William Shakespeare

London, 1623

Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies

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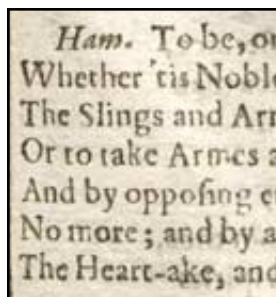# About This Book

Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies

The First Folio: Text as Icon

Arthur Freeman

A discussion of the First Folio's role in the establishment of Shakespeare's reputation, and its history as a bibliophilic and cultural icon.
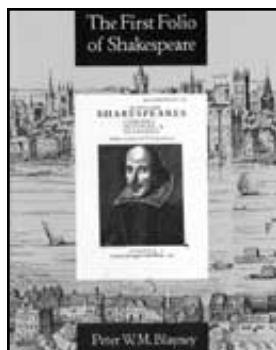
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Peter W.M. Blayney

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The First Folio: Text as Icon

Arthur Freeman

> The First Folio Edition of Shakespeare's Plays … forms the greatest contribution made in a single volume to the secular literature of any age or country. By the English-speaking peoples it must always be regarded as the proudest moment of their literary history. (Sidney Lee, 1902)

THE FIRST COLLECTED EDITION of Shakespeare's plays, published in 1623, seven years after his death, is probably the most famous "literary" printed book in the world. Not undeservedly: the massive single-volume, double-column edition of thirty-six "Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies" prints eighteen plays for the first time, and provides superior texts of four of the others, which had earlier appeared in separate smaller-format versions. Had the 1623 collection never been issued, we would now possess no trace of *The Tempest, Macbeth, As You Like It, Twelfth Night, Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, Measure for Measure*, or *The Winter's Tale*, nor a complete *Richard III*, nor anything but a mangled version of *Henry V* and a clumsy approximation of *The Taming of the Shrew*. The collection omits, incidentally, one late title (*Pericles*) and one then-unpublished collaboration (*The Two Noble Kinsmen*), as well as Shakespeare's sonnets and longer poems, for which the copyright was still jealously guarded.

The volume itself (about 13½ by 8½ inches before trimming, 908 pages) may seem awkward to handle and read, but its imposing size and shape were a mark of esteem in its day. The tall "folio" format was traditionally reserved
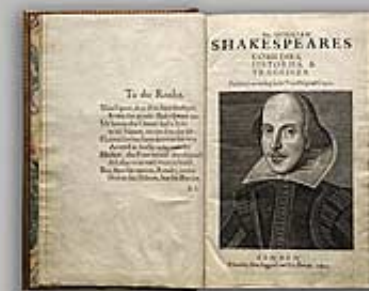
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for lectern Bibles, annals and lawbooks, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and the classics in translation; its use for literary works had been largely restricted to such proven poets as Chaucer and Spenser, to the prose and verse of King James I himself, and to the audacious Ben Jonson, whose grandly titled *Workes* of 1616—mostly, but not all, plays—no doubt helped to inspire the 1623 Shakespeare project. Jonson was likewise the first living dramatist to have his portrait (crowned with laurels) engraved and sold, although here his famous lines opposite the image of his colleague on the title page tell us to concentrate on the contents of the book, not the accurate likeness.

Invaluable as text though it is, and imposing as an object, the *first* Shakespeare folio was not always so venerated as nowadays. Less than a thousand copies—perhaps 750 or so—took nearly a decade to sell, and a reprint of 1632 (the Second Folio) proved more attractive to many contemporary booklovers. Whereas the First Folio had been compiled by two of Shakespeare's friends and fellow-actors, drawing on what they claimed was access to "his papers," the anonymous editor(s) of 1632 worked largely by common sense—correcting many old printer's errors, but introducing a host of new ones, based on misunderstandings of Shakespeare's already slightly archaic language. But the 1632 volume itself was more handsomely produced than the First Folio, and printed on what one Puritan controversialist complained was "the best crown paper, better than most Bibles"; and this was the form of Shakespeare's plays chosen by King Charles I and his nephew Prince Rupert, by the diarist and bibliophile John Evelyn, and by other fastidious readers. Thirty years later, after the Civil Wars and the Restoration of the theater-loving monarchy, a Third Folio (1663–64) reprinted the text of the Second, with further corruption, but added a

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supplement of seven plays "never before printed in folio," only one of which (*Pericles*) is now accepted as Shakespeare's. This version might have seemed even better, to an age attuned to the notion of technical progress, and the Bodleian Library at Oxford—which had once purchased a copy of the 1623 collection—obtained a copy of the Third Folio and cheerfully discarded their First: not until 1905, with considerable serendipity, did they succeed in repossessing it. Rounding out a seventeenth-century quartet, the Fourth Folio of 1685 reproduced the text of the 1663–64 Third, the copyright now being shared by four booksellers. This last, and most textually debased early edition, served for nearly eighty years as the main source of all subsequent versions, however proud each editor in turn claimed to be of "collating" or comparing the First, Second, and Third Folios, and the individual quartos that sometimes preceded them.

Thus when the time seemed ripe for a new multivolume Shakespeare in a handier format, its intending publisher, Jacob Tonson, purchased the copyright of 1685; and his editor, the poet/playwright Nicholas Rowe, based the octavo editions of 1709 and 1714 on the recent Fourth Folio, not the "superseded" First. Rowe did at least consult the earlier texts, if only when problematic readings arose, but his successor Alexander Pope viewed the 1623 Folio and all its descendants as little more than necessary evils, because of what he thought were "trifling and bombast passages" added by players, and omissions of "beautiful passages … without any other reason than their willingness to shorten some scenes." Although Pope owned a copy of the First Folio, and realized that "all the rest [of the folios] have implicitly followed it," he regarded it as so irresponsible from the start that he virtually rewrote passages he disapproved of, and what he considered "interpolations"

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he "degraded to the bottom of the page, with an Asterix referring to the places of their insertion." Edmond Malone, the most astute of eighteenth-century editors, ranked Pope with the overseer of the 1632 Folio as one of "the two great corruptors of our poet's text."

Pope's great adversary Lewis Theobald, a finical but far more painstaking scholar than Pope, treated the First and Second Folios (as opposed to the Third, with the Fourth not even named) as "editions of authority," but his own editions of 1733 and 1740 show continued dependence on the last. His coadjutor and successor Bishop Warburton also paid lip-service to 1623, but like Theobald used it primarily for alternative readings when the later ones seemed questionable. The first editor to declare firmly for 1623 as the supreme Folio text was Samuel Johnson in 1765, reporting that "I collated them all at the beginning, but afterwards used only the first"; for "the first is equivalent to all others, and … the rest only deviate from it by the printer's negligence." No matter that the strict Joseph Ritson accused the great critic of never collating anything fully, rather having only "picked out a reading here and there from the old editions … all his predecessors did the same"—Johnson's judgment was (rightly) etched in stone for posterity.

Johnson's subsequent collaborator, George Steevens, a deeply read but mischievous Shakespearean, took an early view (1766) of the First Folio somewhat akin to Pope's, as having suffered—in contradistinction to the quartos, which he preferred—from "the licentious alteration of the players" as well as carelessness by both the old editors and the printers. But by 1773 Steevens agreed that 1623 was "the earliest and most correct" of the four Folios. He did cleave somewhat to the Second, deeming some of its near-contemporary corrections "not merely such as reiteration of copies will

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naturally produce"; but his former friend and rival, the judicious Edmond Malone, would have none of that: "Of all the plays of which there are no quarto copies extant the first folio, printed in 1623, is the only authentick edition," he wrote, in his magisterial "variorum" edition of 1790. The Second Folio, he added, differs from the First "by negligence or chance; but much more frequently by the editor's profound ignorance of our poet's phraseology and metre, in consequence of which there is scarce a page of the book which is not disfigured by the capricious alterations introduced." On that note, the vindication of the First Folio was complete, and its textual reputation has hardly wavered since then.

As scholars and editors joined in endorsing the literary importance of the First Folio, book collectors followed suit in the marketplace. In the 1750s and 1760s a good copy of the book cost three guineas (about triple the price of a new novel by Fielding or Richardson), rising to seven in the 1770s, and nine or ten in the 1780s. Early editors, even the impecunious Theobald and the often hard-up Dr. Johnson, could all afford copies if they liked, but George Steevens, a dedicated bibliophile, found the escalated figures alarming. After the Duke of Roxburghe, in a moment of auction frenzy in 1790, paid no less than thirty-four guineas for a "very fine" copy, Steevens moaned that it had become "the most expensive single book in our language," and told his fellow Shakespearean Isaac Reed that a bookseller "thinks he shall do me a favour by letting me have [a different copy] at the small charge of twenty guineas." By 1793, as Steevens also complained, the increased scarcity of the book had led to all sorts of fakery on inferior copies: missing leaves reprinted or supplied from the Second Folio, title

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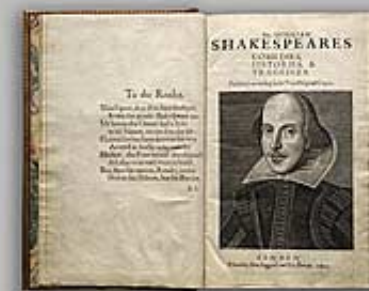
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pages made up out of later strikes of the portrait with spurious letterpress, deceptively "lined at the back, and discoloured with tobacco-water till it has assumed the true *jaune antique*." His own copy—and Steevens possessed forty-nine of the much rarer Shakespeare and pseudo-Shakespearean quartos, as well as Charles I's morocco-bound Second Folio—was imperfect, with its title page and portrait in his own penmanship. It still made twenty-two pounds at his posthumous sale (1800).

Twelve years later the Roxburghe copy trebled its cost at £100, and in 1818 Thomas Grenville paid £121 16s. for another "fine original copy … in a genuine state," which he unwisely rebound. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, the author of *Bibliomania; or Book Madness* (1809), thought this "the highest price ever given, or likely to be given for the volume," and for the next three decades, including the slump of the 1830s, the price held in that range. But it rose again in the 1850s, and in 1864 the very fine Moore-Booth-Rokewood copy—perhaps the finest of all, physically—in the sale of George Daniel established a record that stood for twenty-seven years. Angela Burdett-Coutts, "the richest heiress in all England," paid a staggering £716 2s. for it (as recounted in the Provenance section of this Octavo Edition), for that is the First Folio whose *simulacrum* you have here. Later records were set to be broken, of course: £1,000 in 1899, surpassed within a month at £1,700 (or $8,500, for by now copies were more often than not bound for America). Nor has the twentieth century seen any downturn: copies fetched six figures in dollars in the 1970s and 1980s, peaking twice at over $600,000, and in 1989 a handsome "set" of the Four Folios made nearly 2.1 million dollars, three-quarters of which would probably apply to the First.
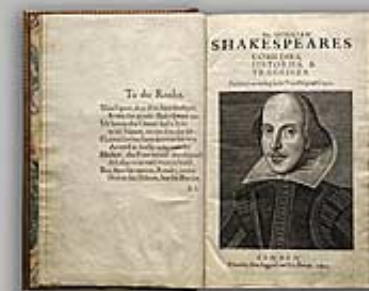
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Of the original press-run of about 750, some 240 copies of the First Folio are now known, representing (for most are incomplete and/or "made up" from other defective copies) perhaps 300 original volumes, as Peter Blayney has estimated. That is not a bad survival rate, in spite of three centuries' enthusiastic reading; but of all these only a dozen or so are said to be "perfect and unrestored" (i.e., copies that seem never to have been tampered with in some material respect), and not one of them remains in a strictly contemporary binding. The Burdett-Coutts copy here reproduced is one of these very few integral specimens, although rebound in the late eighteenth century. There are several other "special" copies, but disappointingly few with early ownership evidence: Ben Jonson must have owned one once, but his first library was destroyed by fire in October 1623; Jonson's Scottish host William Drummond of Hawthornden, a regular purchaser of plays by Shakespeare, Kyd, Dekker, Middleton, Marston, and others, also seems to have bypassed this volume. Robert Burton, author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, possessed a copy, as did Bishop John Cosin of Durham, but not John Donne, nor the poet and play-collector Sir John Harington, nor possibly John Milton (whose first published verses, in praise of Shakespeare, were written for the 1632 reprint). The original publisher, William Jaggard, presented one to Augustine Vincent, author of a work he had published a year earlier, but what became of those given the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, the "incomparable paire of brethren" and joint dedicatees, or for that matter those of the two faithful editors? Copies marked up

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by contemporaries for performance or other use are likewise elusive, one (perhaps used for private theatricals) now in Padua, one known only from fragments, and a third (from the library of the Spanish Ambassador, Count Gondomar) now apparently lost; the B.B. McGeorge–Philadelphia Free Library copy is extensively annotated by two seventeenth-century readers, but at least one other (the Egerton-Ellesmere, at the Huntington Library) owes its marginalia to the nineteenth-century scholar-forger John Payne Collier, who inserted his own textual corrections/improvements, in a deceptively antique script, and later employed them as "contemporary evidence" in his Shakespeare editions. Icons attract blasphemy!

Given the inexorable rise in price since the mid-eighteenth century, and the diminishing availability of complete (if reconstructed) copies of the celebrated book, scholars, book collectors, and curious readers have long consoled themselves with reproductions. The first of these was prepared in 1807 by Francis Douce, an expensive line-for-line reprint (with plenty of errors), followed by a reduced three-volume version in 1864, and a photo-lithographic facsimile two years later. Others by J.O. Halliwell-Phillips (1876), Sir Sidney Lee (1902), and Methuen Publishers (1910) supplied readers until 1955, when a reduced and sadly misprinted facsimile appeared; and in 1968 Charlton Hinman, author of the standard bibliographical account of the First Folio, edited the highly serviceable "Norton Facsimile." The last was assembled—like most of its predecessors—from more than one original, but there is good reason to wish for a single-copy facsimile as well. With the present CD-ROM, Octavo has made available the traditional "finest" of the Folger Library's great hoard, an appropriate choice.

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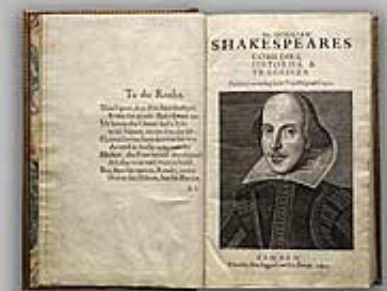
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Arthur Freeman has published several books and many articles on the literature and bibliography of the age of Shakespeare. *Thomas Kyd: Facts and Problems* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967) dates from his years at Harvard and as a professor at Boston University. *Elizabeth's Misfits: Brief Lives of English Eccentrics … 1580–1660* (New York: Garland, 1978) appeared during his twenty-five-year association with the London booksellers Bernard Quaritch Ltd. Since 1997, he has dealt independently in rare books and manuscripts in the intervals of work (with his wife Janet Ing Freeman) on a massive biography of the nineteenth-century Shakespeare scholar and forger John Payne Collier.

FURTHER READING

Secondary literature concerning almost any aspect of Shakespeare is endless, but a short list of studies of the First Folio, and of its editorial history and cult, is provided below. By far the best, most up-to-date, and most readable brief account is Peter W.M. Blayney's *The First Folio of Shakespeare* (Washington, D.C.: Folger Library Publications, 1991), the entire text of which is included on this disc.

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Shakespeare, the Stage, and the Book

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The Theatrical World

Economic realities determined the theatrical world in which Shakespeare's plays were written, performed, and received. For centuries in England, the primary theatrical tradition was nonprofessional. Craft guilds (or "mysteries") provided religious drama—mystery plays—as part of the celebration of religious and civic festivals, and schools and universities staged classical and neoclassical drama in both Latin and English as part of their curricula. In these forms, drama was established and socially acceptable. Professional theater, in contrast, existed on the margins of society. The acting companies were itinerant; playhouses could be any available space—the great halls of the aristocracy, town squares, civic halls, inn yards, fair booths, or open fields—and income was sporadic, dependent on the passing of the hat or on the bounty of local patrons. The actors, moreover, were considered little better than vagabonds, constantly in danger of arrest or expulsion.

In the later 1560s and 1570s, however, English professional theater began to gain respectability. Wealthy aristocrats fond of drama—the Lord Admiral, for example, or the Lord Chamberlain—took acting companies

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under their protection so that the players technically became members of their households and were no longer subject to arrest as homeless or masterless men. Permanent theaters were first built at this time as well, allowing the companies to control and charge for entry to their performances.

Shakespeare's livelihood, and the stunning artistic explosion in which he participated, depended on pragmatic and architectural effort. Professional theater requires ways to restrict access to its offerings; if it does not, and admission fees cannot be charged, the actors do not get paid, the costumes go to a pawnbroker, and there is no such thing as a professional, ongoing theatrical tradition. The answer to that economic need arrived in the late 1560s and 1570s with the creation of the so-called public or amphitheater playhouse. Recent discoveries indicate that the precursor of the Globe playhouse in London (where Shakespeare's mature plays were presented) and the Rose theater (which presented Christopher Marlowe's plays and some of Shakespeare's earliest ones) was the Red Lion theater of 1567. Archaeological studies of the foundations of the Rose and Globe theaters have revealed that the open-air theater of the 1590s and later was probably a polygonal building with fourteen to twenty or twenty-four sides, multistoried, from 75 to 100 feet in diameter, with a raised, partly covered "thrust" stage that projected into a group of standing patrons, or "groundlings," and a covered gallery, seating up to 2,500 or more (very crowded) spectators.

These theaters might have been about half full on any given day, though the audiences were larger on holidays or when a play was advertised, as old and new were, through printed playbills posted around London. The metropolitan area's late-Tudor, early-Stuart population (circa 1590–1620) has
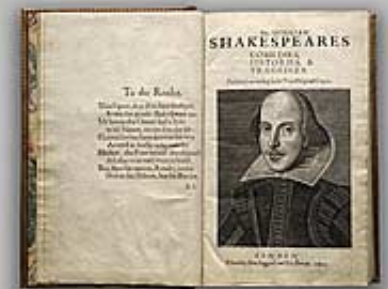
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been estimated at about 150,000 to 250,000. It has been supposed that in the mid 1590s there were about 15,000 spectators per week at the public theaters; thus, as many as 10 percent of the local population went to the theater regularly. Consequently, the theaters' repertories—the plays available for this experienced and frequent audience—had to change often: in the month between September 15 and October 15, 1595, for instance, the Lord Admiral's Men performed twenty-eight times in eighteen different plays.

Since natural light illuminated the amphitheaters' stages, performances began between noon and two o'clock and ran without a break for two or three hours. They often concluded with a jig, a fencing display, or some other nondramatic exhibition. Weather conditions determined the season for the amphitheaters: plays were performed every day (including Sundays, sometimes, to clerical dismay) except during Lent—the forty days before Easter—or periods of plague, or sometimes during the summer months when law courts were not in session and the most affluent members of the audience were not in London.

To a modern theatergoer, an amphitheater stage like that of the Rose or Globe would appear an unfamiliar mixture of plainness and elaborate decoration. Much of the structure was carved or painted, sometimes to imitate marble; elsewhere, as under the canopy projecting over the stage, to represent the stars and the zodiac. Appropriate painted canvas pictures (of Jerusalem, for example, if the play was set in that city) were apparently hung on the wall behind the acting area, and tragedies were accompanied by black hangings, presumably something like crepe festoons or bunting. Although these theaters did not employ what we would call scenery, early modern spectators saw numerous large props, such as the "bar" at which

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a prisoner stood during a trial, the "mossy bank" where lovers reclined, an arbor for amorous conversation, a chariot, gallows, tables, trees, beds, thrones, writing desks, and so forth. Audiences might learn a scene's location from a sign (reading "Athens," for example) carried across the stage (as in Bertolt Brecht's twentieth-century productions). Equally captivating (and equally irritating to the theater's enemies) were the rich costumes and personal props the actors used: the most valuable items in the surviving theatrical inventories are the swords, gowns, robes, crowns, and other items worn or carried by the performers.

Magic appealed to Shakespeare's audiences as much as it does to us today, and the theater exploited many deceptive and spectacular devices. A winch in the loft above the stage, called "the heavens," could lower and raise actors playing gods, goddesses, and other supernatural figures to and from the main acting area, just as one or more trapdoors permitted entrances and exits to and from the area, called "hell," beneath the stage. Actors wore elementary makeup such as wigs, false beards, and face paint, and they employed pig's bladders filled with animal blood to make wounds seem more real. They had rudimentary but effective ways of pretending to behead or hang a person. Supernumeraries (stagehands or actors not needed in a particular scene) could make thunder sounds (by shaking a metal sheet or rolling an iron ball down a chute) and show lightning (by blowing inflammable resin through tubes into a flame). Elaborate fireworks enhanced the effects of dragons flying through the air or imitated such celestial phenomena as comets, shooting stars, and multiple suns. Horses' hoofbeats, bells (located perhaps in the tower above the stage), trumpets and drums, clocks, cannon shots and gunshots, and the like were common

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sound effects. And the music of viols, cornets, oboes, and recorders was a regular feature of theatrical performances.

For two relatively brief spans, from the late 1570s to 1590 and from 1599 to 1614, the amphitheaters competed with the so-called private, or indoor, theaters, which originated as, or later represented themselves as, educational institutions training boys as singers for church services and court performances. These indoor theaters had two features that were distinct from the amphitheaters': their personnel and their playing spaces. The amphitheaters' adult companies included both adult men, who played the male roles, and boys, who played the female roles; the private, or indoor, theater companies, on the other hand, were entirely composed of boys aged about 8 to 16, who were, or could pretend to be, candidates for singers in a church or a royal boys' choir. (Until 1660, professional theatrical companies included no women.) Their playing space would appear much more familiar to modern audiences than the long-vanished amphitheaters; the later indoor theaters were, in fact, the ancestors of the typical modern theater. They were enclosed spaces, usually rectangular, with the stage filling one end of the rectangle and the audience arrayed in seats or benches across (and sometimes lining) the building's longer axis. These spaces staged plays less frequently than the public theaters (perhaps only once a week) and held far fewer spectators than the amphitheaters: about 200 to 600, as opposed to 2,500 or more. Fewer patrons mean a smaller gross income, unless each pays more. Not surprisingly, then, private theaters charged higher prices than the amphitheaters, probably sixpence, as opposed to a penny for the cheapest entry.

Protected from the weather, the indoor theaters presented plays later in the day than the amphitheaters, and used artificial illumination—candles

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in sconces or candelabra. But candles melt, and need replacing, snuffing, and trimming, and these practical requirements may have been part of the reason the indoor theaters introduced breaks in the performance, the intermission so dear to the heart of theatergoers and to the pocketbooks of theater concessionaires ever since. Whether motivated by the need to tend to the candles or by the entrepreneurs' wishing to sell oranges and liquor, or both, the indoor theaters eventually established the modern convention of the noncontinuous performance. In the early modern "private" theater, musical performances apparently filled the intermissions, which in Stuart theater jargon seem to have been called "acts."

At the end of the first decade of the seventeenth century, the distinction between public amphitheaters and private indoor companies ceased. For various cultural, political, and economic reasons, individual companies gained control of both the public, open-air theaters and the indoor ones, and companies mixing adult men and boys took over the formerly "private" theaters. Despite the death of the boys' companies and of their highly innovative theaters (for which such luminous playwrights as Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and John Marston wrote), their playing spaces and conventions had an immense impact on subsequent plays: not merely for the intervals (which stressed the artistic and architectonic importance of "acts"), but also because they introduced political and social satire as a popular dramatic ingredient, even in tragedy, and a wider range of actorly effects, encouraged by their more intimate playing spaces.

Even the briefest sketch of the Shakespearean theatrical world would be incomplete without some comment on the social and cultural dimensions of theaters and playing in the period. In an intensely hierarchical and

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status-conscious society, professional actors and their ventures had hardly any respectability; as we have indicated, to protect themselves against laws designed to curb vagabondage and the increase of masterless men, actors resorted to the near-fiction that they were the servants of noble masters, and wore their distinctive livery. Hence the company for which Shakespeare wrote in the 1590s called itself the Lord Chamberlain's Men and pretended that the public, money-getting performances were in fact rehearsals for private performances before that high court official. From 1598, the Privy Council had licensed theatrical companies, and after 1603, with the accession of King James I, the companies gained explicit royal protection, just as the Queen's Men had for a time under Queen Elizabeth. The Chamberlain's Men became the King's Men, and the other companies were patronized by the other members of the royal family.

These designations were legal fictions that half-concealed an important economic and social development: the evolution away from the theater's organization on the model of the guild, a self-regulating confraternity of individual artisans, into a proto-capitalist organization. Shakespeare's company became a joint-stock company, where persons who supplied capital and, in some cases, such as Shakespeare's, capital and talent, employed themselves and others in earning a return on that capital. This development meant that actors and theater companies were outside both the traditional guild structures, which required some form of civic or royal charter, and the feudal household organization of master-and-servant. This anomalous, maverick social and economic condition made theater companies practically unruly and potentially even dangerous; consequently, numerous official bodies—including the London metropolitan and ecclesiastical authorities as

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well as, occasionally, the royal court itself—tried, without much success, to control and even to disband them.

Public officials had good reason to want to close the theaters: they were attractive nuisances—they drew often riotous crowds, they were always noisy, and they could be politically offensive and socially insubordinate. Until the Civil War, however, anti-theatrical forces failed to shut down professional theater, for many reasons—limited surveillance and few police powers, tensions or outright hostilities among the agencies that sought to check or channel theatrical activity, and lack of clear policies for control. Another reason must have been the theaters' undeniable popularity. Curtailing any activity enjoyed by such a substantial percentage of the population was difficult, as various Roman emperors attempting to limit circuses had learned, and the Tudor-Stuart audience was not merely large, it was socially diverse and included women. The prevalence of public entertainment in this period has been underestimated. In fact, fairs, holidays, games, sporting events, the equivalent of modern parades, freak shows, and street exhibitions all abounded, but the theater was the most widely and frequently available entertainment to which people of every class had access. That fact helps account both for its quantity and for the fear and anger it aroused.

William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, Gentleman

Many people have said that we know very little about William Shakespeare's life—pinheads and postcards are often mentioned as appropriately tiny surfaces on which to record the available information. More imaginatively and perhaps more correctly, Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "Shakespeare is the only biographer of Shakespeare. … So far from Shakespeare's
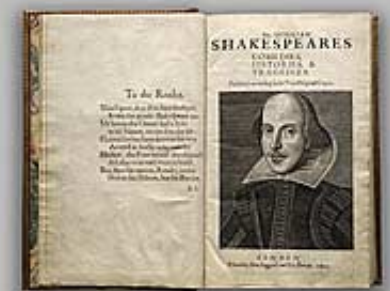
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being the least known, he is the one person in all modern history fully known to us."

In fact, we know more about Shakespeare's life than we do about almost any other English writer's of his era. His last will and testament (dated March 25, 1616) survives, as do numerous legal contracts and court documents involving Shakespeare as principal or witness, and parish records in Stratford and London. Shakespeare appears quite often in official records of King James' royal court, and of course Shakespeare's name appears on numerous title pages and in the written and recorded words of his literary contemporaries Robert Greene, Henry Chettle, Francis Meres, John Davies of Hereford, Ben Jonson, and many others. Indeed, if we make due allowance for the bloating of modern, run-of-the-mill bureaucratic records, more information has survived over the past four hundred years about William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, than is likely to survive in the next four hundred years about any reader of these words.

What we do not have are entire categories of information—Shakespeare's private letters or diaries, drafts and revisions of poems and plays, critical prefaces or essays, commendatory verse for other writers' works, or instructions guiding his fellow actors in their performances, for instance—that we imagine would help us understand and appreciate his surviving writings. For all we know, many such data never existed as written records. Many literary and theatrical critics, not knowing what might once have existed, more or less cheerfully accept the situation; some even make a theoretical virtue of it by claiming that such data are irrelevant to understanding and interpreting the plays and poems.

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So, what do we know about William Shakespeare, the man responsible for thirty-seven or perhaps more plays, more than 150 sonnets, two lengthy narrative poems, and some shorter poems?

While many families by the name of Shakespeare (or some variant spelling) can be identified in the English Midlands as far back as the twelfth century, it seems likely that the dramatist's grandfather, Richard, moved to Snitterfield, a town not far from Stratford-upon-Avon, sometime before 1529. In Snitterfield, Richard Shakespeare leased farmland from the very wealthy Robert Arden. By 1552, Richard's son John had moved to a large house on Henley Street in Stratford-upon-Avon, the house that stands today as "The Birthplace." In Stratford, John Shakespeare traded as a glover, dealt in wool, and lent money at interest; he also served in a variety of civic posts, including "High Bailiff," the municipality's equivalent of mayor. In 1557, he married Robert Arden's youngest daughter, Mary. Mary and John had four sons—William was the oldest—and four daughters, of whom only Joan outlived her most celebrated sibling. William was baptized (an event entered in the Stratford parish church records) on April 26, 1564, and it has become customary, without any good factual support, to suppose he was born on April 23, which happens to be the feast day of Saint George, patron saint of England, and is also the date on which he died, in 1616. Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway in 1582, when he was eighteen and she was twenty-six; their first child was born five months later. It has been generally assumed that the marriage was enforced and subsequently unhappy, but these are only assumptions; it has been estimated, for instance, that up to one-third of Elizabethan brides were pregnant when they married. Anne and William Shakespeare had three children: Susanna, who
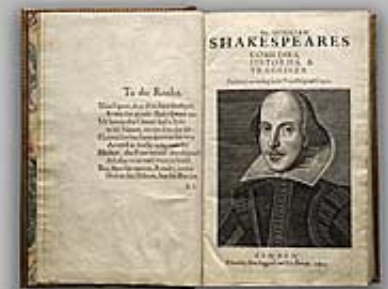
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married a prominent local physician, John Hall; and the twins Hamnet, who died young in 1596, and Judith, who married Thomas Quiney—apparently a rather shady individual. The name Hamnet was unusual but not unique: he and his twin sister were named for their godparents, Shakespeare's neighbors Hamnet and Judith Sadler. Shakespeare's father died in 1601 (the year of *Hamlet*), and Mary Arden Shakespeare died in 1608 (the year of *Coriolanus*). William Shakespeare's last surviving direct descendant was his granddaughter Elizabeth Hall, who died in 1670.

Between the birth of the twins in 1585 and a clear reference to Shakespeare as a practicing London dramatist in Robert Greene's sensationalizing, satiric pamphlet, *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* (1592), there is no record of where William Shakespeare was or what he was doing. These seven so-called lost years have been imaginatively filled by scholars and other students of Shakespeare: some think he traveled to Italy, or fought in the Low Countries, or studied law or medicine, or worked as an apprentice actor/writer, or so on to even more fanciful possibilities. Whatever the biographical facts for those "lost" years, Greene's nasty remarks in 1592 testify to professional envy and to the fact that Shakespeare already had a successful career in London. Speaking to his fellow playwrights, Greene warns both generally and specifically:

> … trust them [actors] not: for there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; and being an absolute Johannes Factotum, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country.

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The passage mimics a line from *3 Henry VI* (hence the play must have been performed before Greene wrote) and seems to say that "Shake-scene" is both actor and playwright, a jack-of-all-trades. That same year, Henry Chettle protested Greene's remarks in *Kind-Heart's Dream*, and each of the next two years saw the publication of poems—*Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, respectively—publicly ascribed to (and dedicated by) Shakespeare. Early in 1595 he was named one of the senior members of a prominent acting company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, when they received payment for court performances during the 1594 Christmas season.

Clearly, Shakespeare had achieved both success and reputation in London. In 1596, upon Shakespeare's application, the College of Arms granted his father the now-familiar coat of arms he had taken the first steps to obtain almost twenty years before, and in 1598, John's son—now permitted to call himself "gentleman"—took a ten percent share in the new Globe playhouse. In 1597, he bought a substantial bourgeois house, called New Place, in Stratford—the garden remains, but Shakespeare's house, several times rebuilt, was torn down in 1759—and over the next few years Shakespeare spent large sums buying land and making other investments in the town and its environs. Though he worked in London, his family remained in Stratford, and he seems always to have considered Stratford the home he would eventually return to. Something approaching a disinterested appreciation of Shakespeare's popular and professional status appears in Francis Meres' *Palladis Tamia* (1598), a not especially imaginative and perhaps therefore persuasive record of literary reputations. Reviewing contemporary English writers, Meres lists the titles of many of Shakespeare's plays, including one not now known, *Love's Labor's Won*, and praises his

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"mellifluous & hony-tongued" "sugred Sonnets," which were then circulating in manuscript (they were first collected in 1609). Meres describes Shakespeare as "one of the best" English playwrights of both comedy and tragedy. In *Remains … Concerning Britain* (1605), William Camden—a more authoritative source than the imitative Meres—calls Shakespeare one of the "most pregnant witts of these our times" and joins him with such writers as Chapman, Daniel, Jonson, Marston, and Spenser. During the first decades of the seventeenth century, publishers began to attribute numerous play quartos, including some non-Shakespearean ones, to Shakespeare, either by name or initials, and we may assume that they deemed Shakespeare's name and supposed authorship, true or false, commercially attractive.

For the next ten years or so, various records show Shakespeare's dual career as playwright and man of the theater in London, and as an important local figure in Stratford. In 1608–09, his acting company—designated the "King's Men" soon after King James had succeeded Queen Elizabeth in 1603—rented, refurbished, and opened a small interior playing space, the Blackfriars Theater, in London, and Shakespeare was once again listed as a substantial sharer in the group of proprietors of the playhouse. By May 11, 1612, however, he describes himself as a Stratford resident in a London lawsuit—an indication that he had withdrawn from day-to-day professional activity and returned to the town where he had always had his main financial interests. When Shakespeare bought a substantial residential building in London, the Blackfriars Gatehouse, close to the theater of the same name, on March 10, 1613, he is recorded as William Shakespeare "of Stratford upon Avon in the county of Warwick, gentleman," and he named several London residents as the building's trustees. Still, he continued to participate

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in theatrical activity: when the new Earl of Rutland needed an allegorical design to bear as a shield, or *impresa*, at the celebration of King James' Accession Day, March 24, 1613, the earl's accountant recorded a payment of 44 shillings to Shakespeare for the device with its motto.

For the last few years of his life, Shakespeare evidently concentrated his activities in the town of his birth. Most of the final records concern business transactions in Stratford, ending with the notation of his death on April 23, 1616, and burial in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon.

The Question of Authorship

The history of ascribing Shakespeare's plays (the poems do not come up so often) to someone else began, as it continues, peculiarly. The earliest published claim that someone else wrote Shakespeare's plays appeared in an 1856 article by Delia Bacon in the American journal *Putnam's Monthly*—although an Englishman, Thomas Wilmot, had shared his doubts in private (even secretive) conversations with friends near the end of the eighteenth century. Bacon's was a sad personal history that ended in madness and poverty, but the year after her article, she published, with great difficulty and the bemused assistance of Nathaniel Hawthorne (then United States Consul in Liverpool, England), her *Philosophy of the Plays of Shakspere Unfolded*. This huge, ornately written, confusing farrago is almost unreadable; sometimes its intents, to say nothing of its arguments, disappear entirely beneath near-raving, ecstatic writing. Tumbled in with much supposed "philosophy" appear the claims that Francis Bacon (from whom Delia Bacon eventually claimed descent), Walter Ralegh, and several other
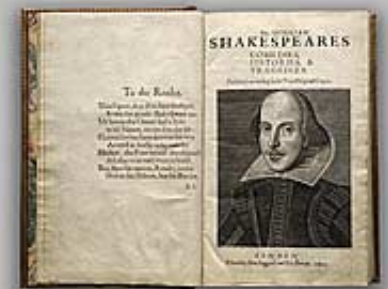
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contemporaries of Shakespeare's had written the plays. The book had little impact except as a ridiculed curiosity.

Once proposed, however, the issue gained momentum among people whose conviction was the greater in proportion to their ignorance of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English literature, history, and society. Another American amateur, Catherine P. Ashmead Windle, made the next influential contribution to the cause when she published *Report to the British Museum* (1882), wherein she promised to open "the Cipher of Francis Bacon," though what she mostly offers, in the words of S. Schoenbaum, is "demented allegorizing." An entire new cottage industry grew from Windle's suggestion that the texts contain hidden, cryptographically discoverable ciphers—"clues"—to their authorship; and today there are not only books devoted to the putative ciphers, but also pamphlets, journals, and newsletters.

Although Baconians have led the pack of those seeking a substitute Shakespeare, in *"Shakespeare" Identified* (1920), J. Thomas Looney became the first published "Oxfordian" when he proposed Edward de Vere, seventeenth earl of Oxford, as the secret author of Shakespeare's plays. Also for Oxford and his "authorship" there are today dedicated societies, articles, journals, and books. Less popular candidates—Queen Elizabeth and Christopher Marlowe among them—have had adherents, but the movement seems to have divided into two main contending factions, Baconian and Oxfordian. (For further details on all the candidates for "Shakespeare," see S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, 2nd ed. [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1991].)

The Baconians, the Oxfordians, and supporters of other candidates have one trait in common—they are snobs. Every pro-Bacon or pro-Oxford

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tract sooner or later claims that the historical William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon could not have written the plays because he could not have had the training, the university education, the experience, and indeed the imagination or background their author supposedly possessed. Only a learned genius like Bacon or an aristocrat like Oxford could have written such fine plays. (As it happens, lucky male children of the middle class had access to better education than most aristocrats in Elizabethan England—and Oxford was not particularly well educated.) Shakespeare received in the Stratford grammar school a formal education that would daunt many college graduates today; and popular rival playwrights such as the very learned Ben Jonson and George Chapman, both of whom also lacked university training, achieved great artistic success, without being taken as Bacon or Oxford.

Besides snobbery, one other quality characterizes the authorship controversy: lack of evidence. A great deal of testimony from Shakespeare's time shows that Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare's plays and that his contemporaries recognized them as distinctive and distinctly superior. (Some of that contemporary evidence is collected in E.K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols. [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1930].) Since that testimony comes from Shakespeare's enemies and theatrical competitors as well as from his co-workers and from the Elizabethan equivalent of literary journalists, it seems unlikely that, if any one of these sources had known he was a fraud, they would have failed to record that fact.
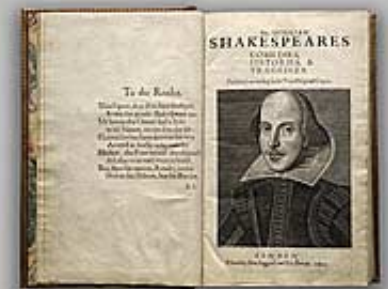
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BOOKS ABOUT SHAKESPEARE'S THEATER

Useful scholarly studies of theatrical life in Shakespeare's day include: G.E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 7 vols. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1941–68), and the same author's *The Professions of Dramatist and Player in Shakespeare's Time,* 1590–1642 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1923); R.A. Foakes, *Illustrations of the English Stage,* 1580–1642 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985); Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage,* 1574–1642, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), and the same author's *Play-going in Shakespeare's London*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Edwin Nungezer, *A Dictionary of Actors* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929); Carol Chillington Rutter, ed., *Documents of the Rose Playhouse*, rev. ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

BOOKS ABOUT SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE

The following books provide scholarly, documented accounts of Shakespeare's life: G.E. Bentley, *Shakespeare: A Biographical Handbook* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961); E.K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1930); Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); and *Shakespeare's Lives*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1991), by the same author. Many scholarly editions of Shakespeare's complete works print brief compilations of essential dates

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and events. References to Shakespeare's works up to 1700 are collected in C.M. Ingleby et al., *The Shakspere Allusion-Book*, rev. ed., 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932).

The Texts of Shakespeare

As far as we know, only one manuscript conceivably in Shakespeare's own hand may (and even this is much disputed) exist: a few pages of a play called *Sir Thomas More*, which apparently was never performed. What we do have, as later readers, performers, scholars, students, are printed texts. The earliest of these survive in two forms: quartos and folios. Quartos (from the Latin for "four") are small books, printed on sheets of paper that were then folded in fours, to make eight double-sided pages. When these were bound together, the result was a squarish, eminently portable volume that sold for the relatively small sum of sixpence (translating in modern terms to about $5.00). In folios, on the other hand, the sheets are folded only once, in half, producing large, impressive volumes taller than they are wide. This was the format for important works of philosophy, science, theology, and literature (the major precedent for a folio Shakespeare was Ben Jonson's *Workes*, 1616). The decision to print the works of a popular playwright in folio is an indication of how far up on the social scale the theatrical profession had come during Shakespeare's lifetime. The Shakespeare folio was an expensive book, selling for between fifteen and eighteen shillings, depending on the binding (in modern terms, from about $150 to $180). Nineteen Shakespeare plays of the thirty-seven that survive first appeared in quarto (including *Pericles*, which does not appear in the First Folio),
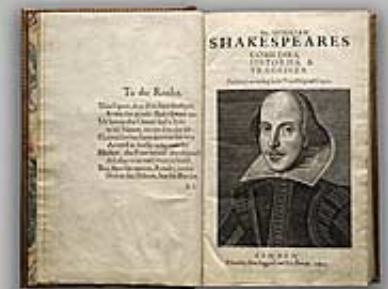
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seventeen of which appeared during Shakespeare's lifetime; the rest of the plays are found only in folio.

The First Folio was published in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, and was authorized by his fellow actors, the co-owners of the King's Men. This publication was certainly a mark of the company's enormous respect for Shakespeare; but it was also a way of turning the old plays, most of which were no longer current in the playhouse, into ready money (the folio includes only Shakespeare's plays, not his sonnets or other nondramatic verse). Whatever the motives behind the publication of the folio, the texts it preserves constitute the basis for almost all later editions of the playwright's works. The texts, however, differ from those of the earlier quartos, some-times in minor respects but often significantly—most strikingly in the two texts of *King Lear*, but also in important ways in *Hamlet, Othello*, and *Troilus and Cressida*. The differences in these texts represent, in a sense, the essence of theater: the texts of plays were initially not intended for publication. They were scripts, designed for the actors to perform—the principal life of the play at this period was in performance. And it follows that in Shakespeare's theater the playwright typically had no say either in how his play was performed or in the disposition of his text—he was an employee of the company. The authoritative figures in the theatrical enterprise were the shareholders in the company, who were for the most part the major actors. They decided what plays were to be done; they hired the playwright and often gave him an outline of the play they wanted him to write. Often, too, the play was a collaboration: the company would retain a group of writers, and parcel out the scenes among them. The resulting script was then the

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property of the company, and the actors would revise it as they saw fit during the course of putting it on stage. The resulting text belonged to the company. The playwright had no rights in it once he had been paid. (This system survives largely intact in the movie industry, and most of the playwrights of Shakespeare's time were as anonymous as most screenwriters are today.) The script could also, of course, continue to change as the tastes of audiences and the requirements of the actors changed. Many—perhaps most—plays were revised when they were reintroduced after any substantial absence from the repertory, or when they were performed by a company different from the one that originally commissioned the play.

Shakespeare was an exceptional figure in this world because he was not only a shareholder and actor in his own company, but also its leading playwright—he was literally his own boss. He had, moreover, little interest in the publication of his plays, and even those that appeared during his lifetime with the authorization of the company show no signs of any editorial concern on the part of the author. Theater was, for Shakespeare, a fluid and supremely responsive medium—the very opposite of the great classic canonical text that has embodied his works since 1623.

The very fluidity of the original texts, however, has meant that Shakespeare has always had to be edited. Here is an example of how problematic the editorial project inevitably is, a passage from the most famous speech in *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet's balcony soliloquy beginning "O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?" Since the eighteenth century, the standard modern text has read,
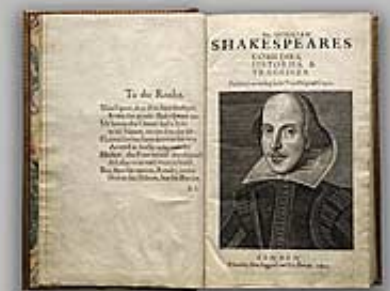
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What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O be some other name!
What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet. (II.2.40–44)

Editors have three early texts of this play to work from, two quarto texts and the folio. Here is how the First Quarto (1597) reads:

Whats *Mountague?* It is nor hand nor foote,
Nor arme,nor face, nor any other part.
Whats in a name! That which we call a Rofe,
By any other name would fmell as fweet:

Here is the Second Quarto (1599):

Whats *Mountagne?* it is nor hand nor foote,
Nor arme nor face, ô be fome other name
Belonging to a man.
Whats in a name that which we call a rofe,
By any other word would fmell as fweete,

And here is the First Folio (1623):

What's *Mountague?* it is nor hand nor foote,
Nor arme,nor face,O be fome other name
Belonging to a man.
What? in a names that which we call a Rofe,
By any other word would fmell as fweete,

There is in fact no early text that reads as our modern text does—and this is the most famous speech in the play. Instead, we have three quite different texts, all of which are clearly some version of the same speech, but none of which seems to us a final or satisfactory version. The transcendently beautiful passage in modern editions is an editorial invention: editors have

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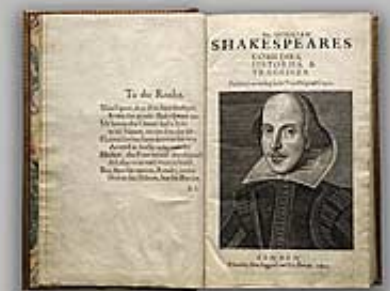FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY

succeeded in conflating and revising the three versions into something we recognize as great poetry. Is this what Shakespeare "really" wrote? Who can say? What we can say is that Shakespeare always had performance, not a book, in mind.

BOOKS ABOUT THE SHAKESPEARE TEXTS

The standard study of the printing history of the First Folio is W.W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio, Its Bibliographical and Textual History* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1955). J.K. Walton, *The Quarto Copy for the First Folio of Shakespeare* (Dublin: Dublin University Press, 1971), is a useful survey of the relation of the quartos to the folio. The second edition of Charlton Hinman's *Norton Facsimile* of the First Folio (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), with a new introduction by Peter W.M. Blayney, is indispensable. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1987), keyed to the Oxford text, gives a comprehensive survey of the editorial situation for all the plays and poems. See also: Russ McDonald, "What Is Your Text?" in *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare* (Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1996); Peter W.M. Blayney, "The Publication of Playbooks," in John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan, eds., *A New History of Early English Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

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Stephen Orgel is the Jackson Eli Reynolds Professor of Humanities in the English Department at Stanford University. He has published widely on the political and historical aspects of Renaissance literature, theater, and art history. An editor of Ben Jonson's masques, the poetry of Christopher Marlowe and John Milton, and of *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale* in the Oxford Shakespeare, Professor Orgel is also a General Editor of the Pelican Shakespeare, and co-editor, with Sean Keilen, of the series *Shakespeare: The Critical Complex* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999).

A.R. Braunmuller is Professor of English at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he has received the Distinguished Teaching Award and the Gold Shield Award for Faculty Excellence. Professor Braunmuller has written numerous books and articles about sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature, and he currently serves as a General Editor of the Pelican Shakespeare.

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The First Folio of Shakespeare

Peter W.M. Blayney

Presented here is a digital facsimile of a booklet originally published in print by the Folger Shakespeare Library. It includes a detailed discussion of the printing and publishing of the First Folio, differences in surviving copies, and the assembly and importance of the Folger collection. Peter W.M. Blayney is the author of several books and articles on the London book trade in the age of Shakespeare, including *The Bookshops in Paul's Cross Churchyard* (1990); and a new introduction to the Norton Facsimile of the First Folio, 2nd edition (1996). He is currently working on a history of the Stationers' Company through 1616.

This facsimile has been formatted to print in two-page spreads on tabloid-size paper to simulate the original printed booklet, and can be reduced for printing onto letter-size paper. The text is indexed and searchable using the standard Adobe Acrobat interface.

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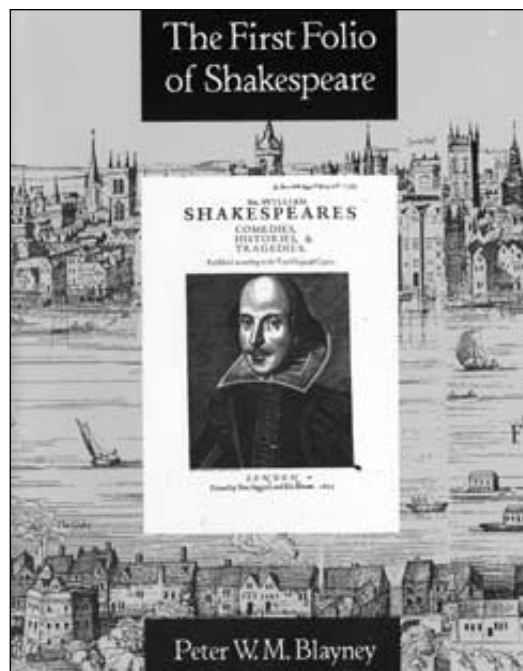
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Bibliographical Items
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Binding and Collation

A detailed, authoritative bibliographic description of the binding and pagination of this copy of the First Folio.

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Provenance

An illustrated essay on the colorful history of the Daniel–Burdett-Coutts First Folio up to its acquisition by Henry Clay Folger.

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Selection and Condition

An overview of the selection criteria for choosing a copy of the First Folio from the Folger Shakespeare Library to be imaged.

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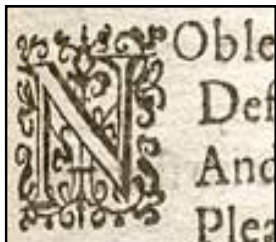
Transcription Note

List of typesetting conventions used in creating the searchable electronic "live text" of the First Folio, illustrated with examples.

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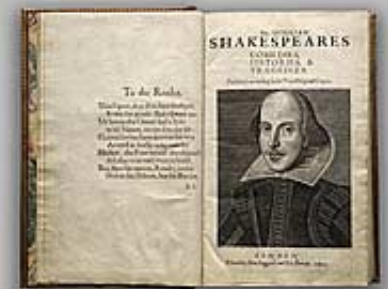
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Binding and Collation

Late eighteenth-century full russia, lightly diced, sides with outer gilt roll-tooled border and floral tools at inner angles, spine gilt in six decorated and three lettered compartments with gilt-tooled bands, the six compartments each with a complex ornament composed of an urn in a medallion centered on a narrow worked bar, surmounted by a rosette with trailing foliage, and supporting a descending palmetto and beadwork swag, corners with roundel and festoon of beadwork with foliating ends. Gilt-lettered LONDON in a shallow compartment at head of spine, similarly at foot MDCXXIII, SHAKE-SPEARE on a black skiver label beneath the first of the six decorated compartments.

As early as 1864 the binding was attributed to John Baumgarten, one of a group of German binders whose arrival in London around the turn of the nineteenth century raised the standards of luxury binding work. Baumgarten's tools were also used by other binders, so attributing work directly to him is exceedingly hazardous; the research necessary to assign this binding as Baumgarten's has yet to be done.

Measurements

13¾ x 8¾ inches (350 x 222 mm).
Textblock: 13¹⁄₃₂ x 8³⁄₁₆ inches (332 x 211 mm).

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Collation

$2°$: πA^6 ($\pi A1+1$, $\pi A5+1.2$); A–2B^6 2C^2 ; a–g^6 χ_2g^8 h–v^6 x^4 ; "gg3.4" ($\pm$"gg3"); ¶–2¶^{6} 3¶1 2a–2f^6 2g^2 "Gg"^{6} 2h^6 2k-3b^6 [\$3 (–2C2, +$^\chi_2$g4, −x3, −+"gg3", –2O2) signed; some missignings]; [18], 303, [1], 46, 49–100, [2], 69-232, [2], 79–80, [26], 98, [2], 109–156, 257–399, [1] pages (399 misnumbered '993'; numerous other mispaginations throughout); in all, 454 leaves including title page with engraved portrait of Shakespeare. In this copy leaves $\pi A5+1.2$ are misbound after leaf $\pi A6$, and leaves T3, T4, and b2 are supplied from another copy or copies.

Accompanying the book are six handwritten pieces pertaining to its history, one of which is written on the front flyleaf of the work; the whole is housed in a Victorian casket (see the Provenance for more information and to view these items).

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Provenance

With the apotheosis of Shakespeare as the great British Bard on the mid-eighteenth-century stage, and the establishment of the First Folio as the only proper copy-text by the playwright's editors, literary reverence had found not only its saint but its shrine. It was left to the early nineteenth century to refine the reverence for that one essential edition to the appreciation of special copies of the book.

As expected, ownership of this particular copy cannot be traced to an era before the connoisseurship of the exemplar. No First Folio survives complete and unaltered in a contemporary binding; very few have their endpapers intact, recording previous ownership. The Burdett-Coutts copy was rebound in the late eighteenth century, obliterating all trace of earlier provenance therein. As the veteran bookseller F.S. Ellis, agent for the British Museum and one of the four leading dealers in the book in his day, noted in Bernard Quaritch's *Contributions towards a Dictionary*

Fig. 1. Angela Burdett-Coutts.
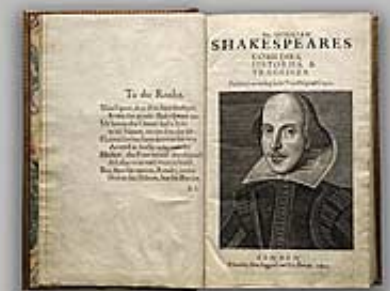
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of English Book Collectors (London, 1892–1921), "Though, as is usual with books, its pedigree did not extend very far, it was less plebeian than most rare volumes in this respect." Its earliest recorded owner was Daniel Moore (1760–1828), who is reported to have acquired the book around

Fig. 2. Note in Rokewode's hand on his inheritance of this copy.

1795. Moore bequeathed his copy to William Henry Booth (1787–1837), who left it in turn to the Suffolk antiquary John Gage (1786–1842)—after 1838, John Gage Rokewode (see Rokewode's note, Fig. 2). Like the actor David Garrick (1717–79), the great reviver of Shakespeare's fame and a notable collector of old plays, all three men were members of Lincoln's Inn, one of London's four (legal) Inns of Court.

Both Moore and Rokewode were Fellows of the Royal Society, and from 1829 until his death the latter was the Director of the Society of Antiquaries. Rokewode's most important papers on British antiquities, especially on medieval liturgical manuscripts, appeared in the antiquaries' journal, *Archaeologia*. After his death, part of the library of this "man of courtesy, kindness and good learning" was sold at auction in December of 1848, but the First Folio that he had inherited in 1837 was no longer present: Rokewode had sold it, in 1841, to the bookseller and publisher William Pickering.

The Moore-Booth-Rokewode copy was already celebrated. The Reverend Thomas Frognall Dibdin, an enthusiastic promoter of bibliomania in Regency England, praised the copy in his *Library Companion* (1824) while it was still in Moore's hands—a contemporary transcription of the relevant pas-

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sage is preserved with the book: see Fig. 3. Dibdin printed the first halting attempt at a list of copies of the First Folio, giving details of twenty-six (and mentioning fourteen others by reputation only). He placed Moore's copy in the "First class" (of perfect specimens) along with just two others, the Cracherode and Grenville copies (the latter two are now in the British Library, but the Cracherode copy is in fact incomplete, lacking two leaves). Not until our copy entered the library of George Daniel did it rise from its position as *primus inter pares* to become, by general reputation, the finest copy of all.

Fig. 3. Contemporary transcription of Thomas Frognall Dibdin's praise of this Folio.

George Daniel was one of the many notable book collectors who have been accountants; he was also a man of letters, several of whose books were published in handsome little duodecimos by William Pickering. It was through his publisher that Daniel acquired the Moore-Booth-Rokewode copy in 1841. (Pickering's letter, dated January 29, 1841, expressing his "great pleasure in adding this fine copy of the first Shakespeare to your Library," was carefully preserved and is reproduced in Fig. 4. Daniel's long note about the purchase and the exceptional merits of this copy is inscribed on one of the book's front endpapers.) Daniel was a convivial and quintessen-
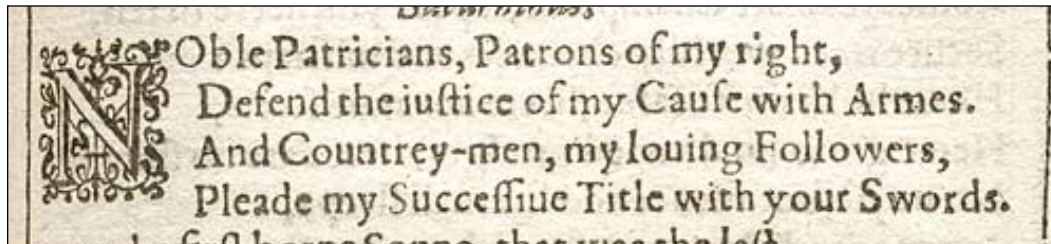
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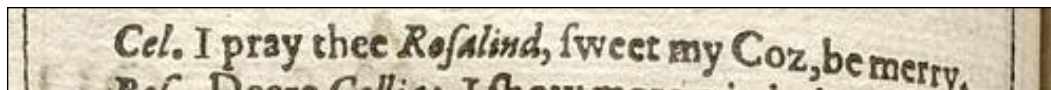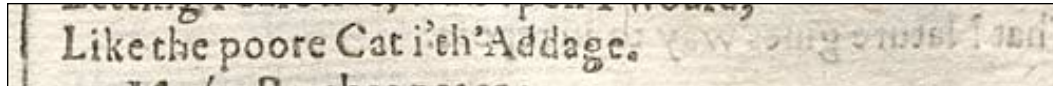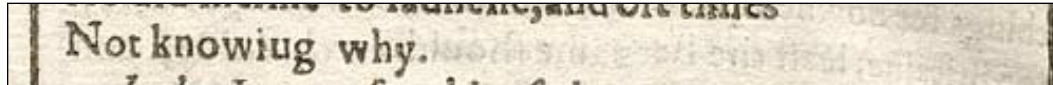➤ ADVANCED FEATURES

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tially urban versifier: among his most characteristic writings were *Virgil in London* (1814) and *Democritus in London* (1852). His copy of the First Folio was also, appropriately, a metropolitan book, having moved about town, from one London collector to another, until transported to its permanent American home. In this it stands in contrast to many another copy of the First Folio, slumbering in an old country house library until beckoned forth by the allure of the market in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century.

Like many collectors, Daniel was not averse to boasting of his purchases. "He would describe," wrote Ellis, "how when the bargain was concluded Pickering essayed to put up the volume in paper, but he exclaimed, 'No, no! nothing less than silk! fetch me one of your best silk handkerchiefs.' Securely tied in this, a hackney coach was called and he drove home to Islington in triumph." Such a tale, repeated and polished in the telling for over twenty years by an inveterate diner-out, succeeded in creating a legend.

Daniel had many other choice books, especially in old English literature, with a multitude of finely bound and extra-illustrated volumes,
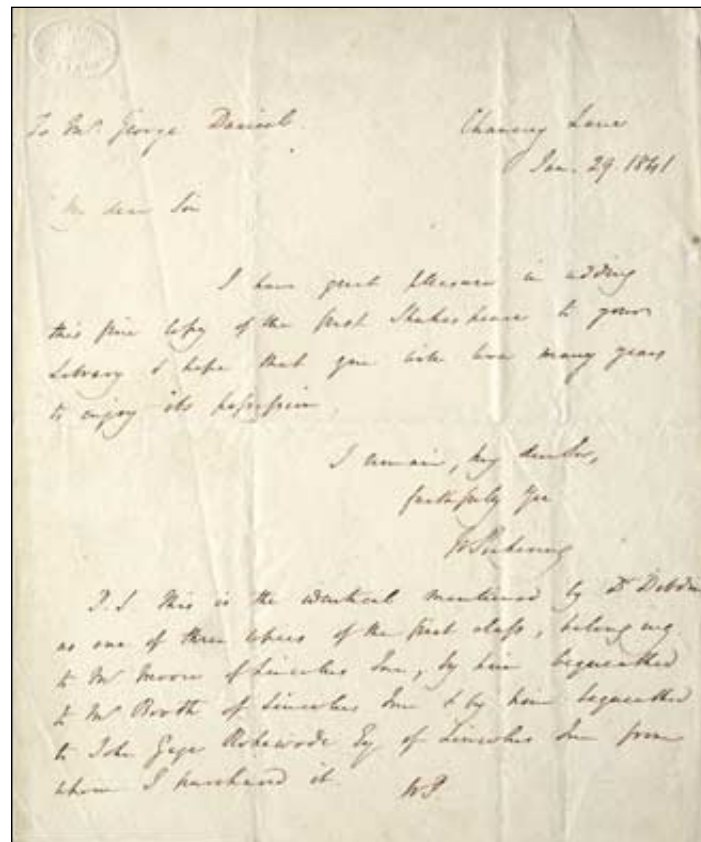
Fig. 4. William Pickering's 1841 letter transmitting the Folio to George Daniel.

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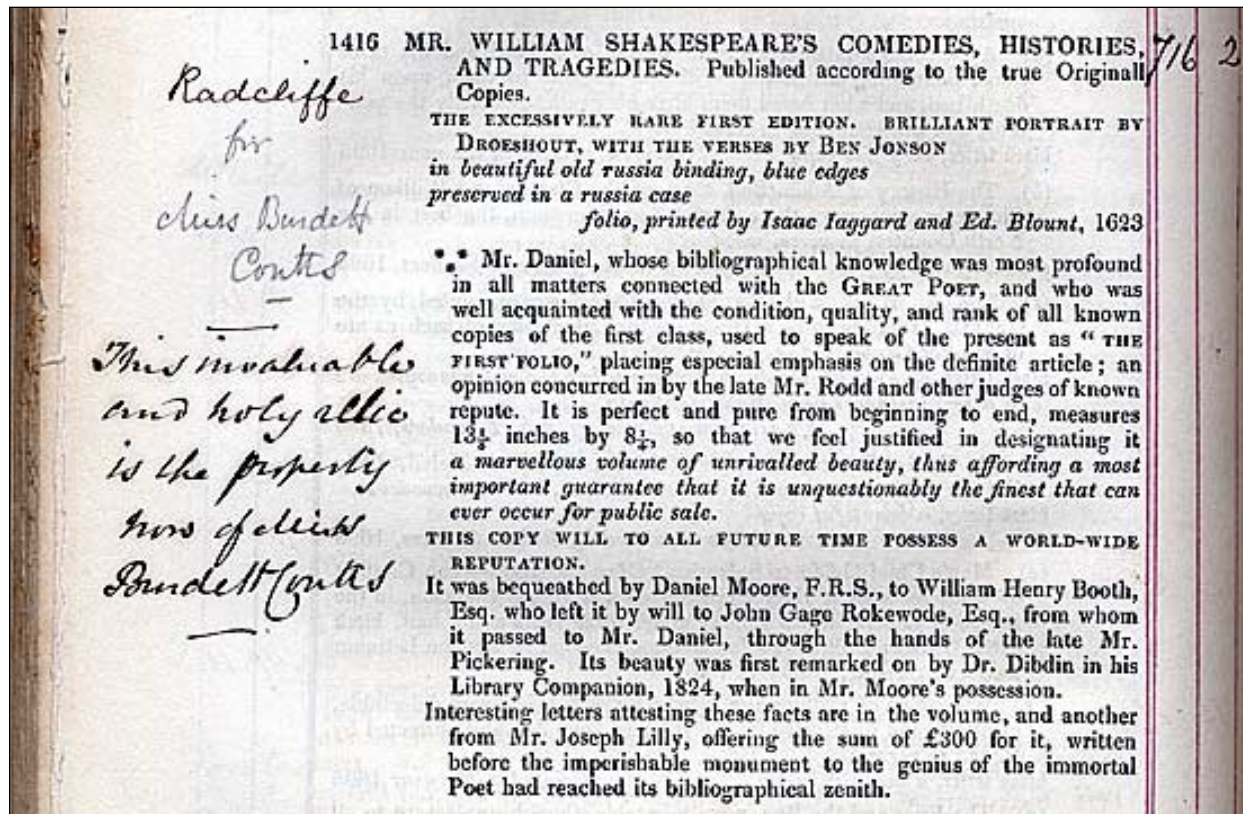
Fig. 5. First Folio entry from Sotheby's catalogue for the sale of the Daniel library. The catalogue belonged to the Victorian antiquary and book collector Frederick William Cosens (1819–89) and is annotated in a contemporary hand.

Elizabethan jest-books, drolleries, garlands, and ballads. When the books were sold by Sotheby's in 1864 as "the most valuable, interesting and highly important library of the late George Daniel," the cataloguer exhausted himself in superlatives, for the collector owned not only the finest First Folio but copies of the other three, and eighteen of the far rarer quarto plays.

Daniel's First Folio was sold for the then-extraordinary price of 682 guineas (or £716 2s.) to "Radcliffe," acting as agent for Angela Georgina

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Burdett-Coutts (1814–1906), the wealthiest unmarried woman in England, and a philanthropist of astonishing scale and range. She had a great interest in Shakespeare and the stage, having inherited the vast fortune of her grandfather, the banker Thomas Coutts (1735–1822), through Coutts' second wife, a celebrated actress. The price stood as a record until 1899, by which time the flourishing transatlantic market for the book prompted ever-higher prices as private British libraries yielded up their copies to American industrialists.

Until the Daniel sale, most serious scholars and editors of Shakespeare had been able to afford a copy of the First Folio for their work. After 1864, the price became prohibitive for private study—although facsimiles were now available. H.H. Furness, the Philadelphia editor of the New Variorum edition, was perhaps the last editor to own and use a First Folio. The Daniel auction was the most influential Shakespeare sale of the nineteenth century, raising prices decisively and permanently. It also established the auction rooms (and Sotheby's in particular) as the arbiters of price.

Individual copies in the nineteenth century had a bibliophilic following; by the turn of the century they had begun to acquire a more serious bibliographical appreciation. Sidney Lee, co-editor of the (British) *Dictionary of National Biography* and the leading Shakespeare biographer of his time, compiled a census of individual copies, which was published in 1902. A census remains to this day a rare form of bibliographical tribute—only Gutenberg's Bible (in 1888) had been so comprehensively studied before Lee. Although W.W. Greg, A.W. Pollard, and their successors were to undermine much of his strictly bibliographical reputation, Lee nonetheless provided a canonizing list, and firmly set the course of First Folio scholarship on the basis of the study of individual copies.

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Fig. 6. Letters concerning the Folio's condition and casket.

Miss Burdett-Coutts was raised to the peerage in 1871, becoming Baroness Burdett-Coutts, and ten years later married William Lehman Ashmead-Bartlett (1851–1921), a young American who had assisted in several of her philanthropic projects. He assumed the surname Burdett-Coutts, retaining the First Folio after her death. The Moore–Booth–Rokewode–Daniel–Burdett-Coutts copy did not reappear on the market until after his death, when Sotheby's offered it once again, along with other treasures from his estate, on May 15, 1922.

By this time Daniel's copy had acquired a reliquary for its protection. Herne's Oak, celebrated in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, fell down in August 1863, and in congratulating Miss Burdett-Coutts on her purchase, Queen Victoria offered a piece of the tree—see Fig.6. Daniel would have applauded the

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use that the future Baroness made of it. In 1835 he had bought for 47 guineas the carved casket made from the mulberry tree in Shakespeare's garden that had been presented to David Garrick along with the freedom of the Borough of Stratford-on-Avon in 1769. Daniel left the object to the British Museum on his death.

The Herne's Oak casket is a superb specimen of High Victorian artistry (see Fig. 8). Ever since

Fig. 7. Allusion to Herne's Oak from Act IV of *The Merry Wives of Windsor.*

Horace Walpole's acquisition of "Queen Anne's Comb" and Sir Walter Scott's baronial accumulations at Abbotsford, the British had collected antiques—but as historical relics rather than as testimony to past taste. Herne's Oak was intended to provide an evocative repository, within the tradition represented by copies of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* in bindings fashioned from beams of the Bedford meetinghouse, or William Everson's fine-press edition of Robinson Jeffers' *Granite and Cypress* (1975), presented to the reader in an elegant piece of desktop sculpture made from the materials of the title. Books are, amongst much else, articles of furniture, and often have a better chance of survival and appreciation if suitably camouflaged.

It was thus perhaps fitting that when the Burdett-Coutts copy came up for sale at Sotheby's, A.S.W. Rosenbach, the greatest showman in the history of the book trade, for once sent his brother Philip, a specialist

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in antiques, to London to bid. The Philadelphia firm bought the book for a record-breaking £8,600. To commemorate the event, *Punch* published a cartoon depicting Uncle Sam with Gainsborough's "Blue Boy" and the Burdett-Coutts copy under his arms, gazing with acquisitive eye on Shakespeare's tombstone, with its curse on anyone who disturbs his bones. The ghost of Shakespeare looks on nervously.

Fig. 8. The ornamental casket housing the Burdett-Coutts First Folio; it measures 9⅛ x 22 x 14⅞ inches and opens from the front.

The Rosenbachs had bought the book for Henry Clay Folger (1857–1930), who had been buying First Folios since 1893. Although he already owned more copies than anyone else did, to Folger each one was importantly different. How very different only became fully apparent with the publication of Charlton Hinman's two-volume study, *The Printing and Proof-reading of the First Folio of Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1963), based on careful collation of the seventy-nine Folger copies, some two-thirds of them throughout. By then, the Folger collection, amounting to roughly one-third of the extant copies, formed part of the collector's memorial, the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C.

One virtue of such a large assemblage is that there is no *single* Folger copy: individual copies retain their individuality. The copy reproduced here is therefore still widely known as the Burdett-Coutts copy, or, more justly, the Daniel–Burdett-Coutts copy.   THE EDITORS

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Selection and Condition

When the Folger Library received Octavo's invitation to provide a copy of the 1623 First Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays for digitization, we welcomed this new opportunity to serve the scholarly community while also providing access to other readers. Our curators and conservation staff saw the project as a preservation and access initiative that was innovative in its execution through digitization but classic in essence. A preservation project that would reduce the handling of one of the great treasures of the library, it doubled as a bold move to extend the Folger's reach to an audience that would otherwise not have unlimited access to such material. Further, the project would adhere to the highest standards and would be conducted under conditions that would assure the proper handling of the original. The resulting product would be distributed at a relatively modest price and would be accompanied by appropriate documentation.

The Folger Library holds seventy-nine copies of the First Folio and numerous fragments, some of substantial completeness. How, given the unique holdings of the library, roughly one-third of the surviving copies of the First Folio copies, could we select one example for the undertaking with Octavo? Each copy of Shakespeare's First Folio has had a life of its own during the nearly 400 years since it was printed, serving variously as a locus of scholarly research, as a revered object of collectors' desires, and as a commodity in the auction and bookselling marketplaces. Copies have been reconstructed, rebound, and, of course, subject to the wear and tear of time. To choose a copy that represented the intentions of the original publishers

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while accommodating the potential of the digital medium, the following criteria had to be met:

Normalcy. A copy of the First Folio in the form in which it ordinarily was sold to the public when new—the "third issue." The typesetting and printing of one of the component plays of the First Folio, *Troilus and Cressida*, were undertaken at different times during the production of the book. The result was that before the First Folio was sold containing the complete *Troilus and Cressida*, a few copies (very few) were sold without the play and then a few copies (again, very few) were sold containing the play but minus its Prologue. Thus, when the First Folio was sold with *Troilus and Cressida* complete with its Prologue—the form in which the vast majority of copies were sold—the book was in its third form, what bibliographers call the "third issue."

Completeness. All component parts present, from Ben Jonson's verses facing the title page to the last page with its decoration and publishers' names— despite the wear and tear of time.

Integrity. The component parts genuine, not facsimiles or parts taken from later editions. Because of the scholarly and monetary value attached to the First Folio, many copies have been reconstructed using parts not original to the 1623 edition.

Order. Component parts assembled in proper order. The binding and rebinding of copies have inevitably introduced a potential for disordering the parts of the book.
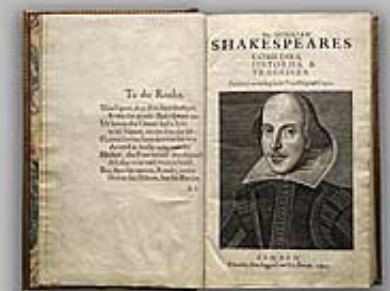
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Condition. Text pages clean, uninjured by use or accident, and free of intrusive annotation. Reading (or thumbing) has damaged copies of the First Folio; as the embodiment of the most studied text in English literature, readers frequently annotated their copies.

Strength and flexibility. Able to withstand handling. Although the materials used to make books in the seventeenth century were durable, the paper and binding of books of this age are potentially delicate. So all of the text on each page could be imaged, the book chosen for the Octavo Edition would have to be opened at every point; it was therefore important to have a copy that could be handled without the likelihood of damage.

One copy in the Folger collection scored above all the others according to these criteria—No. 5, that formerly owned by the fastidious English collector George Daniel and later owned by the Baroness Angela Georgina Burdett-Coutts. The Daniel–Burdett-Coutts copy is renowned for its fine condition. Its blemishes are few: only two leaves are misbound; three leaves are genuine but supplied from another copy; and fewer than a dozen leaves have holes, burn spots, or foxing that affect the text to any degree. No other copy of the First Folio is in equally fine condition. The excellence of this copy, along with its well-documented history, made it the best candidate for digitization.

Donald Farren
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The "live text" in this Octavo Digital Edition is a keyboarded transcription of the text from the book images: it is fully searchable, and text can be copied and pasted into other applications. To allow compatibility across computer platforms, the transcription is set in ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange). Since the ASCII character set does not contain equivalents for some characters (ligatures, abbreviations, etc.) found in the First Folio (which also contains irreproducible typesetting irregularities, such as inverted letters), the following conventions have been followed in creating the live text transcription. (For an informative discussion of the printing of the First Folio, see Peter W.M. Blayney's monograph *The First Folio of Shakespeare*, included in the "About This Book" section of this edition.)

The original text is followed as closely as possible: typos, misprints, and all.

> From whence at first she wegih'd her Anchorage :
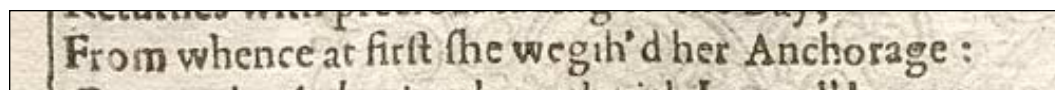
From whence at first she wegih'd her Anchorage:

Capitalization and italicization (including punctuation) are mimicked.
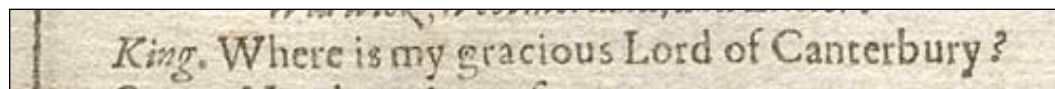
> *King.* Where is my gracious Lord of Canterbury *?*

King. Where is my gracious Lord of Canterbury*?*

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Initial display capitals are set as roman capitals. Period conventions for certain letters (such as *u* for *v* and *i* for *j*) are retained.

NOble Patricians, Patrons of my right,
Defend the iustice of my Cause with Armes.
And Countrey-men, my louing Followers,
Pleade my Successiue Title with your Swords.

The long *s* is set as a modern *s*.

Cel. I pray thee *Rosalind*, sweet my Coz, be merry.

Abbreviations are expanded (except in the case of titles, such as *M.* for "Monsieur" and *K.* for "King," etc.). Abbreviated character names at the beginning of lines and in stage directions are set to match.
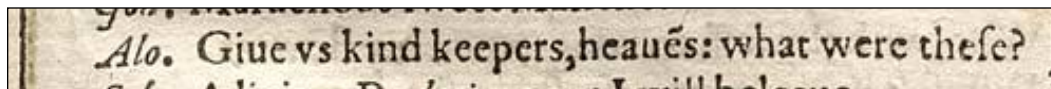
Alo. Giue vs kind keepers, heavens: what were these?

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Contractions, however, are retained.

Like the poore Cat i'th'Addage.

Upside-down characters are righted.

Not knowing why.

Long rules in text are set as 2-em dashes.
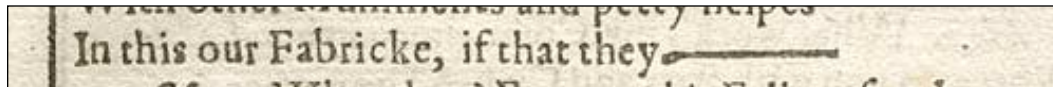
In this our Fabricke, if that they——

Words are uniformly single-spaced.
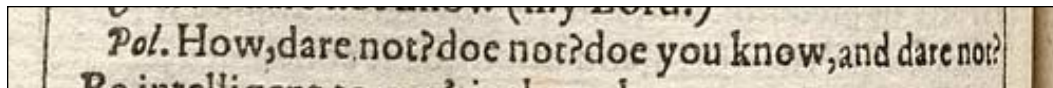
Pol. How, dare not? doe not? doe you know, and dare not?

Spaces before punctuation marks are closed up.
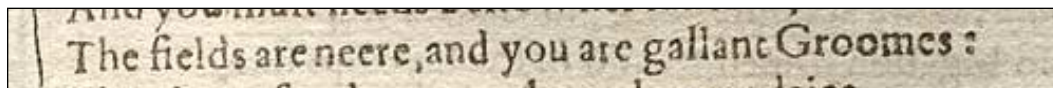
The fields are neere, and you are gallant Groomes:

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Detailed Contents

with Norton Through Line Numbers

This list of contents, and the bookmarks for this Octavo Edition, preserve act and scene divisions as indicated in the First Folio. These often do not match the critically established divisions found in modern editions of Shakespeare, and in many cases are irregular and incomplete (see Peter W.M. Blayney's monograph on the printing of the First Folio in the "About This Book" section for more information).

The "Through Line Numbers" as established by Charlton Hinman in *The Norton Facsimile: The First Folio of Shakespeare* are copyright © 1968, 1996 by W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., and are used in this edition with their permission.

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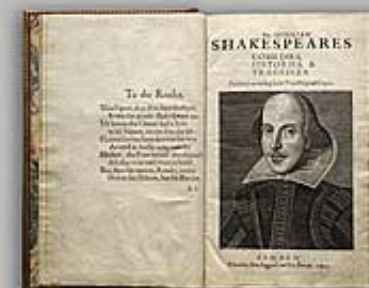
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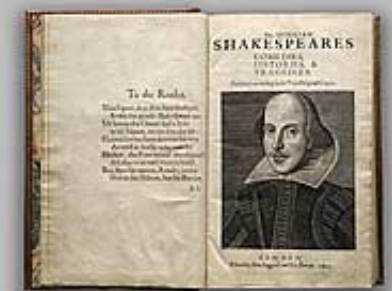
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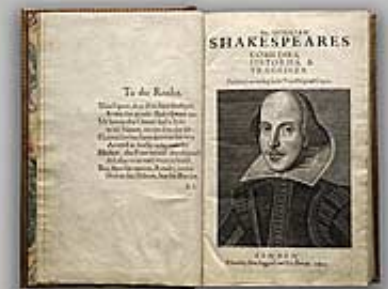
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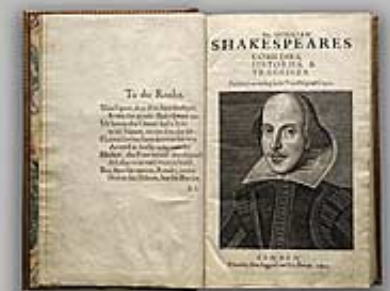
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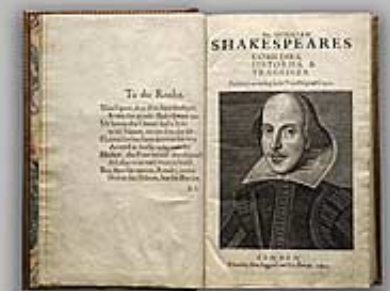
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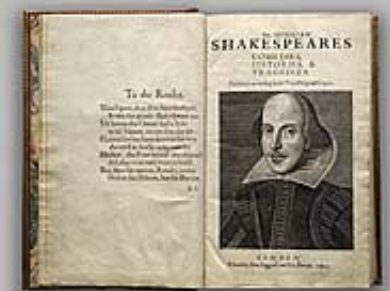
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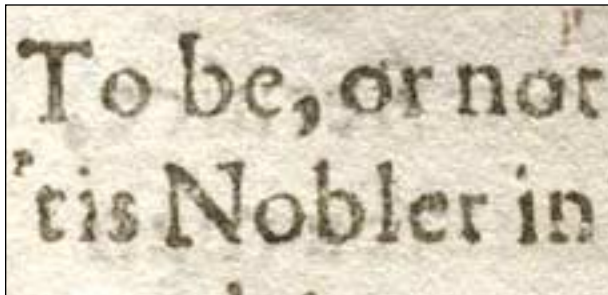
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We also wish to thank John Warnock for his personal efforts on behalf of this project.

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Folger Shakespeare Library

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The Reading Room is open to scholars and Ph.D. students for study and research. It is open to the public during the Folger's annual celebration of Shakespeare's birthday in April.

The Folger is also a museum devoted to Shakespeare's legacy, a lively center for the literary and performing arts, and a center for the revitalization of humanities education in our schools. Throughout the year exhibitions of the Folger's treasures and special events draw visitors into the Great Hall.

Reading room, Folger Shakespeare Library.

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Printed Book Collections

The Folger Library contains about 256,000 volumes, including about 116,000 rare books (pre-1800) and 140,000 modern (post-1800). The collections focus on British and European literary, cultural, political, religious, and social history from the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries, with particular strength in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Early English Books   The Folger Library has one of the largest collections of STC (1475–1640) and Wing (1641–1700) books in the world, numbering approximately 50,000 volumes, including broadsides. In addition, there are some 30,000 eighteenth-century English imprints.

The Shakespeare Collection   At the heart of the Library lies its very large Shakespeare Collection. One hundred eighty-six Quarto editions of the plays and poems are joined by 79 copies of the First Folio, 117 copies of the Second, Third, and Fourth Folios, and about 7,000 other editions of Shakespeare's works, from Rowe (1709) to the latest Oxford and Cambridge editions. Hundreds of foreign editions of the plays and poems translate Shakespeare into over 40 languages. Complementing the book collection are 980 promptbooks of Shakespeare's plays, dating from the late seventeenth through the mid-twentieth century, with strongest holdings in the nineteenth century.

Continental Books   The collection of rare books printed on the Continent is rich and varied, with over 35,000 volumes, including 450 incunabula. More than 2,000 volumes compose the Reformation collection, comprising extensive holdings in Luther and Calvin among others. Other strengths of the Library include Italian drama, travel books, herbals, festival books,

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classical authors, history of science and technology, military history, and French and Dutch historical and political pamphlets (1500–1700).

Modern Books   The large modern collection provides journals, reference works, and critical/historical literature that elucidate the rare book holdings. Highlights include multinational critical works on Shakespeare and his contemporaries; English county histories; Calendars of English State Papers domestic and foreign; the Patrologiae Latinae; the Corpus Christianorum, series Latina; publications of the Catholic Record, Early English Text, Hakluyt, and Harleian Societies, and of the Historical Manuscripts Commission; and dictionaries, encyclopedias, peerages, and a large number of facsimile editions of early books.

Special Collections

The Library's book collections are supplemented by art works, photographs, maps, early music, playbills, theatrical programs and scrapbooks, promptbooks, and film and videos. Thousands of art works on paper as well as some 200 oil paintings comprise one of the largest collections of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century illustrations to Shakespeare, as well as portraits of actors and actresses from that period. In addition, there are engravings from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including a fine collection of works by Wenceslaus Hollar.

About 250,000 playbills and hundreds of programs and scrapbooks record performances, mainly on the British and American stage, from the eighteenth through the early twentieth century. Besides 980 Shakespearean promptbooks, there are another 800 promptbooks recording non-Shakespearean productions, as well as microfilms of the promptbooks at
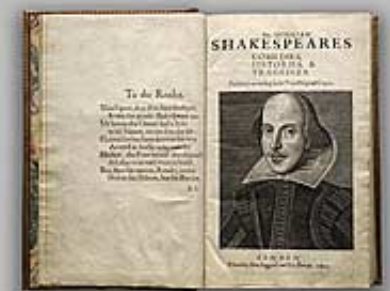
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the Shakespeare Library, Birmingham, the Shakespeare Library, Stratford-upon-Avon, and the Harvard Theatre Collection. In addition, the Folger has a substantial collection of Shakespeare productions on film and video, from the days of silent film to the recent BBC and popular movie versions.

Manuscripts

The Folger Library houses some 55,000 manuscripts in addition to other collections available on microfilm. Its holdings are rich in early correspondence, commonplace and recipe books, as well as poetry and plays. Special collections include the Losely papers of the More family (16th–17th centuries); papers of the Bacon-Townshend families (16th–17th centuries); the Cavendish-Talbot families (1548–1607); the Rich family (1485–1820); the Bagot family (1557–1671); the Robert Bennett papers (17th century); papers of the nineteenth-century theatrical manager Augustin Daly; eighteenth-century records of Drury Lane and Covent Garden theatres; over 200 scrapbooks belonging to the nineteenth-century antiquary, James Orchard Halliwell-Phillips; and 199 volumes from the Strozzi family compiled in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but recording many earlier documents.

Microfilm collections include the Cecil papers from Hatfield House; other Losely papers from the Guildford Muniment Room and Losely Park; manuscripts from theTanner and Rawlinson collections at the Bodleian Library, and from the Harleian and Lansdowne collections at the British Library; the state papers domestic of Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth I, James I and Charles I; the unpublished state papers of the English Civil War and Interregnum; and the papers of Sir Henry Irving and Ellen Terry from the Shakespeare Centre Library, Stratford-upon-Avon.

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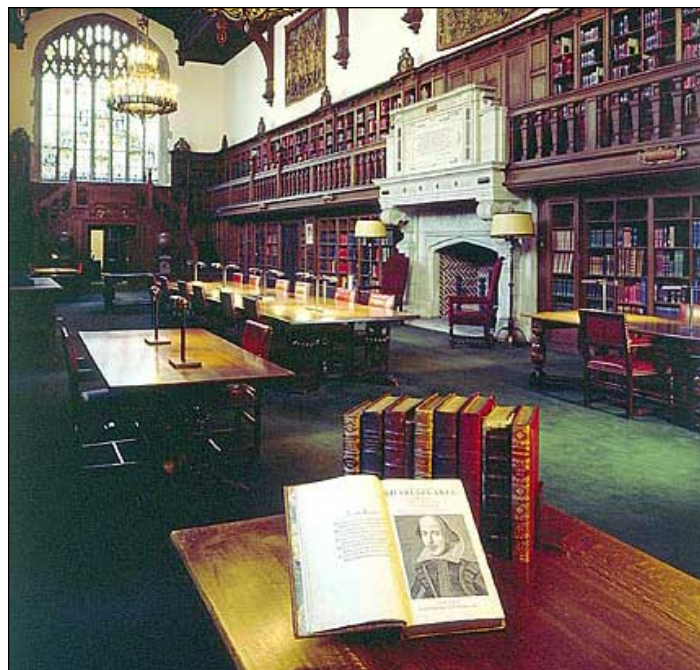➤ *Folger Shakespeare Library*

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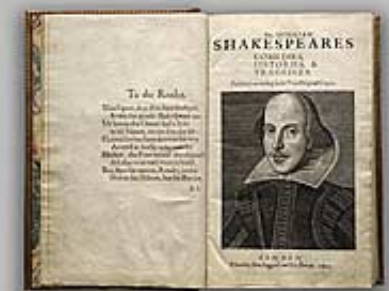
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About Octavo
Digital Preservation and Publishing

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Octavo forms partnerships with libraries, museums, and other cultural institutions to provide effective and innovative solutions for the competing challenges of preservation and access. Institutions charged with collecting and archiving cultural works (especially in the form of rare books, manu-scripts, and historical documents) have long borne the heavy responsibility of caring for the security and preservation of rare originals while making

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Octavo's publishing, imaging, and partnerships programs follow the traditional standards of book communities while developing innovations in

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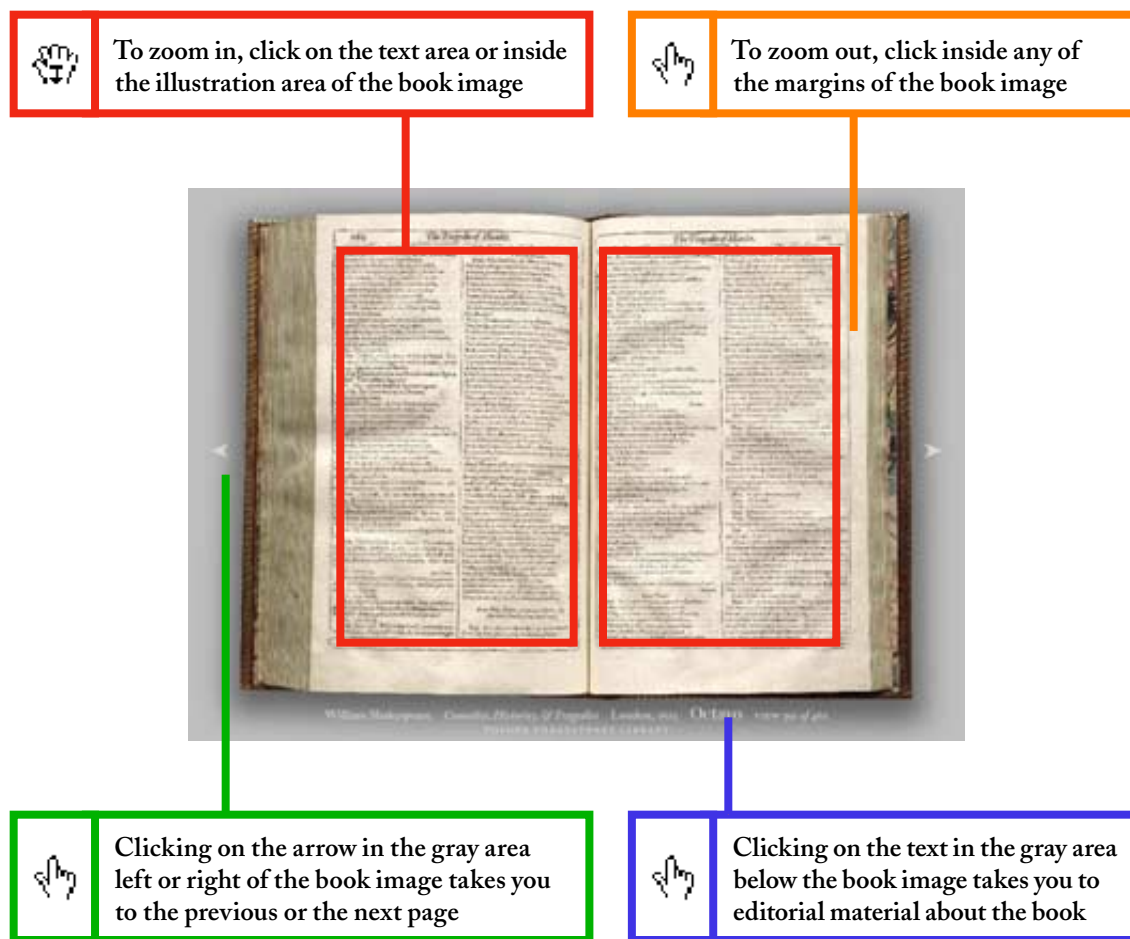
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Display the first page	*home*
Go back to the last page viewed	*control–left arrow*
Go to a specific page	*control–N*
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Find a word or phrase of text	*control–F*
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2. Choose a display resolution that allows you to view millions of colors (32-bit true-color). Alternatively, thousands of colors (16-bit color) is sufficient for most use. 256 color (8-bit color) will work but appear pixelated.

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