

### **A rare quarto edition of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus***

William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*. London: Edward White, 1611. 6 3/4 inches x 4 9/16 inches (171 mm x 116 mm), [80] pages, A-K4.

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' 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.

Now at the National Library of Scotland, this 1611 third quarto of the *Titus Andronicus* is inlaid and bound with a yellow morocco spine with raised bands and tips and dark gray boards; title, author, and date in black are on the spine. Notes by George Steevens appear throughout. The bookplate of John Patrick Crichton Stuart, the third Marquis of Bute is on the front pastedown; the bookplate for the Bute Collection of English Plays is on the back pastedown.

This quarto was previously owned by George Steevens (1736–1800). He was an English Shakespeare editor who collaborated with Samuel Johnson in issuing a complete edition of Shakespeare, *The Works of Shakespeare with the Corrections and Illustrations of Various Commentators* (10 vols., 1773). Steevens owned roughly fifty quartos, and his sale (13 May 1800) was the first large Shakespeare collection to appear at auction, where it was purchased by William Fillingham, an English collector whose books were sold in 1805. The quarto was purchased by John Stuart, the first Marquis of Bute (1744–1814). Stuart added it to the Bute Collection of early English plays that was initially formed by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762) and expanded by her son-in-law John Stuart, third Earl of Bute. The first Marquis of Bute, Lady Mary's grandson, notably acquired 39 Shakespeare quartos. The collection contains 1,266 English plays and includes seventeenth- and eighteenth-century adaptations of Shakespeare's plays and examples of the foremost dramatists from Elizabethan, Jacobean, Caroline, and Restoration periods; also included are a number of promptbooks. The Bute Collection is now in the National Library of Scotland, which purchased it from Major Michael Crichton Stuart on 3 April 1956.

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