

William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*. London: John Smethwicke, [1622]. 7 1/2 inches x 5 inches (191 mm x 127 mm), [88] pages, A–L4.

THE MOST | EXCELLENT | And Lamentable Tragedie, | of **ROMEO** and | **IULIET**. | As it hath
beene sundrie times publikely Acted, | by the **KINGS** Maiesties Seruants | at the **GLOBE**. |
Written by *W. Shake-speare*. | *Newly Corrected, augmented, and amended*. | [printer's device] |
LONDON, | Printed for *Iohn Smethwicke*, and are to bee sold at his Shop in | *Saint Dunstanes*
Church-yard, in *Fleetestreete* | vnder the *Dyall*.

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.

In this play, Romeo and Juliet, offspring of the feuding Montagues and Capulets in Verona, fall in love at a masquerade ball and later discover that the other belongs to a rival family. They pursue their love nonetheless and arrange to be secretly married by a sympathetic friar. Romeo is drawn into a fight and kills Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, just before he arrives at her house to consummate their marriage; meanwhile Juliet's father betroths Juliet to Paris and sets their marriage to take place three days later. Juliet goes to the friar for help and he suggests she take a potion the night before her wedding, which will make her appear dead so she and Romeo can

reunite in Mantua. Romeo never receives the message from the friar but hears of Juliet's death and goes to her tomb with poison to kill himself. He arrives and sees Juliet's body, takes the poison and, as he dies, Juliet awakens to discover her lover dead. Juliet stabs herself just as Capulet and Montague arrive at the tomb; they agree to end their feud.

This fourth quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* was bound brown calf decorated with blind stamping and gold rules on front and back covers; front and back pastedowns have blind stamping. The spine has raised bands with "ROMEO AND JULIET" in gold in the second compartment; "BY W. SHAKESPEARE" in the third. "Collated & perfect. A. Dyce" on the reverse of the front flyleaf.

Purchased by the Bodleian Library in 1836, this quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* was previously owned by Alexander Dyce (1798-1869). Dyce was born in Edinburgh and studied at Oxford, where he was the editor of a dictionary on the language of Shakespeare. In 1825 began his lifelong pursuit of literary scholarship. Dyce was a distinguished editor of Jacobean and Elizabethan dramatists and poets including Christopher Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Alexander Pope. He edited a nine-volume work of Shakespeare (rev. ed. 1864-69). He bequeathed his extensive library to the South Kensington Museums, and it is now in the Victoria and Albert.

Octavo code: **sharow**