

A variant first quarto of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*

William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*. London: R. Bonian and H. Walley, 1609. 6 7/8 inches x 4 13/16 inches (175 mm x 122 mm); [94] pages; A4 (-A1, +¶1, 2) B-L4 M2 (-M2 blank).

The | Famous Historie of | Troylus *and* Cresseid. | *Excellently expressing the beginning* | of their loues, with the conceited wooing | of *Pandarus* Prince of *Licia*. | *Written by* William Shakespeare. | [ornament] | London | Imprinted by *G. Eld* for *R. Bonian* and *H. Walley*, and | are to be sold at the spred Eagle in Paules | Church-yard, ouer against the | great North doore. | 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.

This tragic-comedic play is set in the seventh year of the Trojan War. Troilus, one of the sons of the king of Troy, and Cressida, daughter of Calchus, fall in love. Much of the play is concerned with infighting among the invading Greeks, who attempt to provoke Achilles to fight against the Trojans. Calchus flees to the Greeks and, in exchange for information, asks that Cressida be brought to Greece, where she is pursued by Diomedes. Troilus discovers Cressida's betrayal and vows to kill Diomedes in battle but fails. Achilles finally decides to fight when his companion Patroclus is killed by Hector. Achilles has his men kill Hector as he resting and unarmed, and Troy is laid waste.

This quarto (Quarto B) of *Troilus and Cressida* was bound in nineteenth-century brown sheep with gold tooling. "SHAKEPEARE. THE FAMOUS HISTORIE OF TROYLUS AND CRESSEID. 1609." is lettered in gold up the spine. The turn-ins are gold tooled, and the leaves' edges are gilt. A clipping from a dealer's catalogue is pasted on the reverse of the front free endpaper. A note by Halliwell-Phillipps pasted on the flyleaf opposite discusses the history of this copy and the rarity thereof. This copy differs from the previous 1609 printing of *Troilus and Cressida*, known as Quarto a, only in the title page and the addition of a single leaf, entitled "A neuer writer, to an euer | reader. Newes."

This quarto, before its acquisition by the British Museum in 1858, was owned 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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