

The first quarto edition of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*

William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*. London: John Smethwicke, 1631. 6 15/16 inches x 4 5/8 inches (176 mm x 117 mm), [72] pages, A–I4.

A WITTIE | AND PLEASANT | COMEDIE | Called | *The Taming of the Shrew*. | As it was acted by his Maiesties | *Seruants at the Blacke Friers | and the Globe*. | *Written by VVill. Shakespeare*. | [Smethwicke's device] | LONDON, | Printed by *W. S. for Iohn 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.

This play begins with an induction, a set-up for *The Taming of the Shrew* as a play within a play. A lord decides to play a joke on Christopher Sly, a tinker who lay asleep from drink. The Lord dresses Sly in finery and puts him in good bed, and when he awakes the lord tells him he is a lord who has lost his memory. Sly is entertained by the performance of a play. In the play, three suitors are interested in marrying the fair Bianca, daughter of the wealthy merchant Baptista Minola. They are thwarted in their suit because the father insists that Bianca's older sister, the

shrewish Kate, be married first. Petruchio arrives in town from Verona determined to find a rich wife, and vows to marry Kate despite her temperament. They meet and exchange harsh words, but Petruchio prevails, marries Kate, and takes her with him to the country where she ultimately accedes to his will. Bianca's three suitors disguise themselves, two of them as tutors in order to get close to her and sway her decision. Bianca marries Lucentio, and in the final banquet scene, Petruchio boasts of his obedient Kate and wins a second dowry by proving that Kate has been tamed.

This first quarto of *Taming of the Shrew* is bound in nineteenth-century tan russia with gold-stamped ornamental borders around the edges of both covers; the same border is on the narrow turn-ins, marbled endpapers. Lettered in gold up the spine: "TAMING OF THE SHREW 1631". Inscription on the title page: "Ex dono Christoph. Gewen dno." The bookplate of John Patrick Crichton Stuart, the 3rd Marquis of Bute is on the front pastedown; the bookplate for the Bute Collection of English Plays is on the back pastedown.

This quarto was purchased by the National Library of Scotland from Major Michael Crichton Stuart on 3 April 1956. It is part of the Bute Collection of early English plays that was initially formed by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762). It was expanded by her son-in-law John Stuart, third Earl of Bute, and further enlarged by her grandson the first Marquis of Bute, also named John Stuart (1744–1814), who notably acquired 39 Shakespeare quartos. This quarto was acquired by the first Marquis from the 1806 sale of English book collector Richard Forster. The Bute Collection contains 1,266 English plays and includes seventeenth- and eighteenth-century adaptations of Shakespeare's plays and examples of the foremost dramatists from Elizabethan, Jacobean, Caroline, and Restoration periods; also included are a number of promptbooks.

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