

'Such Violent Hands': The Theme of Cannibalism and the Implications of Authorship in the 1623 Text of *Titus Andronicus*

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Abstract

For many, 'Titus Andronicus' exemplifies the extreme visual horror which characterises the subgenre of Elizabethan revenge tragedy. Long recognised as a collaboration between William Shakespeare and George Peele, the play's notorious denouement – in which a Gothic queen is tricked into eating her slaughtered sons – has often been interpreted as a satire upon the revenge genre itself. Yet the nature of the play has recently been complicated by the claim that an additional banquet scene, only present in the 1623 Folio, may be a later addition written by a third dramatist, probably Thomas Middleton, and incorporated into the play sometime after 1616. This article will consider the implications of this probability further. It will explore how the author was not simply adding new material to 'Titus Andronicus' in order to provide a new selling point for a later revival of the work, but was constructing a new sequence designed to mirror and complement the already infamous cannibalistic conclusion of the original text. Understanding this scene as a later addition, we can now better understand how this additional scene serves as an integral turning point in the drama's narrative, and is far less 'disposable' than previous critics have been equipped to realise.

Keywords: Shakespeare; Peele; Middleton; cannibalism; text; adaptation; revision; Titus Andronicus

Introduction

'O handle not the theme, to talk of hands, / Lest we remember still that we have none' (3.2.29-30).ⁱ These lines, spoken by the titular hero of William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, underscore perfectly this notoriously gruesome drama's characteristic integration of moments of unspeakable violence with instances of equally macabre comedy. Having been vindictively tricked into permitting the severance of his own left hand on the false promise that doing so would secure the release of his imprisoned sons Martius and Quintus, at this moment Titus appears to be resorting to an unseemly degree of levity in an attempt to raise the morale both of himself and of his horribly suffering family. In other contexts, such an approach as this might be perceived as admirable, an expression of defiant contempt for even the most vindictive of his enemies. When we begin to interpret this joke within the wider context of the scene in which it occurs, however, Titus's attempts at humour might appear to be considerably more troubling.

As Jeremy Lopez has rightly noted, there are several moments in *Titus* where humour and laughter appear to be deliberately designed to come across as inappropriate, often being starkly juxtaposed with the tragedy's dark subject matter (Lopez, 2003: 174). Worryingly, however, the company to which Titus is delivering his jokes in 3.2 includes his horrendously mutilated daughter Lavinia, a young woman who has not only been brutally raped by the villainous brothers Chiron and Demetrius, but who has also been subjected by them to the torturous punishment of having her tongue cut out and both of her hands removed in a vicious attempt to prevent her from revealing the identities of her attackers. It is at this point that she first becomes subject to the cruel jibes of other characters, being mockingly taunted by her assailants after she has been forced to endure these deplorable acts: 'now go tell, an if thy tongue can speak...Write down thy mind...An if thy stumps will let thee play the scribe' (2.4.1-4). Read in this light, her father's use throughout 3.2 of witticisms constructed around the concept of the human hand seems at the very least a highly insensitive, perhaps downright callous, course of action. Titus's language has been starkly condemned by David Ellis as his 'obsessive punning on his daughter's handlessness' (Ellis, 2001: 398), and we might even detect parallels within it of the jibes of Chiron and Demetrius following their sickening deed, that 'An 'twere my cause, I should go hang myself', if only 'thou hadst hands to help thee knit the cord' (2.4.9-10): this is observable in the exchange beginning with Marcus's voiced opposition to a possible act of suicide by Lavinia – 'Fie, brother, fie, teach her not thus to lay / Such violent hands upon her tender life' – which encourages Titus's pedantic rejoinder 'What violent hands can she lay on her life?' (3.2.21-5). Surely, if there is ever an individual from whose plight

it is never permissible to attempt to derive 'edgy' comedy, it is a young woman who has just been subjected to violent rape and extreme physical mutilation.

The wordplay of 3.2 provides just one example of how *Titus Andronicus* fails in maintaining what might be considered an appropriately even tone across its tragic narrative. It is perhaps partly for this reason that, to quote from the recent analysis of Goran Stanivukovic, 'More than any other play in the Shakespeare canon, *Titus Andronicus* has provoked diametrically opposed responses from critics' (Stanivukovic, 2019: 37). *Titus* is a play of notable tonal extremes, in which ostensibly comedic moments sit uncomfortably within the framework of a drama which infamously culminates in a sickening and protracted cannibalistic banquet, in which the mother of Chiron and Demetrius, Tamora, is tricked into feeding upon 'two pasties' (5.2.188) which have been fashioned from the butchered carcasses of her sons. Yet although many present-day audiences may find the humour of 3.2 profoundly unsettling, especially coming so soon after their first glimpse of a horribly bloodied Lavinia emerging onto the stage with 'her hands cut off and her tongue cut out, and ravished' (2.4.0.2), certain critics have nevertheless attempted to rehabilitate the play by demonstrating the importance of its distinctive moments of dark comedy to the execution of its overall dramatic integrity. Indeed, as Curtis Perry has recently observed, although 'It was not all that long ago that *Titus Andronicus* was thought to be (in Edward Ravenscroft's memorable formulation) an "indigested piece" of Shakespearean juvenilia', scholars are now more likely to find in the tragedy something which he terms a 'postmodern-seeming sophistication' (Perry, 2019: 16). Regardless, however we might choose to assess the play today, the reluctance of historical commentators to accept Shakespearean culpability for the work's many unsettling excesses continues to cast a long shadow over critical analysis.

The issue of the authorship of *Titus Andronicus* remains an area of sustained scholarly engagement. As Brian Boyd writes, 'For a long time some readers supposed that Shakespeare's hand could not be responsible for all the severed hands and heads...Yet several recent articles...demonstrate that *Titus* has two very dissimilar strata, one that falls within Shakespearean norms, one that falls far outside them' (Boyd, 2004: 51). Building upon this realisation, most scholars now accept that Shakespeare's older contemporary George Peele was responsible for the writing of up to two of the play's scenes: Scene 1 (usually divided into 1.1 and 2.1 following the text presented in the First Folio (hereafter F1) of 1623), and possibly also Scene 6/4.1 (Vickers, 2002: 148-243). As with so much in the field of stylometric analysis, of course, debate continues regarding the exact details of the play's collaborative identity, including

recent arguments that Shakespeare (rather than Peele) may actually have been responsible for the writing of 4.1 (**Weber, 2014; Pruitt, 2017**), and that Shakespeare's involvement in the play may have come about by him completing a tragedy which was left unfinished by Peele, an idea which may be signalled by the possibility that 1.1 shows some signs of Shakespearean revision (**Loughnane, 2017**). Recent scholarship, however, has served to further complicate the question of the play's authorship and textual integrity, particularly regarding 3.2. This short scene was included in the version of the play published in F1, but when examining the three earlier published texts of the tragedy (which were printed in cheaper quarto editions in 1594, 1600, and 1611 respectively), this scene is conspicuously absent. Of course, while a few critics have considered 3.2 to be an authentically Shakespearean passage which simply failed, for various reasons, to find its way into the earlier quartos (**Bate, 1995: 98; Metz, 1996: 114-15**), this is a scene which some (to utilise the phrasing of Alexander Leggatt) have treated as 'disposable' for present-day dramatic purposes (**Leggatt, 2000: 113**). As Charlotte Scott emphasises, 'This extraordinary scene...poses a significant problem to directors, actors and audiences of the theatre – how do you make a fly audible let alone visible?' (**Scott, 2008: 256**), while further problems are emphasised in Michael D. Friedman and Alan C. Dessen's account of *Titus* in performance, who note how 'The need for an interval/intermission, along with a potential problem in the transition between 3.2 and 4.1, therefore leads to a series of adjustments' by modern directors, in order to minimise difficulties that arise in terms of continuity at this moment (**Friedman & Dessen, 2013: 83**). It is fortunate for theatre practitioners, then, that the content of 3.2 can be interpreted as being so easily 'disposable': as Alan Hughes comments in his edition of the play for the New Cambridge Shakespeare series, 'The new scene...illustrates the madness of Titus without advancing the dramatic action' (**Hughes, 1994: 150**).

In 2017, however, Gary Taylor – one of the general editors of the New Oxford Shakespeare – published an article in collaboration with Doug Duhaime (a Digital Humanities Programmer at Yale University) which used a variety of modern digital techniques to assess the presumed Shakespearean auspices of 3.2. Using 'deep reading' alongside an analysis of the sequences of unique and rare words identifiable within the scene, they hence concluded that 3.2 was almost certainly a late addition contributed by a third author, their evidence pointing 'overwhelmingly' to Shakespeare's younger contemporary Thomas Middleton (**Taylor & Duhaime, 2017: 91**). Of course, as Jonathan Bate (a former sceptic of the play's collaborative identity) recognises in his second edition of *Titus* for the Arden Shakespeare, 'These are new results, which other scholars will have to test', but he nevertheless acknowledges that 'The possibility of

Middleton's...hand will have to be considered in future accounts of the scene'; he thus concludes by arguing that 'The date and authorship of the fly-killing scene remain open for further debate' (Bate, 2018: 146). It is within the context of this debate that the present article seeks to analyse the purpose of 3.2 as part of the larger framework of the play as a whole.

In this article, I am not greatly concerned with attempting to challenge Taylor and Duhaime's attribution of this scene to Middleton's authorship, nor do I wish to utilise my own stylometric or dramaturgical tests to further confirm and expand upon Taylor and Duhaime's findings. What is more important for the present analysis is the recognition that Taylor and Duhaime's work has demonstrated quite convincingly that 3.2 must be a later, non-Shakespearean addition to the existing text of the play. But Taylor and Duhaime's attribution of 3.2 to Middleton has enabled us to situate future readings of the play alongside the long-standing scholarly belief that the surviving text of *Macbeth* might also be the result of Middletonian adaptation, as might those of *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well*. Thus, an attribution of this scene to the hand of Middleton is a suggestion which cannot entirely be rejected out of hand.

With this in mind, I will undertake to argue that this issue of the play's authorship actually has a greater significance for a complete understanding of the play than is obvious from any discussion which treats such factors as purely textual. Focusing primarily on the significance of the tragedy's cannibalistic finale in relation to the added material of 3.2, it will be demonstrated how the play's layers of authorship should be a key element in how we interpret the importance of the theme of cannibalism to the play's representation of revenge.

Reading the 'Original' *Titus Andronicus*, c.1592

Titus was a very popular play among early modern audiences. Its continued popularity was even being lamented by Ben Jonson as late as 1614, in the Induction to his comedy *Bartholomew Fair*: 'He that will swear *Jeronimo* [Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*] or *Andronicus* are the best plays yet, shall pass unexcepted at here as a man whose judgement shews it is constant, and hath stood still these five and twenty or thirty years' (Hibbard, 2007: 11). Furthermore, it is quite clear that Middleton himself had a degree of interest in the tragedy. In his early prose work *The Ant and the Nightingale* (published 1604), the titular Ant, returning wounded from war, compares his plight to that of Shakespeare's tragic Roman general: 'for all my lamentable action of one arm like old Titus Andronicus, I could purchase no more than one month's pay for a ten-month's pain and peril' (946-9).ⁱⁱ In each of the early quarto editions which arose from this apparent popularity, however, the text itself remained mostly consistent, each version containing the same twelve scenes, with only minor

differences between them. As we have already seen, however, F1 saw the introduction of the additional Scene 3.2, usually referred to as the ‘fly-killing scene’ after a memorable moment contained therein in which Titus’s brother Marcus swats the aforementioned insect with the flat of his knife. Where the scene originated from has only just begun to be explored in modern scholarship, and there will undoubtedly be much further discussion to be had on the matter. But the results of the tests conducted thus far are excellently localised in the work of Taylor and Duhaime, who helpfully provide a three-point summary of some of their early conclusions:

1. *The Fly Scene was written and added to Titus Andronicus after mid-1608, when the King’s Men began performing at Blackfriars;*
2. *But it is not written in Shakespeare’s post-1607 style;*
3. *Therefore, it was not written by Shakespeare. (Taylor & Duhaime, 2017: 71)*

Taylor and Duhaime’s observations seem perfectly sound. Indeed, that the scene could only have been added after Shakespeare’s company, the King’s Men, began to occupy the Blackfriars Theatre is supported by the fact that its inclusion was apparently part of an effort to rework the play’s structure to accommodate the imposition of act-divisions onto the text, a convention which Taylor has convincingly demonstrated only began to be employed by Shakespeare’s company following their acquisition of the Blackfriars in 1608 (Taylor, 1993: 30-50). Of course, this structural revision was not without its problems. As Hughes notes, ‘While the action flows smoothly from 3.1 into 4.1, the insertion of 3.2 creates an awkward transition unless the former is followed by an interval’ (Hughes, 1994: 150). The author of 3.2, then, clearly wrote his addition with an eye to how it would function within the overall drama, but apparently failed to fully integrate it into the existing structure.

It is not worth repeating here too much of what has already been written on *Titus* in the context of its original composition, which most scholars date to c.1592, but a few key points are certainly worth reiterating. As indicated above, it is fair to say that *Titus* has rarely been admired by modern critics. Often considered narratively underdeveloped, with the story primarily being progressed through increasingly brutal spectacles of killing and maiming, the play has traditionally been viewed as something of a lesser entry in the established Shakespeare canon. Although present-day critics might attempt to take a more nuanced approach towards the play’s violent excesses, however, it is important to note that the same cannot be said of the tragedy’s earlier spectators. As Stanley Wells puts it,

'For centuries *Titus Andronicus* was either rejected from the Shakespeare canon as being unworthy of its author's genius, or vilified as a terrible aberration committed perhaps as a concession to the tastes of barbarous audiences' (Wells, 1997: 206). One of the most eloquent defences of this aspect of the tragedy's dramaturgy, however, is that which was set forth by Eugene M. Waith in the introduction to his critical edition of the play for the original Oxford Shakespeare series, in which he convincingly argued that, even in this most gruesome of Shakespearean texts,

Brutal violence, occasionally tinged with tragedy, serves several artistic purposes. It represents the political and moral degeneration of Rome when Saturninus becomes emperor. It also plays a major part in the presentation of the hero's metamorphosis into a cruel revenger. While no artistic device can be called inevitable, one can say with some assurance that Shakespeare's use of violence in Titus Andronicus is far from gratuitous. It is an integral part of his dramatic technique.
(Waith, 1984: 68-9)

One reason for the unsettling overemphasis on gore in *Titus* has much to do with its generic classification. Indeed, the play is often thought to have been influenced by earlier Elizabethan works such as Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, and, indeed, Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*, all dramas of the late 1580s which are renowned for their blood-soaked storylines. In these tragedies, tongues are ripped out, flesh is stripped from people's bones, and characters even engage in what are evocatively referred to as 'bloody banquets'. It is in this theatrical context, then, that we can best understand Titus's extreme plans for cannibalistic vengeance, which he begins to set in motion towards the end of Scene 11 (5.2):

*Hark, villains, I will grind your bones to dust,
And with your blood and it I'll make a paste,
And of the paste a coffin I will rear,
And make two pasties of your shameful heads,
And bid that strumpet, your unhallowed dam,
Like to the earth swallow her own increase.
This is the feast that I have bid her to,
And this the banquet she shall surfeit on (5.2.185-92)*

That people would flock to such plays should not surprise us. Indeed, as Duncan Salkeld has recently emphasised, this was a time when people attended real-life executions as though they were a variety of theatrical performance in their own right (Salkeld, 2018: 60-2). Furthermore, cannibalism served a strong artistic purpose in such works, either as a means of underscoring the psychological torture of the (witting or unwitting) anthropophage, as discussed by Taylor in his reading of Middleton and Dekker's *The Bloody Banquet* (Taylor, 2001: 20-1), or as a way of signalling the unwilling participation (and abuse) of the murder victim in the revenge action, as explained by Margaret E. Owens (Owens, 2005: 102-3). Considering this, should the original *Titus* of the 1590s continue to be viewed merely as an attempt to exploit a popular craze for particularly gruesome depictions of horror?

There is certainly an argument for this having been the case. Yet in considering this possibility we should not ignore the learned nature of the play. Indeed, there is no attempt to hide its indebtedness to the classical tradition in the construction of its cannibalistic plot, with the poet Ovid being quoted throughout, and a copy of his *Metamorphoses* even being brought directly on-stage during Scene 6 (4.1). Via this engagement with Ovid, the play also pointedly alludes to the tale of Philomela, a woman raped and made tongueless by her brother-in-law King Tereus of Thrace, whose sister Procne (Tereus' wife) subsequently took revenge by killing their son Itys and serving him as a meal to Tereus: we can certainly see this in Aaron's line 'His Philomel must lose her tongue today' (2.3.43) and in the many references by her relatives to 'the tragic tale of Philomel' (4.1.47; cf. 2.4.38, 4.1.52, 5.2.193). Furthermore, the final cannibalistic banquet scene copies much of its action from the conclusion to Seneca's *Thyestes*, in which the title character is tricked by his villainous brother Atreus into eating a meal consisting of the flesh and blood of his own children. As Derek Dunne remarks, 'the Thyestian treatment of Chiron and Demetrius is gruesome in the extreme, but they are themselves guilty of the rape and dismemberment of Lavinia' (Dunne, 2016: 83). In harking back to Seneca, Shakespeare and Peele were not simply appealing to the classical tradition as a source for the play's violence; they were evoking a classical model for revenge as a mode of justice.

The original authors of *Titus*, then, at least attempted to bring some scholarship into the tragedy's construction, but the violence on its surface has made many view it as too unsophisticated to be considered an 'essential' component of the Shakespeare canon. Few critics are against the view, however entertaining some might find it in performance, that *Titus* is an over-the-top bloodbath, with very little social or political depth to its story.

Revising *Titus Andronicus* After 1616

How can this view be said to change when we re-consider the tragedy in its adapted form? As we have already observed, it seems quite likely that the fly-killing scene is a later, likely posthumous addition to the text. How, then, can a single scene of just 84 verse lines be said to repurpose the central cannibalistic themes of such an old tragedy for revival before new audiences during the mid- to late-1610s (or, conceivably, the early 1620s)?

The importance of 3.2 was considered by Hereward T. Price as far back as 1948, in a discussion which considers how its place in the play might lead us to consider it as what we might describe as a 'mirror-scene':

The scene has little or nothing to do with the plot: that is to say, if cut, it will not be missed, nor does it add much to those elements of excitement such as hope, suspense, or anxiety which are stimulated by the plot. On the other hand, it enlarges our knowledge of the problem which is at the core of the work, and in this way Titus gains in depth and perspective. It brings everything into focus. The chief issues of Titus are there, and it may be said to mirror the play...Apparently loose detachable scenes, so-called episodes, are frequent in Shakespeare. They vary in function as in technique, but certain features tend to recur. Many of them are, as in Titus, mirror-scenes, reflecting in one picture either the main theme or some important aspect of the drama. (Price, 1948: 102-3)

Price's commentary on the fly-killing scene is certainly of significant worth, particularly in light of Taylor and Duhaime's recent revelation that the scene is likely to be a late addition to the play. Indeed, rather than simply being a problematic interpolation in an established play-text, 3.2 can actually be said to serve as a thematic and structural re-imagining of the original concluding scene. It is, to some extent, an adaptation or 'mirror image' of the original Scene 12 (5.3).

When we approach the fly-killing scene in this light, its function within the wider context of the play into which it was interpolated becomes much more clearly part of a recognisable Middletonian style. Middleton was certainly a dramatist with a fondness for the writing of banqueting scenes and depictions of feasting. As Chris Meads puts it, 'Middleton used the banquet scene to telling effect as a device with which to open the action of a play and overcome the problem of introducing a large number of important characters in a short space, without losing the audience's interest or understanding' (Meads, 2001: 140). In itself, Middleton's penchant for the writing of banquet scenes might seem relatively unimportant; banqueting scenes recur frequently in the drama of the

period, after all. But the structure of the two banquets of F1 *Titus Andronicus* bears a striking resemblance to the two banqueting scenes in another Shakespeare/Middleton work, the collaborative tragedy *Timon of Athens*, the second of which (3.7) noticeably reflects and inverts the manner and style of the first (1.2), with Middleton possibly reworking Shakespeare's writing of the second to better engage with his own representation of Timon's interactions with his many false friends and creditors (Jowett, 2004: 195-6). As Meads writes of the two banquet scenes in *Timon*, 'The two scenes are structurally a pair; the first being a statement of the accepted Athenian hierarchy and the second depicting the breaking down of that order. Without the first banquet scene, the second would lose a good deal of its dramatic impact and relevance, and without the second the first would appear a languid and lengthy self-indulgence' (Meads, 2001: 147). Considering this realisation, we might now be encouraged to view the pair of banqueting scenes present in F1 *Titus* in a similar light: rather than simply being a 'disposable' addition to an established text, Middleton may well have considered how the addition of 3.2 would affect the overall structure of the complete play, with a particular focus on its relation to the already existing Shakespeare-authored banquet of the concluding scene. That Middleton wrote the scene with a view to the wider play might be signalled by the fact that its central figure of the fly appears to have been adapted from lines spoken by Aaron the Moor in Act 5: 'I have done a thousand dreadful things / As willingly as one would kill a fly' (5.1.141-2).

This scene, unlike Scene 12, does not actually feature any cannibalism. Nevertheless, it is striking how much the stagecraft of this scene can be said to reflect that of the final bloody feast. In 3.2 Titus, Lavinia, Marcus, and Young Lucius enter to a banqueting table at their home. This, for them, would be a very normal everyday occurrence, but for the first time it has become a scene of horror. That this meal will be noticeably out of the ordinary is acknowledged by Titus in the scene's opening lines:

So, so, now sit, and look you eat no more

Than will preserve just so much strength in us

As will revenge these bitter woes of ours. (3.2.1-3)

This family meal is not about pleasure or sociability, but purely about sustenance, and as the scene progresses it is clear why this is the case. Part-way through this sequence, Marcus lashes out and kills a fly with the flat of his knife. Then, with a cry of 'Out on thee, murderer!' (3.2.54), the usually warlike Titus begins to show the first signs that he is losing his grip on reality, railing against his brother for the abominable act:

*How if that fly had a father, brother?
How would he hang his slender gilded wings
And buzz lamenting doings in the air!
Poor harmless fly,
That with his pretty buzzing melody
Came here to make us merry—and thou hast killed him.
(3.2.60-5)*

Tellingly, this is a significant departure from the cruel and martial character he has been throughout the earlier parts of the play. In the Peele-authored 1.1, after all, Titus had even slain his own son, Mutius, for defying his will regarding a marriage between Lavinia and Saturninus. On the other hand, Lavinia, the mutilated daughter, cannot even eat and drink without the assistance of her father, and, it seems, is very much unwilling to do so. Finally, Young Lucius, the innocent child, is forced to watch this horror show, a family meal which has lost all mirth. It is not even clear whether any food is so much as touched. There is some suggestion that Titus may attempt to bring some food to his daughter's mouth, although she seems to steadfastly reject receiving sustenance in such a way. Here, then, we see a physically and emotionally broken family, unable to engage in two of the most normal social practices: eating and drinking.

Taylor and Duhaime do not fail to see the link between the added scene and the bloody banquet of the concluding sequence:

Lavinia, of course, is not committing cannibalism, at least not in 3.2. But...Lavinia in 3.2 is the centre of a riveting tragic spectacle: a silent female victim of male violence, for whom the normal social rituals of eating and drinking have turned into a nightmare. (Taylor & Duhaime, 2017: 89)

To an audience already familiar with the action of the original, pre-1616 *Titus*, the added scene appears to be a very deliberate inversion of the original, cannibalistic conclusion. The only other banquet scene in the play, after all, plays out very differently. There, two able-bodied characters sit at table. They are both paragons of contentedness. Tamora believes her revenges against Titus have been successful, bringing him to a state of insanity. As far as she is aware, both of her sons are alive and well, and in the midst of this, she is happy and willing to partake in the meal set before her. Indeed, Titus describes her eating it 'daintily' (5.3.60). It is only after the feast is concluded that Titus gleefully springs the truth upon her, both of her children's deaths, and of her unnatural act:

Why, there they are, both bakéd in this pie,

Whereof their mother daintily hath fed,

Eating the flesh that she herself hath bred. (5.3.59-61)

Without 3.2 to precede it, Titus's revenge is excessive in the extreme, forcing Tamora to ingest human flesh carved from her own offspring as part of the overall escalation of cruelty which has occurred across the narrative. But reading the fly-killing scene before this gory finale, the inhumanity of Titus's revenge, while certainly still excessive, now has a discernible narrative origin. Titus has already experienced a banquet where the horrors now afflicting the lives of himself and of his family members have been brought to the surface. Lavinia, in particular, has found herself unable (and unwilling) to do one of the simplest things in life: eat. Why then should Tamora, whose cruelty has seemingly known no bounds, continue to be permitted to enjoy such functions as these? Eating should be a pleasure, but Titus makes sure that for Tamora it has now become a waking nightmare.

The scene's author, then, was not simply adding material to assist the company in repurposing its structure for a post-1608 Blackfriars context. Rather, he was a writer consciously engaging with the fuller narrative of the drama, seeking to insert work which would enrich the overall execution of the revenge storyline. Whereas *Titus* has often been criticised for its poor integration of its violence into its narrative, the introduction of 3.2 in F1 actually serves to provide a more obvious tangent for the escalation of Titus's cruelty. The cannibalistic nature of Titus's revenge is no longer simply gratuitous violence solely intended to satisfy a bloodlust among its audiences, but becomes part of a much more calculated plot. It is an effort to completely degrade his enemy, obliterating her ability to fully function as a part of normal human society, just as he has found that his daughter can no longer do. Again, the focus of the tragic spectacle is upon the tragic woman. Lavinia can no longer feed, and so, Titus determines, neither will Tamora. Thus, justice, however grotesque, can be seen to have been delivered.

Coda: The Case of Arbella Stuart?

Before concluding this discussion of F1 *Titus Andronicus* and the importance of the fly-killing scene therein, there is one more avenue of research which should briefly be discussed in terms of why this kind of scene might have been considered particularly appropriate for a revival in the context of the mid- to late-1610s. There are many possibilities for what might have inspired a revival of such a sensational cannibalistic drama so soon after Shakespeare's death; but it is worth quoting at length from

Taylor and Duhaime's suggestion of the contemporaneous plight of Lady Arbella Stuart:

A niece of Mary, Queen of Scots, Arbella was a potential heir to the English throne and therefore a threat to King James. Without the King's consent, she married in secret William Seymour (also with a claim to the throne), and in June 1611 they attempted to flee to France together. Arbella was captured, and imprisoned in the Tower of London...Arbella remained in prison for the rest of her life...In 1613, the famous London gossip John Chamberlain described her as 'crackt in her braine'; witnesses in the Tower described 'fyttes of distemper and convulsyons', and reported that Arbella refused to eat or to speak...[S]he died on 25 September 1615 (Taylor & Duhaime, 2017: 89).

To Taylor and Duhaime, strong resonances of Lady Arbella's plight might be observable in the presentation of the character of Lavinia, particularly during 3.2:

Like Arbella, the grieving, educated noblewoman Lavinia has lost her husband. Unlike any other passage in Titus Andronicus, the Fly Scene focuses on Lavinia's rejection of food and drink. Arbella stubbornly refused to speak; Lavinia cannot speak. Some of these comparisons between Arbella and Lavinia were, of course, present in the original play; but anyone watching or adapting the play after Arbella's imprisonment might have made the connection, and completed the link by adding to Lavinia's tragic, grieving silence a refusal to eat. (Taylor & Duhaime, 2017: 89)

Admittedly, Taylor and Duhaime's reading is primarily thematic and, it could be argued, somewhat esoteric. Additionally, Taylor's dating of the addition of 3.2 to 'soon after Shakespeare's death in April 1616' (Taylor & Loughnane, 2017: 491) is far from conclusive: indeed, in the case of *Titus Andronicus*, there is (as of yet) no entirely convincing evidence, internal or external, which testifies to any particular date of adaptation, unlike with (for example) *Measure for Measure*, which John Jowett has influentially shown was probably inspired by a news-sheet which was not published until October 1621 (Jowett, 2001). Nevertheless, this remains a particularly interesting suggestion, especially considering that it is specifically Middleton's involvement in the text that Taylor and Duhaime are here considering.

Plays inspired by popular interest in the case of Lady Arbella Stuart were relatively common at this point in time, the most famous perhaps being John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, which has notably been connected to the case by Sara Jayne Steen (Steen, 1991). Of more immediate interest, however, is Anne Lancashire's work in connecting Middleton's *Second Maiden's Tragedy* directly to the case of Lady Arbella (Lancashire, 1978: 279). If Middleton had indeed chosen to reflect upon Arbella's persecution in a King's Men play of 1611, Taylor and Duhaime's argument may seem quite plausible when considering his adaptation of a King's Men play later in the same decade.

If this is the case, then the characterisation of Lavinia in this scene takes on a whole new meaning. In the original play, Lavinia, the silent (or, more specifically, silenced) woman is largely used as a plot device. A shocking, bleeding, and agonised spectacle following her rape and mutilation, she principally served as a visual image, following her father around on-stage, but doing little. As Bethany Packard writes, 'When rape forcibly removes her from the narrative of personal and Roman purity, the play uses her to necessitate recognition of its many other narratives' (Packard, 2010: 282-3). As a signifier of the excessive suffering of the Andronici, she is a powerful reminder of the motivations behind her father's revenge.

In the adapted text, however, the author of 3.2 repurposes the play so that she becomes much more characterful. She refuses all sustenance, herself consumed by woes; and by making her the central focus of this single interpolated scene – the author even giving her something of a voice, as relayed by her father through his interpretation of her outward signs, sounds, and expressions – she becomes a representation of real, wronged women, of whom Arbella Stuart may be the most obvious textual adherent. The dramatist communicates to us that these are not just Titus's wrongs; his daughter's suffering far outweighs his.

How, then, does this change our perception of her involvement in preparing the cannibalistic feast for her enemies? More research is required, and it remains to be seen whether future investigations into the text of *Titus* continue to support and expand upon the possible Middletonian auspices of 3.2.

Conclusion

Middleton's application of such a scene as 3.2 to the story of *Titus Andronicus* may well be yet another part of his long-recognised interest in the case of Lady Arbella Stuart at around this time in his career. Many Jacobean sympathisers with and supported the suffering and starving woman, and it thus stands to reason that this repurposing of the tragedy's cannibalistic themes may have been a way for Middleton to use a pre-

existing Shakespearean play to exploit audience sensibilities and concerns at a much later point in time. But whether or not we accept this historical context, as proposed by Taylor and Duhaime, the evidence for the scene's status as a later, non-Shakespearean addition to the play nevertheless seems strong. In this scenario, the author was not simply adding new material to *Titus Andronicus* in order to provide a new selling point for a later revival of the work, or to make it easier for the play to be divided into five acts following the acquisition by the playing company of the indoor Blackfriars Theatre. He was constructing a new sequence designed to mirror and complement the already infamous cannibalistic denouement of the original text. Understanding 3.2 as a later addition, we can now better understand how the fly-killing scene is far less 'disposable' than previous critics have been equipped to realise.

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ⁱ All quotations from the works of Shakespeare are keyed to the edited texts included in Taylor et al, 2016.

ⁱⁱ All quotations from the works of Middleton are keyed to the edited texts included in Taylor et al, 2007.