

**TITUS
ANDRONICUS**

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Titus Andronicus by William Shakespeare

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

**TITUS
ANDRONICUS**

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THE TRAGEDY OF
TITUS ANDRONICUS.

Preface.

Early Editions. In 1600 a quarto edition of *Titus Andronicus* was published, bearing the following title-page:—

“The most lamentable Romaine Tragedie of *Titus Andronicus*. As it hath sundry times been playde by the Right Honourable the Earle of Pembroke, the Earle of Darbie, the Earle of Sussex, and the Lorde Chamberlaine theyr Seruants. 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.” This is the earliest known edition, and is referred to as Quarto 1.

Another quarto, printed from the former, was brought out in 1611:—

“The most lamentable Tragedie of *Titus Andronicus*. As it hath sundry times beene plaide by the Kings Maiesties Seruants. LONDON, Printed for Edward White, and are to be solde at his shoppe, nere the little North dore of Pauls, at the signe of the Gun. 1611.”

In the 1st Folio *Titus Andronicus* comes between *Coriolanus* and *Romeo and Juliet*; the text was somewhat carelessly printed from a copy of the Second Quarto with MS. additions. The Second Scene of the Third Act, not found in the quartos, is peculiar to the Folio version.

Date of Composition. According to Langbaine, in his *Account of the English Dramatic Poets*, a quarto edition of *Titus Andronicus* was printed in 1594; but no copy has been discovered. The earliest allusion to Shakespeare's connection with the subject is Meres' mention of the play, in 1598, as one of Shakespeare's well-known tragedies. There can be little doubt that Ravenscroft, who "about the time of the Popish Plot," revived and altered *Titus Andronicus*, preserved a trustworthy tradition with respect to its authorship. "I have been told by some anciently conversant with the stage, that it was not originally Shakespeare's, but brought by a private actor to be acted, and he only gave some master-touches to one or two of the principal characters." Internal evidence seems to corroborate the tradition, and Shakespeare's additions are now generally assigned to about 1589-90. The following passages suggest Shakespearian authorship:—I. i. 9; II. i. 82, 83; I. i. 70-76, 117-119, 141, 142; II. ii. 1-6; II. iii. 10-15; III. i. 82-86, 91-97; IV. iv. 81-86; V. ii. 21-27; V. iii. 160-168.*

The problem is complicated by the fact that there must have been at least three plays on the subject, according to the references in the Stationers' Registers, and Henslowe's *Diary*. Jonson probably referred to an older play when he wrote:—"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" (*Bartholomew Fair*, 1614). This would place the production in question between 1584 and 1589.

The German "tragedy of *Titus Andronicus*," acted abroad about the year 1600 by the English players, may contain elements of the older original on which the pres-

* (Cp. H. B. Wheatley, *New Shakespeare Soc.*, 1874; a synopsis of critical opinion is to be found in Fleay's *Manual*, p. 44; Knight, in his *Pictorial Shakespeare*, defends Shakespeare's authorship.)

The fullest recent study of the subject is that of Dr. M. M. Arnold Schröer, Marburg, 1891.)

ent play was founded: among its characters there is a "Vespasian," and it is noteworthy that there is a record in Henslowe's diary of a "*titus and Vespasia*" acted "by Lord Strange's men" on the 11th of April, 1591. The play is marked "*ne*" (i.e. "new"). Similarly, a "*Titus and Andronicus*" is described as a new play by Henslowe under the date of January 22nd, 1593-4.

Under any circumstances, *Titus Andronicus* stands outside the regular early Shakespearian dramas,—the gentle "love-plays" of his first period: its value, however, in literary history, is this:—crude as it is, it certainly belongs to the same type of play, as the greater tragedy of *Hamlet*: the *machinery* in both plays is much the same; both are Kydian dramas of Revenge; Nemesis triumphs in the end, entangling in her meshes the innocent as well as the guilty, the perpetrators of crime as well as the agents of vengeance.

Source of the Plot. It is remarkable that popular as was the story of *Titus Andronicus* in the sixteenth century, no direct source of the play has yet been discovered, and nothing can be added to Theobald's comment. "The story," he observes, "we are to suppose merely fictitious. Andronicus is a surname of pure Greek derivation. Tamora is neither mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus, nor anybody else that I can find. Nor had Rome, in the time of her emperors, any war with the Goths that I know of; not till after the translation of the Empire, I mean to Byzantium. And yet the scene is laid at Rome, and Saturninus is elected to the empire at the Capitol."

The ballad given in Percy's *Reliques* was evidently based on the present play, though formerly considered as its source.*

* Cf. *Roxburghe Ballads* (Ballad Society), Vol. I.; the version cannot, according to Chappell, be earlier than the reign of James I., and is more probably of that of Charles I. The title of the ballad is "*The lamentable and tragical history of Titus Andronicus*. With the fall of his Sons in the Wars with the Goths, with the manner of the Ravishment of his daughter Lavinia," etc.

Preface

THE TRAGEDY OF

The Time of the Play. The period covered by the play is four days represented on the stage; with, possibly, two intervals.

Day 1, Act I.; Act II. Sc. i. *Day 2*, Act II. Sc. ii.-iv.; Act III. Sc. i. *Interval.* *Day 3*, Act III. Sc. ii. *Interval.* *Day 4*, Acts IV. and V. (cf. P. A. Daniel's *Time-Analysis*, p. 190).

TITUS ANDRONICUS

Critical Comments.

I.

Argument.

I. Titus Andronicus, a Roman general, returns home in triumph after a conquest of the Goths, and is hailed by a large part of the people as their next emperor. The inheritance of the crown is just then in controversy between the deceased ruler's two sons. Titus will not take advantage of the dispute and his own popularity, but magnanimously sides with the elder son, Saturninus, who is enabled by this influence to ascend the throne. The new emperor asks Titus's daughter Lavinia in marriage, which request is granted. But the project is thwarted by the emperor's younger brother, Bassianus, who carries off Lavinia—to whom he is betrothed—by force. Titus is so enraged at this and so earnest in his faith with Saturninus, that he kills one of his own sons who has aided Bassianus. Nevertheless, the emperor uses this as a pretext for slighting Titus, whose power he fears; and although he makes quick choice of another wife in the person of Tamora, queen of the Goths, brought captive by Titus, he seeks the downfall of the general. He finds a ready second in Tamora, who hates Titus because he has offered up her son as a sacrifice to the slain members of his family.

II. Though this deadly hatred exists on the part of the imperial couple, they yet veil it under a show of amity. The deluded Titus seeks to do them honour by giving a hunt, which ends as a chapter of horrors. The empress seizes the opportunity to meet her lover, a cruel and crafty Moor named Aaron. By a series of devilish plots he

incites the empress's two sons to ravish Lavinia, tear out her tongue, and cut off her hands, so that she cannot denounce them either in speech or writing. Bassianus is slain, and the Moor directs suspicion against two sons of Titus.

III. The two sons are sentenced and led to execution. Aaron gives Titus to understand that their lives will be spared if he will cut off his hand and send it to the emperor. Titus complies, but is mocked by the Moor, who returns the hand with the heads of the two sons. Henceforth Titus devotes his whole life to vengeance.

IV. Pretending madness he sends strange messages to the emperor, and also to Tamora's sons, whom he discovers to be the authors of Lavinia's shame.

Meantime another son of Titus, named Lucius, being banished from Rome, gathers together a powerful army of Goths, who menace the city. Tamora finds it necessary to hold a parley with him at his father's house.

V. To arrange the interview, she goes with her two sons, disguised, to Titus's house. He still feigns insanity and, after she departs, kills the sons and bakes their remains in a pie. The pie is shortly after offered to Tamora at a feast, when she and the emperor meet Lucius in parley. It is a fitting dish for a bloody banquet, since, at the general slaughter which ensues, Lavinia, Tamora, Titus, and Saturninus all are slain. Lucius tells the people the true story of the persecutions of his father's house, and is proclaimed emperor. The Moor is condemned to a lingering death, half-buried in the sand.

McSPADDEN: *Shakespearian Synopses*.

II.

Tamora.

. . . She is the presiding genius of the piece: and in her we see, as we believe, the outbreak of that wonderful conception of the union of powerful intellect and moral