20. Caines, "An All-Female, Mess-Free *Titus Andronicus*."

21. Bonnie Lander Johnson and Eleanor Decamp, "Introduction," *Blood Matters: Studies in European Literature and Thought, 1400-1700* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 6.

22. "*Titus Andronicus* | Royal Shakespeare Company," *Royal Shakespeare Company*, 2025, https://www.rsc.org.uk/titus-andronicus/about-the-play.

23. Caines, "An All-Female, Mess-Free *Titus Andronicus*."

24. Williams, "'*Titus Andronicus* "Unplugged': How the Globe Is Staging the Gory Play in a New Light."

25. Maxwell, *Wax Impressions*, 11.

26. Christopher Behnke, Cornelia Kastelan, Valérie Knoll, and Ulf Wuggenig, eds. *Art in the Periphery of the Center* (London: Sternberg Press, 2015).

27. Johnson and Decamp, "Introduction," *Blood Matters*, 6.

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29. Katherine A. Craik, "Sorting Pistol's Blood: Social Class and the Circulation of Character in Shakespeare's *2 Henry IV* and *Henry V*," in *Blood Matters: Studies in European Literature and Thought, 1400-1700* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 44.

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31. 16. Albert H. Tricomi, "The Aesthetics of Mutilation in *Titus Andronicus*," in *Shakespeare and Language*, ed. Catherine M. S. Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 226, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511617379.014.

32. Williams, "We Are Doing Gallons of Blood."

33. Bilal Tawfiq Hamamra, "Disowning Familial Relations in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*," *The Explicator* 78, no. 2 (2020): 80.

34. Munro, "'They Eat Each Other's Arms,'" 75.

35. Cedric Watts, "The Bloody Banquet in *Titus Andronicus* | Blogs & Features," Shakespeare's Globe, 14 May 2014, accessed 12 October 2025, https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discover/blogs-and-features/2014/05/11/the-bloody-banquet-in-titus-andronicus/.

36. Gregg, "*Titus Andronicus* and the Nightmares of Violence and Consumption," 1.

37. I do not see the inevitability of the connection between consumption and incestuous consummation that Gregg draws. It is far more likely the consequence of her sexual appetite for Aaron at the expense of her children, resulting in the consumption of her children metaphorically by others.

38. Thomas A. Oldham, "The Affective Appeal of Violence and the Violent Appeal of Affect: *Titus Andronicus*, Lucy Bailey, and Shakespeare's Globe," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 40.1 (2022): 70.

39. *Titus Andronicus,* directed by Jude Christian, (London, Sam Wanamaker Playhouse) attended 11 March 2023.

40. Kiersten Bjork, "'And With Thy Shame Thy Father's Sorrow Die': The

Rape, Mutilation and Murder of Lavinia as a Reflection of the Position of Women in Elizabethan England," Theatre Fairfield. https://www.theatre-fairfield.org/newpage5c6de04c, accessed 9 October 2025.

41. Bjork, "'And With Thy Shame Thy Father's Sorrow Die."

42. Sally Barnden, "Photographing *Titus Andronicus*: Textual Fidelity, Spectacle, and the Performance Tradition," *Theatre Journal*, vol. 69.4 (2017): 555–571.

43. Oldham, "The Affective Appeal of Violence and the Violent Appeal of Affect," 71.

44. Solga, *Violence Against Women*, 43.