

William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*. London: John Smethwicke, 1609. 6 7/8 inches x 4 11/16 inches (175 mm x 119 mm), [92] pages, A–L4 M2.

THE | MOST EX- | CELLENT AND | Lamentable Tragedie, of | *Romeo and Juliet*. | As it hath
beene sundrie times publiquely Acted, | by the KINGS Maiesties Seruants | at the Globe. | Newly
corrected, augmented, and amended : | [ornament] | LONDON | Printed for IOHN SMETHVVICK,
and are to besold | at his Shop in Saint *Dunstanes* Church-yard, | in Fleetestreete vnder the Dyall.
| 1609.

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 third quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* was bound by Riley in eighteenth-century maroon straight-grained morocco with elaborate blind tooling bordered by gold rules on both covers; the turn-ins are wide with blind tooling and gold rules; front and back pastedowns and endleaves blind tooled. Reading up the spine in gold: "[ROM]EO AND JULIET. BY WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE." Heber library stamp and notes by Heber on front flyleaf.

This quarto, before its acquisition by the Bodleian Library was in the library of Richard Heber, who purchased it in April 1804 at Lord Thorlo's sale at Christies. Richard Heber (1773–1833), British bibliophile, started amassing a classical collection as an undergraduate at Oxford, but broadened his collection to include rare editions of early English drama and literature. He purchased both single volumes and entire libraries and did not limit himself to a single copy of any particular book. As a result, he owned at least 150,000 volumes, and his collection filled eight houses. He was member of Parliament for Oxford University (1821–26) and a founder of the Athenaeum Club in London.

Octavo code: **sharox**