

understanding of the plays are included. The first is a song from the second entry of *Cupid and Death* and the second additional passages from the enlarged version of *The Siege of Rhodes*.

The drama of the English Commonwealth not only continued the Shakespearean and Jonsonian tradition but also anticipated and facilitated the rise of Restoration theatre. Restoration drama would not have been possible without the dramatic variety and activity of the English Republic when new dramatic forms and conventions appeared. It was when English theatre spanned “From the irreverent treatment of Shakespearean text to the sensational political drama of the Exclusion crisis to the opera of Purcell to the classical ethos of Nathaniel Lee” (35). In this way the edition sheds new light on the plays of the 1650s that made a significant break with the past contributing to the theatrical growth and development of the theatre that followed the Restoration of Charles II in 1660.

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Titus Andronicus, “the black sheep of the Shakespearean canon”, is no longer “one of the stupidest and most uninspired plays ever written” (Eliot, 82). Although Harold Bloom classifies it as an “Apprentice Tragedy”, contemporary criticism emphasises its importance in the Shakespearean canon for it is a sophisticated and modern play which should be frequently read and performed. Today the question of authorship has been displaced and critics have concentrated on a literary and theatrical analysis of the text. *Titus Andronicus* has been one of the most neglected plays of the Shakespearean corpus within Spanish criticism, theatrical productions, and translations, perhaps because it is problematic, controversial, and immoral. For this reason it is unusual to find studies devoted to *Titus Andronicus* or to the classical sources of Shakespeare’s plays in Spain. This book is really exceptional because it deals precisely with the classical sources of *Titus Andronicus* suggesting that “Shakespeare’s most shocking play [it] should be closest to the spirit of the

classics.” (Muir, 23)

A lucid book of the kind is always welcome as it can bring new readings and interpretations of the play in question. It concentrates on the analysis of the classical sources of this early Shakespearean play although it also explores its cultural and historical contexts. It provides a rigorous and scholarly account of sources and comments on Ovidian, Virgilian and Senecan hypotexts that contributed to the making and shaping of the play discussing the use Shakespeare made of them.

However it seems to me a rather contradictory and confusing work as, on the one hand, it is well-documented, has a survey of critical approaches and includes critical apparatus and a select bibliography of references and further reading, but, on the other hand, it is an informative updated guide which includes the plot and gives the translation of the text of the sources and of the play itself. The positive side is that the book can be used as a general introduction for undergraduate students and readers and can also be a useful tool for scholars who would like to know more about the classical background of *Titus Andronicus* and about the liberties Shakespeare took with sources in order to adapt them to his dramatic needs. Some of the comments are old-fashioned, even uncritical as when the author says Shakespeare wrote *Titus Andronicus* “to show his friends and fellow dramatists that he was able to write a Senecan tragedy” (28-29) or when he points out that Shakespeare’s use of classical material was due to his intention of showing “his learning before Marlowe or Jonson that were better learnt than him” (59). It is hard to see the justification for the chapter devoted to “the paradigmatic value of classical legacy and its utility for life” (21) and to “the topic of education in the play” (26). There other more relevant themes and aspects that have a contemporary appeal and urge closer examination like some of those that appear in the critical survey (30) to prove that it is “an important play and a living one” (Bate, 3). This reduces scholarly expectations on points that need further discussion and argumentation.

This work is successful in ascertaining where possible what sources Shakespeare used for the plot and the dramatic delineation of the characters, in discussing the use he made of them, and in illustrating how they are woven into the texture of his play in a descriptive manner. Thus intertextuality is a major concern as it is considered an essential part within the study of literary sources. By paying close attention to them, the author shows an impressive grasp not only of classical history, culture and mythology but also of Elizabethan and Shakespearean drama.

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