Alas, Poor Titus Is Quite Undone: An Appreciation and Critique of Julie Taymor's *Titus*

Titus (Anthony Hopkins) Contemplates His Fate

My Rating: * (1999) Running Time: 165 minutes**
Rated R (for extreme violence and sexual images).

Credits

Director: Julie Taymor

Cinematographer: Luciano Tovoli

Production Design: Dante Ferretti

Music: Elliot Goldenthal

Producers: Conchita Airoldi, Jody Patton, and Julie Taymor

Screenplay: Julie Taymor (based on Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus)*

Costumes: Milena Canonero

Editing: Françoise Bonnot

Cast

Titus: Anthony Hopkins
Saturninus: Alan Cumming
Bassanius: James Frain
Aaron: Harry J. Lennix
Demetrius: Matthew Rhys
Lucius's son: Osheen Jones

Tamora: Jessica Lange
Marcus: Colm Feore
Lavinia: Laura Fraser
Lucius: Angus MacFadyen
Chiron: Jonathan Rhys-Meyers

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by T. Larry Verburg

Abstract

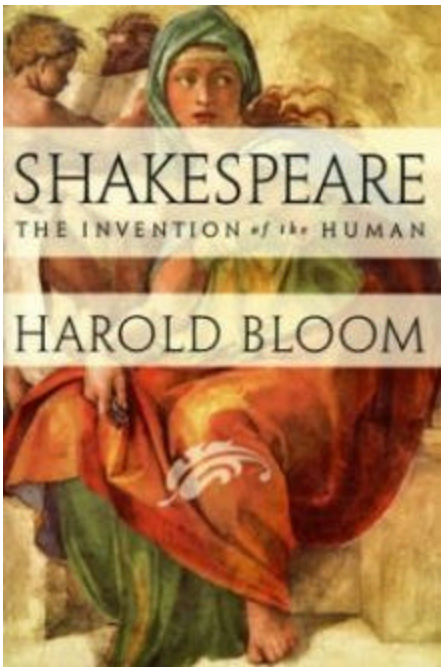
A small industry in Shakespeare and his times has burgeoned in the 1990s, with the publication of books like Harold Bloom's hagiography—*Shakespeare: the invention of the human* (1998) and the production of commercially viable films like Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth* (Britain 1998), Kenneth Branagh's *Much ado about nothing* (Britain-USA 1993) and *Hamlet* (USA-Britain 1996), and Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo & Juliet* (USA 1996). Perhaps the most remarkable sign of Shakespeare's recent popularity is the number of times *Titus Andronicus*, long notorious as Shakespeare's worst and most violent play, has been staged in the last twenty-five years. One of the most dramatic Shakespearean events in recent years has been *Titus* (USA 1999), Julie Taymor's film adaptation of *Titus Andronicus* (which followed her successful New York stage production). This paper presents an analysis of that film and attempts to chart the various ways in which Taymor has translated Shakespeare's tragic play into the film medium, and also to measure her relative successes and failures in this remarkable artistic endeavor.

Introduction

Today, *The Lamentable Tragedy of Titus Andronicus* (1594), like *Timon of Athens* (circa 1607), is one of Shakespeare's least performed plays, and there is good reason for it. The play combines the almost unbearable sadness of *King Lear* (1605) with the horrific cruelty of the Jacobean revenge tragedy, as staged in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (circa 1613). *Titus Andronicus* is arguably Shakespeare's most unpleasant dramatic creation, as a mere recounting of the plotline will testify.

Then how successful could a film adaptation of Shakespeare's bitter play expect to be? The 1990s have been a decade of unprecedented interest in Shakespeare and his times, and many of his plays have been translated into the medium of film. Examples include Franco Zefferelli's *Hamlet* (1990), Kenneth Branagh's *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993), Oliver Parker's *Othello* (1995), Richard Loncraine's *Richard III* (1995), Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo & Juliet* (1996), Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* (1996), Trevor Nunn's *Twelfth Night* (1996), and Michael Hoffmann's *William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999).

These films (and others, such as John Madden's *Shakespeare in Love* and Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth*, both 1998) have found receptive audiences. In addition, a book on Shakespeare and his influence on modern culture has become a best seller in both hardback and paperback editions (Harold Bloom's *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. New York: Riverside Books, 1998 and 1999, respectively). Recently, books have also appeared on the life of Shakespeare, Shakespeare in films, and Shakespeare's language. (These books are, respectively, Anthony Holden's *William Shakespeare: The Man Behind the Genius: A Biography* [Boston: Little Brown & Company, 2000]; Douglas C. Brode's *Shakespeare in the Movies: From the Silent Era to Shakespeare in Love* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2000]; and Frank Kermode's *Shakespeare's Language* [New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2000].)



Harold Bloom's *Shakespeare*

Despite these Shakespearean triumphs, it was still with something akin to skepticism that I watched *Titus* (1999). Director Julie Taymor, best known for her Broadway productions of *The Lion King* and *The Green Bird*, seemed to me at first glance an unlikely person to produce such a problematic play. Why should she so sorely tease

and temp fate on her directorial film debut? I discovered, in fact, that she holds at least three aces in her poker hand. First, Taymor has experience—having successfully staged the play at the Theatre for a New Audience in 1994. Second is the fact that the part of Titus is played by Anthony Hopkins, one of the truly great actors of our time. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, Taymor has a tremendous amount of imagination and a keen insight into the problems and strengths of *Titus Andronicus* as a potential vehicle for a film. She may well have learned some pointers from the late Chicago theatre director Michael Maggio, who directed Shakespeare's dark play for the New York Shakespeare Festival in Central Park in 1989.

The plot of Shakespeare's cruel play reads almost like theatre of the absurd, so emotionally overwhelming and horrific are the tribulations that befall Titus and his family. Thick and fast fall the blows upon the head of Titus—not even Job or Abraham suffers as much as Titus does for his pride and nobility. As is usual in a Shakespearean tragedy, the hero is shown at his tallest height and power, just before his fall. Titus Andronicus (Anthony Hopkins), an aging Roman general, returns to Rome victorious after an extended ten-year campaign spent defeating the barbarous Goths. He brings to Rome as captives Tamora (Jessica Lange), the Goths' queen, and her three sons, Alarbus, Demetrius, and Chiron. To appease the gods for the deaths of his own sons in battle, Titus sacrifices Tamora's eldest son, Alarbus (apparently too briefly in the film to be credited). Titus remains deaf to Tamora's vocal and piteous entreaties for mercy. Vowing to exact revenge on Titus for the killing of Alarbus, Tamora and her two surviving sons, Demetrius (Matthew Rhys) and Chiron (Jonathan Rhys-Meyers), are taken as gifts to the new Emperor.

But Rome is a divided city, an armed camp. The great Roman Emperor Caesar is dead, and his two sons—Saturninus, the eldest, and Bassanius, beloved by Lavinia, Titus's daughter—dispute who shall wear the emperor's crown. In a dramatic if misguided action motivated, depending upon you point of view, either by his true nobility of mind and spirit, or by a slavish devotion to duty and tradition, Titus rejects the crown offered him by the grateful and jubilant citizens of Rome. Instead, he hands the crown to Saturninus (Alan Cumming). Thus Saturninus is made Emperor through Titus's intercession.

Saturninus Needs a Queen

Saturninus responds to Titus's noble gesture by claiming Titus's beautiful young daughter, Lavinia (Laura Fraser), for his bride, definitely not a *quid pro quo*. But Titus dutifully accepts Saturninus's specious claim, heedless of the fact that Lavinia and Saturninus's younger brother, Bassanius (James Frain), are in love and are pledged to one another. By these two actions—the ritual sacrifice of Tamora's eldest son and his acceptance of Saturninus's wanton claim for the hand of Lavinia—Titus unwillingly sets into motion a catastrophic series of events that will leave his family shattered and his thoughts of a peaceful retirement in old age a lamentable joke. This play, more than any other by Shakespeare, illustrates the Solonic tag, so often recounted in Greek tragedy, "Count no man happy until he is dead."

The implacable machinery of doom, death, and martyrdom is irrevocably set into motion when Bassanius, aided by Titus's four surviving sons, abducts Lavinia. The first victim to fall before the sword is Titus's own son, Mutius, whom Titus slays because, in helping Bassanius abduct Lavinia, he has brought shame to their good name and become a traitor to Rome. Saturninus, angered by his brother's act of near treason, takes Tamora as his wife instead. As Empress, Tamora, who lusts for a thousand-fold vengeance on Titus, now wields the power to make good her threats of retribution. Aaron (Harry Lennix), a conscienceless Moor who is secretly her lover, aids and captains Tamora in her dire machinations. The play tells of the cruel and pathological manner by which Tamora, her evil paramour, Aaron, and her sons, Demetrius and Chiron, achieve their unspeakable vengeance on Titus and his family.

The resolution and climax of the play (as in the film adaptation) represent new heights (or lows) in the revenge tragedy. The vengeance exacted by both sides is, in fact, so terrible and inhuman that it borders on the insane. But vengeance is a sword that cuts both ways. And Tamora is so bent on her course of revenge that she fails to act prudently.

There are indeed many scenes in the film that might have come straight from the legendary Grand Guignol—that macabre and darkest of art forms. Perhaps the most notable Grand Guignol-like scene occurs when a street performer and his strumpet arrive at Titus's residence, pretending to perform an entertainment for Titus and the surviving members of his by-now numb and shattered family. Instead of the proffered music and entertainment, they deliver to Titus, enclosed in what appears to be the barrel of a street organ, the heads of two of his sons and his own hand severed in a misguided plea for clemency. (By allowing his hand to be cut off by Aaron and sent to the Emperor, Titus believed he had saved his sons from execution.) This scene (and others like it, called by Taymor "Penny Arcade Nightmares") fits the texture of the film wonderfully, and is not in the play.[1] In the play, a messenger merely delivers the body parts to Titus stating the obvious, "Worthy Andronicus, ill art thou repaid / For that good hand thou sent'st the Emperor" (III.i.235-236).

The briefest comparison of Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* with Shakespeare's *Titus Andronmicus* will show us many similarities, even though nearly twenty years separates them in time. Aside from the fact that both are "revenge tragedies," and brew up that most potent of blood sports, murder, probably the most telling similarity between the two plays is their intense, palpable aura of doom and tragedy. Even to someone merely reading the plays, the experience is quite intense and at times almost overwhelming.

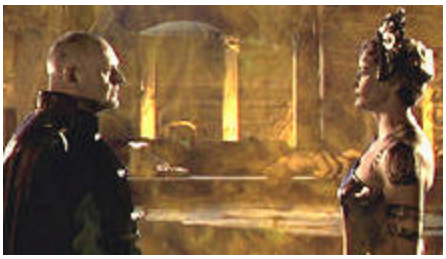
Webster's great tragedy, while not as gloomy and depressing as *King Lear* or as bloodthirsty as *Titus Andronicus*, comes pretty close to being both. A brief plot outline will confirm this assertion. The Duchess, a widow, falls in love with and marries her steward, Antonio—a commoner. Her two brothers—Ferdinand, Duke of Calabria, and the Cardinal—are outraged at this serious breech of decorum, and believing their names brought low and their honor besmirched, force the lovers to separate. The Duchess is kept prisoner in her palace, while Antonio flees for his life. Bosola, the cruel minion of the Cardinal, mentally tortures the Duchess in a most foul and evil way. He finally strangles her and her children, and to top it off, murders Antonio. As if these foul deeds are not enough, Webster creates a palpable atmosphere of brooding darkness and impending death. In fact, blood and violence are not enough for Webster, and he sprinkles his play liberally with ghosts, disembodied hands, poison, and murder by strangulation and breaking of the victim's neck—not to mention liberal doses of incest, adultery, and lycanthropy.[2]

Critical Reception

Although *Titus Andronicus* was extremely popular in Shakespeare's time, a modern audience can be expected to recoil from the many horrors perpetrated by Tamora and Titus, on one another and on their respective families. Especially problematic are the series of murders in Act V of the play (which are faithfully reproduced in the film). One London audience watching the play performed in 1923 were so taken aback by the cascade of horrors in Act V that they actually burst out laughing, not generally a thing to be desired when staging a Shakespearean tragedy.[3]

As a source and model for his play, Shakespeare borrowed the Philomela legend from Greek mythology and also borrowed heavily from Seneca's influential Roman tragedy *Thyestes*. Roman tragedy traditionally looks to the art of oratory and declamation to produce its effects, and thus stage action is relatively flat. This means that none of the grisly details of the murders would be enacted on the stage. Of course Shakespeare's version of the Roman dramatic tradition would carry the muted horror of the Roman drama and enact it effectively onstage—a distillation and heightening of the various Roman dramatic elements would result in powerful tragedy indeed on the Elizabethan stage. And there are numerous horror tales of the effect of such drama on those individuals in the audience of tender sensibilities.

Perhaps a misunderstanding of the nature of Elizabethan drama (not just Shakespeare's) and its indebtedness to Senecan (that is, Roman) drama led many film critics to overreact somewhat in their criticism of the film when it first came out. One example of this type of excessively negative review came from Stuart Klawans, film critic for *The Nation.* Klawans writes: "Though reputed to be a theatrical genius, [Julie Taymor] has made a hash of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, turning one of the stupidest plays ever written (I quote T. S. Eliot) into the dumbest movie of December '99."[4]



Titus and Tamora in Confrontation

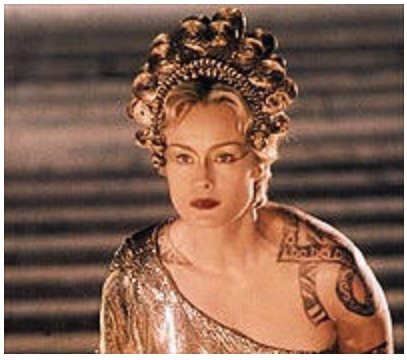
Apparently Klawans has some of the same problems I did with certain aspects of the camera work. Certainly, some of the video-like sequences are overly pretentious, but Klawans's assertion that Julie Taymor lacks talent is both absurd and quite simply untrue. This is apparent when Klawans writes, "So, in *Titus*, fascist chic gets served up with lost-world primitivism, Renaissance weeds with late-nineties kid's wear, to no more purpose than can be found in the reeling-drunk camera movements or dump-it-in-the-Cuisinart editing." What bothers me most in his admittedly brief review of *Titus* is that Klawans's approach to the film suggests ignorance of Shakespeare and Elizabethan drama. The film is, after all, an *adaptation* of the Shakespeare play, and much of Klawans's invective should more fairly be directed at the Bard.

I believe it is more productive, however, to discover what Taymor has made of the play, and to see how, exactly, she has reinterpreted Shakespeare's very interesting, if bloody, play for the film medium. I believe that in this direction lies the more valuable contribution for both film and literary study. To simply say that the play is stupid fails to account for its popularity in Shakespeare's time and its popularity with college and university audiences today. (I should state here for the record that, while I don't read him on a regular basis as I do Roger Ebert and Janet Maslin, among others, I usually find Klawans a very fine and perceptive film critic. His stance vis-à-vis *Titus* is all the more troubling since he is an influential American film critic, read by a significant

number of film buffs.)

Klawans might be interested to learn that there has been a marked resurgence in the number of stage productions of *Titus Andronicus* in England, America, and Europe. *Titus Andronicus* has also gained the attention of critics and scholars alike who have found much to praise in the written play. Cambridge University Press, for example, published new and definitive editions of the play in 1994 (Alan Hughes, ed., *Titus Andronicus* [Cambridge; New York: CUP, 1994]) and the Arden Shakespeare series followed suit in 1995 (Jonathan Bate, ed., *Titus Andronicus*, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series [London: Routledge, 1995]). In the same year, a book of critical essays was published on *Titus Andronicus*: Philip C. Kolin, ed., *Titus Andronicus*: *Critical Essays* (New York; London: Garland, 1995). Another book by Shakespeare scholar G. Harold Metz published in 1996 has an interesting chapter discussing the performance history of *Titus Andronicus* between 1970 and 1994 (G. Harold Metz, *Shakespeare's Earliest Tragedy: Studies in "Titus Andronicus"* [Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1996]).

I should also say that not all critics reacted as did Klawans. Of the mainstream film critics, for example, Roger Ebert, almost always a model of thoughtful and well-reasoned film analysis and a fine prose writer to boot, gave a fair and reasoned review of the play. Unfortunately, in assuming that the play is practically worthless, Ebert falls prey to some of the same prejudices as does Klawans. Ebert writes: "There is no lesson to be learned from 'Titus Andronicus.' It is a tragedy without a hero, without values, without a point, and therefore as modern as a horror exploitation film or a video game. It is not a catharsis, but a killing gallery where the characters speak in poetry." [5]



Tamora Becomes Queen

I strongly disagree that the play has "no lesson" to teach us, the modern audience. Ebert, however, makes up for this prejudice by detailing a large number of perceptive observations for such a short critical review. Even if you don't agree with Ebert's conclusions, you'll admit that he has watched the film closely and bases his conclusions on fact. Ebert notices, for example, Taymor's "fanciful version of ancient Rome," complete with police wearing Nazi uniforms; the problem with the "rigid choreography" of the soldiers as they enter Rome; the gleam of Hannibal Lecter in Hopkins's portrayal of Titus; the "outrageous" contrivance of Aaron's devious plots and schemes, and Taymor's "command of costumes and staging, ritual and procession, archetypes and comic relief."

But again, I must protest, in all fairness, that the film is a good one, and that Taymor is in good company when she attempts to revaluate the Shakespeare play that everyone loves to hate. For example, the Arden edition of *Titus Andronicus* boasts a 121-page Introduction in which Jonathan Bate argues that *Titus Andronicus* should be rescued from its virtual oblivion: "not only the play's staging but also its aesthetics and politics are in fact complicated and sophisticated—and . . . ought to be widely read and more frequently performed. . . . I believe that *Titus* is an important play and a living one."[6] In the 1980s, the Royal Shakespeare Company staged *Titus Andronicus* as one in a series of Shakespeare's Roman plays. In an interview, Trevor Nunn, Associate Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company (and director of 1996's *Twelfth Night*), said of *Titus Andronicus* that "[It] is represented as emblematic of and representative of the old Roman virtues under attack. . . . No other society, in historical terms, has been able to make the point of waning military power, moral collapse, mockery of traditional principles and nightmarish violence unleashed."[7]

In fact, as mentioned earlier, a serious and very positive revaluation of *Titus Andronicus* has been taking place since the 1950s, and this revaluation has carried with it a mounting body of literary criticism that views *Titus Andronicus* in a new and more favorable light. Now, I'm not suggesting that one has to be a Shakespeare scholar to review a film adaptation of one of his plays. Klawans is, after all, a working film critic who does not have the luxury of time to prepare a learned review of each film he sees. Still, I feel he should have taken a little more time to discover why his reaction to the film was so negative. And he should have taken the time, at least, to discover if his problems lay with Taymor or with Shakespeare.

Lavinia After Her Ordeal

Problems of the Play and Film

In the film, the devious machinations by Aaron and Tamora resulting in the brutal murder of Bassanius by Demetrius and Chiron and their inculpation of Titus's two innocent sons for the deed are realistically and convincingly portrayed. Because of the swiftness of these abominable actions and the resulting dramatic tensions, the viewer will have no difficulty in dealing with the many coincidences of plot and the damnable ease with which their heinous acts are concluded. Indeed, the subsequent rape and

mutilation of Lavinia is so realistically portrayed that, like a punch in the stomach, it takes one's breath away.

The sight of Lavinia left standing white and wraith-like on a dead tree stump in the middle of a swamp is a powerful if unwanted sight. She is so ghost-like in the wind, waving her bloody branch-like stumps of hands and opening her tongue-less mouth that it is an effort not to cry out. This scene, in particular, is so grotesque in its horror and muted beauty that one can only conclude it serves a symbolic role. The use of naked branches to signify her severed hands and their veins is visually stunning; it is also thematically effective, as it points to the symbolic and fairy-tale element in the play—recreated wonderfully in the film—the use of the Philomela legend from Greek mythology, probably borrowed by Shakespeare from a contemporary translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

After her brutalization, Lavinia is already dead, and this is probably clearer in the film than the play. She inhabits the threshold of a shadow world where men and women are transformed into trees and flowers. She remains only peripherally in this world, the world of the play and film, and then only until she can take an active part in the restoration of her honor through revenge. After that, Titus kills her, in compliance with her wishes and his compassion not to let her suffer. In the context of the play, her death is really an act of mercy, though it probably will not be seen as such by modern audiences. Indeed, the bloodbath of death in Act V is so very swift and partially unexpected, that it seems almost comic; the viewers ask themselves incredulously, "What *else* can happen?"

The entire episode of Lavinia's martyrdom is otherworldly, and its visual effect is powerfully rendered in the film. In fact, it reminded me of that gripping scene in Charles Laughton's *Night of the Hunter* (1955), when we look beneath the surface of the lake and see Shelley Winters seated in the car, the waves gently undulating and the second mouth of her neck wound slowly oscillating—terror and beauty in the same horrific sight. The fate of the women in these two films is similar. In both films the perversion of the romantic element results in the violent deaths of the women. It may be significant, too, that the survivors of the two films are children. The tragic legend of Philomela must have occurred to Shakespeare as a suitably anti-romantic plot element that also suggested to him an appropriate ending to the play.

In this context, it is interesting to note that the scene where Marcus (Colm Feore) comes upon Lavinia in the swamp has raised much controversy and condemnation among audiences and scholars alike:

Who is this? my niece, that flies away so fast!

Speak, gentle niece, what stern ungentle hands

Have lopp'd and hew'd and made thy body bare

Of her two branches . . .

Alas, a crimson river of warm blood,

Like to a bubbling fountain stirr'd with wind,

Doth rise and fall between thy rosed lips,

Coming and going with thy honey breath.

And, notwithstanding all this loss of blood,

As from a conduit with three issuing spouts,

Yet do thy cheeks look red as Titan's face

Blushing to be encountered with a cloud.

A craftier Tereus, cousin, hast thou met,

And he hath cut those pretty fingers off,

That could have better sew'd than Philomel.

O, had the monster seen those lily hands

Tremble, like aspen-leaves, upon a lute,

And make the silken strings delight to kiss them,

He would not then have touch'd them for his life!

(II.iv.11; 16-18; 22-25; 29-32; 42-47)

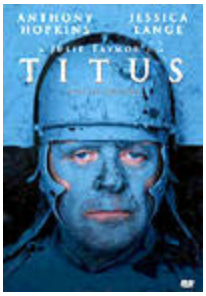
Many believe that Marcus's words to Lavinia are so inappropriate as to be positively absurd. It is argued, for example, that this and many other speeches in the play use words that are totally inappropriate to the very incidents they describe. These speeches have been criticized by Wolfgang Clemen, one of the "classical" Shakespeare scholars, as Shakespeare's "unrestrained desire for expression over any real necessity for it. The images run wild, they are not yet organically related to the framework of the play."[8] Indeed, Marcus's words to Lavinia have raised scholars' eyebrows for centuries.

Titus Prepares to Serve Dinner

Wolfgang Clemen refers to Marcus's lines in a manner that anticipates Klawan's and Ebert's reactions to the film adaptation. Clemen sees Marcus's speech as especially troubling: "the best example of such absurd contrast between occasion and image [that is, between the word and the deed] is offered by the speech . . . which Marcus makes upon finding the cruelly mutilated Lavinia in the wood. . . . It is not only the idea that a human being at the sight of such atrocities can burst forth into a long speech full of images and comparisons which appears so unsuitable . . . but it is rather . . . their wanton playfulness" (Clemen, 26).

I, however, see Marcus's words as a logical outcome of the scene, and the speech is especially effective in the film. The scene is certainly a fantastic, if gruesome, one. The scene, with its mythic overtones, is so highly stylized and symbolic, the high poetic language so appropriate to the scene, that it emphasizes the mythic atmosphere surrounding the incident. In fact, Marcus's speech is itself a metaphor for Lavinia's death-in-life, as she stands upon the threshold of her passage to the other world of myths, gods, and heroes.

This concept of the disparity between language and deed in a play (or film) is an interesting one, and it has many possibilities for investigation and comparison. On this subject, I can think of no more appropriate parallel than that of James Cameron's *Titanic* (1997). There is no denying the power of the spectacle and the rich texture of the cinematography in *Titanic* (for which cinematographer Russel Carpenter won a richly deserved Oscar). What is more problematic is the film's very silly story. It makes Roy Baker's *A Night to Remember* (1958) or even *Titus* appear, by comparison, crowning achievements of realism. What is even worse than Cameron's story, however, is the film's very silly dialogue. I agree wholeheartedly with Phillip Lopate, who wrote, "I have a hard time accepting Leonardo di Caprio in *Titanic* as a mature male lead, and the picture's stale, silly dialogue gets on my nerves—never was there a greater disjunction between elegance of visuals and inelegance of language."[9] I must say it was with great relief that I saw di Caprio finally stiffen with the rigor of the icy sea water, untold hours after a normal mortal would have been harping his way aloft.



Translating the Play into Film

Watching *Titus* did not send me scurrying immediately after my edition of Shakespeare, however, and I can't say that I had any great desire immediately afterward to reread the play or to purchase the film version on DVD. That desire came only later, after reflecting on the "staging" of the play, when a longing arose in me to see exactly how the film's director and writer, Julie Taymor, had translated Shakespeare's play into the medium of film and created a visually exciting and organic whole from an art that is largely auditory. As any playgoer knows, directors have been toying with Shakespeare's plays for centuries, cutting a bit here, changing a little now and then, like the order of certain scenes. Some changes are to be expected in *any* production of Shakespeare, even the most faithful to the original, and I consider Taymor's film production to be of these.

But what do we make of Taymor's assertion in her *Cineaste* interview that *Titus Andronicus* "is not meant to be read but to be performed" (De Luca and Lindroth, 28). Certainly Shakespeare wrote *all* of his plays to be performed. As a working playwright that was his obsession—the *performance*. We can only conclude, by the cavalier way he ignored the publication of his plays (in contradistinction to Ben Jonson, for example), that he had no consuming passion to see his plays in printed form, but merely left to posterity the job of assembling an accurate text of the plays. Or, perhaps, Taymore refers to the Roman style of acting where action was secondary to the locution of the actor.

What amazes me most is that the film is as close to Shakespeare's play as it is. There have been relatively few introductions of new of new elements of plot, and the changes that have been made generally contribute to the dramatic effect of the film. Aside from several differences between play and screenplay (some of which are discussed by Julie Taymor in the *Cineaste* interview), there are so many curiosities in the film that it would take a monograph to detail them all. One of the film's more obvious curiosities, and one that bothered me a great deal, was the use of Roman style military dress, weaponry, and cavalry officers on horseback juxtaposed (for no purpose I could discern) with modern weapons like assault rifles and modern inventions such as automobiles.

Perhaps Julie Taymor can be cited for excess zeal here. Still, she chose Milena Canonero, the Oscar-winning costume designer of Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* (Britain 1975) and Hugh Hudson's *Chariots of Fire* (Britain 1981), to design her costumes. According to Canonero,

> **Julie wanted to make a movie where there were no specific, direct references to a period, but to create a world unto itself. There are longago [sic], faraway references like Roman and Etruscan, and also fairly recent references, like the wartime 1930s and 40s. That gives a symbolic relevance to the violence and revenge, makes it more eternal.**

Also, her vision is very witty, and we tried to get that across with the look of the movie."[10]

I disagree with Taymor and Canonero that the use of these anachronisms is effective—for me they merely serve to draw unwonted attention to themselves as artifices and point away from the film. The scene where Aaron kills the nurse, for example, takes place in a section of the palace that looks like a modern pool hall. According to Taymor, the idea to have Aaron use a pool cue to murder the nurse was a "brilliant" contribution of Harry Lennix (De Luca and Lindroth, 29). This act certainly underscores the Moor's villainous character and opportunistic nature. I disagree with Maria De Luca and Mary Lindroth, however, who believe these anachronisms are "but seamless leaps into an unexpected and thematically reverberating variety of time periods" (De Luca and Lindroth, 28).

I, on the other hand, found the use of both period and modern elements in the film somewhat arbitrary and not really effective. I would say, do one or the other, as Baz Luhrmann did with his otherwise less successful version of *Romeo and Juliet* (1996). Seeing the two elements yoked together like a metaphysical conceit reminded me of watching those television westerns as a child, where the hero would ride a horse and blast away with a six-shooter at fleeing bandits (also on horseback), while his sidekick rode along, bouncing over the potholes in his jeep.

It's not that I have a problem with Shakespeare performed in modern dress. I have watched several Shakespeare plays set in modern times and enjoyed them immensely. And I enjoyed Kevin Klein as a dandified Bottom in Michael Hoffmann's *William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999). I am no purist on this account, and while I believe that the Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet* (1996) is an interesting failure, still I applaud the guts it took, for director, producer, and actors, to make this film and to assume that today's youth are capable of actually *enjoying* Shakespeare. As a former teacher of Shakespeare in high school and college, I believe anything done, within reason, to make Shakespeare more applicable and acceptable to modern youth (including music and dance) will only serve in the long run to illustrate the towering genius of Shakespeare and make him more "popular," in the best sense of the word—and that is, after all, only Shakespeare's due.

In looking at the differences between the film and the play, it seems to me that a slim majority of the changes are exceptionally fruitful and enhance the play for the modern audience. The swirling forest scene where Bassanius is slain is visually effective and disturbing, with its improvised and frenetic movement. It appears spontaneous and yet is more refined than the intentionally herky-jerky camera movement of Eduardo Sanchez and Daniel Myrick's *The Blair Witch Project* (1999). But other changes and the use of some symbolic images are not so productive, and I can only deduce that

Taymor has a slightly eccentric view of the play and the film. The *Cineaste* Interview itself is a case in point. The Interview is at turns enlightening, misleading, and mystifying.

Taymor accepts the more humanistic aspects of Shakespeare's dark play and its relation to current events. She maintains, for example, and I agree with her, that the film asks some fairly direct questions of the audience. "What can we do as a people," she wonders, "about the sickest thing in our lives, which is our incessant need to be violent, and racism and the whole business?" (De Luca and Lindroth, 29) But then we have the rather strange assertion that "Even Demetrius and Chiron are not cold-blooded killers and they're shocked when Aaron kills the nurse with a pool cue" (De Luca and Lindroth, 29). How can this act be "shocking" to the two brothers who have slain Bassanius and "trimmed" his bride? And I wonder if it can it be both "brilliant" and "shocking," in the sense she implies, at the same time?

Another plot element that gave me pause is the use of Lucius's son (played by Osheen Jones) as a mostly silent witness to the entire film as it unfolds. Perhaps the suggestion is that the ones who truly suffer in wars are the young, the children who are our future. Perhaps the boy's character exists to deliver a comment on the film, like the Greek chorus of old. If this is Taymor's intent, then the only other cinematic use of this type I can think of is that made by David Lean of the town idiot (John Mills) in *Ryan's Daughter* (1970), in my view an extremely underrated film. Mills is there for several reasons, haunting the town, as ubiquitously as the sky. Most importantly, by reflecting the chaos and war that exists outside the islands, he indicates that war is madness, and it destroys lives. Taymor herself has said that her metaphorical use of Young Lucius stems from her being "intrigued with this idea of the child's experience of violence" (De Luca and Lindroth, 28). Ultimately, however, Taymor's use of Young Lucius as the "eyes of the audience" remains ambiguous and open to both criticism and reinterpretation.

It is only toward the end of *Titus*, after all, that the boy is finally identified as Lucius's son—Young Lucius—that is, Titus's grandson. And why the film opens in modern day with the boy playing with toy soldiers puzzles me. The only sense I can make of that is that this story of violence and outrage is an old one, too old, perhaps, and that Taymor is reminding us that these atrocities are occurring even in our own day—as witness the troubles in Northern Ireland, the atrocities in Sarajevo, the pogroms in Africa, and the list goes on.

And what do these troubles amount to but revenge and counter revenge flavored with religion and ethnocentrism? It is not Shakespeare's fault that he was prescient enough to realize that evil is within mankind—our heart of darkness, our shadow self—and will probably remain with us until we evolve into a more peaceful creature or are rendered as obsolete as the Dodo bird.

Maria De Luca and Mary Lindroth wax eloquently about this aspect of Taymor's directorial skills: "Her dazzling layers of imaginative juxtapositions, notably her sensitive and original framing of the tale through the eyes of the boy Lucius . . . take us beyond the brutality and madness, and provide viewers with a catharsis, an insight into the emotional vulnerabilities behind the violence and the human tragedy it ultimately causes" (De Luca and Lindroth, 28). This is simply not so; it doesn't happen in the

play, and it sure doesn't happen in the film. The only catharsis available in the film is through Titus, as he rises and falls, and lets his obstinate pride and single-minded devotion to duty dictate his actions instead of his intellect or his heart. Certainly Young Lucius is a symbolic presence in the film; that is clear, but I never once felt in the least that I was "seeing" the film through his eyes. One reason for this is that Anthony Hopkins as Titus towers over the cast; it is to Titus that we look for a meaning to all of this awful suffering, to whom we look for a catharsis, for a mind that is strong and supple enough to unravel the mystery of human evil and fate.

That *Titus* is choreographed in places like a musical should come as no great shock, considering Taymor's Broadway credentials. What is odd is that some of these sequences don't really work. We are introduced to the Roman soldiers, led by Titus, who perform a kind of mechanized goosestep, only slightly sillier. What this represents, I suppose, is the idea of military order taken to ridiculous heights. Or perhaps Taymor ridicules the *idea* of order as its own reward, like the stereotypical Prussian soldier, so well portrayed by D. H. Lawrence, for whom there is no greater joy than following orders. There is, for me, something absurd about grown men in uniforms acting deadly serious about the act of mere walking. That is why I once laughed at the guards outside Buckingham Place who go from statue-like immobility to waist-high knee kicks, ended by terrifically loud heel clicks. I'm not sure ultimately what this says about Titus, but it certainly lets us know that he is an army man through and through, and that he values discipline. But is he, really, *too* rigid?

The idea of soldiers, toy and real, is used in a metaphorical sense in the film. Like many other elements of the film, it becomes clear only as the film unfolds. The army represents the cold light of a Roman tradition that glorifies duty to the state. Thus it is that Titus can slay his son because of devotion to duty, and give up his daughter to a usurper for the same reason. The soldiers are the upholders of a harsh, masculine tradition that rejects the maternal, nurturing instinct and lives for war, rapine, and violence. There is no room for the notion of romanticism, only the fulfillment of one's duty, and allegiance to the state in the form of the emperor. If this comes close to totalitarianism and fascism, this is no coincidence. Mussolini, like Hitler, preyed upon the infantile fantasies of a people starving for glory and who desired mightily to return to a former golden age that they believed was their cultural heritage. No matter that the golden age never existed; it could be realized in the present by the subjugation of neighboring countries and the extermination of a race of scapegoats.

Much of what is supposedly glorious about the Roman Empire—that shines like so much fools gold in the deep recesses of the racial imagination—is specious and dangerous when looked at in the light of day. But what matters for the Elizabethans, and for Shakespeare, is the fact that the Roman Empire represented order and stability—order and stability at a time when political as well as civil life was very

uncertain and Catholics and Protestants were at pointed swords.

Young Lucius

In an interview given to *Sight and Sound*, Taymor told John Wrathall this about the child's toys, "I never got over the image of the unburying of the Chinese terracotta army [discovered in 1974 near the ancient capital of Xi'an] and I wanted this shot of the army coming in [at the beginning of the film] to be like the terracotta army on the march. It's as if the child's toys are coming alive."[11] According to Taymor, "Because this play is as much about violence[-]as[-] entertainment as it is about violence itself, I wanted to start with the child's approach to violence, which is through his toys" (Wrathall, 25). While I do not agree with this assumption, it does explain the rather bizarre opening of the film. The "child" Taymor contemplates here is obviously a male, though one wonders what toys Tamora had as a young girl.

The Triumph and Failure of Art

Some visually interesting sequences added by the director are not particularly effective—some of the dreams and nightmares, the so-called "Penny Arcade Nightmares." Others do dramatize certain key dramatic elements in the film. One controversial sequence occurs as Lavinia relives her rape and torture at the hands of Demetrius and Chiron. We see here a colorful and dramatic representation of her inner anguish. This anguish is portrayed as an expressionistic video, the kind we have come to expect in the more experimental and successful music videos, with images of a doe and a snarling tiger shown for a few seconds and then intercut with other images representing innocence, violence, aggression, and assault. This brief sequence deserves careful consideration because it symbolizes at the same time both the triumph and failure of Taymor's art.

The triumphs of Taymor's art are fairly obvious: the brilliant visual effects that strike us with such unique power; the unusual and thoughtful use of images and symbols that resonate like musical motifs throughout the film; the sheer joy in experimentation that she brings to her directorial film debut; and the sensitivity with which she interprets Shakespeare's tragedy and renews it for a modern audience. John Wrathall, in his brief but cogent interview with Julie Taymor, offers some perceptive observations on the brilliance of Taymor's art. He recognizes the power and boldness of her

imagination and creativity: "Taymor's distinctive achievement lies in the flair and dynamism with which she reinvents material for a new [film] medium" (Wrathall, 24). Wrathall goes on to point out the importance to Taymor and her film that much of it was shot in Italy at Cinecittà. Shooting in Rome "Not only gives the film a frisson of real history," he writes, "but also allowed Taymor to tap into the creative well-spring of Italian cinema" (Wrathall, 26). This creative "well-spring" included Lucianci Tovoli, Director of Cinematography, who worked with Antonioni; and Dante Ferretti, Production Designer, who worked with both Pasolini and Fellini (Wrathall, 26).

In the short, surrealistic flashback sequence, Lavinia stands high on a pedestal, being buffeted by the winds. She is a brunette Marilyn Monroe, skirt being lifted to expose her thighs, as the tigers menace her from left and right. Why use this image of American iconography in a Shakespearean play? Is this sequence making a bold statement about the male constantly preying upon the female and using her to satisfy his own desires and carnal appetites?

Taymor herself sheds some interesting if somewhat ambiguous light on her methods here. She maintains,

> **There's something about the image of Marilyn Monroe with the wind blowing up her dress which is an incredible rape. This woman has to hold down her skirt and there's the roar of the subway going underneath and blowing it up. It's the most iconographic image of Monroe that exists. And so for Lavina with these tigers attacking her: there's no more powerful sensual, sexual image of a woman than that" (Wrathall, 26).**

In the same sequence Taymor also employs two other disparate images: the goddess on a pedestal and the ballerina as "pristine female image[s] of perfection and grace. I wanted to play with the defilement of these two icons of female virtue and sexuality" (Wrathall, 26). But I wonder here at the word "defilement" and wonder too, whether there are just too many things going on here.

I am not convinced, either, that Marilyn Monroe is an icon for all the ages, though in real life she certainly was used by the media every bit as much as she herself used the media for her own purposes. Perhaps the world has shrunken and been engulfed by a media that recognizes no national or international boundaries. Perhaps Chinese peasants walking with their vegetable carts to markets in rural areas would recognize the Marilyn icon and react to it. Perhaps Incas in the high Andes of Peru might also recognize the symbolism of female submitting to male that underlies the American icon. After all, C. G. Jung in his approach to psychology emphasized the incredible similarity of men's psyches, as represented in the dreams of men and women of different cultures and even different ages. Perhaps in this sense Marilyn is more an archetype than an icon. But I am skeptical.

Ultimately the flashback sequence doesn't work here, however, for a very simple reason: because we find it hard to equate the images in the sequence as having come from the mind of Lavinia, even a mind as traumatized to distraction as Lavinia's is. For a few brief seconds, I even had the odd feeling that a part of Lavinia, perhaps her darker more sensual self, was actually enjoying the sexual brutality of the rape, that she was even *responding* to the sexual stimuli, the age-old myth that every woman

wants to be overpowered and ravished by the masculine. The beauty and potent sensuality of the imagery here is actually a deterrent to Taymor's message, if she is showing us that Roman society was an authoritarian, tradition-bound, and male-dominated society. The tigers, as symbols of sexuality and fierceness, are grander, more brightly beautiful than Demetrius and Chiron, real agents of Lavinia's destruction.

This and other such video sequences, as well as additions such as the Grand Guignol, apparently represent a kind of expressionistic interior monolog or soliloquy for the various actors; these sequences serve to heighten the film's dramatic tension in places where the written play admittedly falls short. In these scenes the written play is arguably subservient to the film version because the play uses uninspiring words to convey the protagonists' emotion or simply leaves the audience on its own to imagine the emotion stemming from the action, like the relatively flat scene where the messenger brings Titus the heads of his two sons. It is in scenes such as this that the film versions of Shakespeare's (or any other good dramatist's) plays can best achieve their magic, add real value to the production, and thus enhance the modern audience's enjoyment of the art.

The scenes in the palace, as it degenerates into wanton abandon and carnal profligacy, are also well choreographed and contrast nicely with the austere exterior of streets, sidewalks, soldiers, prostitutes, and anonymous darkness. The drabness of everyday life consists of shadows, while the goings on in the palace are pictured in bright, colorful scenes. Beautiful people wearing little but their smiles cavort near an Olympic-size pool. We know that the downfall of Saturninus and Tamora is near, however, because as audiences we have come to expect swift and fell retribution to follow once the sins of Sodom and Gomorra are exposed to view.

That the palace is in such a sad sate of affairs is due chiefly to the negligence and weakness of Saturninus and the lusts of Tamora and Aaron. Indeed, much is made in the film and the play of the fact that Saturninus is ignorant of the fact that Aaron has made him a cuckold. The climax of this part of the film comes when Tamora is delivered of Aaron's baby. The fact of the child's color is the issue here. In both the play and the film, what is stressed is that Tamora has rotten bad luck; it is terrible that she may be found out, not necessarily that she and Aaron have been behaving lasciviously.

One of the most important considerations in producing a play like *Titus Andronicus* for a modern audience is the requirement to have a fine cast who deliver superb acting. Taymor has certainly assembled an outstanding cast in her film. One must say that the acting by Anthony Hopkins as Titus is superb. In fact, the film is worth watching if only to see Hopkins at work. If the film is worth a second look, it is by sheer dint of his

magisterial performance that he elevates the play and creates its very heart and drama.

It is difficult to do Hopkins justice and embarrassing, indeed, not to have words to praise him highly enough. I can think of no other living film actor with his range—demented but brilliant lunatic in Jonathan Demme's *Silence of the Lambs* (1991); invidious suitor and husband to Emma Thompson in James Ivory's *Howard's End* (1992); diffident Englishman and doomed would-be romantic in Ivory's *The Remains of the Day* (1993); rigid Oxford don C. S. Lewis, who succumbs to the charms of Debra Winger in Richard Attenborough's moving *Shadowlands* (1993); difficult, self-absorbed, and controlling artist in Ivory's *Surviving Picasso* (1996); or as the proud, aristocratic, and swashbuckling hero and mentor of Antonio Banderas in Martin Campbell's immensely fun *The Mask of Zorro* (1998)—and this range is evident in *Titus*.

Hopkins is believable as the proud and noble Roman general, as the unthinking soldier who slays his own son for compromising his honor and who will not repent this deed, as the utterly destitute and pathetic figure who grovels in the dirt and supplicates a hostile emperor to have mercy on his sons who are falsely condemned to death, and as the crafty if bloodthirsty army man who, feigning madness, sets a trap for Demetrius and Chiron and plans the ultimate surprise for Tamora. Here are shades of Hannibal Lecter. As Titus contemplates the banquet he has planned for Tamora, I see the old Hannibal Lecter gleam in his eyes, and seem to hear him say, "fava beans."

It would be unfair to slight the other fine actors in the film, but the only ones who stand out for me are Laura Fraser as Lavinia, pale and beautiful in her suffering; Matthew Rhys and Jonathan Rhys Meyers as Demetrius and Chiron, respectively, who are perfectly cast and costumed as post-punk, video maniacs, sociopaths without a conscience or a cause; and Harry Lennix as Aaron, who is superb as the Moor who revels in evil simply for its own sake. Alan Cumming as Saturninus, however, looked too weak to have any real political aspirations, or even to desire Lavinia, much less the bawdy barbarian, Tamora. Saturninus looked anything other than saturnine, and it is to be assumed that he was cast ironically in this role.

I believe Julie Taymor is mistaken in her casting of Tamora. Jessica Lange as Tamora, while still strikingly beautiful, was not well suited for her role. She is too soft spoken, too regal, to be effective as the crude and bloodthirsty Tamora. In some ways, perhaps, her beauty even works against her in this role. In her defense, however, I should point out that Taymor certainly chose Jessica Lange for the right reasons. In discussing casting with interviewer James Kaplan, Taymor insists, "What I didn't want was a Lady Macbeth—a harsh queen who was just cold and vicious: I wanted that vulnerability that Jessica has. Through all the horrible vengeance she takes, there's somewhere where you will always understand the primal hurt. She is the mother incarnate."[12]

It is difficult for me not to want to discover a motive for Aaron's malignancy, if only to comply with my concept of *mimesis*, but Shakespeare's villains have a habit of defying amateur psychologists like myself, and I can find nothing in the film (or play) that explains the Moor. In fact, though he bleeds when pricked and presumably dies as a man at the play's end, he is almost a caricature of evil, not a man of flesh and blood. He confesses to Lucius (Angus MacFadyen) a diabolical litany of offenses he has

perpetrated against the innocent, simply for the fun of it. And he will not submit; he is a worthy precursor to Milton's brilliant Satan, when at the end of the play he tells Lucius, "I am no baby, I, that with base prayers / I should repent the evils I have done. / Ten thousand worse than ever yet I did / Would I perform if I might have my will" (V.iii.185-188).

Aaron only shows his human, vulnerable side in wanting to protect his newborn son. The warmth of his affection for his newborn son, depicted eloquently in the film, strikes us at first as odd. We wonder if it is counterfeit. Can such a man, a thing of evil, contain the same thoughts, impulses, the same emotions and passions as other men? It is said that Hitler loved his dog, ironically enough, a German Sheppard. But then, on reflection, perhaps it is not so very strange that a man such as the Moor would want a copy of himself to perpetuate his line. Otherwise, he is that type of villain of whom it can only be said, as it was by Coleridge of Iago, that his is a "motiveless malignity."

So how are we to take the ending, when Young Lucius gently carries the infant in his arms, lovechild of the evil Aaron and Queen Tamora? The end of the film is not particularly forthcoming on this issue. It is not in Shakespeare's play. In the film the boy walks slowly out into the open air, just as the sun rises, and we see the newly awakening land. And at the very instant that the sun lies on the horizon, the film ends. Is this hope for the future, or simply an omen, an indication that what seems innocent can in time become deadly and lethal?

In the *Cineaste* interview, Taymor maintains that the film's ending is less abstract than her stage production, where the baby was placed in a coffin that rested on the banquet table. When the coffin was opened (by Young Lucius), "you heard many babies crying, the birds, the bells. That was too oblique and abstract for a movie because that would be saying that the child is dead. In the theatre it's symbolic" (De Luca and Lindroth, 29). Obviously Taymor subscribes to a different concept of symbol and metaphor than I do. As Juliet would say, "A coffin is a coffin is a coffin," even with the sounds of songbirds and tinkling bells.

Of the intriguing sun image Taymor says, "It's not a full sunrise. [The scene's] about possibility and hope but it's not about solution" (De Luca and Lindroth, 29). Ultimately, I guess this means that the film is intentionally open-ended. I'm afraid I see this manufactured ambiguity as a failure of nerve on Taymor's part. In the play, on the other hand, it is quite clear, with the installation of worthy Lucius as Emperor, that life is expected to move forward on an even keel from now on. This is what the citizens of Rome expect at any rate and is what the play clearly indicates.

The problem is that after such horrendous and bloody deeds, this promise of peace sounds to our ears rather flat and hollow. Our emotions have been squeezed in a vise, and the ending is rather a let down, rather a dull vibration when we are used to the deafening rumble of satanic mills and factories. This is a very real problem in the play, and I think Taymor understands this sense of hollowness and deflation. She makes a noble effort at dramatic intensity with Young Lucius carrying Aaron's baby and walking towards the sunrise, but ultimately chooses an ineffective method of correcting this anti-climax in the film.

We all know, of course, that once the flames of hate and violence engulf a society, the blaze can rarely be totally extinguished. Perhaps it will always be there, a kind of satanic legacy, burning like an ember in the dark, secret caves of the mind and soul. Such monumental passions and horrific deeds can hardly leave anyone unchanged. It's possible to read the film, then, as a warning that the purest heart can harbor evil, and that the most pleasant of days can turn into a nightmare. We must do the best with what we have, and plan for our future and our children's future, realizing that the gift that each placid day brings us is not permanent and never assured.

But perhaps, after all, I should leave the last word with Taymor. I believe her production of *Titus*, like Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet*, took a great deal of courage. And, unlike Luhrmann's version of *Romeo and Juliet*, I believe *Titus* succeeds as a film, though this is in great part due to the genius of Anthony Hopkins. I suspect that *Titus* will be the only film adaptation of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* for many years to come. As such, it will remain the definitive film version for several years, if not decades. And so I applaud the director, producers, actors, and all who took part in this production, for, as Taymor so eloquently puts it, in a kind of ironic understatement, "Titus is not a neat or safe play, where goodness triumphs over evil, but one in which, through relentless horror, the undeniable poetry of human tragedy emerges in full force, demanding that we examine the very root of violence and judge its various acts."[13]

Notes

1. **Maria De Luca and Mary Lindroth, "Mayhem, Madness, Method: An Interview with Julie Taymor," *Cineaste*, 25, 3 (June 2000): 28-31. [Back]**

2. **Noted scholar Una Ellis-Fermor has written perceptively of Webster and his very great talent. She defines Webster as a man who understood his times and was able to transform the late Elizabethan and Jacobean zeitgeist into dramas of rich texture and high drama. "He remains," she writes, "the playwright who most clearly perceived the chaos and conflict in which the tragic thought of his generation was caught and, while unable to climb out of the 'deep pit of darkness,' discerned for a moment through the eyes of one of his characters the 'stars' that 'shine still'" (Una Ellis-Fermor, *The Jacobean Drama: An Interpretation* [New York: Vintage, 1964], p.170). [Back]**

3. **Oscar James Campbell, ed., *The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare* (New York: Thomas Crowell, 1966), p. 882. [Back]**

4. **Stuart Klawans, "Y2K: The prequel," *The Nation* (January 24, 2000): 35-36. Klawans's review is available online at http://www.thenation.com/. You must click**

on *Archives*, and then select the January 24, 2000 issue from the drop-down menu for the year 2000. [Back]

5. Roger. Ebert's review of *Titus* (from the *Chicago Sun-Times*) is available online at http://www.suntimes.com/ebert/ebert_reviews/2000/01/012105.html/. [Back]

6. Jonathan Bate, ed., *Titus Andronicus* , Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 2-3. Cited in Barry Gaines, "*Antony and Cleopatra* / *King Henry V* / *Titus Andronicus*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 50, 2 (Summer 1999): 206-210. [Back]

7. The interview with Trevor Nunn is published in Ralph Berry, *On Directing Shakespeare* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989), pp. 60-81. The quote is taken from pp. 67-68. [Back]

8. Wolfgang H. Clemen, *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* (1935; New York: Hill and Wang, revised and augmented edition, 1956), p. 26. The chapter on *Titus Andronicus* is on pages 21-29. [Back]

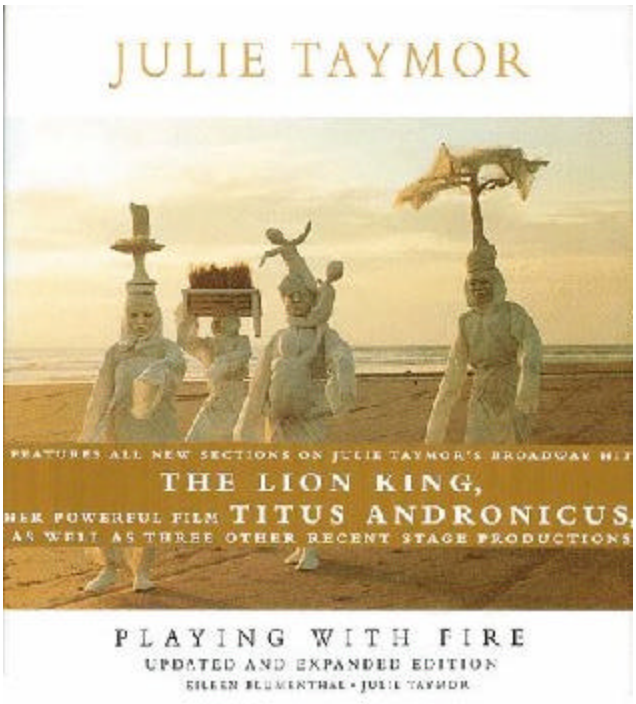
9. Phillip Lopate, *Totally, Tenderly, Tragically: Essays and Criticism from a Lifelong Love Affair with the Movies* (New York: Anchor Books, 1998), p. xv. [Back]

10. John Calhoun, "Taymor tackles titus," *Entertainment Design* 34, 3 (March 2000): 8-13. [Back]

11. John Wrathall, "Bloody Arcades," *Sight and Sound*, July 2000: 24-26. The quote is taken from page 24. [Back]

12. James Kaplan, "The US interview: Jessica Lange," *US*, issue 264 (January 2000): 56-60+. [Back]

13. Eileen Blumenthal and Julie Taymor, *Playing with Fire* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999). Quoted on the Clear Blue Sky Productions *Titus* Website http://www.clearblueskyfilms.com/featurefilms/titus/. [Back]



Julie Taymor's Playing With Fire

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