

# SHAKESPEARE RECOVERED

Durham's First Folio

Exhibition

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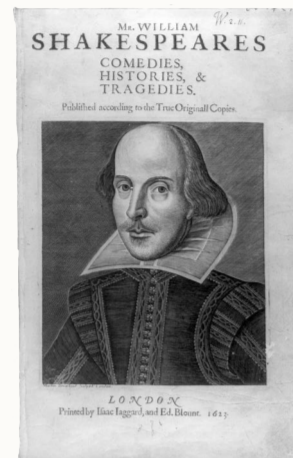
At-Home Resources

These resources are designed for visitors who are unable to visit the Shakespeare Recovered exhibition due to the access requirements for our historic library spaces.

This pack contains photos of the exhibition space, images of our First Folio, the exhibition graphics and interpretation and links to exhibition films and interactives.

We hope you enjoy exploring these resources. If you would like to pass on any feedback, please contact:  
**[visitor.services@durham.ac.uk](mailto:visitor.services@durham.ac.uk)**

## What is a First Folio and why is it so important?



"First Folio" refers to the first edition of Shakespeare's plays, published in 1623. Around 750 copies were produced and 235 are known to survive today.

Without the First Folio, plays that had not been published before, including *The Tempest* and *Macbeth* would have been lost...



### Bishop Cosin

John Cosin probably acquired his First Folio in the 1620s and added it to his library, here in Durham, in 1669.

### Durham University

Cosin's First Folio has been in Durham for over **350 years**. Since 1937 it has been officially part of the University's rare book collections.

### Shakespeare's Legacy

In the centuries following the Folio's publication, Shakespeare's reputation has grown to the status of global icon that he holds today.



1998



### Theft and Recovery

Our Folio was stolen, along with other manuscripts and books, in December 1998. Ten years later, it turned up in Washington D.C.

Police and rare book experts identified the book and it was returned to Durham.

2008



### Our Folio Today



In 2023, we took the 400th anniversary of the First Folio's publication as an opportunity to examine our Folio from exciting new perspectives. This exhibition shares with you what we have learned.

1616

William Shakespeare dies 23 April 1616

1623

Shakespeare's First Folio is published

A young John Cosin purchases his copy of the First Folio

1669

Bishop Cosin founds his library

2025

This graphic explains the history of Durham's First Folio. To find out more, click on this link to watch a short film [Video 1 - Exhibition Introduction](#)



## SHAKESPEARE RECOVERED

*Actu: primus, Scena prima.*

When Durham's First Folio was returned after its theft, there was cause for celebration, but also concern. The vandalism it had suffered meant that our Folio was no longer what most people imagine a book to be.

We believe these tragic events are now an important part of the book's story, so we have embraced our Folio for what it is. As you walk through its detached pages and damaged text-block you will discover clues that show its recent history, as well as newly revealed evidence of its distant past.

**SHAKESPEARE'S  
FIRST FOLIO  
IS A LITERARY  
WONDER OF  
THE WORLD, BUT  
ONLY DURHAM'S  
FIRST FOLIO CAN  
TELL THIS UNIQUE  
AND POWERFUL  
STORY.**



"Reader, looke not on his picture  
but his booke"  
Ben Jonson



This iconic portrait was placed  
at the front of each copy of  
Shakespeare's First Folio when it  
was published in 1623. Sadly, the  
portrait and this opening poem by  
Ben Jonson were never recovered  
after the theft of our Folio.



Jonson's poem has proved to  
be a valuable resource in our  
search for the lost portrait and  
the opening poem of the  
First Folio.



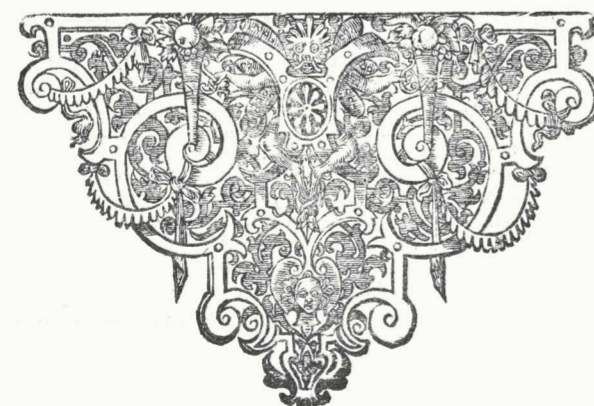
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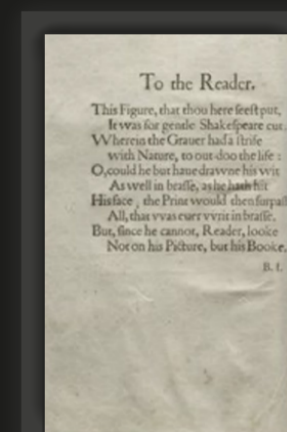
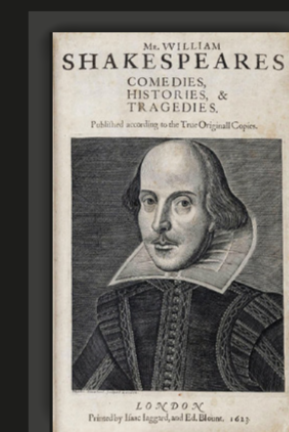
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Jonson's poem has proved to be profound, encouraging us not to dwell on Shakespeare's image, but to seek the true brilliance of his legacy within the pages of the First Folio.





The largest remaining fragment of our First Folio is its text-block. The sewing structure on the book's spine was severely damaged when it was stolen and would need to be entirely replaced using new materials for it to be read in a traditional manner.

This has presented a major dilemma for our Conservation Team, who are aiming to preserve the historic value of the book's current state, while also making it accessible to future generations.

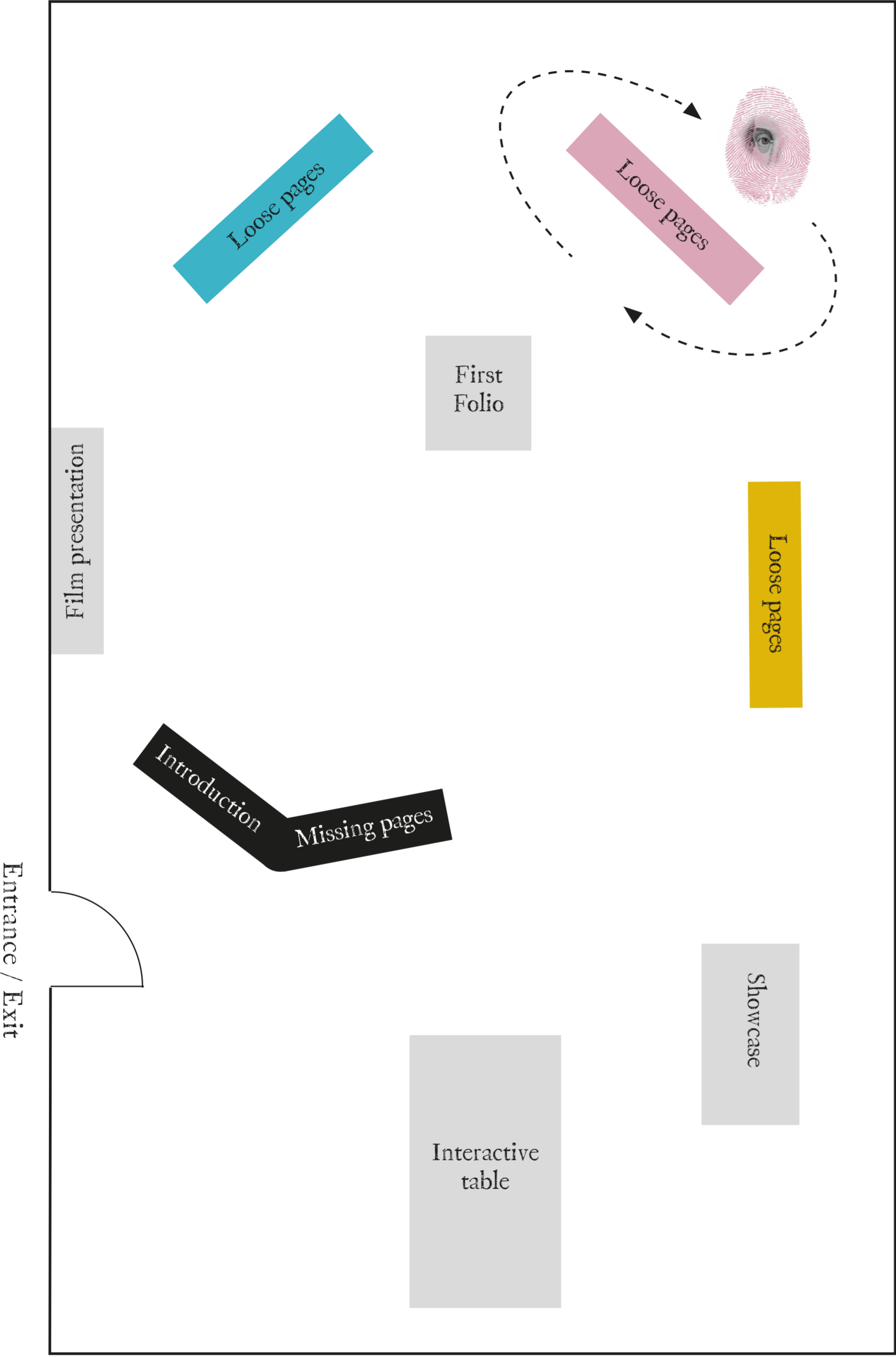


Compare the shining gold edge of these pages to the damaged sewing threads on the spine. The condition of our First Folio allows us to peer through time and gather clues that tell the full story of its life.

The decision not to rebind our Folio will be reviewed in 3 years, taking on board the visitor response to this exhibition and further consultation with stakeholders interested in the future uses of the book.



# Layout of exhibition in Cosin's Library



The unique condition of Durham's First Folio allows us to look beyond Shakespeare's famous words and explore the individual pages of the book as artefacts for investigation and research.

The theft and vandalization of our Folio presents a rare opportunity to closely examine an iconic object, revealing new information about Shakespeare's world and the making of his legacy. Unbound from their original structure, these pages become relics, puzzle pieces and works of art.



Use this guide as you walk through the exhibition and **look closely** to discover how each page reveals a new clue in the story of Durham's First Folio.

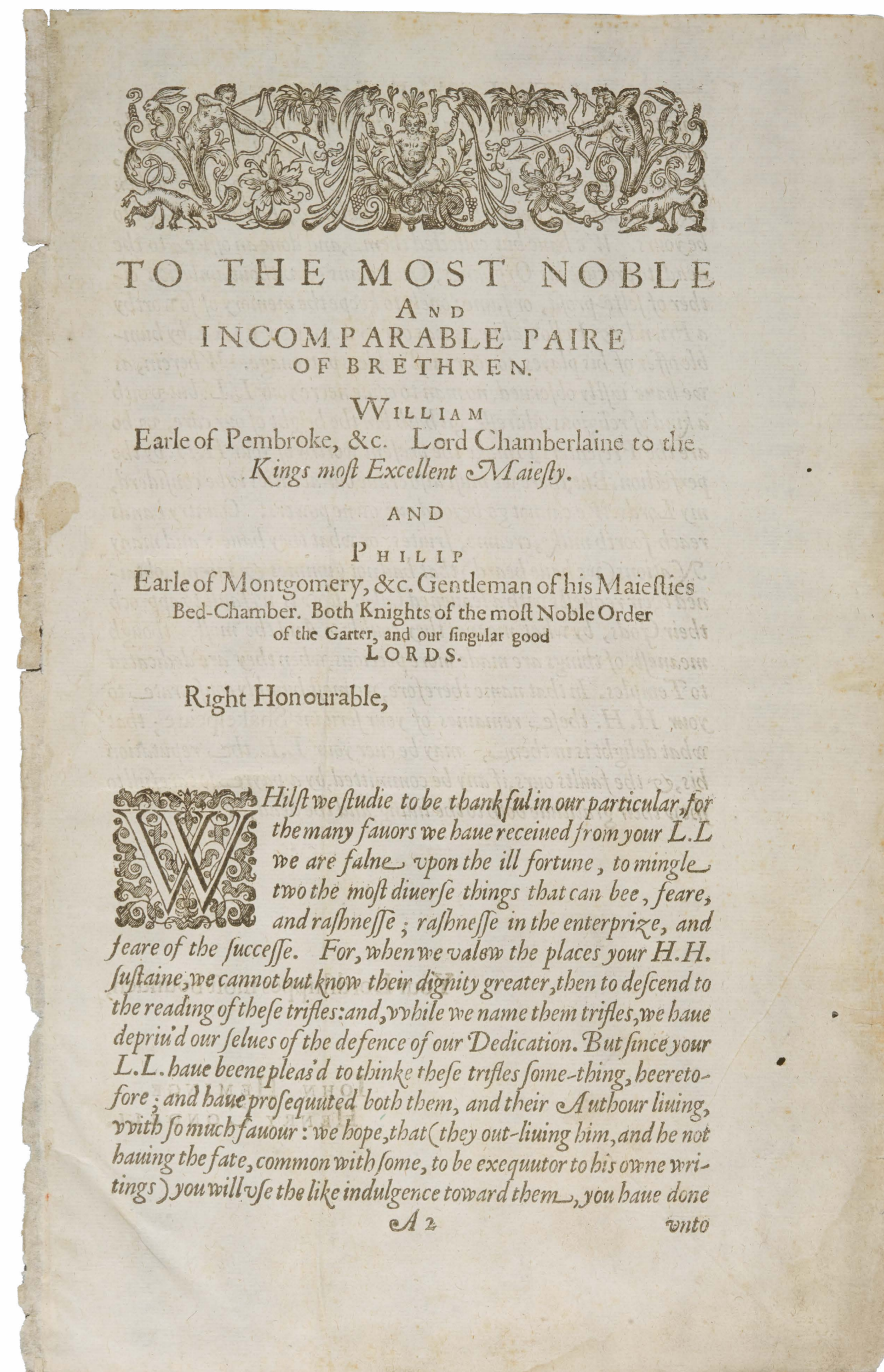
ACT I	<i>Shakespeare's Secrets</i>
II	<i>The Cult of the Bard</i>
III	<i>Making the First Folio</i>

# ACT I

## Shakespeare's Secrets

Durham's First Folio reveals its extraordinary life through a series of physical clues. The unique marks hidden in these pages were crucial to identify the book after it was stolen, allowing it to return to its rightful home.

The current condition of our Folio provides unprecedented access to parts of the book that are normally invisible, allowing us to apply cutting-edge heritage science techniques. The new secrets this has revealed help to develop our perception and understanding of this remarkable object.



The crease in the bottom right corner of this page matches a crease known to exist in Durham's First Folio before its theft. This evidence was used by experts to confirm the stolen book's identity.



# A CATALOGVE

of the feuerall Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies contained in this Volume.

## COMEDIES.

<b>H</b> e Tempest.	Folio 1.	<i>The First part of King Henry the fourth.</i>	46
<b>T</b> he two Gentlemen of Verona.	20	<i>The Second part of K. Henry the fourth.</i>	74
<i>The Merry Wines of Windsor.</i>	38	<i>The Life of King Henry the Fifth.</i>	69
<i>Measure for Measure.</i>	61	<i>The First part of King Henry the Sixth.</i>	96
<i>The Comedy of Errors.</i>	85	<i>The Second part of King Hen. the Sixth.</i>	120
<i>Much adoo about Nothing.</i>	101	<i>The Third part of King Henry the Sixth.</i>	147
<i>Loues Labour lost.</i>	122	<i>The Life &amp; Death of Richard the Third.</i>	173
<i>Midsummer Nights Dreame.</i>	145	<i>The Life of King Henry the Eighth.</i>	205
<i>The Merchant of Venice.</i>	163		
<i>As you Like it.</i>	185		
<i>The Taming of the Shrew.</i>	208		
<i>All is well, that Ends well.</i>	230		
<i>Twelue-Night, or what you will.</i>	255		
<i>The Winters Tale.</i>	304		

## HISTORIES.

<i>The Life and Death of King John.</i>	Fol. 1.		
<i>The Life &amp; death of Richard the second.</i>	23		

## TRAGEDIES.

<i>Troilus &amp; Cressida.</i>	
<i>The Tragedy of Coriolanus.</i>	Fol. 1.
<i>Titus Andronicus.</i>	31
<i>Romeo and Juliet.</i>	53
<i>Timon of Athens.</i>	80
<i>The Life and death of Julius Caesar.</i>	109
<i>The Tragedy of Macbeth.</i>	131
<i>The Tragedy of Hamlet.</i>	152
<i>King Lear.</i>	283
<i>Othello, the Moore of Venice.</i>	310
<i>Anthony and Cleopater.</i>	346
<i>Cymbeline King of Britaine.</i>	369



To the great Variety of Readers.



From the most able, to him that can but spell: There you are number'd. We had rather you were weigh'd. Especially, when the fate of all Bookes depends vpon your capacities: and not of your heads alone, but of your purses. Well! It is now publique, & you wil stand for your priuiledges wee know: to read, and censure. Do so, but buy it first. That doth best commend a Booke, the Stationer saies. Then, how odde soeuer your braines be, or your wisdomes, make your licence the same, and spare not. Iudge your sixe-pen'orth, your shillings worth, your five shillings worth at a time, or higher, so you rise to the iust rates, and welcome. But, what euer you do, Buy. Censure will not driue a Trade, or make the lacke go. And though you be a Magistrate of wit, and sit on the Stage at *Black-Friers*, or the *Cock-pit*, to arraigne Playes dailie, know, these Playes haue had their triall already, and stood out all Appeals; and do now come forth quitted rather by a Decree of Court, then any purchas'd Letters of commendation.

It had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to haue bene wished, that the Author him selfe had liu'd to haue set forth, and ouerseen his owne writings; But since it hath bin ordain'd otherwise, and he by death departed from that right, we pray you do not envie his Friends, the office of their care, and paine, to haue collected & publish'd them; and so to haue publish'd them, as where (before) you were abus'd with diuerse stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of inuiurious impostors, that expos'd them: euen those, are now offer'd to your view cur'd, and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceiu'd the. Who, as he was a happie imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresse of it. His mind and hand went together: And what he thought, he vttered with that easinesse, that wee haue scarce receiued from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our prouince, who onely gather his works, and giue them you, to praise him. It is yours that reade him. And there we hope, to your diuers capacities, you will finde enough, both to draw, and hold you: for his wit can no more lie hid, then it could be lost. Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe: And if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to vnderstand him. And so we leaue you to other of his Friends, whom if you need, can bee your guides: if you neede them not, you can leade your selues, and others. And such Readers we wish him.

A 3

John Heminge.  
Henrie Condell.

This catalogue page was printed before all of the plays to be included were finalised. In the Tragedies section, the play *Troilus and Cressida* is written by hand due to its late addition. This unusual detail was a further identifying feature of Durham's First Folio.

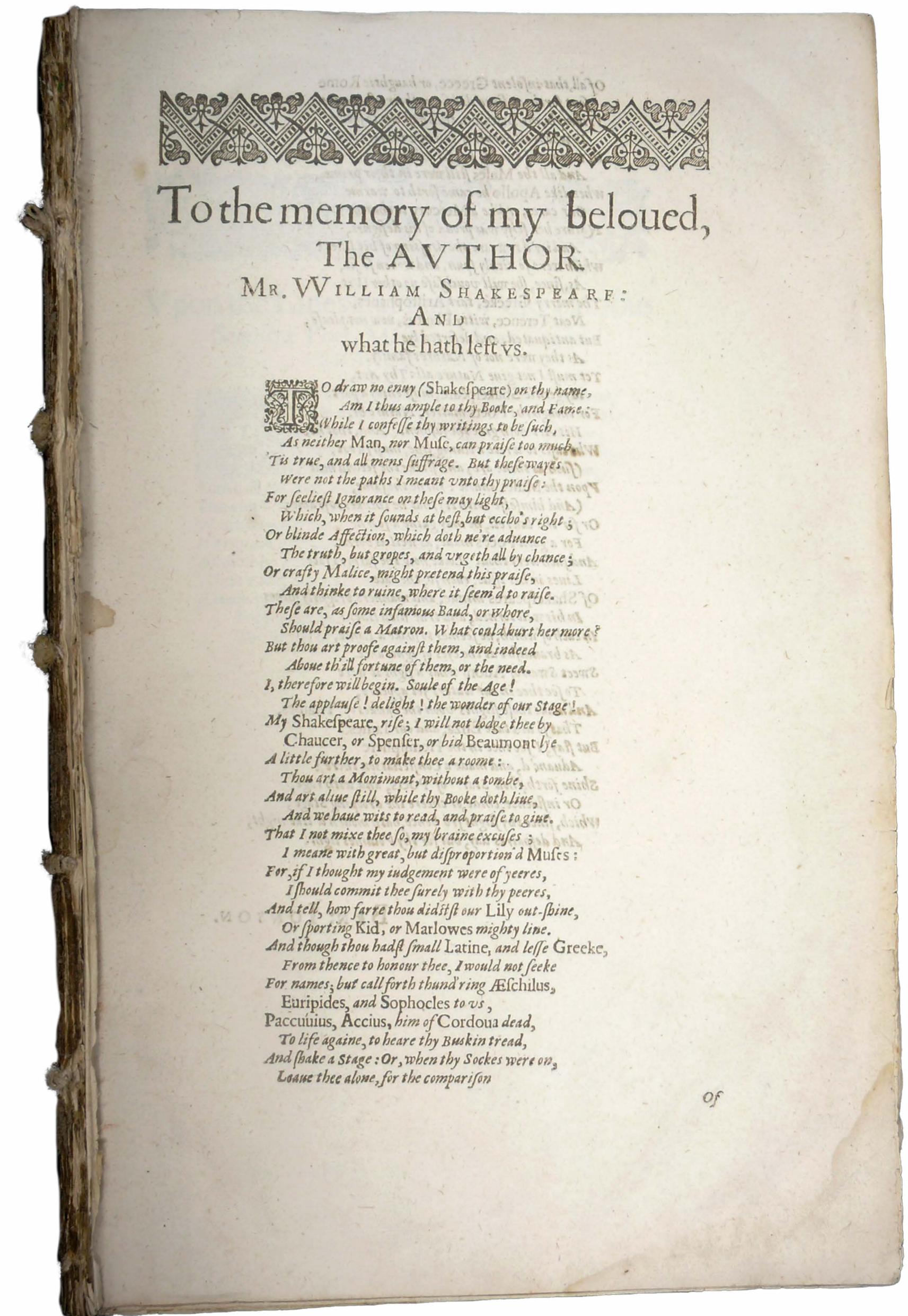
Look closely at the bottom of this page and you can see a very faint inscription. The ink becomes much clearer when exposed to different wavelengths of light, helping modern scholars learn what past readers were thinking, or, in this case, doodling!

## ACT II

### *The Cult of the Bard*

In a library full of rare and interesting books, what makes Shakespeare's First Folio so special? In part, this is the legacy of the promotional campaign devised by its publishers over 400 years ago.

To ensure it was seen as more than just a collection of plays, the creators included poems and laments by other writers to establish the significance of Shakespeare's work and give the book an almost sacred status.



This poem is an endorsement of Shakespeare's greatness from fellow playwright Ben Jonson. The verse celebrates the book as one "neither man nor Muse can praise too much".



Vpon the Lines and Life of the Famous  
Scenicke Poet, Master WILLIAM  
SHAKESPEARE.



Hose hands, which you so clapt, go now, and wring  
You Britains braue; for done are Shakespeares dayes:  
His dayes are done, that made the dainty Playes,  
Which made the Globe of heau'n and earth to ring.  
Dry'de is that veine, dry'd is the *Theopian* Spring,  
Turn'd all to teares, and *Phabus* clouds his rayes:  
That corp's, that coffin now besticke those bayes,  
Which crown'd him *Poet* first, then *Poets* King.  
If *Tragedies* might any *Prologue* haue,  
All those he made, would icarfe make one to this:  
Where *Fame*, now that he gone is to the graue  
(Deaths publike tyring-house) the *Nuncios* is.  
For though his line of life went soone about,  
The life yet of his lines shall neuer out.

HUGH HOLLAND.

Playwright Hugh Holland uses this poem to declare the immortality of Shakespeare's work. The First Folio serves as the eternal embodiment of the greatest author who has ever lived... well worth the purchase price!



TO THE MEMORIE  
of the deceased Authour Maister  
W. SHAKESPEARE.

Shake-speare, at length thy pious fellowes giue  
The world thy Workes: thy Workes, by which, out-live  
Thy Tombe, thy name must: when that stone is rent,  
And Time dissolues thy Stratford Monument,  
Here we aline shall view thee still. This Booke,  
When Brasse and Marble fade, shall make thee looke  
Fresh to all Ages: when Posteritie  
Shall loath what's new, thinke all is prodegie  
That is not Shake-speares; eu'ry Line, each Verse  
Here shall reuiue, redeeme thee from thy Herse.  
Nor Fire, nor cankring Age, as Naso said,  
Of his, thy wit-fraught Booke shall once innade.  
Nor shall Ie're beleene, or thinke thee dead  
(Though mist) untill our bankrupt Stage be sped  
(Impossible) with some new straine t'out-do  
Passions of Iuliet, and her Romeo;  
Or till I heare a Scene more nobly take,  
Then when thy half-Sword parlying Romans spake:  
Till these, till any of thy Volumes rest  
Shall with more fire, more feeling be exprest,  
Be sure, our Shake-speare, thou canst neuer dye,  
But crown'd with Laurell, liue eternally.

L. Digges.

To the memorie of M. W. Shake-speare.

WEE wondred (Shake-speare) that thou went'st so soone  
From the Worlds-Stage, to the Graues-Tyring-roome.  
Wee thought thee dead, but this thy printed worth,  
Tels thy Spectators, that thou went'st but forth  
To enter with applause. An Actors Art,  
Can dye, and liue, to acte a second part.  
That's but an Exit of Mortalitie;  
This, a Re-entrance to a Plaudite.

I. M.

The praise for Shakespeare continues in this poem. By owning the book, readers are invited to join the inner circle of writers and scholars helping to spread his fame.

The Workes of William Shakespeare,  
containing all his Comedies, Histories, and  
Tragedies: Truly set forth, according to their first  
ORIGINALL.

The Names of the Principall Actors  
in all these Playes.



*William Shakespeare.*

*Richard Burbadge.*

*John Hemmings.*

*Augustine Phillips.*

*William Kempt.*

*Thomas Poope.*

*George Bryan.*

*Henry Condell.*

*William Slye.*

*Richard Cowly.*

*John Lowine.*

*Samuell Crosse.*

*Alexander Cooke.*

*Samuel Gilburne.*

*Robert Armin.*

*William Ostler.*

*Nathan Field.*

*John Underwood.*

*Nicholas Tooley.*

*William Ecclestone.*

*Joseph Taylor.*

*Robert Benfield.*

*Robert Goughe.*

*Richard Robinson.*

*John Shancke.*

*John Rice.*

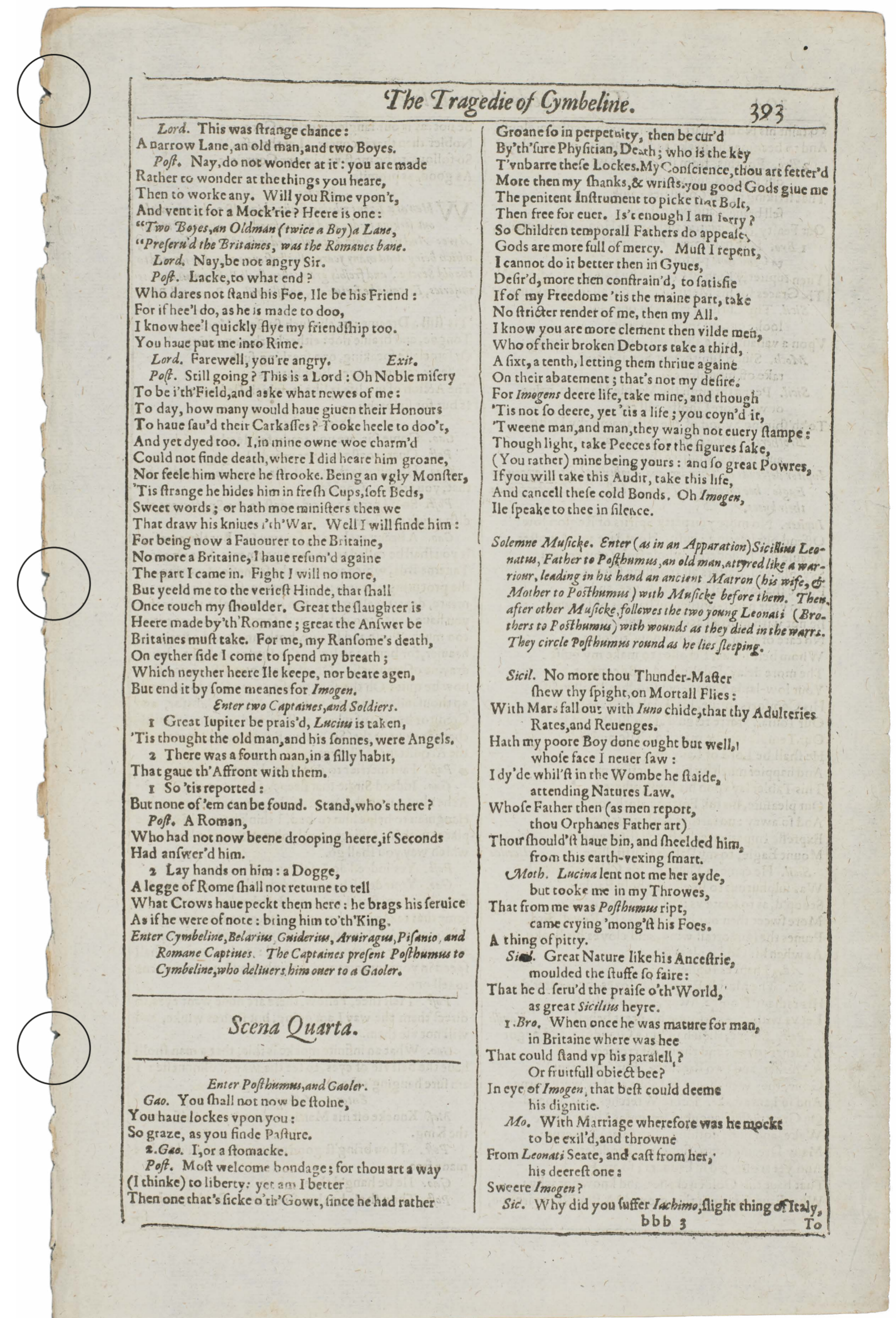
Before the publication of the First Folio, Shakespeare was best known as an actor, performing alongside the men listed here. This book focuses on promoting his talents as a playwright of unmatched genius.

# ACT III

## Making the First Folio

Every page of Shakespeare's First Folio was printed by hand, with each individual letter precisely arranged by a large team in a busy workshop.

The condition of our Folio allows us to look at multiple pages side by side to compare details and increase our understanding of the book as a physical object. The binding marks and print variants that you can see give a unique insight into the industry of book manufacturing in the 1600s.



The notches in the spine side of these pages are binding marks from the 1600s. Though they may look like damage, they are a rare piece of evidence of the book's original appearance.

I know not how, a Traitor.

*Cym.* Take him hence,  
The whole world shall not force him.

*Bel.* Not too hot;  
First pay me for the Nursing of thy Sonnes,  
And let it be confiscate all, so soone  
As I haue receyvd it.

*Cym.* Nursing of my Sonnes?  
*Bel.* I am too blunt, and tawey: heere's my knee:  
Ere I arise, I will preferre my Sonnes,  
Then spare not the old Father. Mighty Sir,  
These two young Gentlemen that call me Father,  
And thinke they are my Sonnes, are none of mine,  
They are the yllae of your Loynes, my Liege,  
And blood of your begetting.

*Cym.* How? my Issue.  
*Bel.* So sure as you, your Fathers: I (old *Morgan*)  
Am that *Belarius*, whom you sometime banish'd:  
Your pleasure was my neere offence, my punishment  
It selfe, and all my Treason that I suffer'd,  
Was all the harme I did. These gentle Princes  
(For such, and so they are) these twenty yeares  
Haue I train'd vp; those Armes they haue, as I  
Could put into them. My breeding was (Sir)  
As your Highnesse knowes: Their Nurse *Emphilie*  
(Whom for the Theft I wedded) stole these Children  
Vpon my Banishment: I mou'd her too't,  
Hauiug receyvd the punishment before  
For that which I did then. Beaten for Loyaltie,  
Excited me to Treason, Their deere losse,  
The more of you 'twas felt, the more it shap'd  
Vnto my end of stealing them. But gracious Sir,  
Heere are your Sonnes againe, and I must loose  
Two of the sweetest Companions in the World,  
The benediction of these cowering Heauens  
Fall on their heads like dew, for they are worthie  
To in-lay Heauen with Starres.

*Cym.* Thou weep'st, and speak'st:  
The Service that you three haue done, is more  
Vnlike, then this thou tell'st. I lost my Children,  
If these be they, I know not how to wish  
A payre of worthier Sonnes.

*Bel.* Be pleas'd awhile;  
This Gentleman, whom I call *Polidore*,  
Most worthy Prince, as yours, is true *Guiderius*:  
This Gentleman, my *Cadwallo*, *Arviragus*.  
Your yonger Princely Son, he Sir, was lapt  
In a most curious Mantle, wrought by th'hand  
Of his Queene Mother, which for more probatoun  
I can with ease produce.

*Cym.* *Guiderius* had  
Vpon his necke a Mole, a sanguine Starre,  
It was a marke of wonder.

*Bel.* This is he,  
Who hath vpon him still that naturall stampe:  
It was wife Natures end, in the donation  
To be his euident now.

*Cym.* Oh, what am I  
A Mother to the byrth of three? Nere Mother  
Reioyc'd deliuerance more: Blest, pray you be,  
That after this strange starting from your Orbes,  
You may reigne in them now: Oh *Imogen*,  
Thou hast lost by this a Kingdome.

*Imo.* No, my Lord:  
I haue got two Worlds by't. Oh my gentle Brothers,  
Haue we thus met? Oh neuer say heereafter

But I am truest speaker. You call'd me Brother  
When I was but your Sister: I you Brothers,  
When we were so indeed.

*Cym.* Did you ere meete?  
*Arvi.* I my good Lord.

*Gui.* And at first meeting lou'd,  
Continew'd so, vntill we thought he dyed.

*Cym.* By the Queenes Dramme she swallow'd,  
*Cym.* O rare instinct!

When shall I heare all through? This fierce abridgment,  
Hath to it Circumstantiall branches, which  
Distinction should be rich in. Where? how liu'd you?  
And when came you to serue our Romane Captiue?  
How parted with your Brother? How first met them?  
Why fled you from the Court? And whether these?  
And your three motiues to the Battaille? with  
I know not how much more should be demanded,  
And all the other by-dependances  
From chance to chance? But nor the Time, nor Place  
Will serue our long Interrogatories. See,  
*Pesthumus* Anchors vpon *Imogen*,  
And she (like harmlesse Lightning) throwes her eye  
On him: her Brothers, Me: her Master hitting  
Each object with a loy: the Counter-change  
Is feuerally in all. Let's quit this ground,  
And smooke the Temple with our Sacrifices.  
Thou art my Brother, so we'll hold thee euer.

*Imo.* You are my Father too, and did releue me:  
To see this gracious season,

*Cym.* All ore-joy'd  
Saue these in bonds, let them be ioysfull too,  
For they shall taste our Comfort.

*Imo.* My good Master, I will yet do you seruice.  
*Lus.* Happy be you.

*Cym.* The forlorne Souldier, that no Nobly fought  
He would haue well becom'd this place, and grac'd  
The thankings of a King.

*Post.* I am Sir  
The Souldier that did company these three  
In poore beseeching: 'twas a siment for  
The purpose I then follow'd. That I was he,  
Speake *Iachimo*, I had you downe, and might  
Haue made you finishe.

*Iach.* I am downe againe:  
But now my heauie Conscience sinkes my knee,  
As then your force did. Take that life, beseech you  
Which I so often owe: but your Ring first,  
And heere the Bracelet of the trust Pynesse  
That euer swore her faith.

*Post.* Kneele not to me:  
The powre that I haue on you, is to spare you:  
The malice towards you, to forgie you. Liue  
And deale with others better.

*Cym.* Nobly down'd:  
Wee'l learne our Freeneffe of a Sonne-in-Law:  
Pardon's the word to all.

*Arvi.* You helpe vs Sir,  
As you did meane indeed to be our Brother,  
Joy'd are we, that you are.

*Post.* Your Seruant Princes, Good my Lord of Rome  
Call forth your Sooth-sayer: As I slept, me thought  
Great Iupiter vpon his Eagle back'd  
Appear'd to me, with other sprightly shewes  
Of mine owne Kindred. When I wak'd, I found  
This Labell on my bosome; whose containing  
Is so from sense in hardnesse, that I can

Make

for the dead.  
*Can.* Vnlesse a man would marry a Gallows, & be-  
get yong Gibbets, I neuer saw one so prone: yet on my  
Conscience, there are verier Knaues desire to liue, for all  
he be a Roman; and there be some of them too that dye  
against their wills; so should I, if I were one. I would  
we were all of one minde, and one minde good: O there  
were desolation of Gallies and Galowfes: I speake a-  
gainst my present profit, but my wish hath a preferment  
in't.

### Scena Quinta.

Enter *Cymbeline*, *Belarius*, *Guiderius*, *Arvi-*  
*ragus*, *Pisano*, and *Lords*.

*Cym.* Stand by my side you, whom the Gods haue made  
Preferuers of my Throne: woe is my heart,  
That the poore Souldier that so richly fought,  
Whose ragges, shad'd gilded Armes, whose naked breast  
Stept before Targes of prooffe, cannot be found:  
He shall be happy that can finde him, if  
Our Grace can make him so.

*Bel.* I neuer saw  
Such Noble fury in so poore a Thing:  
Such precious deeds, in one that promist nought  
But beggery, and poore looks.

*Cym.* No tydings of him?  
*Pisa.* He hath bin search'd among the dead, & liuing;  
But no trace of him.

*Cym.* To my greefe, I am  
The heyre of his Reward, which I will adde  
To you (the Liver, Heart, and Braine of Britaine)  
By whom (I grant) she liues. 'Tis now the time  
To aske of whence you are. Report it.

*Bel.* Sir,  
In Cambria are we borne, and Gentlemen:  
Further to boast, were neyther true, nor modest.  
Vnlesse I adde, we are honest.

*Cym.* Bow your knees:  
Arise my Knights o'th' Bartell, I create you  
Companions to our person, and will fit you  
With Dignities becomming your estates.

Enter *Cornelius* and *Ladies*.  
There's businesse in these faces: why so sadly  
Greet you our Victory? you looke like Romanes,  
And not o'th' Court of Britaine.

*Corn.* Haile great King:  
To sowe your happinesse, I must report  
The Queene is dead.

*Cym.* Who worse then a Physician  
Would this report become? But I consider,  
By Medicine life may be prolong'd, yer death  
Will seize the Doctor too. How ended she?

*Corn.* With horror, madly dying, like her life,  
Which (being cruell to the world) concluded  
Most cruell to her selfe. What she confest,  
I will report, so please you. These her Women  
Can trip me, if I erre, who with wet cheekes  
Were present when she finis'd.

*Cym.* Prythee say  
*Corn.* First, she confest she neuer lou'd you: onely  
Affected Greatnesse got by you: not you,  
Married your Royaltie, was wife to your place:

Abhor'd your person.

*Cym.* She alone knew this:  
And but she spoke it dying, I would not  
Beleeue her lips in opening it. Proceed.

*Corn.* Your daughter, whom she bore in hand to loue  
With such integrity, she did confesse  
Was as a Scorpion to her fight, whole life  
(But that her flight prevented it) she had  
Tane off by poyson.

*Cym.* O most delicate Fiend!  
Who is't can read a Woman? Is there more?

*Corn.* More Sir, and worse. She did confesse she had  
For you a mortall Minerall, which being tooke,  
Should by the minute feede on life, and lingring  
By inches waste you. In which time, she purpos'd  
By watching, weeping, tendance, killing, to  
Orecome you with her shew; and in time  
(When she had fitted you with her craft, to worke  
Her Sonne into th' adoption of the Crowne)  
But sayling of her end by his strange absence,  
Grew shamelesse desperate, open'd (in despight  
Of Heauen, and Men) her purposes: repented  
The euils she hatch'd, were not effected: so  
Dispayring, dyed.

*Cym.* Heard you all this, her Women?  
*La.* We did, so please your Highnesse.

*Cym.* Mine eyes  
Were not in fault, for she was beautiful:  
Mine eares that heare her flattery, not my heart  
That thought her like her seeming. It had bene vicious  
To haue mistrusted her: yet (Oh my Daughter)  
That it was folly in me, thou may'st say,  
And proue it in thy feeling. Heauen mend all.

Enter *Lucius*, *Iachimo*, and other Roman prisoners,  
*Leonatus* behind, and *Imogen*.

Thou comm'st not *Caius* now for Tribute, that  
The Britaines haue rae'd out, though with the losse  
Of many a bold one: whose Kinsmen haue made suite  
That their good soules may be appeas'd, with slaughter  
Of you their Captiues, which our selfe haue granted,  
So thinke of your estate.

*Luc.* Consider Sir, the chance of Warre, the day  
Was yours by accident: had it gone with vs,  
We should not when the blood was cool, haue threatend  
Our Prisoners with the Sword. But since the Gods  
Will haue it thus, that nothing but our liues  
May be call'd ranfome, let it come: Sufficeth  
A Roman, with a Romans heart can suffer:  
*Augustus* liues to thinke on't: and so much  
For my peculiar care. This one thing onely  
I will entreate, my Boy (a Britaine borne)  
Let him be ransom'd: Neuer Master had  
A Page so kinde, so duteous, diligent,  
So tender ouer his occasions, true,  
So feare, so Nurse-like: let his vertue ioyne  
With my request, which Ile make bold, your Highnesse  
Cannot deny: he hath done no Britaine harme,  
Though he haue seru'd a Roman, Saue him (Sir)  
And spare no blood beside.

*Cym.* I haue surely seene him:  
His fauour is familiar to me: Boy,  
Thou hast look'd thy selfe into my grace,  
And art mine owne. I know not why, wherefore,  
To say, liue boy: ne're thanke thy Master, liue;  
And aske of *Cymbeline* what Boone thou wilt,  
Fitting my bounty, and thy state, Ile giue it:

Yes,

The single word in the bottom right corner of each page is called a catchword. This indicates the first word of the next page and is designed to help printers keep the loose sheets in order.

The tight columns and narrow margins you see here were set by printers to save on space. Although it was an expensive book for its time, the First Folio was actually printed on cheap paper to reduce production costs.



## To bind, or not to bind

**Every book in this library has a story to tell, but few as dramatic as the tale of our First Folio.**

The severely damaged condition of the book makes it unique among the 235 surviving copies of the First Folio and its complicated history has prompted lots of discussion and debate. After careful consideration and consultation with conservation experts, historians and local residents, we have decided to maintain it as you see it today.

Rebinding our Folio would irreversibly remove much of what makes it exceptional. We believe that we can learn more about it from its current condition than we could if it were rebound as any other book on the shelf.

The role of conservators is not to restore objects to their original condition, but to

**PRESERVE THE STORIES THAT OBJECTS HOLD FOR THE BENEFIT OF FUTURE GENERATIONS.**

The fragility that stops us reading our Folio as a traditional book presents opportunities for learning and research that no other First Folio can provide.

**“LET ME BE THAT I AM, AND SEEK NOT TO ALTER ME”**

*Much Ado About Nothing, Act 1 Scene 3*



**“ALL THAT GLISTERS IS NOT GOLD”**

**TWENTY YEARS OF ADVANCING TECHNOLOGY SINCE OUR FOLIO'S RETURN MEANS THAT WE HAVE NEW TOOLS TO EXPLORE THE BOOK IN WAYS WE COULD NOT WHEN IT WAS FIRST RECOVERED.**

The loose and damaged pages are a treasure trove of clues that help us understand how this book has changed over 400 years.

Thanks to modern techniques, details invisible to the human eye can be revealed without causing any damage to our Folio. Through a process known as spectroscopy, electromagnetic waves including x-rays, UV and infrared light can be directed at the book, with specialised detectors and cameras capturing the effects.

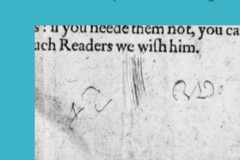
Approaches like this help us to see hidden details in a new light, with inks, creases and even the materials of the paper itself all analysed and investigated. The development of technology is one of the best arguments for not altering the book too greatly through conservation. What new techniques await that will reveal more deeply hidden secrets than those we see here?

*The Merchant of Venice, Act 2 Scene 7*

The image above shows the gilt edge of our Folio. Elemental analysis shows that this decoration is not just gold, but also contains high levels of arsenic.



Below: Infrared imaging reveals faint ink inscriptions in the margins



Above: "False Colour" image produced from hyperspectral imaging where different colours represent different materials. In this case, the fact that Troilus & Cressida is very dark relative to everything else tells us it is a different ink.



Find out more about the research and conservation work related to our First Folio in [Video 2 - Conservation and Research](#)





Put yourself in the shoes of our conservators and decide what you would do with Durham's First Folio. Explore the process of caring for this historic book and find out the consequences of your choices, for good and for bad. You can never please everyone!

Follow this link to [\*\*play our interactive game\*\*](#)



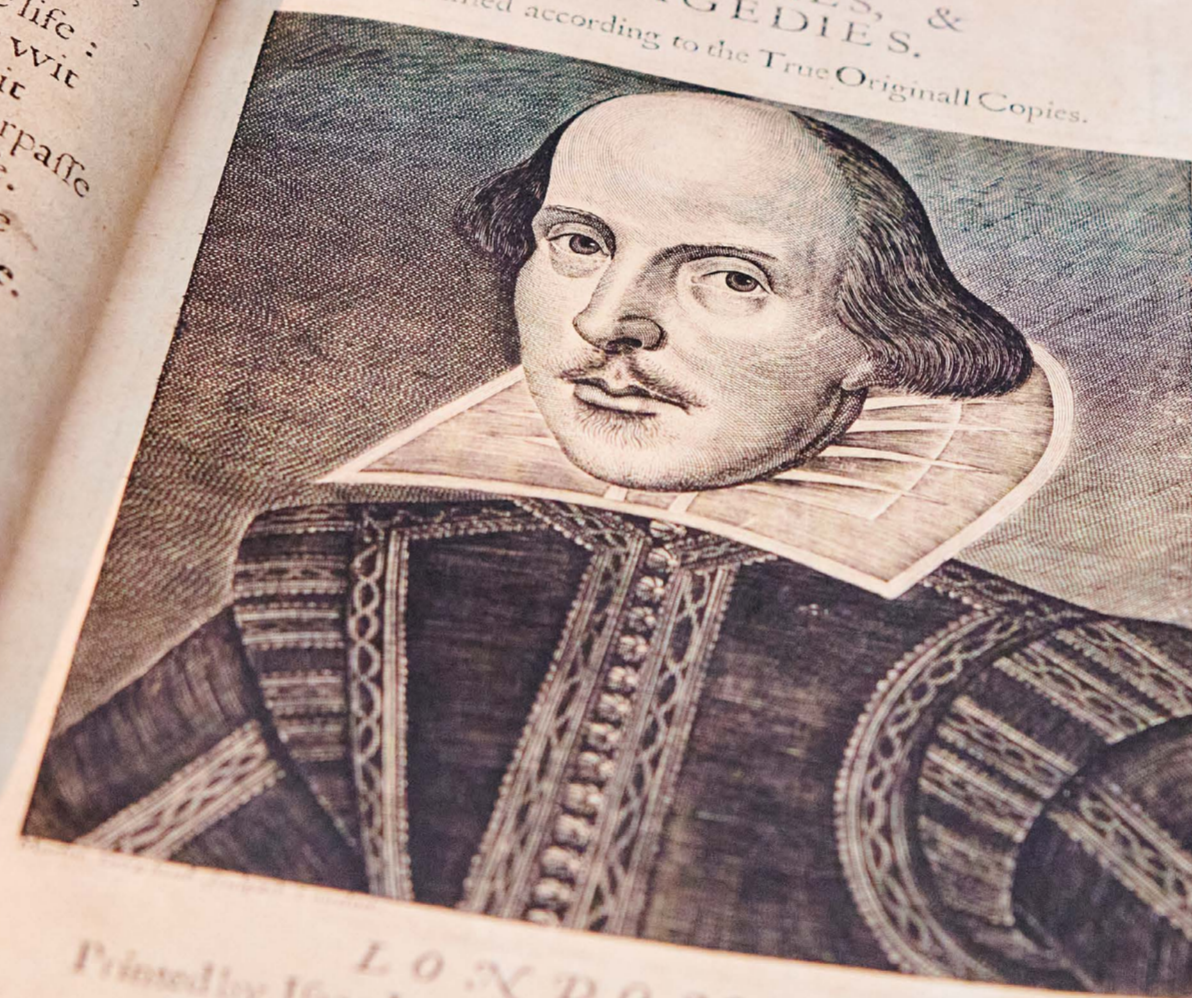
To the Reader.

This Figure, that thou here seest put,  
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut,  
Wherein the Grauer had a strife  
With Nature, to out-doo the life:  
O, could he but haue drawne his wit  
As well in bras, as he hath hit  
His face, the Print would then surpasse  
All, that vvas euer vvrit in bras.  
But, since he cannot, Reader, looke  
Nor on his Picture, but his Booke.

B. I.

MR. WILLIAM  
SHAKESPEARES  
COMEDIES,  
HISTORIES, &  
TRAGEDIES.

Published according to the True Originall Copies.



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Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount. 1611.