

An extremely rare quarto of *Titus Andronicus*

William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*. London: Edward White, 1600. 6 7/16 inches x 4 1/2 inches (164 mm x 121 mm), [80] pages, A–K4.

The most lamentable Romaine Tragedie of *Titus Andronicus*. | As it hath sundry times beene playde by the | Right Honourable the Earle of Pembroke, the | Earle of Darbie, the Earle of Sussex, and the | Lorde Chamberlaine theyr | Seruants. | [ornament] | AT LONDON, | Printed by I. R. for Edward White | and are to bee solde at his shoppe, at the little | North doore of Paules, at the signe of | the Gun. 1600.

Shakespeare's quartos, so named because of their format (a single sheet folded twice, creating four leaves or eight pages), are the first printed representations of his plays and, as none of the plays survives in manuscript, of great importance to Shakespeare scholarship. Only twenty-one of Shakespeare's plays were published in quarto before the closure of the theaters and outbreak of civil war in 1642. These quartos were printed from either Shakespeare's "foul papers" (a draft with notations and changes that was given in sections to actors for their respective roles); from "fair copies" created from foul papers that presented the entire action of the play; from promptbooks, essentially fair copies annotated and expanded by the author and acting company to clarify stage directions, sound effects, etc.; or from a previously published quarto edition. The quartos were inexpensive to produce and were published for various reasons, including to secure the acting company's rights to the material and to bring in money during the plague years in London when the theaters were closed.

In this play, the Roman general Titus Andronicus returns from ten years at war, bringing with him Tamora, Queen of the Goths, and her sons. Only four of his twenty-five sons have survived, and Titus therefore sacrifices Tamora's eldest son; Tamora vows revenge. She becomes the wife of Saturninus and Rome's empress. Tamora frames Titus' sons for a murder and they are beheaded; her sons also rape Titus' daughter Lavinia and sever her hands and her tongue. Titus's last living son, Lucius, is banished, and he allies with the enemy Goths and plans to attack Rome. Titus feigns madness and Tamora presses him to stop Lucius. Titus instead kills her sons, bakes them in a pie, and feeds them to Tamora; he then kills Tamora and Lavinia. Saturninus kills Titus, and Lucius kills Saturninus, becoming the Roman emperor.

This rare second quarto of *Titus Andronicus* is bound in blue levant morocco with gold bordering rules the front and the arms of Edinburgh University on the front and back covers. The bookplate of Edinburgh University is on front pastedown. In gold reading up the spine: "TITUS ANDRONICUS LOND. 1600."

This quarto was given to the University of Edinburgh in 1627 by James Drummond (1585–1649) of Hawthornden, a former student at the university, as well as a poet and man of letters.

Octavo code: **shatiz**