

**A CENSUS OF  
SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS  
IN QUARTO, 1594-1709**

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A census of Shakespeare's plays in quarto, 1594-1709 by Henrietta C. Bartlett & Alfred W. Pollard

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By  
HENRIETTA C. BARTLETT  
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*PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH IN YALE UNIVERSITY*  
BY THE ELIZABETHAN CLUB  
AND THE EDITORS



## INTRODUCTION.

Few literary prophecies have been so strikingly fulfilled as that of "A newer writer" who in the preface which follows the revised title of the first edition of *Troilus and Cressida* (1609) predicted of Shakespeare "when hee is gone and his Commedies out of sale you will scramble for them, and set up a new English Inquisition." It used to be thought much to say of a book that it was worth its weight in gold, but copies of the earliest Shakespeare quartos are worth their weight in banknotes and those notes by no means for the smallest sums. Nor is this money value unreasonable. It is based, as all money values will be found to be in the case of books, on intrinsic interest, the intrinsic interest, in this case, of the plays in themselves and secondly of these early editions as such. It is enhanced, moreover, as money values must always be, if they are to exceed the ordinary, by an exceptional degree of rarity.

We may take the question of rarity first, as the more quickly dealt with. How great it is this Census itself abundantly reveals. Of the earliest quarto with which Shakespeare's name has been connected, the 1594 edition of *Titus Andronicus* (we may both hope and believe that Shakespeare's share in it, if any, was of the very smallest) only one copy is known. Of the second, the first edition of *Richard II*, three copies are recorded, two of them in solid public ownership and so presumably beyond any chance of changing hands. Of the third, the first edition of *Richard III*, there are four copies and a fragment, of which two and the fragment are unpurchasable. Of the pirated *Romeo and Juliet* of 1597 only four copies are registered, three of them publicly owned; of the better text of 1599 as many as eleven, of which no fewer than seven are in private hands. In the case of the First Part of *Henry IV* there is a fragment of four leaves, which may be the scanty remains of an entire edition published early in 1598, and three copies (two in public ownership) of the edition of that year which usually passes as the first. Of *Love's Labors Lost* reasons have been given in *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos*\* (pp. 70 sq.) for believing that a pirated first edition has entirely perished. Of the good text of 1598, which passes as the first, there are as many as ten copies, no fewer than six being in private hands. The fact that nearly as large a number of copies exist of this quarto as of Burby's edition of *Romeo and Juliet* reinforces the argument for a pirated edition of the one play as of the other having helped, by taking off the edge of the demand, to save Burby's from being thumbed to pieces. On the other hand it can only be reckoned a coincidence, though a very curious one, that the present ownership of the ten copies of the one play, and of the eleven of the other is with one exception exactly the

\* *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos: a study in the bibliography of Shakespeare's plays, 1594-1685.* By Alfred W. Pollard. With 37 illustrations. Methuen and Co. 1909.

## INTRODUCTION

same.<sup>1</sup> Three other cases need special mention, the first of these being the Second Part of *Henry IV*, of which Sheet E in the first edition exists in two states, four copies of the first and four of the second issue being in public ownership, and three of the first and six of the second in private. In the case of *Hamlet* we have a double complication, an earlier text and a later, and for the later text two states of the title-page. Of the earlier edition only two copies are known (one public, one private); of the later text three copies with the title-page dated 1604 (one public, two private), and two (both public) with the last figure of the date altered to a 5. Lastly of *Troilus and Cressida* there are two issues of 1609, one with a mention on the title of its having been acted (two copies in public ownership, one in private), the other (five public, two private) withdrawing this statement and adding the preface, from which we have already quoted, which takes credit for the play "not being sullied with the smoaky breath of the multitude." Adding the editions which need no comment to those already mentioned we can present the whole series of First Editions in a list, variant issues being counted together, but editions with different texts kept apart.\*

### FIRST EDITIONS.

|   | Public Ownership. | Private Ownership. | Total.        |
|---|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Titus Andronicus, 1594 . . . . .              | 2                 | 1                  | 3             |
| Richard II, 1597 . . . . .                    | 2                 | 1                  | 3             |
| Richard III, 1597 . . . . .                   | 2 + frag.         | 2                  | 4 + frag.     |
| Romeo and Juliet, First Text, 1597 . . . . .  | 3                 | 1                  | 4             |
| Romeo and Juliet, Second Text, 1599 . . . . . | 4                 | 7                  | 11            |
| Henry IV, Part I, 1598 . . . . .              | 2                 | 1 + frag.*         | 3 + frag.*    |
| Love's Labors Lost, 1598 . . . . .            | 4                 | 6                  | 10            |
| Merchant of Venice, 1600 . . . . .            | 9                 | 8                  | 17            |
| Henry V, 1600 . . . . .                       | 4                 | 2                  | 6             |
| Much Ado about Nothing, 1600 . . . . .        | 8                 | 7                  | 15            |
| Henry IV, Part II, 1600 . . . . .             | 8                 | 9                  | 17            |
| Midsummer Night's Dream, 1600 . . . . .       | 5                 | 3                  | 8             |
| Merry Wives of Windsor, 1602 . . . . .        | 3                 | 2                  | 5             |
| Hamlet, First text, 1603 . . . . .            | 1                 | 1                  | 2             |
| Hamlet, Second text, 1604-05 . . . . .        | 3                 | 2                  | 5             |
| King Lear, 1608 . . . . .                     | 6                 | 4                  | 10            |
| Troilus and Cressida, 1609 . . . . .          | 7                 | 3                  | 10            |
| Othello, 1622 . . . . .                       | 9                 | 4                  | 13            |
|   | 80 + 1 frag.      | 64 + 1 frag.       | 144 + 2 frag. |

\* The fragment of *Henry IV*, Part I, from the Perry Collection is reckoned with the 1598 edition, as if the same text. Logically, either the fragment or the 3 copies of the 1598 edition should be excluded.

<sup>1</sup> The Elizabethan Club owns a copy of *Romeo and Juliet* and none of *Love's Labors Lost*. Trinity College, Cambridge, owns a copy of *Love's Labors Lost* and none of *Romeo and Juliet*. The other owners are the Bodleian Library, the Earl of Ellesmere (each copy having been catalogued by the Second Earl of Bridgewater in 1649), the British Museum, Edinburgh University (each copy presented by William Drummond of Hawthornden), Mr. Folger (two copies of *Love's Labors Lost* and three of *Romeo and Juliet*), Mr. Huntington (two of each) and Mr. W. A. White.

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Thus of these eighteen editions which, as we shall see, have great, if varying, importance for the construction of a text, the average number of copies extant is just eight apiece, and less than half of these are in private hands, though probably enough remain unregistered to bring the two classes to an equality and make the average number of copies still extant nine instead of eight.

The hypothetical pirated First Edition of *Love's Labors Lost*, if it ever existed, has left no trace behind except a possible allusion on the title-page of Burby's edition. The First Edition of *Henry IV*, Part I, is represented by a fragment of four leaves, *Titus Andronicus* by one copy, the first *Hamlet* by two, *Richard II* by three, the first *Romeo and Juliet* by four, *Richard III* by four and a bit, the *Merry Wives* and second *Hamlet* by five, *Henry V* by six. There is no seven, nor nine, nor twelve, nor fourteen, nor sixteen; otherwise from zero to seventeen all the numbers are filled. Is there any basis for a guess, or guesses, why so many more copies of some plays should have been preserved than of others? Mr. Falconer Madan, in commenting on the story of the original Bodleian copy of the First Folio, which disappeared from the library in the Seventeenth Century (it was probably sold as a duplicate when the third edition appeared in 1663) and was bought back in 1906 for £3000, found evidence of the degrees of popularity of different plays in the comparative amount of wear and tear shown by the leaves on which they were printed. We may safely invert the deduction and connect the disappearance of copies with the popularity of the plays, or (which is not quite the same thing) their vogue with the play-reading public at the moment of issue. It is noteworthy that the four quartos which everyone admits to have been pirated, the first *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry V*, the *Merry Wives* and the first *Hamlet*, only muster seventeen copies between them, or just half the average of the First Quartos as a whole. We are not to attribute this fewness of copies to any high minded objection of book buyers to piracy, leading them to purchase copies in order to burn them, or even to burn them after they had been read, as scrupulous people might burn foreign editions of copyright novels which they had brought home to finish. We should rather remember that the pirate *ex hypothesi* always got out his edition at least a little before the time when the players would have printed the play of their own accord. If he could not effect his piracy when the vogue of a play was at its height, he must needs come in as soon as possible after this, or he would have had no temptation to take the risk of getting himself into trouble. What concerns us is that the nearer to the psychological moment his edition appeared the more likely would it be to be thumbed to pieces.

Turning to the quartos which we believe to have been printed with the players' consent we find that *Richard II*, *Richard III* and *Henry IV*, Part I, represented respectively by three, four and three copies of the first edition, went through five or six editions apiece before 1623, whereas *Henry IV*, Part II, of which nineteen copies survive, was never reprinted in quarto. It is disconcerting to find that, on the theory this suggests, so fine a play as