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- 1 Hunting *par force* in early modern England was an activity that, although immensely important to the construction of aristocratic masculine identity, was predicated upon and built around a number of structuring anxieties which both imbued it with a uniquely prestigious status, and at the same time informed its much-noted ritualism and affinities with sacrificial activity.¹
- 2 Suzanne Walker has attributed this to the underlying vulnerabilities in the categories of "human" and "animal" which the sport laid bare:

the identity of the prey swings between passive object and active subject, just as in the course of the hunt the living animal is itself transformed into a collection of dead body parts. [...] An illustration of the complexity of early modern definitions of the animal, the hunting treatise is also a meditation on the nature of the limits and dangers of subjectivity.²
- 3 While scholars often note the interplay between wildness and civilisation inhering in hunting, Walker suggests that this dichotomy is troubled by the rites of seigneurial hunting, which elaborate and amplify the savagery of the kill and therefore destabilise the boundary between "human" adversary and "bestial" hunter.³ The potentialities, and problems, of violence as a means of delimiting individual and social identity is evidently relevant to Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (1599), *Coriolanus* (c. 1608), and *Titus Andronicus* (published in 1594), plays which particularly foreground the related discourses of venery, sacrifice, and ritualised feasting.
- 4 These particular tragedies have been selected for examination because, this research suggests, their classical subject matter enable Shakespeare to explore themes already imbricated with the early modern conception of ancient Rome, while also allowing implicit allusion to more contemporary arguments surrounding feasting and sacrifice. Elizabethan and early Stuart texts can often be found connecting bloody banqueting

and pagan sacrifice with Roman society; such discourses were lent added urgency and topicality by the tendency of Protestant writers to elide ancient Rome with contemporary Catholicism.⁴ Simultaneously, the importance of the hunt to these plays hardly needs stating, so pervasive are their allusions to the sport. The horrific rape and mutilation forming the traumatic core of *Titus Andronicus* is consistently figured as a hunt, as Demetrius reminds his brother: “Chiron, we hunt not, we, with horse nor hound,/But hope to pluck a dainty doe to ground.”⁵ In *Julius Caesar*, upon encountering Caesar’s stabbed and bloody corpse Mark Antony famously laments “Here was thou bayed, brave hart,” describing the assassins as Caesar’s “hunters [...] /Signed in thy spoil and crimsoned in thy lethe,”⁶ The shared associations of the poached animal and the mutilated human body become inseparable from the broken and diseased body politic, especially in *Coriolanus*; the animal body, ostensibly quartered in order to reinstate social order but in the process transformed from adversary into meat, becomes a source of urgent questioning of human individuality and agency. The “familiar concerns of the Shakespearean Roman world” – including political instability, civil conflict, and public versus private selfhood – are imbued with a particular urgency in these plays by the informing metaphor of hunting custom, allowing a more delicate balance between distance and immediacy in Shakespeare’s tragic treatment of ritualised social conflict than is made possible, say, in his more festive use of hunting customs in the comedies, or the more carefully polemicized history plays.⁷

- 5 This article interrogates Shakespeare’s exploitation of the tensions inherent in the sport: between game and sustenance, prestige and brutality, violence and play. Their emphasis on ritualistic hunting echoes the ceremonialism associated with the chase, evoking in order to deny the subjectivity of the noble quarry and thereby casting the deer as both worthy adversary and aestheticized corpse. I have elsewhere argued that the hunt was “an arena which enabled wealthy and powerful men to enact and displace their impulse to social violence onto the substituted victim of the deer,” making the body of the dead deer a compelling iconographical and sartorial inspiration for early modern “festive pastimes which, in order to enact a statement of local and social identity, turn[ed] to a violent, exclusionary, and destructive sport.”⁸ Relatedly, if the carcass of the deer is a locus onto which anxieties about individual selfhood, social cohesion, and human subjectivity are projected and worked through, but also to an extent accentuated, how should we interpret Shakespeare’s deployment of the body of the hunted animal, both as a linguistic point of reference and as an interpretive subtext to the maimed and dismembered human body as physically represented on stage? Taking this question as a point of departure, this article will ask how the symbolic relationship between hunting and identity as portrayed in these plays reflects and complicates the tragic vision of a society in crisis.

Ritual and Taboo in the Seigneurial Hunt

- 6 The highly ritualised nature of the aristocratic hunt has been much remarked by historians, who tend to read its ceremonialism in terms of both exclusionary spectacle and, more anthropologically speaking, as containing and assuaging the shock of the kill itself. After the kill itself, the “chiefe hunter” would perform the dismemberment of the deer carcass (known as “breaking” or “unmaking” the deer); medieval and early modern manuals expounding the norms and etiquette of the sport provide great detail

on the correct manner and order in which to butcher the corpse, which notes to blow concurrently, to whom various parts of the deer should be awarded, and how to reward the hounds.¹ The taxonomical status of the dead deer's body – whether it should be treated as vanquished foe, trophy, or meat – is a particularly fraught subtext underpinning the treatment of the carcass. If, as Walker persuasively argues, “the definition of the stag as singular personality is essential to the nobility of the hunt. Once dead, though, the quarry disintegrates back into pieces of meat,” then the subsequent transformation of the animal into meat becomes problematic, and contemporary commentators are accordingly anxious to assert that the venison itself was far from the main goal of hunting.² Thus in *The Boke Named the Gouvernour*, Thomas Elyot notes that

Kylling of dere with bowes or greyhoundes, serueth well for the pot [...] and therefore it must of necessitie be some tyme vsed. But it conteynethe therin no commendable solace or exercise, in comparison to the other fourme of hunting.³

7 Reputation is here closely entangled with both physical and mental wellbeing: the extent to which the exercise can provide “solace” is contingent upon the degree to which it is “commendable,” and this in turn determines the merit of the participant himself. It is clear, moreover, that the desired evocation of social prestige rests upon a crucial iteration that nobles do not hunt for sustenance.⁴ Arguably, the rituals of *par force* hunting were designed precisely to reinforce and to broadcast this preference for the sport for its own sake and the alleged indifference towards the meat obtained thereby: a similar strategy can be detected in the fifteenth-century manual attributed to Juliana Berners, *The bokys of haukyng and hunting*, which, in its glossary of collective nouns, defines butchers in relation to the bloodiness of their profession (“a Gorynge of bouchers”) and hunters in terms of ritual horn-blowing (“a Blaste of hunters”).⁵ Reading between the lines of the manuals’ careful instructions, the impression is of a performativity and emphasis on visual ceremony which aim towards idealised, euphemistic abstraction; a rite which paradoxically denies the materiality of the corpse at the same times as it foregrounds body parts, blood, bones, and viscera.

8 Nevertheless, this denial of the most tangible outcome of the hunt, the meat, appears at first contradicted by the equally important discourse of festivity which medieval and early modern writers associated with the sport. This is made evident in George Gascoigne’s meticulous description in *The Noble Art of Venerie* (1575), which even includes instructions on those parts of the deer which, as “the dayntie morselles whiche appertayne to the Prince or chief personage on field,” should be consumed immediately,

to the end that as he or she doth behold the huntzman breaking vp of the Deare, they may take theyr pleasure of the sweete deintie morsels, [...] reioycing and recreating their noble mindes with rehersall whiche hounde hunted best, and which huntzman hunted moste like a woodman: callyng theyr best fauoured hounds and huntzmen before them, and rewarding them fauorably, as hath bene the custome of all noble personages to do.⁶

9 The communal consumption of these delicacies while the unmaking ceremony takes place emphasises the methectic quality to the ritual, reaffirming the shared bonding experience through this opportunity for the spectators to “recreat[e]” and “rehers[e]” the excitement of the day, to assess individual performances, and to establish the narrative of that particular hunt. As this passage suggests, this was a highly symbolic experience intrinsically tied up with both selfhood and social identity. The rejection of

hunting that “serueth well for the pot,” made explicit by Elyot, is socially laden: at the same time as distinguishing performative consumption from taboo sustenance, it also indicates a powerful statement of exclusivity, particularly given the fondness for venison in the period across all ranks of English society.⁷ The circumspection with which the dead animal body is treated both in the manuals and by the hunters themselves, its elaborate dissection and distribution, transform the slain quarry into a concrete metaphor for the narratives of wealth, power, and prowess which the noble sport was seen to encapsulate. Simultaneously, the performative consumption of these “dayntie morselles” makes visible a “theater of meat” which “endorses the act of eating as an aestheticized assertion of human control over creation, and therefore also over death,” yet which through its very theatricality “raise[s] questions about meat’s dangerous potential influence on the identity and status [...] of the eater who consumes it.”⁸

“Bleed[ing] in Sport.” Flawed Rites and Blooding Rituals in *Julius Caesar*

- 10 Important resonances exist between Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* and the argument outlined above that the breaking of the deer functions as a means of ritualistically alleviating the guilt of the kill and of effacing the proscribed recognition of the animal-as-meat. From the moment of his decision to join the conspirators, Brutus is concerned to define Caesar’s death as ritual rather than murder and thus to control its meaning as event.¹ Responding to Cassius’s suggestion that, in order to forestall any retaliation, Mark Antony “Should [not] outlive Caesar” (2.1.156), Brutus responds “Our course will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius,/To cut the head off and then hack the limbs” (161-162). The Roman body politic, of which Caesar is the head and Mark Antony a limb, swiftly shifts in Brutus’s ensuing speech to Caesar’s actual body, which is both synecdoche for the state, and also painfully material, a physical presence which must be eviscerated not symbolically but with violent literality. He continues

Let’s be sacrificers but not butchers, Caius.
[...]
Let’s kill him boldly, but not wrathfully:
Let’s carve him as a dish fit for the gods,
Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds (165-173).

- 11 Brutus’s figuration of the planned assassination in sacrificial terms rationalises Caesar’s death as a necessary evil to preserve the good of the commonwealth, while effacing the bloodiness of the act itself. The attempted aestheticisation of the physical reality of murder, in Brutus’s vision of dissection transforming the noble hart into a sacred “dish,” evokes the ceremonialism of breaking the deer and its denial of the messiness of the kill, yet it also inadvertently recalls the practical difficulty, from an external vantage point, of distinguishing the huntsman from the butcher. This attempt to preempt and shape narratorial perception is therefore immediately problematised by Brutus’s venatic and theriophagic language, which implicitly acknowledges and undermines the taboo of the deer-as-meat. Brutus appears fundamentally to misunderstand the deliberate evasion signalled by such hunting rituals and by the manuals’ linguistic distinctions between hunters and butchers. By evoking food preparation rather than adversarial combat, his description of Caesar as a “dish” degrades this imagined ceremony into a hunt merely “for the pot” and implies that the

conspirators will indeed be lower-status “butchers,” while his false opposition between the nobly dressed sacrificial victim and the reward fed to the hounds forgets that the *curée* was also an intrinsic part of such venatic ceremonies.² The imagined event becomes paradoxically *more* dysphemistic even as he attempts to cloak it in mysticism: their victim will be “dismember[ed],” “carve[d],” terms hardly less violent than “butcher[ed]” or “hew[n].”

The impossibility of rendering merely symbolic the body of the slaughtered animal is made most physically and visibly apparent in the scene of Caesar’s murder by the very fact of it being staged: the visceral effect on an audience of its violence, the wild frenzy of the assailants, and most strikingly, the profusion of stage blood. On the basis of more than 60 early modern plays with explicit references in the stage directions to blood, and over 150 that stage characters being wounded or stabbed, Lucy Munro has argued convincingly that stage blood was a feature of early modern theatre practice: as she points out, this would have been a multisensory experience for the audience, assaulting both eyes and ears and, if animal blood were used, even the nose.³ This visual onslaught would in itself carry associations with Elizabethan theatrical depictions of Rome, which revelled in particularly lavish violence, but as Leo Kirschbaum has argued, we should understand this bloodiness literally as well as symbolically – it is naturally affecting in performance to modern as well as early modern playgoers.⁴ The moment both invites and repels the complicity of the audience: Anthony Dawson argues that in this scene “memorial power is linked to a shedding and sharing of blood”, acting as “a conduit for what historians called ‘social memory’.”⁵ Yet at the same time the scene creates precisely the anxieties that venatic ceremonies were intended to assuage, “the shock caused by the sight of flowing blood” that Walter Burkert detects in both hunting ritual and sacrifice.⁶ Brutus can control the responses of neither the citizens of Rome nor the theatregoers of London despite his efforts to ritualise Caesar’s death, embedded in his unsettling instruction to his co-conspirators to “bathe our hands in Caesar’s blood/Up to the elbows” (3.1.106-107). Attempting ritualistically to assuage the guilt of the kill, Brutus prefigures the custom of blooding reported in July 1618 by Horatio Busino, chaplain to the Venetian ambassador, in his description of the hunts enjoyed by James VI and I:

On his Majesty coming up with the dead game, he dismounts, cuts its throat and opens it, sating the dogs with its blood, as the reward of their exertions. With his own imbrued hands, moreover, he is wont to regale some of his nobility by touching their faces. This blood it is unlawful to remove or wash off, until it fall of its own accord, and the favoured individual thus bedaubed is considered to be dubbed a keen sportsman and chief of the hunt and to have a certificate of his sovereign’s cordial good-will.⁷

- 12 Shakespearean scholars and historians of the hunt alike have made the twin observation that the bloody episodes encapsulated by Caesar’s assassination in the play, and the unmaking of the deer, can both be seen to enact a profane parody of communion, sharing amongst solemn participants the blood of the sacrificial victim.⁸ Similarly, James here adopts a role of regal largesse, distributing the animal’s blood as if it were as tangible a reward for the courtiers as it is for the hungry hounds, a spiritual as well as physical form of sustenance. James’s hunting ritual, as with the more widely-attested “breaking” ceremonies, therefore makes visible what is at stake in the deer’s dismemberment and distribution. Just as Gascoigne’s hunters retrospectively transform the foregoing chase into narrative, agreeing the best performances and cementing the participants’ mutual fellowship over food and wine,

James's bleeding singles out for favour the best hunter, at the same time confirming the membership of the rest of the group, the courtiers' proximity to the king, and their shared stamina and prowess.

- 13 As Shakespeare's tragedy demonstrates, however, straightforward elevation of death into abstract symbolism is not possible: rather the uncomfortable slippage between ceremonialism and performance become apparent, with Brutus and Cassius recasting "this our lofty scene" as a moment, not only of historical and dramatic significance, but of play. As they wash their hands in Caesar's blood, Cassius muses meta-theatrically "How many ages hence/Shall this our lofty scene be acted over/In states unborn and accents yet unknown?" (3.1.111-113), to which Brutus responds, apparently oblivious to the disturbing import of his words, "How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport [...]" (114). Significantly, Shakespeare had once before made reference to the bleeding ritual in his portrayal of the agonistic and destructive forces of the Roman state, and was to return to the image again, although only in *Julius Caesar* is it literally staged. In *Titus Andronicus*, written maybe a decade earlier, Aaron exults to Tamora that "Thy sons make pillage of [Lavinia's] chastity/And wash their hands in Bassianus' blood" (2.2.44-45), while in the later play *Coriolanus*, Aufidius longs to meet with his bitter rival and to "Wash my fierce hand in's heart".⁹ In neither case are the murderers ennobled by ritual cleansing; rather, their ambition to treat their enemy as slaughtered animal carcass exposes their willingness to reduce conflict to a brutal game, to make their rival "bleed in sport." Demonstrating the uneasy potential for the hunter to be portrayed in terms of the animality against which he defines himself, Aufidius even jarringly refers to his own hand, rather than his foe's heart, as "fierce", serving as a critical reminder that the ambivalence which Brutus invites with his reformulation of the conspirators as "sacrificers, not butchers" is one which inheres in hunting itself. It is also an ambivalence that Mark Antony is able to seize upon, displaying Caesar's blood, not as it was circulated amongst the assassins, but upon his pitifully torn and stained mantle; figured not as a hunter's badge of honour but as a contrast to the bountiful bequests to the people of Rome contained within Caesar's will.

The Deer's "Unrecuring Wound": Poaching and Feasting in *Titus Andronicus*

- 14 As the foregoing discussion suggests, despite the sorrow that he professes that Caesar "must bleed" (2.1.170), in the event Brutus's desire to ritualise Caesar's death is rooted in that very blood. The bleeding ceremony in which the assassins participate is an attempt analogous to that in the seigneurial hunt, attempting to render Caesar cervine and his death not even as sacrifice, but as "sport." Relatedly, if what is at stake in hunting rituals is the preservation of the boundary between human self and animal other, this is given a politically pointed aspect in cases of unlawful hunting. Fetishization of the body of the dead deer appears throughout the period in the related discourses of poaching and political protest, activities emphatically opposed to the seigneurial hunt. A great deal of recent scholarship has detailed examples of elaborate and highly visible poaching expeditions designed as acts of dissent, antagonism, or rivalry against members of the gentry.¹ Significantly, these protests on occasion also used the body of the hunted deer itself to illustrate, in particularly unpleasant and visual terms, the threat of further violence. In a striking example from 1272, poachers

entered Rockingham forest in Northamptonshire “with bows and arrows and they cut off the head of a buck and put it on a stake in the middle of a certain clearing, [...] in great contempt of the lord king and of his foresters.”² The outraged tone of the account implies the breach of etiquette represented by the poachers’ symbolism: their appropriation of the ritualised treatment of the deer’s head found in the seigneurial hunt is a deliberate impropriety, a parody of the spectacle of the hunt which inscribes class conflict onto the body of the slaughtered animal. Particularly striking is the iconography of punishment and power suggested by the deer’s head on a spike: this visual evocation of the impaling of traitor’s heads on London Bridge resonates with the deployment, in the plays under discussion, of references to slaughtered deer as metonymic of political violence. In this example of seditious hunting, the poachers assert their disrespect for the dead animal itself, rendering its body into parts for illicit circulation and making it unfit as either aristocratic communion feast or as prized memento of the hunt within the growing *trophäenkult* that archaeologists have identified in the period.³ This, then, is a typological transgression, the wrong kind of breaking ritual, travesty and thus undermining the comforting distinction of unitary self from fragmentary animal other.

- 15 The decapitated head as stage prop, recent writers on theatre history have shown, contains much the same political allusivity as the displayed head of the poached deer, usually appearing in the context of capital punishment or other forms of state violence. Carol Chillington Rutter notes that “execution makes legible the state’s absolute power. The monarch repudiates the traitor’s attempt upon the head of the state, upon the head of the body politic, by enacting on the traitor’s actual body a symbolic inversion of the thwarted crime.”⁴ Of the plays under discussion, *Titus Andronicus* most brutally and viscerally foregrounds the reality of mutilation and dismemberment as highlighted in poaching protests but purposefully effaced by the rituals at the end of the seigneurial hunt itself. Indeed, the literalisation of the fragmented body politic in the steady accrual of decapitated heads and severed limbs makes this surely one of Shakespeare’s most disturbing tragedies.⁵ The play opens with an offstage ceremonial killing of the kind that Brutus hopes to enact upon Caesar, and the similarity of language between the two plays reemphasises the point made above about Brutus’s incomprehension of the unmaking ceremony. Despite Titus’s insistence that his sons “Religiously [...] ask sacrifice” (1.1.127), Lucius’s treatment of Alarbus appears much closer to the butchery Brutus fears should Caesar be “hew[n] [...] a carcass fit for hounds” (JC 2.1.173):

Away with him, and make a fire straight,
And with our swords upon a pile of wood
Let’s hew his limbs (TA, 1.1.130-132).

- 16 A faint implication that Alarbus here takes on the role of the dead and dissected beast of the chase, transformed into trophy, underlies the emphasis on his dismemberment and Tamora’s recognition that the Goth’s are present “To beautify [Titus’s] triumphs, and return” (113). The possibility also resonates in Lucius’s farewell to his dead brother, later in the same scene: “There lie thy bones, sweet Mutius, with thy friends’;/ Till we with trophies do adorn thy tomb” (392-393). While the primary meaning of “trophies” here indicates the spoils of war, this more martial sense is subtended by the increasingly popular amuletic uses of animal bodies amongst aristocratic hunters, noted above. Alarbus’s semi-bestial sacrifice sparks a sequence of revenge killings and mutilations which conform to the pattern of *quid pro quo* sacrifice, while hunting

language(s) build throughout the first two acts towards the moment when the dark energies of the hunt, the shock of violence so carefully contained in ritual, bursts free. Hunting is explicitly introduced by the end of the first scene in the sadistic sexual punning of Chiron, Demetrius, and Aaron which culminates in the last's jarringly dysphemistic advice: "Single you thither then this dainty doe,/And strike her home by force" (617-618). Titus's entry the scene immediately following this exchange recasts the hunt within the world of ballad, but here, again, a sense of foreboding is introduced:

The hunt is up, the morn is bright and grey,
[...]
Uncouple here, and let us make a bay
And wake the emperor and his lovely bride (2.1.1-4)

- 17 His evocation of "A Hunts-up, or Morning song for a new-married wife, the day after the marriage" is appropriate for the occasion, yet it too carries an unintended subtext of sexual misconduct, if the text recorded in 1661 reflects the version known to have existed from the early 16th century:

The hunt is up, the hunt is up,
and now it is almost day,
And he that's abed with another man's wife
it's time to get him away.⁶

- 18 Once within the forest, the hunt's Ovidian intertext emerges in Tamora's portentous threats to Bassianus and Lavinia:

Had I the power that some say Dian had,
Thy temples should be planted presently
With horns, as was Actaeon's, and the hounds
Should drive upon thy new-transformed limbs (2.2.61-64).

- 19 As Marienstras notes, Actaeon's fate is in a sense projected onto both Bassianus and Lavinia, the one being murdered and the other hunted by the brothers, "A pair of cursed hellhounds" (5.2.144).⁷ Tellingly, Tamora coldly dismisses Lavinia's plea for help by refusing to "rob [her] sweet sons of their fee" (2.2.179), a noun which figures the brothers both as human hunters and as the hounds, since "fee" could mean either "deer" or more specifically "a dog's share of the game."⁸ The conflicting venatorial discourses culminate in the violence inflicted upon Lavinia by Chiron and Demetrius, explicitly figured not just as hunting, but as poaching: "What," asks Demetrius, "hast not thou full often struck a doe/And borne her cleanly by the keeper's nose?" (1.1.593-594). These different discursive hunts are ultimately subsumed into the bloodiness and bestiality of a rape-as-hunting which is shorn of the hunt's shaping and containing rituals. Like the Northamptonshire poachers, the brothers' subsequent mutilation of Lavinia is in brutal imitation of the breaking of the deer, aggressively renouncing the reverence due to the noble beast of the aristocratic sport. Their shockingly violent appropriation of hunting ritual attempts to remove Lavinia's status as human, transforming her instead into a message to be read by the other characters onstage. The term used to describe the deer's dismemberment, "unmaking", here becomes significant, suggesting its deliberate function in denying the animal as unified subject. In violation of the aristocratic taboo against viewing venison as *meat*, Aaron even describes her treatment as such: "Why, she was washed and cut and trimmed" (5.1.95).

20 As this last point indicates, alongside these images of the hunt *Titus Andronicus* returns equally compulsively to related images of food, feeding, and necrophagy. This fixation on consumption serves as a pertinent reminder of the problematic relationship between the hunted deer as noble beast or culinary delicacy. Wounds are throughout connected with mouths: Alarbus's "entrails feed the sacrificing fire" and his limbs are "clean consumed" (1.1.147,132), in retaliation for which both Lavinia's mouth and her vagina (often symbolically associated in the period) are mutilated.⁹ Titus's self-mutilation delights Aaron so much that he declares it "Doth fat me with the very thoughts of it" (3.1.204), while Titus vows that in retribution "these mischiefs [will] be returned again/Even in their throats that hath committed them" (3.1.274-275), a promise that he punningly carries out both by cutting the throats of Chiron and Demetrius, and by feeding their flesh to Tamora. This simultaneously culinary and venatic revenge fittingly parallels and balances the play's traumatic episode of sexual poaching: as François Laroque points out, "The framework of Titus' culinary revenge is thus a direct extension of the ritual of the hunt [...], and the punishment that Titus inflicts upon Chiron and Demetrius metaphorically echoes the circumstances in which they raped Lavinia".¹⁰ Titus's ultimate act of retribution figures Chiron and Demetrius rather than Lavinia as the slaughtered deer, transforming them into "two pasties" (5.2.189), a word most usually associated with venison. This bestialisation is frequently underscored in modern productions which have the brothers hanging from butcher's hooks.¹¹ Even so, through his acceptance of the logic of the hunt, Titus continues the denial of Lavinia's human agency which logically culminates in his murder of her: if Lavinia carrying Titus's severed hand "between [her] teeth" (3.1.283) earlier in the play suggests the "trained hunting dog carrying its master's quarry," then this analogy is continued in the scene of the brothers' slaughter.¹² Titus makes clear her role, and her reward: "tween her stumps [she] doth hold/The basin that receives [their] guilty blood" (5.2.182-83), much like the hounds awaiting the dead animals' blood in the *curée* ceremony.¹³ Conversely, Titus's stage-management of the scene and detailed description of his planned revenge expresses his control of the play's action, his implied assertion that his revenge is legitimate hunting, rather than illicit poaching; while his necrophagous feast recalls the hunt's methectic closing ritual, the moment when the hunters fed upon their quarry and retrospectively shaped the narrative of the foregoing chase.

21 Despite Titus's best efforts, any such legitimation of his retributive hunt is qualified, much as in *Julius Caesar*, by its kinship with butchery and particularly by the gustatory nature of his revenge. Sally Templeman suggests the possibility that in the earliest years of its stage history *Titus Andronicus* was "performed by [...] Strange's Men, or the Lord Chamberlain's Men at the Cross Keys or, indeed, at another of London's inn-yard playhouses," meaning its audiences would have been subject to a potent olfactory experience, as the inn kitchens adjacent to the playing space began to prepare food for the evening at precisely the point when the plays would be concluding. Fascinatingly, Templeman argues that the scene of Titus's final revenge would have presented a unique opportunity:

in inn-yard venues, it is quite likely that Tamora's pie had been baked in the inn's own kitchen [...]. This play's "sensual event," enhanced by its proximity to supertime and Shakespeare's culinary realism, would have become a multisensory bombardment for hungry inn-yard playgoers as they watched, smelt, imagined, and tasted Titus' pie.¹⁴

22 Despite the illegality of procuring it, this could even have been a venison pie: as Manning notes, “James I was dismayed by the amount of venison for sale in London, [...] which was openly hawked by butchers and poulterers in London and the suburbs. [...] Many tavern keepers were receivers of stolen venison.”¹⁵ The theatre audience are here again made complicit, involuntarily and sensorially engaged with an experience of the hunted deer which is far closer to the circulation of ill-gotten venison than to the aristocratic taboo surrounding hunting for sustenance. Revenge in this play is a metaphorical, as well as ultimately literal, act of cannibalism, recalling the taboo around meat that informs the ceremonies at the close of the hunt. If the play opened with an equally affecting and disturbing “multi-sensorial” experience of “Alarabus’s smoking entrails” as “olfactory props,” then the audience might well have been forcibly reminded of the opening sacrifice of the play, another moment at which taboo food preparation is horribly suggested by the roasting of human flesh.¹⁶ The parallel references to hunting and to feeding, then, work to emphasise the equivalence between insider and outsider, Roman and Goth, hunter and poacher.

Conclusion: *Coriolanus* and the Feast of War

23 These plays share with the hunt itself a preoccupation with the fragmented body as a kind of discursivity, as a way of shaping narrative and of controlling social meaning. The methectic operation of ritualistic dismemberment within the hunter group comes to look strangely similar both to the ways in which judicial violence formulates and contains national identity, and the anxieties betrayed thereby about the possibility of the self or the state a unified, unfragmented whole. The analogy between hunting and warfare, frequently mentioned by contemporary writers such as Elyot and famously remarked by Roger Manning, is taken to its logical and ignoble conclusion, as the waste and spoils of war reflect and parallel both the trophies of the hunt and the uneasy excesses of aristocratic feasting.¹ Zvi Jagendorf notes that the political concerns of *Coriolanus* work against any sense of tragic catharsis or eventual reintegration: in tragedy as in

the rituals of sacrifice, [...] [t]he torn victim’s body [...] is, in real or symbolic terms, food that will nourish the society that makes this ritual part of its history. [...] Thus the bloody fragments of sacrifice are transformed into a comforting whole, a coherent tradition of cult or community.²

24 The hunt’s uneasy relationship with sacrifice is analogous to *Coriolanus*’s unstable status as tragic hero: in both cases, there is a refusal or inability to acknowledge the dead body as deliberate sacrifice, as “food that will nourish the society.” Thus in the divided and famine-stricken Rome of *Coriolanus*, war has become both hunt and sustenance for the power-wielding class. Admiring *Coriolanus*’s distinction on the field despite his late arrival from fighting another battle elsewhere, the commander Cominius characterises *Coriolanus*’s part in the action as “a morsel of this feast,/Having fully din’d before” (1.9.10-11). The “feast” offered by war is implicitly cannibalistic, a violence turned inward upon its participants and, throughout the play, upon Rome itself. In the opening scene, the rioting, starving citizens express their anxiety that “If the wars eat us not up, [the patricians] will” (1.1.84); fittingly, when Menenius attempts to allay their fears through a rhetorical dissection and itemisation of the body politic, he figures the “senators of Rome” not as the head, but as the belly (147).³

25 References to hunting in *Coriolanus* are equally problematic, tainted by the play's pervasive preoccupation with food. The animal imagery of the play is mutable, as both Coriolanus and the citizens slip between hunting hounds and poached deer: at the moment where Coriolanus quite literally makes his name, entering Corioles alone and capturing the city single-handed, his fellow soldiers agree he is surely destined "To th'pot, I warrant him" (1.4.47), as though his own fanatical commitment to war transformed his own body into that of the inappropriately, ignobly hunted deer. Earlier in Act 1, Coriolanus's scorn and loathing of the plebeians had already translated the language of class conflict into hunting metaphor, albeit one of mass slaughter rather than of noble sport: "And let me use my sword, I'd make a quarry/With thousands of these quarter'd slaves" (197-198). The victims of the political hunt are deindividuated, this time as a reflection of the divisions that define the world of the play: patrician versus plebeian, soldier versus citizen. The violence of the hunt and of state power are elided, as the mob's dissection into "quarter'd slaves" confirms and qualifies the venatic imagery of "quarry" by suggesting both the dismembered deer, and the gruesome punishment meted out to traitors. Political aggression could indeed subtend contemporary examples of the kind of venatorial excess evoked by Coriolanus's graphic image of corpses piled high, as in a genuine occasion of indecorous hunting taking place in 1572, when such "quarry" was indeed intended as a politically threatening message. As described by the antiquarian John Smyth who served the Berkeley family, Queen Elizabeth accompanied by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester visited Berkeley Castle while on progress, and in their host's absence went hunting in his park:

such slaughter was made, as 27 stagges were slaine in the Toiles in one day, and many others [...] stollen and havoked: whereof when this lord Henry, then at Callowdon, was advertised, [...] hee sodainly and passionatly in discontent disparted that ground: But in fewe monthes after, hee had a secret freindly advertizem^t from the Court, [...] Advising this lord to carry a wary watch over his words and actions, least that, that Earle (meaning Leicester) [...] might have a further plott against his head and that Castle.⁴

26 This antagonistic hunting represents an invasion onto Berkeley's property, both land and animal, which is lent an unavoidably menacing subtext by the presence of the monarch which makes the event indistinguishable from an act of punitive state aggression against the individual: Berkeley's park, his deer, become an extension of his own body. Manning supplies an interesting contextual reading of the episode, pointing out that "Berkeley's brother-in-law, Thomas, duke of Norfolk, had recently been executed for treason, and Elizabeth had just granted some of the Berkeley estates [...] to Leicester and his brother."⁵ Again, the transgression of proper hunting practice through the amassing of animal corpses encodes a potent language of state violence and containment upon the bestial body.

27 Shakespeare's parodic use of hunting rituals in these plays therefore suggests a possible reading of the early modern hunt itself as a discourse which not only invites, but indeed denotes, the mapping of power and politics onto the body of the animal. The seigneurial hunt, with its ritualisation of dismemberment, bleeding, and consumption, provided early modern English culture with a symbolism through which to tackle anxieties about both individual subjectivity and about how a community expressed itself. This in turn lent Shakespeare with a powerful language and iconography of brutality as self-defining, and of a consuming and cannibalistic agonism which, in its basis in violence and its potential to turn inward, presents a particularly fragile form of

human or communal identity. The attempts of the hunt itself to use ceremonialism to control meaning are taken to their tragic conclusions in the three plays under discussion, demonstrating the dangers of understanding the state in terms of the vulnerable, divisible, ultimately bestial body.

NOTES

1. I am grateful to Laura Seymour for reading a draft of this article and for her insightful comments, as well as to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful feedback.
2. Suzanne Walker, “Making and Breaking the Stag: The Construction of the Animal in the Early Modern Hunting Treatise”, in *Early Modern Zoology: The Construction of Animals in Science, Literature, and the Visual Arts*, ed. Karl A. E. Enekel and Paul J. Smith, 2 vols., Leiden & Boston, Brill, 2007, 2, 317-337, p. 317.
3. Cf. Edward Berry, *Shakespeare and the Hunt: A Cultural and Social Study*, Cambridge, CUP, 2001, esp. pp. 75-77; Charles R. Forker, “The Green Underworld of Early Shakespearean Tragedy”, *Shakespeare Studies* 17 (1985), 25-47.
4. Cf. Richard Marienstras, *New Perspectives on the Shakespearean World*, trans. Janet Lloyd, Cambridge, CUP, 1985, pp. 48-57; Anthony B. Dawson, “The Arithmetic of Memory: Shakespeare’s Theatre and the National Past,” *Shakespeare Survey* 52 (1999), 54-67, pp. 58-61. On the early modern theatre’s staging of contemporary Eucharistic debates and ideas around dangerous consumption, cf. Laura Seymour, “The Feasting Table as a Gateway to Hell on the Early Modern Stage and Page,” *Renaissance Studies* (2019), (accessible online at: doi:10.1111/rest.12618).
5. William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Jonathan Bate, coll. The Arden Shakespeare, London, Bloomsbury, 2018, 2.2.25-26. Subsequent references embedded in the text.
6. William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. David Daniell, coll. The Arden Shakespeare, London, Bloomsbury, 1998, 3.1.204-206. Subsequent references embedded in the text.
7. Berry, *op. cit.*, p. 70; also cf. Gary Miles, “How Roman are Shakespeare’s ‘Romans?’”, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40 (1989), 257-83; Naomi Conn Liebler, *Shakespeare’s Festive Tragedy: The Ritual Foundations of Genre*, London, Routledge, 1995, pp. 16-18 and *passim*. For a consideration of festive hunting in the “forest comedies,” cf. Jennifer Allport Reid, “‘Wearing the Horn’: Class and Community in the Shakespearean Hunt”, in *The Routledge Handbook of Shakespeare and Animals*, ed. by Karen Raber and Holly Dugan, London, Routledge, forthcoming.
8. Reid, “Wearing the Horn”.
1. George Gascoigne, *The Noble Arte of Venerie*, [London], 1575, sig. H8^r, and cf. sigs. H8^r-I4^r.
2. Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 317; also cf. Hannele Klemetilä, *Animals and Hunters in the Late Middle Ages: Evidence from the BnF MS Fr. 616 of the Livre de Chasse by Gaston Fébus*, New York and London, Routledge, 2015, p. 51.
3. Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour*, London, 1531, sigs. J7^v-J8^r.
4. Catherine Bates argues that hunting is a primarily symbolic rather than subsistence activity; cf. *Masculinity and the Hunt: Wyatt to Spenser*, Oxford, OUP, 2013, pp. 5-16.
5. *The bokys of haukyng and hunting*, St Albans, 1486, sig. F7^r. Also cf. Juliet Fleming, “Carving for Knaves,” in *Text Food and the Early Modern Reader: Eating Words*, ed. by Jason Scott-Warren and Andrew Elder Zurcher, London, Routledge, 2018, 17-30.
6. Gascoigne, *op. cit.*, sig. H8^v.

7. Cf. Andrew Boorde, *A Dyetary of Helth*, London, 1542, J1^r; Fynes Moryson, *An Itinerary*, London, 1617, sig. 3R2^v.
8. Karen Raber, "Animals at the Table: Performing Meat in Early Modern England and Europe", in *Performing Animals: History, Agency, Theater*, ed. by Karen Raber and Monica Mattfeld, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017, 14-27, pp. 16, 21.
1. Brents Stirling, "Or Else This Were a Savage Spectacle", *PMLA* 66 (1951), 765-774; also cf. David Kaula, "'Let Us Be Sacrificers': Religious Motifs in *Julius Caesar*", *Shakespeare Studies* 14 (1981), 197-214, pp. 206-210; Berry, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-88.
2. On the *curée* cf. Richard Almond, *Medieval Hunting*, Stroud, Sutton, 2003, pp. 78-79.
3. Lucy Munro, "'They Eat Each Other's Arms': Stage Blood and Body Parts", in *Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance*, ed. by Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern, London, Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2013, pp. 73-93, pp. 78, 84.
4. Leo Kirschbaum, 'Shakespeare's Stage Blood and Its Critical Significance', *PMLA* 64 (1949), 517-529.
5. Dawson, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
6. Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*, trans. by Peter Bing (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1983), p. 21.
7. Horatio Busino, "Venice: July 1618, 1-15", in *Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Archives of Venice: Volume 15, 1617-1619*, ed. Allen B Hinds, London, 1909, pp. 251-266 (accessible online at: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/venice/vol15/pp251-266>, last accessed 23 April 2019).
8. On the religious analogy, cf. Jennifer Allport Reid, "The Beastly Body in St Paul's Cathedral: Procession and Politics under Mary Tudor," in *Old St Paul's and Culture*, ed. by Shanyn Altman, Katrina Marchant and Nicole Mennell, under consideration; Berry, *op. cit.*, p. 79; regarding *Julius Caesar*, cf. Kaula, *op. cit.*, p. 208; Marienstras, *op. cit.*, p. 62; François Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World: Elizabethan Seasonal Entertainment and the Professional Stage*, trans. by Janet Lloyd, Cambridge, CUP, 1991, pp. 277-281.
9. William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. Philip Brockbank, coll. The Arden Shakespeare, London, Bloomsbury, 2006, 1.10.27. Subsequent references embedded in the text.
1. Cf. esp. E. P. Thompson's *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1975; Jean Birrell, "Who Poached the King's Deer? A Study in Thirteenth Century Crime", *Midland History*, 7 (1982), 9-25; Roger Manning, "Unlawful Hunting in England, 1500-1640", *Forest & Conservation History*, 38 (1994), 16-23, p. 16; Reid, "The Beastly Body."
2. *Select Pleas of the Forest*, ed. G. J. Turner, London, Bernard Quaritch, 1901, pp. 38-40.
3. Aleksander Pluskowski, "Communicating Through Skin and Bone: Appropriating Animal Bodies in Medieval Western European Seignorial Culture", in *Breaking and Shaping Beastly Bodies: Animals as Material Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Pluskowski, Oxford, Oxbow, 2007, pp. 32-51.
4. Carol Chillington Rutter, "Talking Heads", in *Shakespeare and the Making of Theatre*, ed. by Stuart Hampton-Reeves and Bridget Escolme, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 102-127, p. 110; also cf. Munro, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-87; Andrew Hiscock, "'Enter Macduffe, with Macbeths Head': Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the Staging of Trauma", in *Stage Directions and Shakespearean Theatre*, ed. by Sarah Dustagheer and Gillian Woods, London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2018, 241-261.
5. Cf. Gillian Murray Kendall, "'Lend Me Thy Hand': Metaphor and Mayhem in *Titus Andronicus*", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40 (1989), 299-316; Rutter, *op. cit.*, p. 114. Analogous is the recurrence in *Measure for Measure* of the severed head as prop and motif; I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer at *la Société Française Shakespeare* for this point.
6. Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues*, London, 1611, sig. 3Z4^r; Ross W. Duffin, *Shakespeare's Songbook*, New York and London, Norton, 2004, pp. 205-206.
7. Marienstras, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

8. Cf. "fee, n.1.", *OED Online*, Oxford, OUP, 2019 (accessed online at www.oed.com/view/Entry/68942, last accessed 23 April 2019); "fee, n.2.", *ibid.*, (accessed online at www.oed.com/view/Entry/68943, last accessed 23 April 2019).
9. Jennie Votava, "'The Voice That Will Drown All the City': Un-Gendering Noise in *The Roaring Girl*", *Renaissance Drama* 39 (2011), 69-95, p. 84.
10. Laroque, *op. cit.*, p. 384n.
11. I am indebted for this point to Laura Seymour; her helpful suggestions have also greatly informed the succeeding argument.
12. Alan Dessen. *Titus Andronicus*, Manchester, Manchester UP, 1992, p. 56. On the reduction of both Lavinia and Titus to the status of nonhuman lifeforms, cf. Seymour, "Actions that a (Hu)man Might Play: A Cognitive Study of Gesture in Shakespeare's Plays", unpublished doctoral thesis, Birkbeck, University of London, 2016, pp. 47-52.
13. Berry, *op. cit.*, p. 81, similarly makes the point that pasties are usually made of venison.
14. Sally Templeman, "'What's This? Mutton?': Food, Bodies, and Inn-Yard Performance Spaces in Early Shakespearean Drama", *Shakespeare Bulletin* 31 (2013), 79-94, pp. 81, 84, 89-90.
15. Roger B. Manning, *Hunters and Poachers: A Social and Cultural History of Unlawful Hunting in England 1485-1640*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1993, pp. 167-168.
16. Holly Dugan, "'As Dirty as Smithfield and as Stinking Every Whit": The Smell of the Hope Theatre', Karim-Cooper and Stern, *op. cit.*, 195-123, p. 196.
1. Manning, *Hunters and Poachers*, p. 39.
2. Zvi Jagendorf, "'Coriolanus: Body Politic and Private Parts,'" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41 (1990), 455-469, p. 468.
3. Cf. Janet Adelman, "'Anger's My Meat': Feeding, Dependency, and Aggression in *Coriolanus*", in *Shakespeare, Pattern of Excelling Nature*, ed. David Bevington and Jay L. Halio, London, Associated UP, 1978, 108-124.
4. John Smyth, *The Berkeley Manuscripts*, ed. Sir John Maclean, Gloucester, The Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, vol. 2, 1883; cf. Manning, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
5. Manning, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

ABSTRACTS

Critics have noted the prominence in Shakespeare's Roman tragedies of the related discourses of hunting, sacrifice, and ceremonialism. The emphasis on ritualism and aberrant feasting in these plays finds its echo in the par force hunting, which evokes in order to deny the subjectivity of the noble quarry, casting the deer as both worthy adversary and aestheticized corpse. Early modern hunting manuals describe the ritualism at the conclusion of the aristocratic hunt, formalised ceremonies which enacted an elaborately ceremonial dissection and distribution of the body of the slain quarry, drawing their symbolic charge from the inherent violence of the hunt and its sacrificial emphasis on the dead animal's physical dismemberment. Exploring the interactions between hunting, ritualism, and sacrifice in *Titus Andronicus*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Coriolanus*, this article excavates the contemporary significance of the deer as animal, as lordly game, and as symbol. This article suggests that in these plays, the animal corpse becomes a useful metaphor for communal conflict and division, resonances which the aristocratic sport easily evoked given

the discourses of exclusion and elitism which surrounded it and its importance in the construction of noble male identity.

La critique a montré l'importance, dans les tragédies romaines de Shakespeare, des discours sur la chasse, le sacrifice et le cérémonial. La part du ritualisme et des aberrantes festivités associées dans ces pièces trouve un écho dans la vénerie qui, afin de nier toute subjectivité à la proie, suppose de la concevoir à la fois comme valeureux adversaire et corps esthétisé. Les manuels de chasse de la première modernité décrivent les rituels qui viennent clôturer la chasse aristocratique, les cérémonies formelles où l'on dissèque et partage le corps mutilé de l'animal qui trouvent leur charge symbolique dans la violence inhérente à la chasse et l'importance accordée au sacrifice et au démembrement de l'animal mort. Cet article explore les liens entre chasse, ritualisme et sacrifice dans *Titus Andronicus*, *Julius Caesar*, et *Coriolanus*, afin d'exhumer le sens contemporain de la dépouille animale, à la fois noble gibier et symbole. La présente contribution suggère que dans ces pièces le cadavre animal devient métaphore utile du conflit et de la division de la communauté, faisant écho à ce qu'évoque aisément les discours sur l'exclusion et l'élitisme qui entourent ce divertissement aristocratique tout à fait central dans la construction d'une identité masculine noble.

INDEX

Mots-clés: Chasse, Jules César, Titus Andronicus, Coriolan, corps animal, démembrement, rituel

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