

An early quarto edition of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*. London: John Smethwicke, 1637. 7 inches x 5 1/16 inches (178 mm x 129 mm), [88] pages, A–L4.

The most | excellent | and Lamentable Tragedie, | of **Romeo** and | **Juliet**. | As it hath been sundry times publikely Acted | by the **Kings** Majesties Servants | at the **Globe**. | Written by *W. Shake-speare*. | *Newly corrected, augmented, and amended*. | [Smethwicke's device] | *London*, | Printed by R. Young for *John Smethwicke*, and are to be sold at | his Shop in *St. Dunstons Church-yard* in Fleetstreet, | under the *Dyall*. 1637.

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 fifth quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* quarto is bound in nineteenth-century red levant morocco with gold tooling. A stamp in the bottom center of the front cover turn-in ("BOUND BY F. BEDFORD") identifies this as the work of the noted nineteenth-century London binder Francis Bedford (1799–1883). The spine is divided into six compartments with raised bands, with "SHAKE- | SPEARES | ROMEO | AND | JULIET" lettered in gold in the second compartment; "LOND. | 1637" in the third. The bookplate of Edinburgh University is on the front pastedown. Copy correction notes by J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps on obverse of back free endpaper.

This quarto was given to Edinburgh University Library in 1872 by James

Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps (1820–1889), the English Shakespeare collector and scholar whose *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare* (1848) was published in several editions. Beginning in the 1870s, he devoted his time completely to the research of Shakespeare's life. Halliwell-Phillipps was instrumental in the acquisition of New Place, the site of Shakespeare's last home, and in the creation of the Museum at Stratford-upon-Avon (now Nash's House and New Place).

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