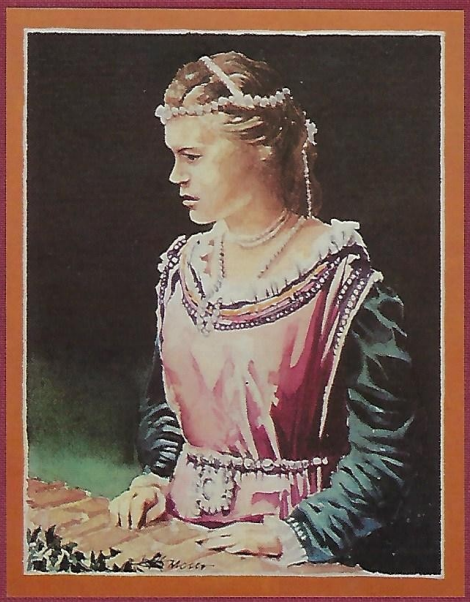
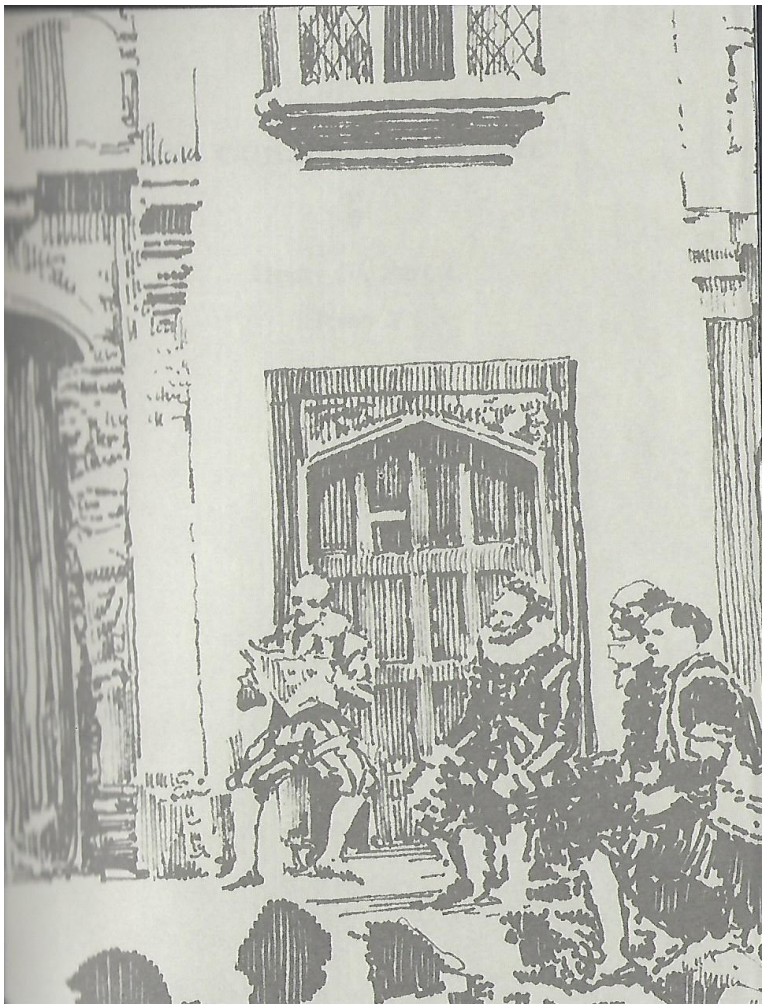
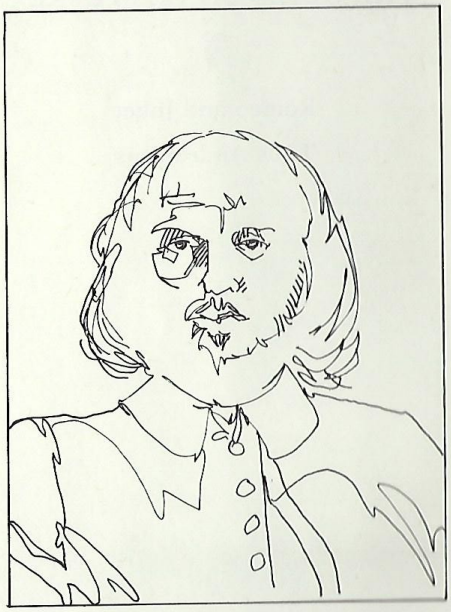
THE GUILD

Shakespeare







THE GUILD

Shakespeare

ROMEO AND JULIET
TITUS ANDRONICUS

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FOREWORD
to
ROMEO AND JULIET
by Julie Harris

I grew up in Michigan, and never saw a production of *Romeo and Juliet* on stage when I was young. I did see the movie starring Norma Shearer and Leslie Howard with John Barrymore as Mercutio. Those actors were not in their teens when they acted in the film, and I supposed that the roles should always be played by grown-ups. Later I attended a production of the play in England; it was in the early 1950s when I first went to visit London and traveled to Stratford-upon-Avon to see Shakespeare's home and the theatre where his plays are produced. Romeo was Laurence Harvey, and Zena Walker was Juliet. But for me it was still a play about older young people.

JULIE HARRIS has performed such diverse roles as Emily Dickinson in *The Belle of Amherst,* Blanche du Bois in *A Streetcar Named Desire,* and Mary Lincoln in *The Last of Mrs. Lincoln,* for which she won the Tony Award in 1972. Her Shakespearean roles include Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet,* Blanche in *King John,* Ophelia in *Hamlet,* and the Third Witch in *Macbeth.*

When Michael Langham asked me to play Juliet in 1960 at the Stratford Festival Theatre founded by Tyrone Guthrie in Stratford, Canada, I was terrified. Other than playing the Third Witch in the "Scottish" play (a production of *Macbeth* starring Michael Redgrave and Flora Robson), I had no experience acting in Shakespeare's plays.

Michael Langham came to New York City where I lived, and with great sensitivity and patience he guided me through the play scene by scene. He gave me a copy of the old Italian legend of Romeo and Juliet by Luigi da Porto. The legend found its way to England *and* to Shakespeare, for *Romeo and Juliet* was based on an English reworking of da Porto's story.

No matter how frightened I was of playing Juliet, I was challenged too: by the part, by the miraculous play itself, by the genius of the poetry, and by the uniqueness of the feelings expressed by a girl not yet fourteen—and I was thirty-five years old!

With Michael leading me through the play, my understanding increased and my terrors fell away—well, a little way away. But I did wonder how I could ever play the scene in which Juliet's Nurse comes to Juliet and tells her that her kinsman Tybalt is dead. And killed by Romeo. *And* Romeo banished! Juliet must go from shock at the news of Tybalt's death, to relief that Romeo is alive, to despair at knowing that Romeo has been banished and she has lost him! All these feelings tumble out in a cascade of emotion.

After the period of rehearsals at Stratford I was prepared to play Juliet, and I longed to be able to fill every moment with truth. But I didn't really realize what strength it would take to

carry those three hours. Fortunately I had so much help: Kate Reid as the Nurse, Christopher Plummer as Mercutio, Douglas Rain as Tybalt, Eric Christmas as Peter, Bruno Gerussi as my Romeo, Jack Creley as my father, and Leo Ciceri as Paris. We were all helped by a brilliant vocal coach and a beautiful human being, Iris Warren.

I will always remember that season in Canada: my mountain-climbing expedition, my ascent to Mount Everest. I hardly ever reached the summit, but when I did, Oh, Glory! And even to try was a rich experience.

I had a lovely English friend, Caroline D. Hewitt, born near Shakespeare's home in Warwickshire, who headed a girl's school in New York City and was a great Shakespearean scholar. When "Miss Hew" learned I was to play Juliet that season of 1960, she told me about the great Ellen Terry's performance of Juliet long ago. In the final scene, when Juliet wakes in the tomb to find Romeo dead, she holds Romeo for the last time, kisses him, and says "Thy lips are warm!" Miss Hew told me that when Ellen Terry spoke those words she whispered them; they went right to your heart as you realized that if Juliet had woken a few moments earlier she would have found her Romeo alive. In the old Italian legend, she *does* wake before Romeo dies—but he has already drunk the poison, and so there is between them the terror that Romeo knows that he must die and Juliet must witness her lover's death!

I wondered why Shakespeare didn't use that part of the story in his play. I spoke about it to Michael Langham when we were in rehearsal, and he decided that we would use a moment of that

part of the old legend. As Romeo raised the vial of poison to his lips to drink, my fingers trembled and my arms moved ever so slightly. Bruno (Romeo) was looking away from me as he drank and didn't see that I had moved. It became an exciting moment.

Eventually, I did see two *young* actors, Leonard Whiting and Olivia Hussey, portray Romeo and Juliet in Franco Zeffirelli's film. I also saw the glorious work of the great choreographer John Cranko, when he produced *Romeo and Juliet* for the Stuttgart Ballet with Marcia Haydée and Richard Cragun—heartbreakingly beautiful that work is.

So my dream has come true. I have seen the play done perfectly and had the great good fortune myself to work with an inspired director who gave me the opportunity to play one of the greatest parts ever written in a play of Divine inspiration.

> . . . when he [Romeo] shall die,
> Take him and cut him out in little Stars,
> And he will make the Face of Heav'n so fine
> That all the World will be in love with Night
> And pay no Worship to the garish Sun.

Has language ever been used more beautifully?

FOREWORD
to
TITUS ANDRONICUS
by Brian Bedford

A great experience is possible from simply reading a play, but it's only half of what the author had in mind. Possibly *less* than half in the case of Shakespeare, because he was first and foremost an actor, and I suspect that in the Elizabethan theatre the *actor,* not the play, was the thing. Actors need material in which to dazzle, of course, and fortunately for us Will Shakespeare, player, also had the knack of throwing together a few "enterludes and pastoralls." Thanks to a couple of his fellow actors, who said he was a "happie imitator of Nature" who penned his plays at the speed of thought and with such ease that there was scarcely an inkblot on

BRIAN BEDFORD's first stage appearance was in *Julius Caesar,* in the part of Decius Brutus. He has directed a production of *Titus Andronicus,* and his numerous Shakespearean credits include the title roles in *Hamlet* and *Richard III,* Ariel in *The Tempest,* and Malvolio in *Twelfth Night.* In 1971 he won the Tony Award for his role as Arnolphe in *School for Wives.*

his original manuscripts, we have a record of what we now consider Shakespeare's *literary* works.

I was introduced to these at the age of eight when, on a rainy afternoon in the north of England, my brother cajoled me into memorizing "Friends, Romans, Countrymen" by the promise of a cigarette! The ensuing smoking habit I eventually overcame, but I'm afraid the Shakespeare dependence, instigated on that claustrophobic afternoon, has proved insurmountable. To this day I remain in the grip of the "happie imitator," as passionate admirer, actor, audience member, and director.

It was in this last capacity that I eventually got involved with *Titus Andronicus* in 1980 at Stratford, Ontario. As *Titus* was Shakespeare's first tragedy and this was to be its first-ever production at Stratford, it seemed, although potentially a baptism of fire, an appropriate choice.

Before he starts working with his cast and designers, a director must first evolve a clear idea of the overall effect intended by the playwright; he must then navigate all the elements of his production in that direction. In attempting to formulate what *I* thought an appropriate direction for *Titus Andronicus,* I studied the text at great length. I found it tremendously exciting and could envisage, given the right emotional commitment by the actors, a really powerful theatre experience. Yes, the play was a minefield due to occasional overwriting and a certain naiveté of effect, but I thought that with careful pruning I could negotiate a clear and dramatic path through this fascinating, complex piece. I did not, however, have a unifying concept that would give the production substance and prevent it from being, however histri-

onically thrilling, just a catalogue of horrors until I came across a prophecy made by the Sibylline oracle in 6 A.D.:

> Inexorable wrath shall fall on Rome;
> A time of blood and wretched life shall come.
> Woe, woe to thee, O land of Italy,
> Great, barbarous nation . . .
> And no more under slavish yoke to thee,
> Will either Greek or Syrian put his neck,
> Barbarian or any other nation.
> Thou shalt be plundered and shalt be destroyed
> For what thou didst, and wailing aloud in fear,
> Thou shalt give until thou shalt repay.

This prophecy seemed to me to have been written (or bellowed) with *Titus Andronicus* in mind, and it immediately inspired me to place the tragedy (its characters and events having no historical authenticity) at the very end of the 4th century, a few years before the Barbarian conquest of Rome. By doing so, I was able to approach this amazing product of Shakespeare's apprenticeship years not only as a superior version of the then-popular Revenge play but as a metaphor for the demise of the greatest civilization the world had yet known.

Thanks to the Sibyl, I now saw *Titus Andronicus* as an account of the moral disintegration of a golden age as it gives way to bestial anarchy. Historically this happened gradually, over centuries, but Shakespeare, in the business of creating great theatre, compacts the process and produces the metamorphosis before our very eyes. We see in Titus' exhausted nobility the grandeur

that was Rome, but almost immediately (the play is like one long superimposition effect in the movies) his image tarnishes, and the theme of the play emerges, as he endorses the mutilation and sacrifice of the Gothic Queen's heir. Through this barbarous act Titus unwittingly contributes to the "out-of-jointness" of a time for which, like Hamlet and Richard II later, he is tragically unprepared.

For forty years Titus has been a loyal soldier, and as the play opens, his conservative principles and his commitment to an outdated code of honour lead him, respectively, to two disastrous actions: the patently inappropriate choice of Saturninus for Emperor, and the impetuous killing of his own son. It is important to remember that the opening sequence is scrutinized by, and to a great extent staged expressly for, the hoi-polloi. This lends an appropriate reality to the dialogue, which would otherwise seem stiff and stilted. It also strengthens the motivation of certain key actions. For example, Titus's murderous reaction to being dishonoured by Mutius stems in part from his being publicly embarrassed.

After the long first scene, Aaron's words in the second have a fresh, audacious charisma. We sense a keenly focused vitality that will eventually bring Rome to its knees. Aaron is a political catalyst, and at the close of his introductory speech he spells out the Gothic manifesto: the annihilation of the Roman emperor *and his empire.* All Aaron's machinations are motivated by subversive intent. He is a Machiavellian revolutionary ("Blood and Revenge are hammering in my Head"), and the final image of my production would be Aaron's solitary black figure standing aloft, looking purposefully into the future, the lifeless victims of his strategies

scattered beneath him. Simultaneously the audience would hear (replacing the lengthy eulogies after Titus' death) the Sibylline oracle's ominous prediction.

A careful look at Titus' volte-face—his amazing emotional journey from blinkered patriot, embodiment of Rome's greatest values, to diabolically inspired butcher—is essential to an appreciation of his tragedy and of the play itself. Titus' killing of Mutius, within minutes of his first appearance, establishes him as a martinet who has no respect for human life (not even his youngest son's) when honour is at stake. It also suggests that he has been infected by the disease of violence, which often assumes epidemic proportions at the inception of a nation and during its decline. Thus it is particularly surprising that the accumulation of horrifying experiences (and I think the realization that Rome, his raison d'être, is a "wilderness of tigers" is almost as shattering to him as seeing his mutilated daughter) releases a previously untapped *spiritual* resource in this war-machine of a man. When he is exhorted to temper his passionate, mind-threatening lament with *reason,* he replies:

> If there were Reason for these Miseries,
> Then into Limits could I bind my Woes.
> When Heav'n doth weep, doth not the Earth o'erflow?
> If the Winds rage, doth not the Sea wax mad,
> Threat'ning the Welkin with his big swoll'n Face?
> And wilt thou have a Reason for this Coil?
> I am the Sea.

And later, passionately rebuking his brother for killing a fly:

> Out on thee, Murderer! Thou kill'st my Heart.

Hitherto an unquestioning logistician committed to the annihilation of Rome's enemies, Titus glimpses (a) a cosmic perspective on his agonized existence, and (b) the intrinsic value of *all* life. In conjunction with these insights, he is engulfed by the conflicting, ignoble instinct for revenge; and it is the latter that splits his mind and provides the play with its chilling coup-de-théâtre of a climax.

Titus is the first of many Shakespeare characters who, when they have lost everything, begin to assemble true values. Unfortunately his obsessively violent nature forces him to reject his newfound enlightenment in favour of a spectacularly horrifying revenge. In doing so, he finally succumbs to the moral anarchy he has spent his life opposing, and thus helps usher his beloved civilization another step towards its own extinction.

Editor's Introduction to *ROMEO AND JULIET* and *TITUS ANDRONICUS*

The two plays in this volume provide us our first glimpse of the young Shakespeare as a writer of tragedy. *Romeo and Juliet* is the earliest major English play to accord full tragic stature to the trials of youthful love. Its characters are among the most vivid in the entire Shakespearean canon, and the sympathy with which the protagonists are depicted has made their story a point of reference for lovers the world over. *Titus Andronicus* is a work that marks the playwright's initial foray into Roman antiquity, a subject of great interest during Shakespeare's time. As a work focusing on revenge and on the problems of reconciling a belief in divine justice with a recognition of human suffering, it anticipates a number of themes in the two later tragedies that many consider to be Shakespeare's greatest.

Romeo and Juliet probably dates from around 1594–95, and it was almost certainly conceived in tandem with *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Like the Mechanicals' play in Shakespeare's comedy, it derives from the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in Ovid's narrative poem, the *Metamorphoses.*

But even more than its comic counterpart, *Romeo and Juliet* has itself been a prolific source for later works of art. Of these the best known are lyrical ballets by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky and Sergei Prokofiev, an evocative film by Franco Zeffirelli, and a riveting Broadway musical, *West Side Story,* by Leonard Bernstein, Jerome Robbins, and Stephen Sondheim. Nor should we fail to note the dozens of parodies that have made Juliet's first question in the Balcony Scene the most familiar, and undoubtedly the most widely misunderstood, line in literary and theatrical history.

Yes, *Romeo and Juliet* is so deeply embedded in our culture that we run the danger either of overlooking it entirely or of failing to pause long enough to perceive it for what it is: a work of immense tragic power, and one that takes anything but a sentimental view of the love relationship that stands at its core.

Before we ever see the lovers together we learn something about the social contexts that will constrain their movements. We discover that Romeo belongs to a hot-blooded male world that lives by the code of the duel. In this setting tempers are always near the boiling point, and even well-meaning young gentlemen like Romeo and his friend Benvolio must be prepared to defend themselves at any time, particularly when irascible types like Tybalt are cruising in search of occasions to assert their "honor."

Meanwhile, we observe that Juliet, who at thirteen is probably several years younger than Romeo, has led a sheltered life under the tutelage of an earthy Nurse who functions, among other things, as a buffer between her charge and a set of parents whose primary objective is to use Juliet as an instrument to ad-

vance the family's "hopes" in society. Hence the Capulets' eagerness to have her marry a Count such as the youthful Paris.

Fittingly, the first words Romeo and Juliet speak to each other at the Capulet feast comprise a love sonnet. Romeo has already established a reputation for himself as a devotee of Petrarchan love-melancholy, and Juliet takes to "the Book" with an alacrity that shows her to be an equally ardent romantic. After their initial exchange of Love's courtesy, they immediately launch into a second sonnet. But in what will turn out to be a prophetic moment, their dialogue is abruptly interrupted by the Nurse with a call from Juliet's mother. Meanwhile, in what proves to be another ominous moment, Tybalt recognizes Romeo's voice as that of a Mountague and has to be restrained lest he immediately avenge what he considers a scornful intrusion on Capulet "solemnity."

Thus Shakespeare plants the seeds of an action in which "violent Delights" will bear fruit in "violent Ends." These words are Friar Lawrence's, and he plays a role that is best described as equivocal. On the one hand, he speaks for a tradition of "Learning," "good Counsel," and "Philosophy" that is several times invoked to remind the lovers, and especially Romeo, that they must use their heads if they hope to advance the desires of their hearts. On the other hand, in an effort to forge an "Alliance" that will turn their "Households' Rancor to pure Love," he agrees to marry the lovers secretly and, when things go wrong, to assist them with expedients to preserve their marriage and buy time until they can emerge in public as man and wife. At the end of the play it can be said of the Friar, as of Romeo in his well-intended

intervention to stop the duel between Mercutio and Tybalt, that he "meant all for the best." But if some of the Friar's "Sentences" eventually prove applicable to Romeo's behavior, it may well be that Shakespeare also expected his audience to notice that many of them seem equally pertinent to the actions of the Friar himself.

What we generally remember most vividly from *Romeo and Juliet* is the scene in Capulet's Orchard when Romeo looks up to Juliet's window and the two lovers exchange the most eloquent vows ever spoken. This tableau is echoed in a later scene when Romeo descends from their one night together and Juliet has a premonition of him standing in a grave. But it is a more public moment in between these two that proves to be the point of crisis in the play. This is the pivotal instant when Romeo decides to draw his sword and avenge the death of his friend Mercutio.

Just a few minutes earlier, Romeo has turned the other cheek in response to the insults of his new cousin by marriage. Now, with Mercutio's "plague" ringing in his ears, the hero can only hear the promptings of "fire-ey'd Fury." We cannot help identifying with Romeo's plight. But as soon as the deed is done, we recognize, with the protagonist, that he has acted impulsively and is now "Fortune's Fool."

From this point on, the course of the action is downward. Once Romeo learns that he is banished, he becomes suicidal. Meanwhile, Juliet's parents decide to cure her supposed grief over the death of her cousin by marrying her to Paris. Shortly thereafter, the Nurse, who had been so endearingly loquacious in her earlier scenes, and in her own way so supportive of Juliet, displays a shocking incapacity to understand the meaning of Ju-

liet's wedding vows. Eventually the heroine finds herself completely alone, and the fortitude she displays in her own moment of crisis is one of the most moving displays of courage in all of Shakespeare.

Similarly touching is the conviction with which Juliet responds to the situation she discovers when she awakens in the Capulet tomb. In their final moments both lovers prove equal to the highest demands on their fidelity, and the statues to be raised in their honor by their reunited fathers echo the sentiments of four centuries of Shakespearean audiences: if ever two lovers deserved to be canonized for their devotion, those two are "Juliet and her Romeo."

Lest we assume too quickly that the playwright meant for them to be regarded as "Sacrifices" in a more conventional theological sense, however, we should note that the words with which Romeo describes his mental and spiritual state at the moment of his suicide are images that recall the Friar's earlier warnings about "damned Hate." As such, they suggest that an Elizabethan audience in the 1590s might have attached more significance than we normally do to the Prince's observation that the action concludes with a "glooming Peace."

As a tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet* is unusual in the amount of comedy it contains. The Nurse is one of the most amusing characters in the canon. And Mercutio is so quick-witted, and so engaging, that some of his admirers have found it difficult to forgive Shakespeare for killing him off. But in a sense that is how the play itself is structured; up to the death of Mercutio, it functions in many respects as a comedy. Only then do the playwright's notes

turn tragic. To be sure, there have been tragic foreshadowings prior to that moment, such as Romeo's expressions of apprehension before and after Mercutio's celebrated Queen Mab speech (which is delivered, in fact, to exorcise Romeo's fear of his bad dreams). And there are moments of comedy after that point, such as the exchanges between Peter and the Musicians on the morning of Juliet's scheduled wedding to Paris. But it nevertheless holds true that *Romeo and Juliet* is in many respects a comedy gone sour. That may not account for all its power to enthrall us, but it certainly has a great deal to do with the pathos the play has always evoked in performance.

Recent productions have demonstrated that *Titus Andronicus* is also a tragedy that can move audiences. It was undoubtedly a popular work with the playgoers of its own day, so much so indeed that in 1614 Ben Jonson took it upon himself to ridicule the taste of those who still admired a play that by then struck many people as crude. Subsequent critics and producers tended to share Jonson's low estimate of the play, and for a while in the early years of this century it was even fashionable to deny that a work so "primitive," and so melodramatic in its wanton displays of blood and mayhem, could have been written by the same dramatist who gave us *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. Happily, those days are now behind us, and what is now emerging is a consensus that *Titus Andronicus* is worthy of attention both for its own merits and for a number of qualities in which it anticipates some of the finer moments of precisely those later tragedies.

Just when the play was written is still a subject of debate. It was on the boards by at least 1592, if not late 1591, and it may

have been composed as early as 1589, in response to the fashion for revenge plays initiated by Thomas Kyd's notoriously popular *Spanish Tragedy* and the now-lost precursor to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In 1594 the *Titus Andronicus* text appeared in a good quarto printing that probably earned it the distinction of being the first of Shakespeare's plays to be published.

Notwithstanding its reputation for excessive stage violence, *Titus Andronicus* is in some ways the most "literary" of Shakespeare's tragedies. It contains several quotations from Latin sources the dramatist wished to invoke; and when the mutilated Lavinia finally discovers a way to tell her story, she does so by pointing to the passage in the *Metamorphoses* where Ovid describes the rape of Philomela.

A number of other details in the play also derive from Ovid. But another source, not only for items of plot and imagery but for the very concept of tragedy embodied in the play, was Seneca. His *Troades* may well have been Shakespeare's source for the sacrifice of Alarbus in the opening scene. And his *Thyestes* was surely one of the sources for the grotesque banquet at the end of the play.

For the story of the title character, Shakespeare probably drew from a prose history that now survives only in an eighteenth-century reprint. So far as we know, there was no actual Titus Andronicus in fourth-century Rome. The Titus of the play was therefore a fictional character whom Shakespeare seized upon as a means of dramatizing an episode in the decline of the Roman Empire.

In all likelihood the opening act of *Titus Andronicus* was

largely, if not entirely, Shakespeare's invention. As such, it demonstrates an interest in some of the same concerns that dominate the dramatist's other plays about the uses and abuses of political power. The Titus who returns victorious from his wars with the Goths is in many ways an anticipation of the Coriolanus who returns from combat in Shakespeare's later tragedy: for all his successes on the battlefield, he is anything but prepared for the challenges that now face him in the supposedly peaceful landscape of his mother city. With a touch of insensitivity, if not arrogance, he alienates Tamora by the brusqueness with which he sacrifices the Gothic Queen's oldest son to appease the spirits of the Roman dead he has brought back in coffins for the Andronicus tomb. With a singlemindedness that suggests inflexibility, he disregards the hints that Bassianus might be a better choice than his older brother and gives his vote for Emperor to Saturninus instead. With a blind loyalty to the new Emperor that makes him disregard the fact that his daughter is already betrothed to Bassianus, he accedes to Saturninus' request and promises Lavinia to him as his new Queen. And then with a stubbornness that anticipates King Lear's treatment of Cordelia, he slays his youngest son after Mutius tries to bar Titus from the exit through which Bassianus, Titus' brother Marcus, and Titus' other three sons have carried Lavinia away.

So much happens so quickly in this long opening scene that it is difficult to absorb it all at once. But the end result is clear enough: the Titus who returned from battle as "Rome's best Champion" is now maneuvered from the center of power to the periphery. Scorned by the Emperor he has placed on the throne,

subject to the Machiavellian schemes of the Gothic Queen who has just been elevated to Empress, and only with difficulty reconciled to the brother and sons he feels have dishonored him, the old man now finds himself adrift in a world so alien from anything he has experienced before that he is at a loss for a way to regain his bearings.

And what is worse is that his troubles have only begun. In the scenes that follow, Titus and family suffer so much anguish that the protagonist comes desperately close to losing his sanity. As the play ends, Titus' brother Marcus is once again the People's Tribune he had been in the opening scene. Only this time the People's Choice accepts the crown when it is offered, and there is reason to hope that the chaos soon to engulf the Roman Empire can be forestalled for at least a few more years.

Just how the Elizabethan audience was meant to view Titus Andronicus is uncertain. Like Lear, he is clearly to be seen as a man "more sinned against than sinning." On the other hand, like most of the avengers depicted on the Elizabethan stage, he is driven to extremes that might be expected to taint his own character in the eyes of the shocked audience. If so, the concluding moments of the play would seem calculated to restore to the protagonist at least some of the sympathy he may have forfeited by his previous actions.

Except for "the Fly scene" (III.ii) and a few scattered lines elsewhere in the play, which first appeared in the 1623 First Folio, the authoritative text for *Titus Andronicus* is the 1594 First Quarto, which survives in a single copy now in the Folger Shakespeare Library. In general, the best text for *Romeo and Juliet* is the 1599

Second Quarto, which seems to have been printed from a manuscript close to the author's own text. At times, however, superior readings are to be found in the 1597 First Quarto, a text probably reconstructed from memory by actors who had appeared in the play. And occasionally there are corrections to be incorporated from later quarto printings in 1609 and 1622 and from the First Folio, whose text of the play was set primarily from the 1609 Third Quarto.

ROMEO AND JULIET