printed in 1622.

One of Shakespeare's most esteemed plays, *Hamlet* is the story of the troubled prince of Denmark and the events that unfold when he becomes aware that his father was killed by his uncle, now his stepfather. It is a tragedy of regicide and revenge with all the trimmings: a usurper on the throne, a haunting, madness, suicide, and mayhem resulting in multiple deaths — both accidental and homicidal, not to mention a foreign invasion. Hamlet's famous soliloquy in Act III of the play as we know it (the quartos are not divided into acts) is, beyond a doubt, one of the most powerful speeches in all of Shakespeare's plays.

Now at the British Library, this 1622 fourth quarto of *Hamlet* was bound by the British Museum Bindery in nineteenth-century red sheep with gilt tooling. "SHAKSPERE. HAMLET. LONDON." is lettered in gold up the spine, with the crest of David Garrick above and below. The turn-ins are elaborately tooled.

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