

**THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM  
SHAKESPEARE: WITH A LIFE OF THE  
POET, EXPLANATORY  
FOOT-NOTES, CRITICAL NOTES, AND A  
GLOSSARIAL INDEX. IN TWENTY  
VOLUMES. VOLUME XIII**

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Liv. ——— 'Art beastly creature!  
The blot and anery to our general name!  
Confusion fall'! ———

Chi. 'Nay, then, 'I stoo your mouth. Bring  
thou her husband!'

Loretta College Library

THE

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

WITH

A LIFE OF THE POET, EXPLANATORY FOOT-NOTES, CRITICAL  
NOTES, AND A GLOSSARIAL INDEX.

**Harvard Edition.**

BY THE

REV. HENRY N. HUDSON, LL.D.

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*IN TWENTY VOLUMES.*

VOL. XIII.

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## TITUS ANDRONICUS.

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**M**ENTIONED as one of Shakespeare's plays, by Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia*, 1598, and printed in 1600, but without the author's name; while the title-page asserts it to have been played sundry times by the Servants of the Earl of Pembroke, of the Earl of Derby, of the Earl of Sussex, and of the Lord Chamberlain. The same text was issued again in 1611, also without the author's name, but "as it hath sundry times been played by the King's Majesty's Servants." What had previously been known as "the Lord Chamberlain's Servants" received the title of "His Majesty's Servants" soon after the accession of King James to the English throne, in 1603. This was the company to which Shakespeare belonged, and for which most, if not all, of his plays were written. The play was also included in the folio collection set forth by Heminge and Condell in 1623; but with one entire scene, the second in Act iii., not given in the quarto editions.

Though no earlier edition than that of 1600 is now known to exist, it is altogether probable that the play was printed in 1594; as the Stationers' Register has the following entry, dated February 6th of that year: "A book entitled a noble Roman History of Titus Andronicus." The entry was made by John Danter, and undoubtedly refers to the play which has come down to us as Shakespeare's. And Langbaine, in his *Account of English Dramatic Poets*, published in 1691, speaks of an edition of that date. That there were copies of such an edition know to Langbaine, only ninety-seven years after the alleged date, and now lost, might well be, as it is said that only two copies of the quarto of 1600 are now known to be extant.

As regards the date of the composition, we have still further notice in the Induction to Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, which



was written in 1614: "He that will swear, *Jeronimo* or *Andronicus* are the best plays yet, shall pass unexcepted at here, as a man whose judgment shows it is constant, and hath stood still these *five-and-twenty* or *thirty years*." Taking the shortest period here spoken of, we are thrown back to the year 1589 as the time when the play was first on the boards. That the piece now in hand was the one referred to by Jonson may be justly presumed, from the known fact of its great and long-continued popularity on the stage, and as there was no other play so entitled, that we know of.

Nearly all the best critics, from Theobald downwards, are agreed that very little of this play was written by Shakespeare. And such is decidedly my own judgment now, though some thirty years ago, in "my salad days," I wrote and printed otherwise. One of our best deliverances on the subject is in Sidney Walker's *Critical Examination of the Text of Shakespeare*, 1860, as follows: "Act i. scene 1, and the greater part, or rather the whole, of Act v. are the work of one writer, and that writer not Shakespeare. The Latinism both of the manner and the matter would be sufficient to prove this, did not the utter want of imagination in the author render all other arguments needless. The other three Acts — with occasional exceptions, perhaps — bear the unmistakable stamp of another and more poetical mind; yet I feel all but certain that Shakespeare did not write a word of the play, except, possibly, one or two passages. To say nothing of the absence of his peculiar excellences, and the precipitous descent from *Venus and Adonis* and *Tarquin and Lucrece* to *Titus Andronicus*, I do not believe he *would* have written on such a subject; still less that *he* could have revelled with such evident zest in details of outrage and unnatural cruelty. Perhaps the last scene of Act iv. was written by the author of Acts i. and v."

Substantially concurrent herewith is the judgment of Staunton: "That Shakespeare had some share in the composition of this revolting tragedy, the fact of its appearance in the list of pieces ascribed to him by Meres, and its insertion by Heminge and Condell in the folio collection of 1623, forbids us to doubt. He may, in the dawning of his dramatic career, have written a

few of the speeches, and have imparted vigour and more rhythmical freedom to others; he may have been instrumental also in putting the piece upon the stage of the company to which he then belonged; but that he had any hand in the story, or in its barbarous characters and incidents, we look upon as in the highest degree improbable."

Our latest expression of judgment in the question is by Mr. Fleay, whose claim to be heard will, I think, be undisputed: "A stilted, disagreeable play, with a few fair touches. It has many classical allusions in it; many coincidences in the use of words and phrases with Marlowe's work; in style and metre it is exactly what a play of Marlowe's would be, if corrected by Shakespeare: it is built on the Marlowe blank-verse system, which Shakespeare in his early work opposed; and did not belong to Shakespeare's company till 1600."

The question, by whom the main body of the play was written, is not so easily answered, and perhaps is hardly worth a detailed investigation. Mr. Grant White is strongly inclined to regard it as a joint production of Marlowe, Greene, and Shakespeare. He indicates the latter half of scene 2, Act i., the whole of scenes 1 and 2, Act ii., and the greater part of scene 2, Act iv., as originally the work of Greene: the choice of the plot and incidents, together with the writing of scene 4, Act iv., and nearly all of Act v. in its original form, he ascribes to Marlowe; and thinks that in the first half of scene 2, Act i., in scenes 3 and 5, Act ii., and throughout Act iii., "we may clearly trace the hand of Shakespeare." In all this, however, he seems to feel that his judgment is not very sure-footed; and I suspect that, if he were to pronounce on the subject now, he would find less of Shakespeare in the play than he did some twenty years ago.

For my own part, I am quite convinced that Shakespeare had little to do in the writing of it, though enough, perhaps, to warrant the printing of it as his; while the play, as a whole, is so extremely distasteful to me, that I would gladly be rid of it altogether. And I agree substantially with Mr. White and Mr. Fleay as to Marlowe's share in the workmanship. At the time when *Titus Andronicus* appears to have been written, Marlowe

had just unfettered the English Drama from the shackles of rhyme, and touched its versification with the first beginnings of freedom and variety. As if to square the account for this advance upon the dramatic taste and usage of the time, he trained his verse to a stately and high-sounding march, and often made it puff wellnigh to the cracking of its cheeks with rhetorical grandiloquence and smoke. The theatrical audiences of that day were prone to bestow their loudest applause on tragedies which gave them to "sup full of horrors"; and Marlowe was apt enough, without the stimulus of such motives, to provide them banquets of that sort. To distinguish rightly between the broad and vulgar ways of the horrible, and the high and subtile courses of tragic terror, was a point of art which he did not live to reach, and probably could not have reached if he had lived the full time.

The play in hand is without any known foundation in authentic history. How or whence the story originated, has not been revealed, unless in the play itself. The scene of the incidents seems to be nowhere, the time, nowhere. The sentiments and customs of ages and nations far asunder in time and space, Pagan gods and Christian observances, are jumbled together in "most admired confusion"; and indeed the matter generally seems to have been patched up at random from what the author or authors had learned in books.

I must add that there is an old ballad on the same subject, which was entered at the Stationers' by Danter at the same time with the play, and is printed in Percy's *Reliques*: but which of them was written first, we have no means of deciding, save that, as Percy remarks, "the ballad differs from the play in several particulars which a simple ballad-writer would be less likely to alter than an inventive tragedian."