

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

William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*. London: Edward White, 1611. **6 13/16 inches x 4 13/16 inches** (173 mm x 122 mm), [80] pages, A4 (-A1) B-K4 (lacks title page, supplied in MS.).

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 third quarto of *Titus Andronicus* was bound by the British Museum Bindery in nineteenth-century red sheep with gilt tooling, which includes the crest of David Garrick on both boards. "SHAKESPEARE. TITUS ANDRONICUS. LOND. 1611." is lettered in gold up the spine. The turn-ins are gold tooled and the top turn-in of the front board is signed "TUCKETT. BINDER. BRITISH MUSEUM." The leaves' edges are gilt.

Now at the British Library, this q quarto was previously owned by David Garrick (1717–1779), an English actor whose unaffected performance in the title role of *Richard III* in 1741 brought him renown. Garrick, both as an actor and theatrical manager, exerted a tremendous influence on stage practices throughout the 18th century; as a friend and classics pupil of Samuel Johnson, he brought reputability to his trade. He began to collect early printed plays during the 1740s, at which time most collectors regarded stage scripts as popular works unfit for inclusion in serious libraries. Garrick, however, recognized their worth and, assisted by friends and knowledgeable advisors, built his collection in the interest of scholarship and the enrichment of subsequent generations. He bequeathed the collection to the British Museum upon his death in 1779.

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