

## **An early quarto edition of Shakespeare's *Love's Labours Lost***

William Shakespeare, *Love's Labours Lost*. London: John Smethwicke, 1631. 6 3/16 inches x 4 7/8 inches (157 mm x 124 mm), [76] pages, A–I4 K2.

Loues Labours lost. | A wittie and | pleasant | comedie, | As it was Acted by his Maiesties Seruants at | *the Blacke-Friers and the Globe*. | *Written* | By **William Shakespeare**. | [Smethwicke's device] | *London*, | Printed by *W. S.* for *John Smethwicke*, and are to be | sold at his Shop in Saint *Dunstones* Church- | yard vnder the Diall. | 1631.

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.

At the opening of the play, Ferdinand, the king of Navarre, and three noble friends take an oath to devote themselves to scholarship and avoid women for a period of three years. He decrees that no woman will come near his court. Soon after the princess of France arrives, along with three ladies from her retinue, to discuss whether France owes money to the kingdom of Navarre. The French delegation is granted an audience with Ferdinand, who immediately becomes smitten with the princess. Each of his attendants, as well, have been captivated by different ladies accompanying the princess. One by one, the men let slip their love for the women; they agree to break their vow and pursue their respective love interests. The men visit the princess and her attendants in disguise but are recognized by the women who tease them. The men return out of costume and declare their love. After a lavish pageant, word arrives at the court that the king of France is dead; the princess declares she will not consider Ferdinand's suit before a year of mourning has elapsed. Her attendants do likewise with their suitors and they return to France.

This quarto was bound by the British Museum Bindery in nineteenth-century green sheep with gilt tooling, which includes the crest of David Garrick on both boards. "SHAKESPEARE. LOVES LABOURS LOST. LOND. 1631" is lettered in gold up the spine. The turn-ins are gold tooled and the top turn-in of the front board is signed "TUCKETT. BINDER. BRITISH MUSEUM." The leaves' edges are gilt.

Now at the British Library, 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.

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