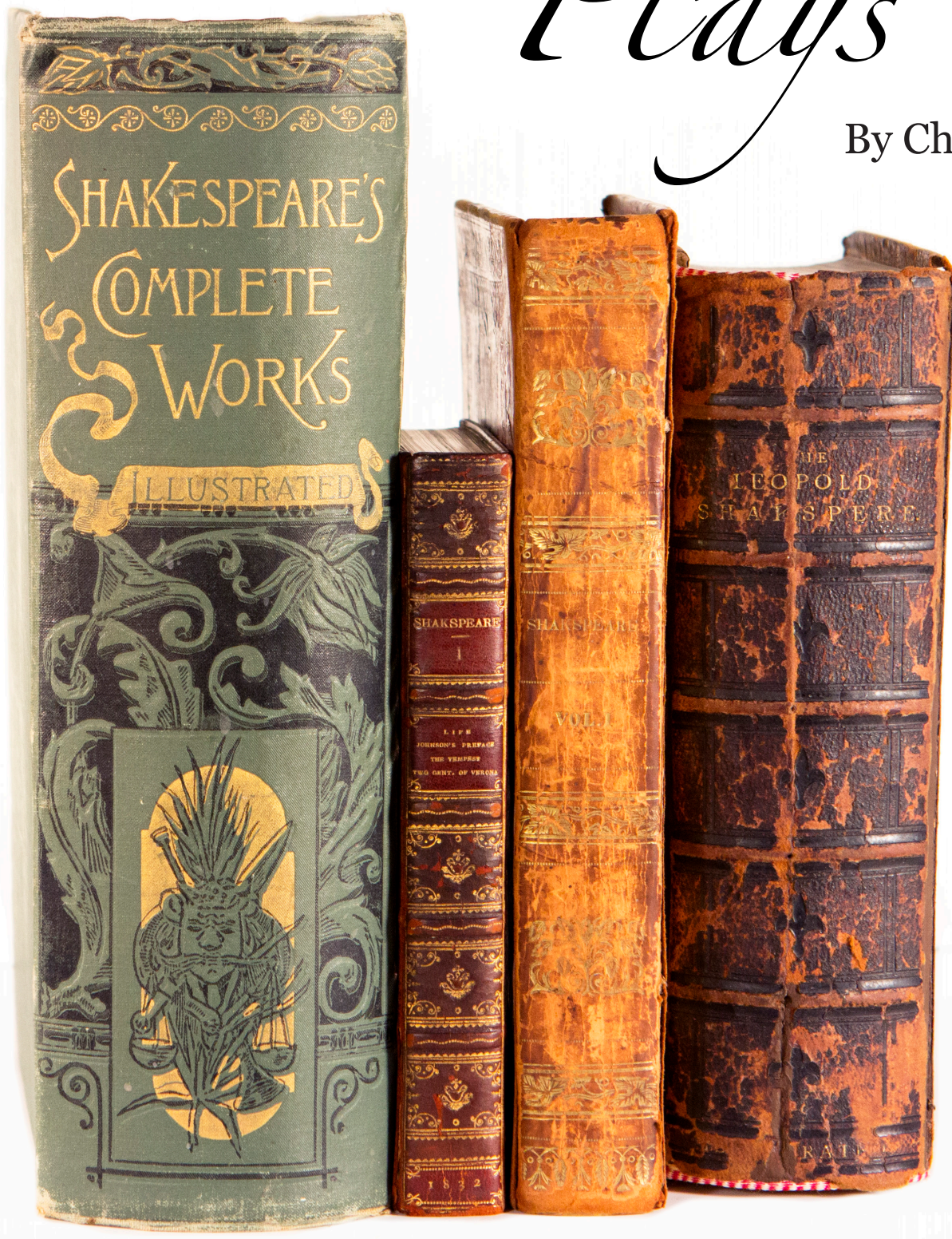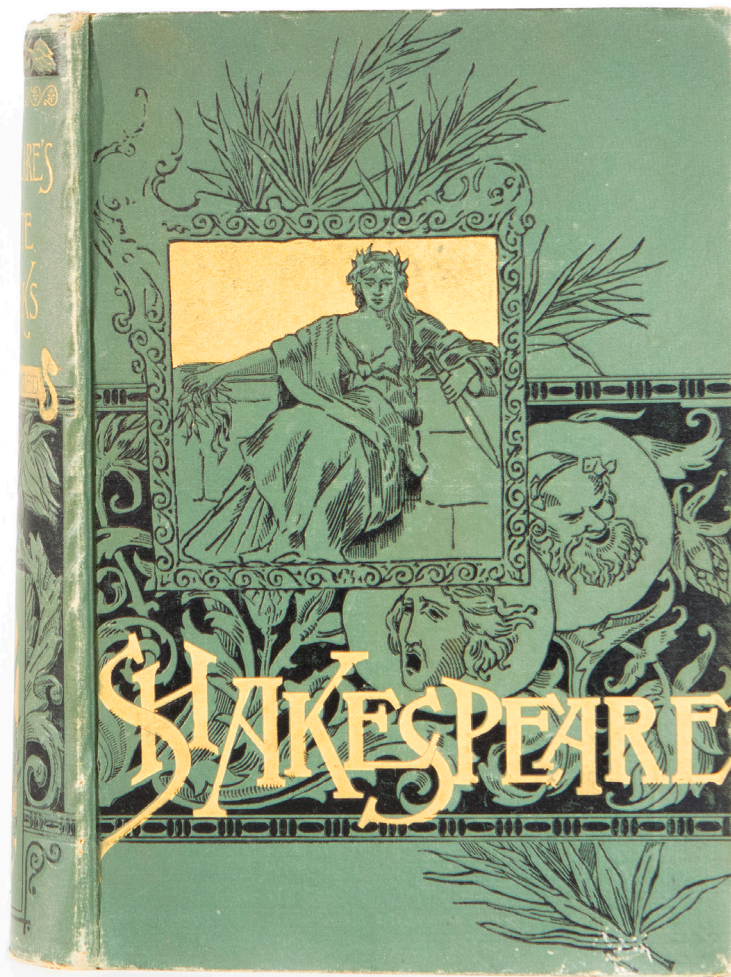# The Art of Printing

Shakespeare Plays

By Charlotte Guthery

The Complete Works
of William Shakespeare
One Volume, 1878

A teal cloth bound book depicts intricate detail including impressions and gold detailing using a gold leaf technique. This book contains an older image of Shakespeare with his dog above his signature. This copy was printed in 1878 with its original binding. It was published and printed in Albany, New York, titled as America's Standard Edition of the Complete Works of William Shakespeare and was edited by Hallwell, Knight, and Collier. This is an illustrated edition, although it contains less images than the other copies in this article. The prints are intricate and full page, depicting famous actors of the decade portraying well known Shakespearean characters.

The Leopold Shakespeare

One Volume / circa 1800

The Leopold Shakespeare was aptly named, as this edition was dedicated to King Leopold of Belgium. The cover and binding are of engraved leather and gold leaf detailing. This edition also contains Shakespeare's coat of arms displayed on the cover. At the time Shakespeare was surviving family was prominent and had a coat of arms to represent them.

Shakespeare was born to a family with none, but after becoming well known he created his own. There are Latin and Roman letters present below the title. This is one of the most ornately decorated editions; the interior is covered in wood engraving embellishments, which were based on the engravings in the first folio.
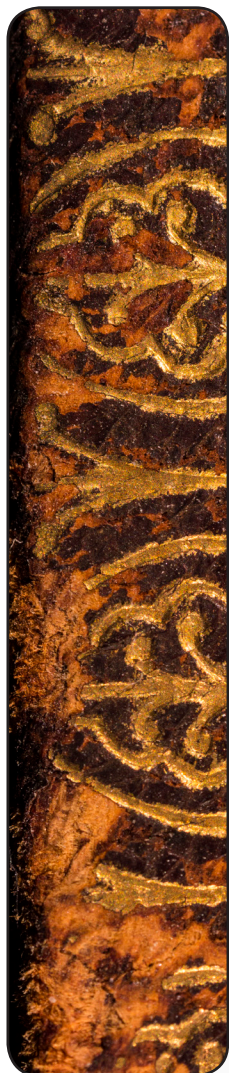
The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare

Two Volumes, 1831

This collection of Shakespeare was printed in two volumes; Comedies and Tragedies. The cover is made of polished calfskin with gold leafing with shallow impressions on the cover. The inside cover image of Shakespeare depicts him surrounded by the prominent actors of the 1800's, which was not uncommon. Many times, all of the images in these volumes were of famous actors depicted as the characters they play, as seen in Book 1. This specific edition is considered a "working" edition, which means it is a draft of a book. A working edition was sold cheaply, while the "final" edition of the volumes would be made using better quality resources (paper, leather, ink) and sold at a higher price.

The Plays and Poems of Shakespeare

Fifteen Volumes / 1832

This specific edition has many impressive qualities, as it is an 1832 volume edited by A.J. Vampy with images taken from paintings by Boydell, who were both famous in this era. While the binding is not original, it was rebound by a well-known printer, Joseph Zaehinsdorf. The cover is Polish calfskin and spine with gold leafing. The binding is incredibly intricate for the size of the book, but shows wear in the corners where the leather has torn away.

The prints inside are an important feature as they are based off of the paintings from Boydell's collection. John Boydell was an 18th century publisher who spent the last two decades of his life creating a three part Shakespeare project. This project would eventually contain an illustrated edition, a folio of prints, and a gallery open to the public of paintings all from Shakespearean scenes, curated by Boydell. These images are scattered throughout this collection.
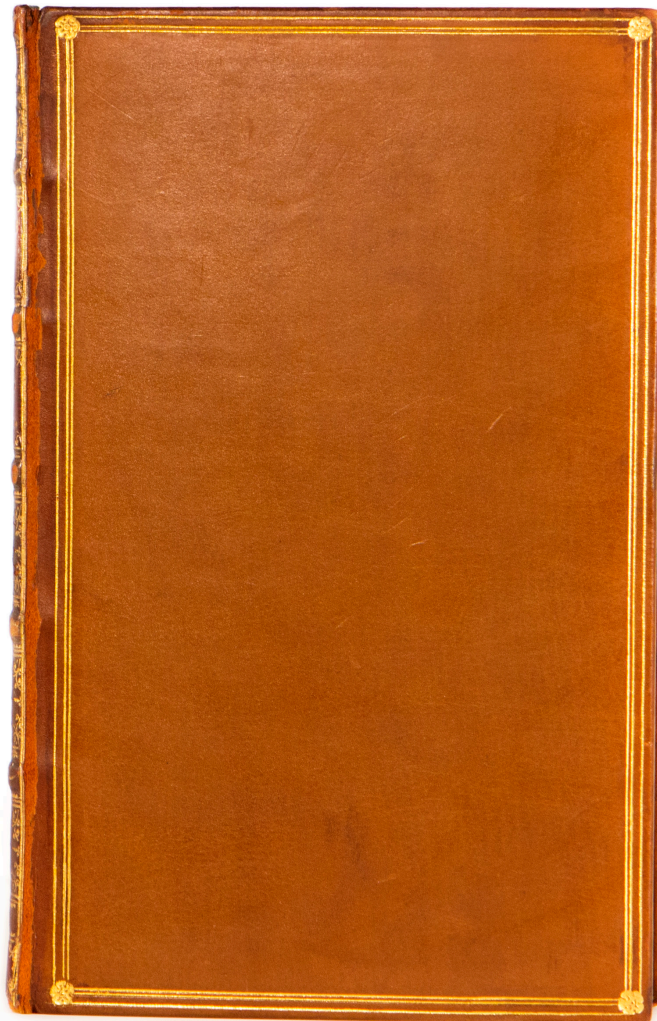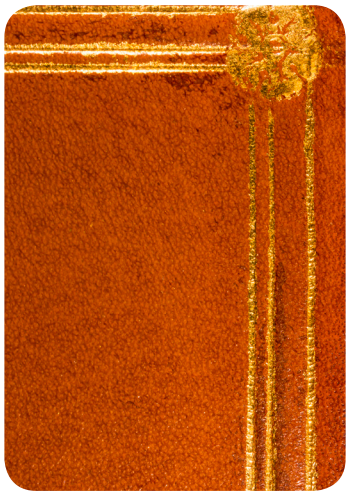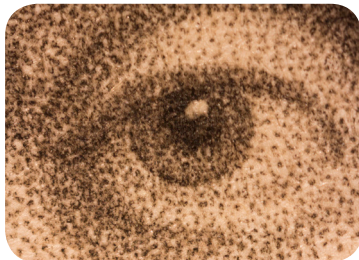
Shakespeare's Portrait

Book 1

Book 2

Book 3

Book 4

Many copies of Shakespearean plays include an image of Shakespeare on the inside front cover. The most common of these portraits is shown in the second book, but as seen in the other copies there are many more version that are not as well known. The images of Shakespeare vary widely, but that is not uncommon for the time period he was alive. In fact many of these prints were created using different techniques altogether.

The first book, while being one of the newer copies, is the only one which includes relief prints. A relief print is what most people think of for printing. Some type of material (wood, steel, copper, etc.) is carved to create an image. To transfer the picture, ink is place on the uncarved (raised) portions. There are few ways to distinguish this from an engraving or etching. Engravings and etchings work by putting ink on the carved out grooves (lower portions), then pressing the print firmly to deposit the ink. Relief prints show the ink indented into the page, while etchings and engravings show the ink above the paper. This is seen in the first book, where the ink appears lower than the rest of the page.

This particular image was created using steel stippling. Stippling is mainly used for shading, in unison with solid lines and strokes.

The second book, depicting the most famous of Shakespeare's portraits is a woodcut engraving. The thick lines and structured feel show this. Wood does not allow for heavy blacks, nor for extreme detail, but is easy and inexpensive to produce.

Book 3 shows a portrait of Shakespeare created using a copper engraving with no stippling and Book 4 uses a steel engraving with stippling. Determining the difference between copper and steel engravings is difficult, but possible. Steel allows for much more freedom with lines and shading, while copper prints have slightly thick more structured feel to them.

Images and Details

The images included in each edition are very different from one another, showing not only the artist's taste, but also the worth of that particular book. Book 1 uses the exact same printing as was used for Shakespeare's portrait, a steel relief print with stippling. Book 2 also uses a similar method with a woodcut engraving.

Book 3, however switches from copper engravings to woodcut engravings. This supports the idea that this copy is a working print. Because of this the most expensive material is the paper, so everything is cramped to preserve space. The prints themselves, of which there are many in this volume, will also be inexpensive, as wood is less expensive than copper

The fourth book is also a unique image. This particular copy actually has prints commissioned by the 18th century publisher named Boydell, as described earlier. This copy uses a new technique, not seen in the other books, of etching. Etchings are like engravings in where the ink is placed, but instead of carving out images, etchings are painted onto a surface with a corrosive acid, which creates the indents. Etchings, therefore, have more of a flow and drawn quality to them, much like a painting.
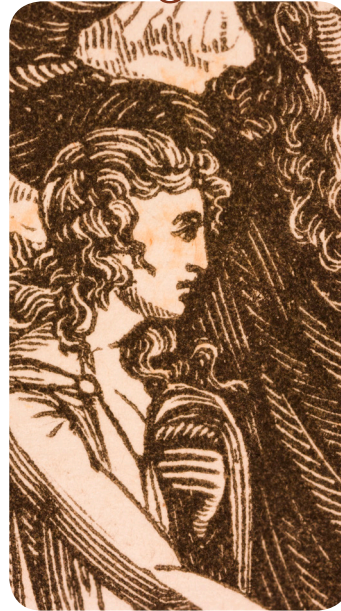
Book 1

Book 2

Book 3

## Book 4

Fonts

Book 1

Book 2

Book 3

Book 4

Typefaces are an important part to any design or layout. The typeface, layout, and size of the title and body text shows a lot about the print and its intended audience. When viewing titles of the plays in each book, there is an obvious difference between the first book and the others. Book 1 uses a Black-Letter typeface, shown by the thick lines, gothic feel, and triangle serifs, while the other books use a slab-serif font, shown by thick straight lines. Most of these books were printed around the early 1800's, when the slab-serif font was commonly used in printing. In this instance the first book was printed four decades after the others, which could explain the difference. There is also a difference in the quality of the prints. When comparing the three slab-serif fonts, it is apparent that Book 2 has the best quality print. The Book 3's title shows messiness around the edges of each letter and Book 4 doesn't have a clean print on the paper. The quality can also be seen in the body text. Not only the quality of the print, but also the paper. Once again Book 2 has an extremely clean print and solid paper. Book 3, however, shows its inexpensiveness. Not only are the letters messy and not printed evenly, but there are imperfections in the paper, and letters from the other side show through. This supports the idea that the third book is a working copy.

About the Author
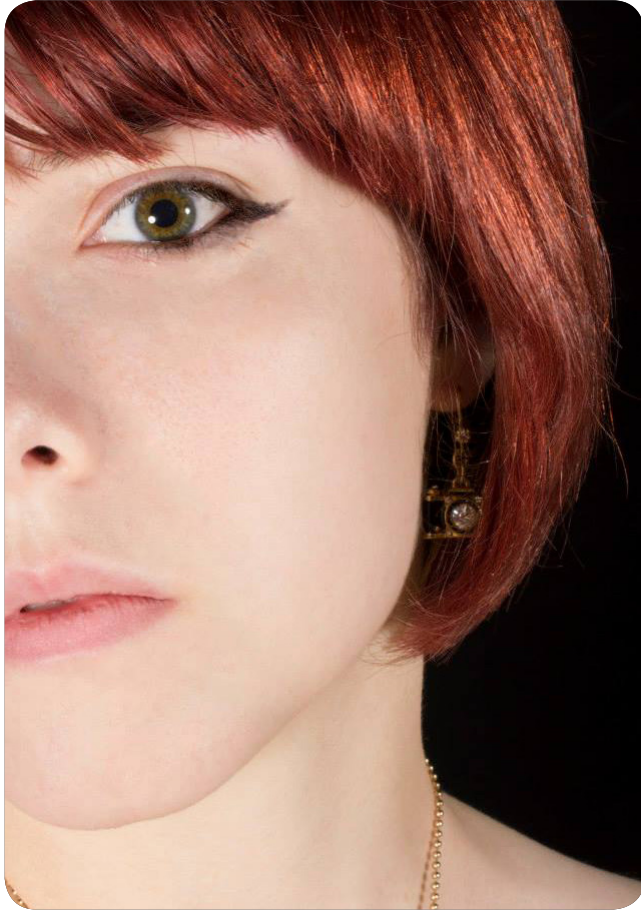
Charlotte Guthery is currently a third-year Imaging and Photographic technology student at Rochester Institute of Technology. She is focusing her studies on advanced optics, mathematics, astronomy, and programming, in addition to her major. After college she is hoping to continue her studies in a graduate school for Optical Engineering. Outside of school she has a passion for Shakespearean plays. Beginning at age 10, Guthery took summer classes in DC specifically on reading, understanding, and acting in Shakespeare Plays. She pursued this until age 18. During college she has been perpetuating this interest in the form of a study. She has always felt confined by the time limit when studying Shakespeare's plays in classes, so has decided to independently study them. She hopes to use this to delve into the text and story of the play and understand it further.
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