

An early quarto edition of Shakespeare's *Henry V*

William Shakespeare, *Henry V*. [London: Thomas Pavier, 1619]. 7 9/16 inches x 5 7/8 inches (192 mm x 149 mm), [56] pages, A–G4 (G4 blank).

The | Chronicle History | of Henry the fift, with his | battell fought at *Agin Court* in | France. Together with an- | *cient Pistoll*. | *As it hath bene sundry times playd by the Right Honou- | rable the Lord Chamberlaine his | Seruants*. | [printer's device] | Printed for *T. P.* 1608.

Shakespeare's quartos, so named because of their format (a single sheet folded twice, creating four leaves or eight pages), are the first printed representations of his plays and, as none of the plays survives in manuscript, of great importance to Shakespeare scholarship. Only twenty-one of Shakespeare's plays were published in quarto before the closure of the theaters and outbreak of civil war in 1642. These quartos were printed from either Shakespeare's "foul papers" (a draft with notations and changes that was given in sections to actors for their respective roles); from "fair copies" created from foul papers that presented the entire action of the play; from promptbooks, essentially fair copies annotated and expanded by the author and acting company to clarify stage directions, sound effects, etc.; or from a previously published quarto edition. The quartos were inexpensive to produce and were published for various reasons, including to secure the acting company's rights to the material and to bring in money during the plague years in London when the theaters were closed.

Henry V takes place in England and France at the beginning of Henry's

reign. The action opens before the 1415 Battle of Agincourt and presents the events leading to the conflict and preparations for battle. The English arrive in France, take control of a town, and are cautioned by the French who vow not to back down. On the eve of battle, Henry wanders anonymously among his soldiers and expresses his doubts, yet he gives them a rousing call to arms the following day. The English prevail, and King Charles VI of France consents both to Henry's marriage of his daughter, Catherine of Valois, and to Henry's eventual succession to the French throne. (Henry died only two months before Charles, narrowly missing his chance to become king of France.)

Now in the British Library, this third quarto of *Henry V* was bound by the British Museum Bindery in nineteenth-century red sheep, both blind and gold tooled with the crest of David Garrick in gold on the front and back boards. "SHAKSPERE. HENRY THE FIFT. 1608." is lettered in gold up the spine. The edges of the boards and the turn-ins are also gold tooled. The top edge of the text block is gilt.

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 18th century; as a friend and classics pupil of Samuel Johnson, he brought reputability to his trade. He began to collect early printed plays during the 1740s, at which time most collectors regarded stage scripts as popular works unfit for inclusion in serious libraries. Garrick, however, recognized their worth and, assisted by friends and knowledgeable advisors, built his

collection in the interest of scholarship and the enrichment of subsequent generations. He bequeathed the collection to the British Museum upon his death in 1779.

Octavo code: **shahey**