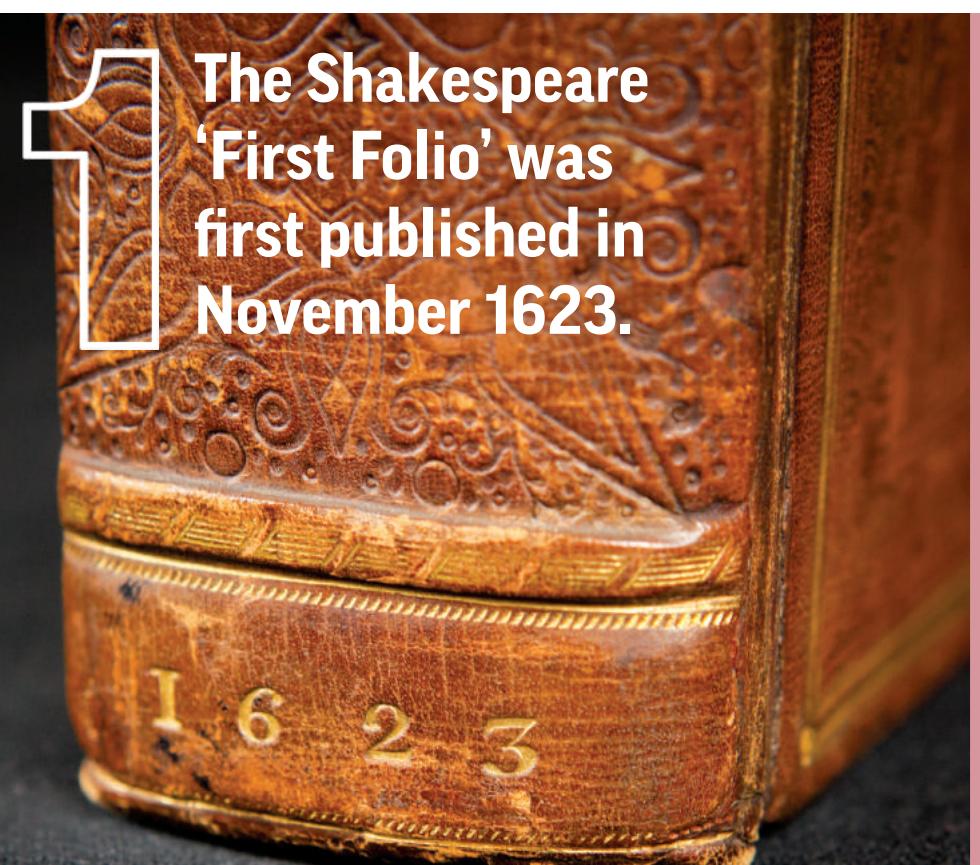
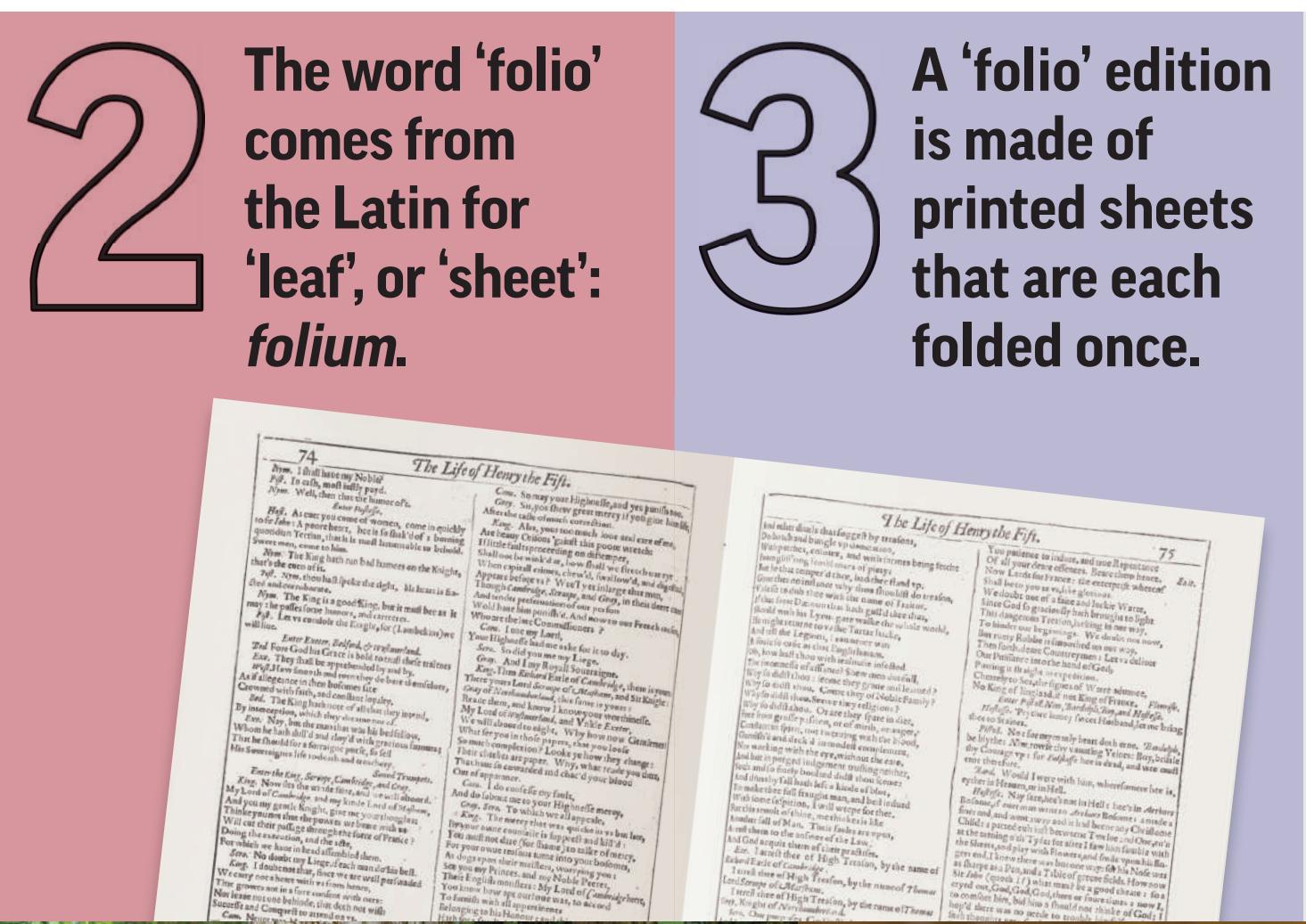


# FIFTY FIRST FOLIO FACTS

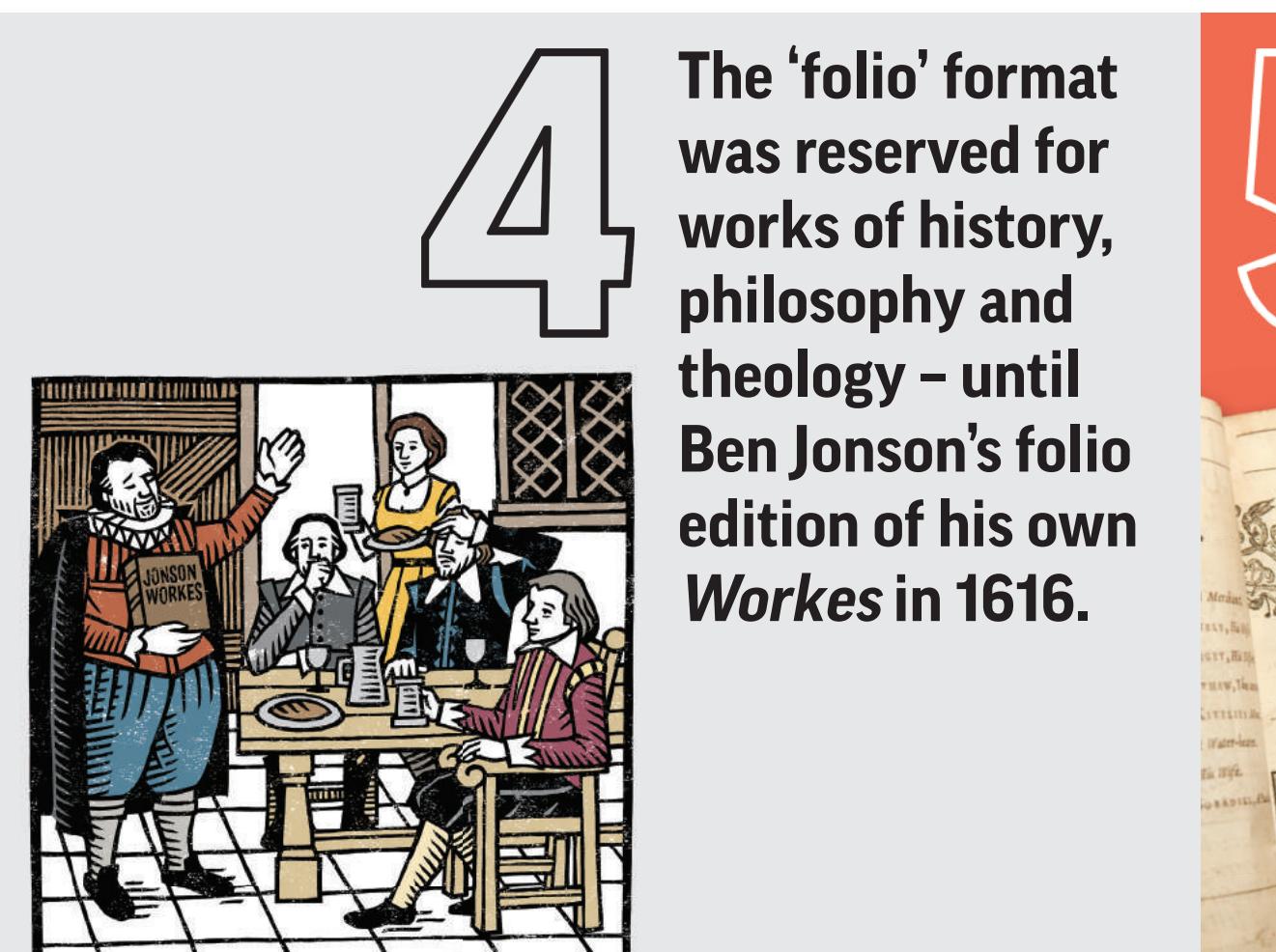


1 The Shakespeare 'First Folio' was first published in November 1623.

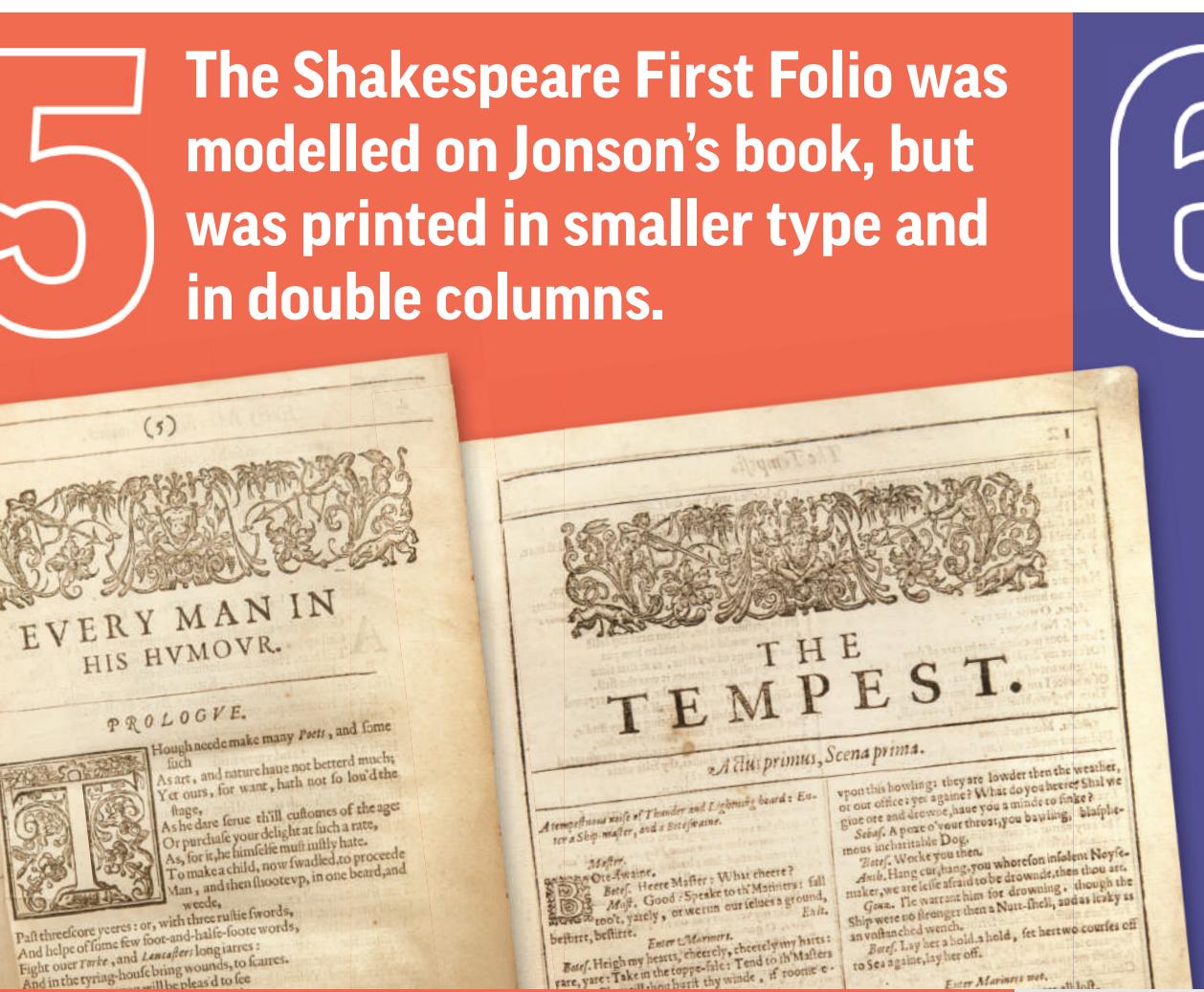


2 The word 'folio' comes from the Latin for 'leaf' or 'sheet': *folium*.

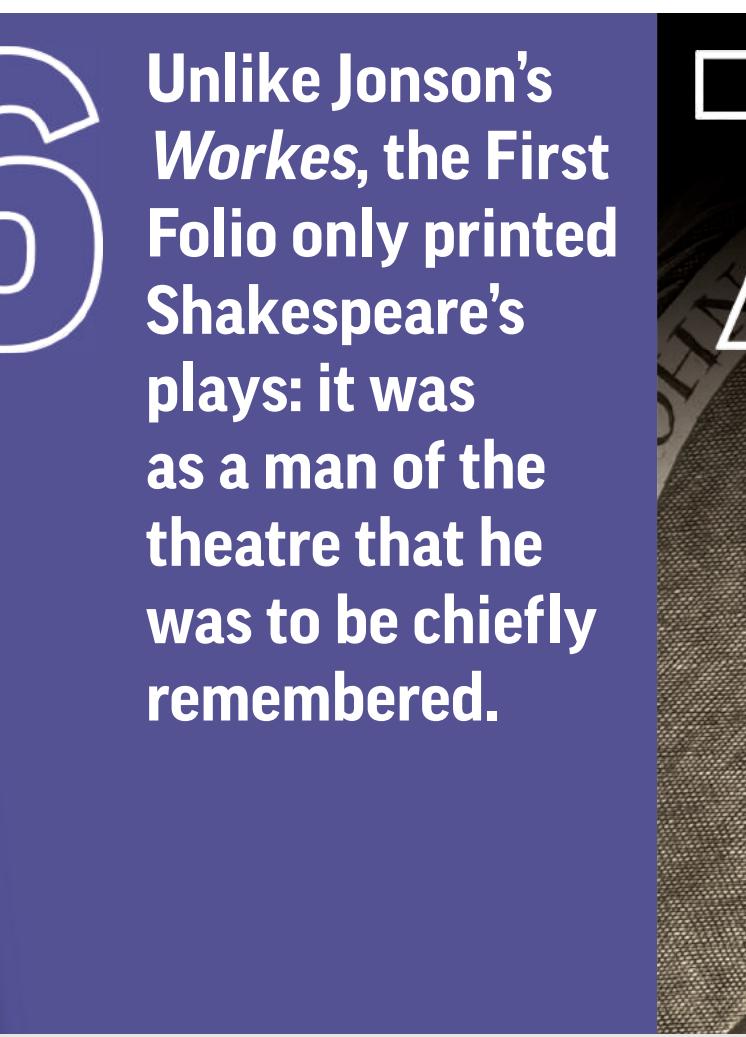
3 A 'folio' edition is made of printed sheets that are each folded once.



4 The 'folio' format was reserved for works of history, philosophy and theology – until Ben Jonson's folio edition of his own *Workes* in 1616.



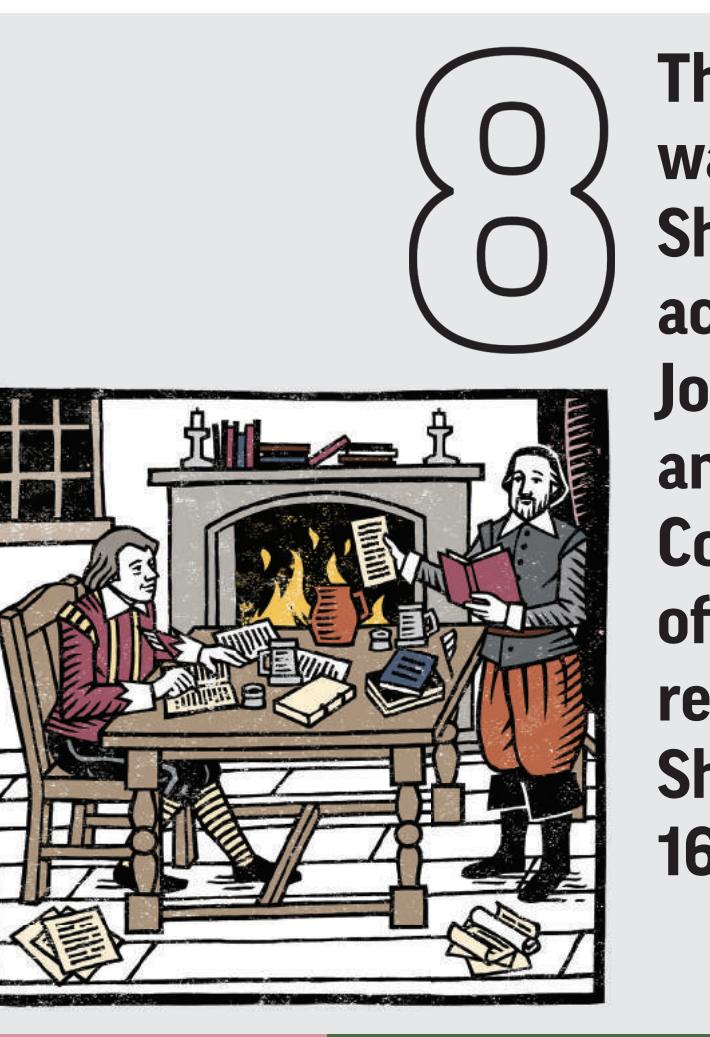
5 The Shakespeare First Folio was modelled on Jonson's book, but was printed in smaller type and in double columns.



6 Unlike Jonson's *Workes*, the First Folio only printed Shakespeare's plays: it was as a man of the theatre that he was to be chiefly remembered.

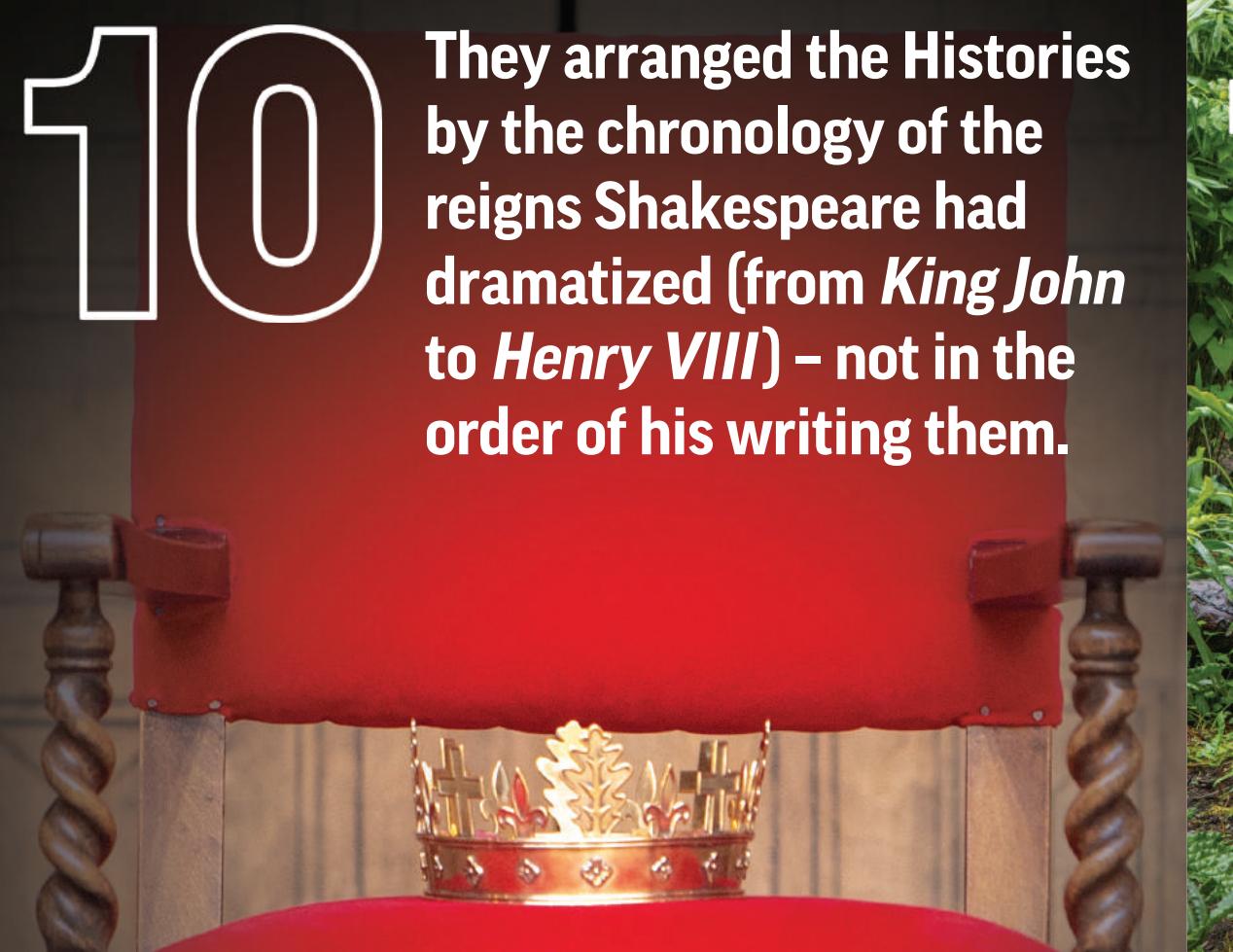


7 Ben Jonson wrote two poems to introduce his friend's First Folio.



8 The First Folio was prepared by Shakespeare's acting colleagues John Heminge and Henry Condell, both of whom were remembered in Shakespeare's 1616 will.

9 Carefully researching their collection, Heminge and Condell divided their friend's plays into three sorts: Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies.



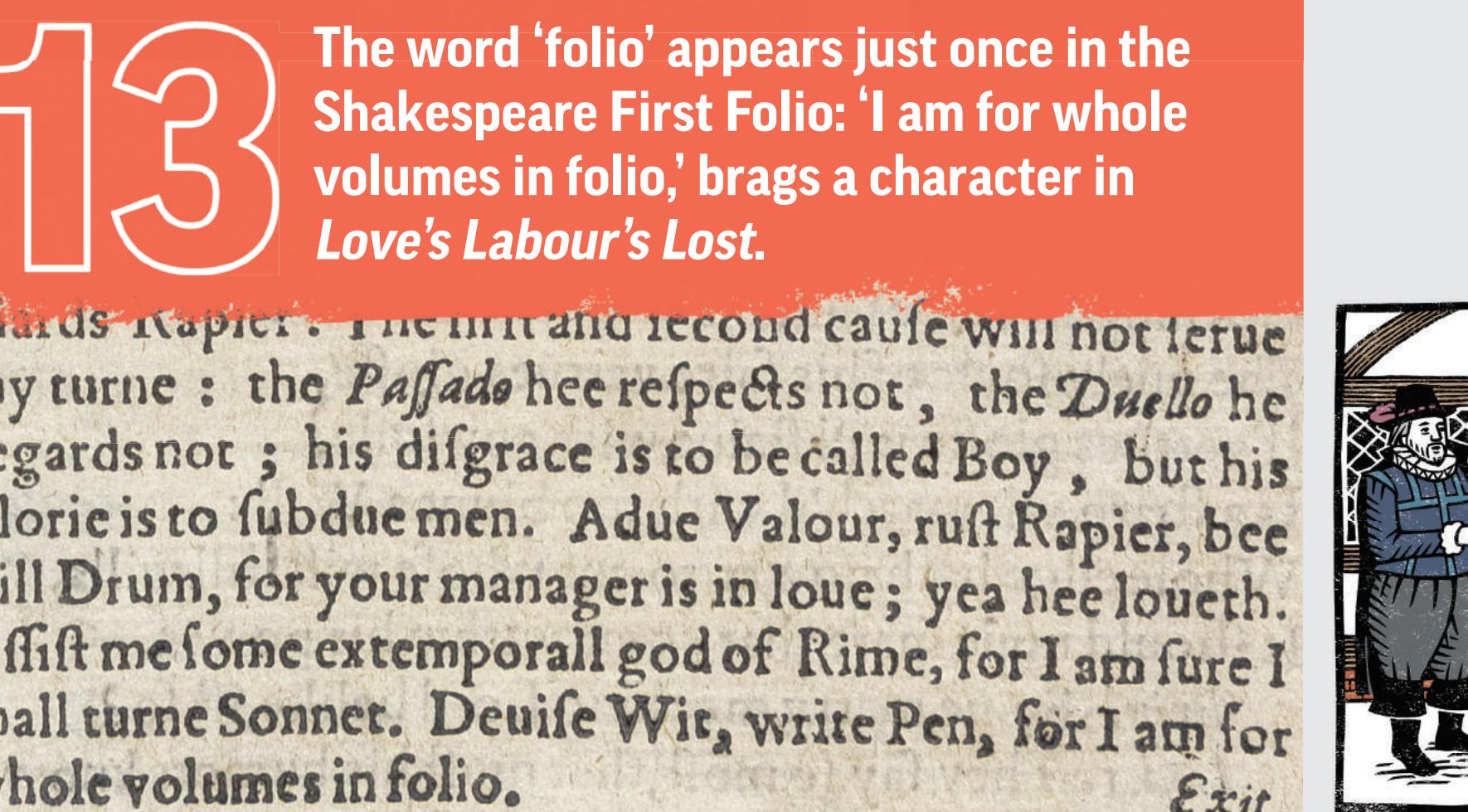
10 They arranged the Histories by the chronology of the reigns Shakespeare had dramatized (from *King John* to *Henry VIII*) – not in the order of his writing them.



11 The arrangement of the Comedies seems to follow a seasonal cycle, from *The Tempest*'s spring-like rebirth, via *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, to *Twelfth Night* and *The Winter's Tale*.



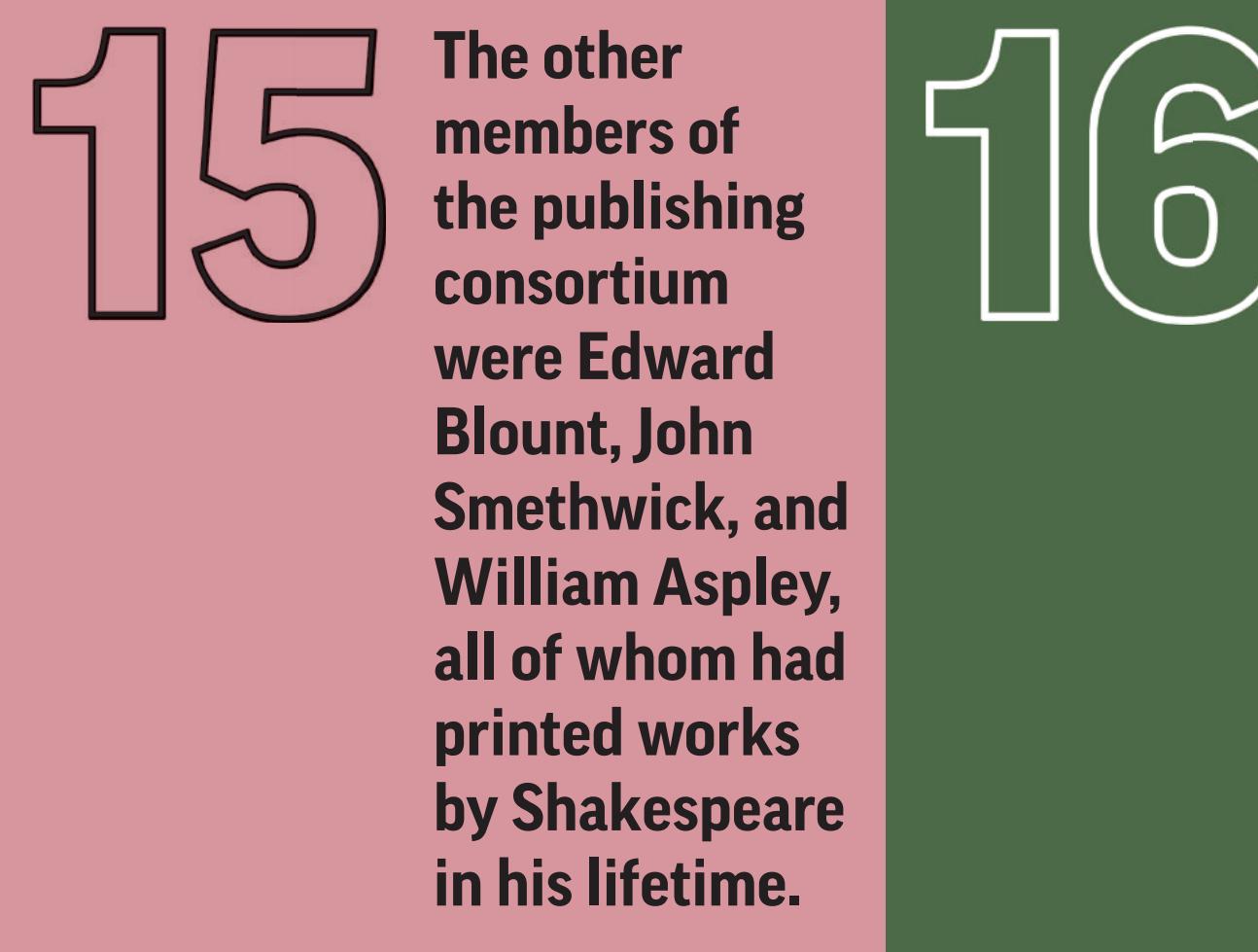
12 The First Folio's full title reads: *Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies.*



13 The word 'folio' appears just once in the Shakespeare First Folio: 'I am for whole volumes in folio,' brags a character in *Love's Labour's Lost*.



14 The First Folio was produced by a syndicate of publishers, led by the father-and-son team of William and Isaac Jaggard.



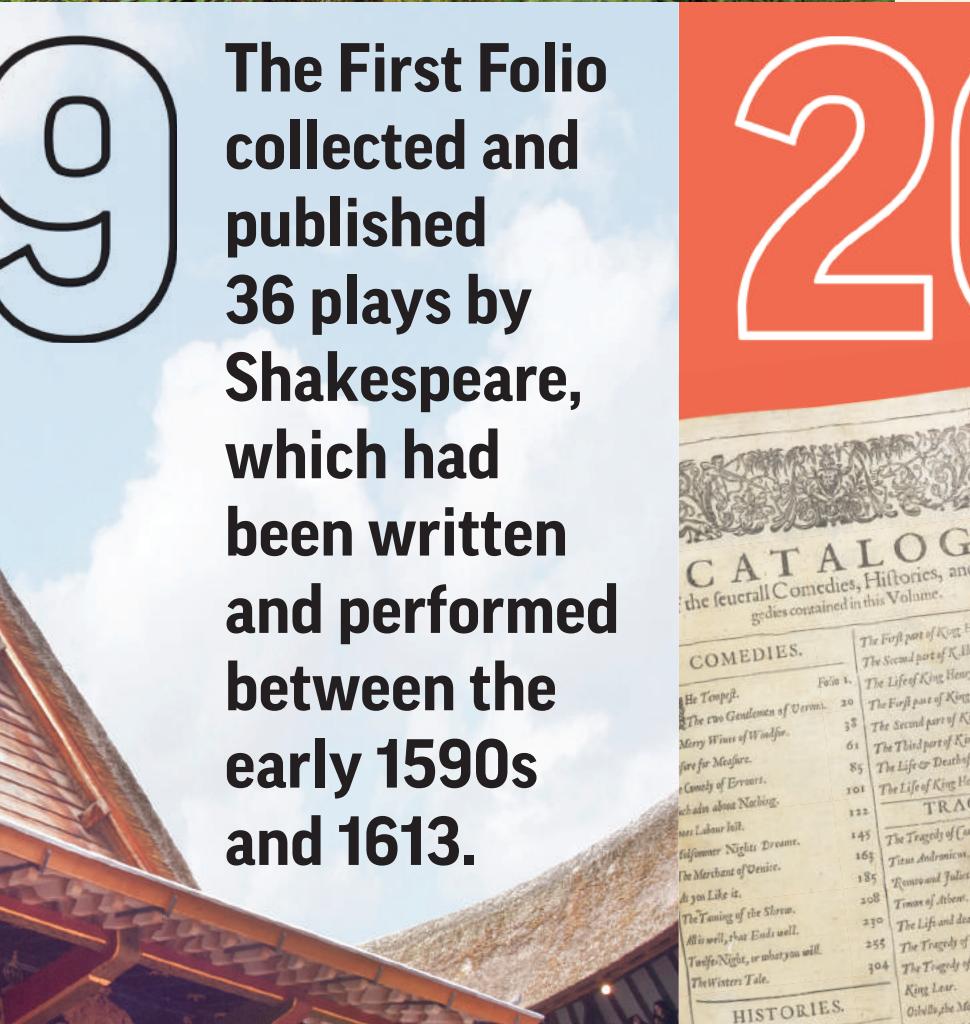
15 The other members of the publishing consortium were Edward Blount, John Smethwick, and William Aspley, all of whom had printed works by Shakespeare in his lifetime.

16 William Jaggard was blind, and died a month before the publication of the First Folio.

17 William Jaggard had owned the monopoly on printing London playbills since 1615.



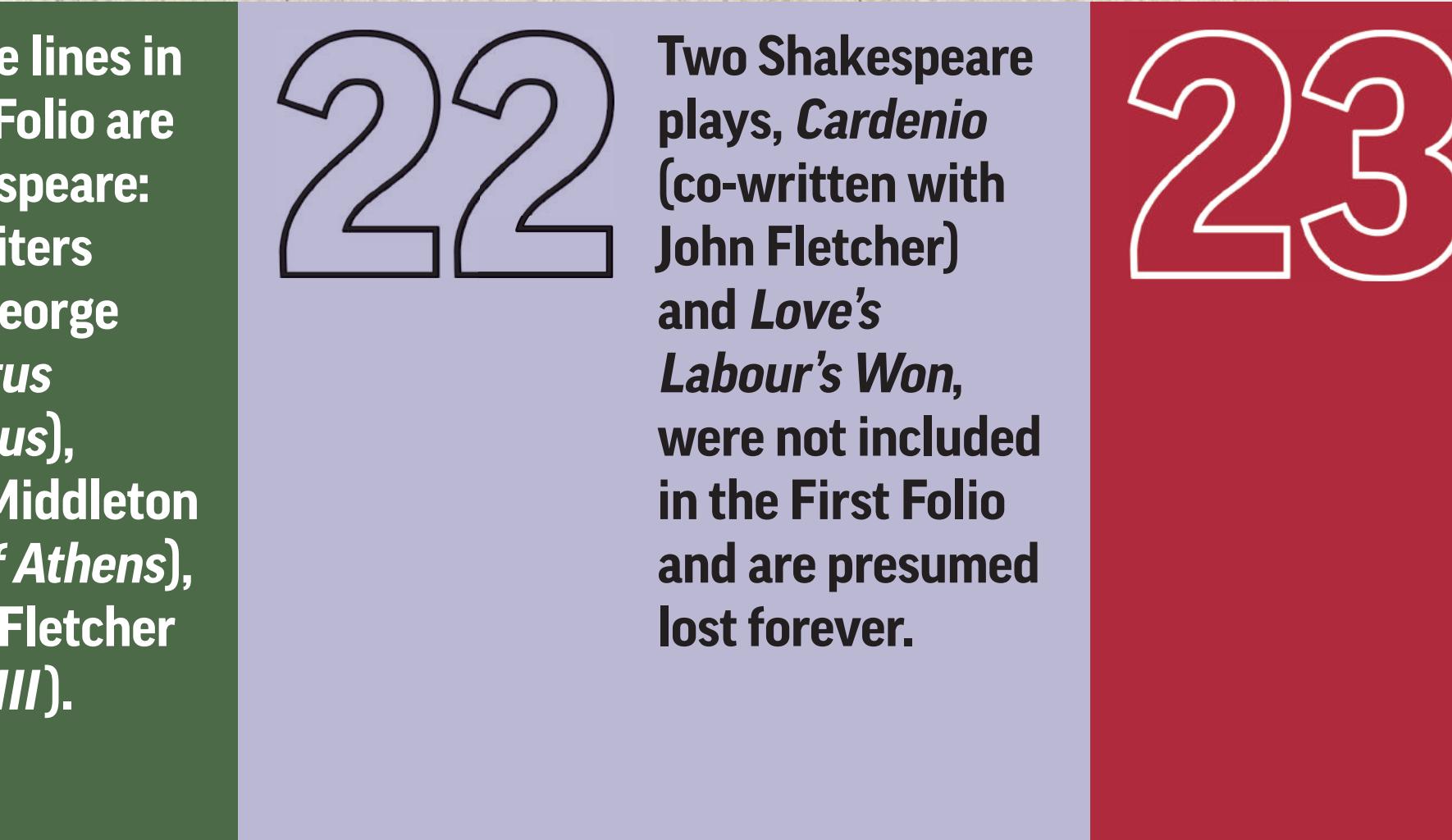
18 The First Folio replaced and squashed a rival bid – by the printer Thomas Pavier in 1619 – to publish a collected edition of Shakespeare's plays.



19 The First Folio collected and published 36 plays by Shakespeare, which had been written and performed between the early 1590s and 1613.



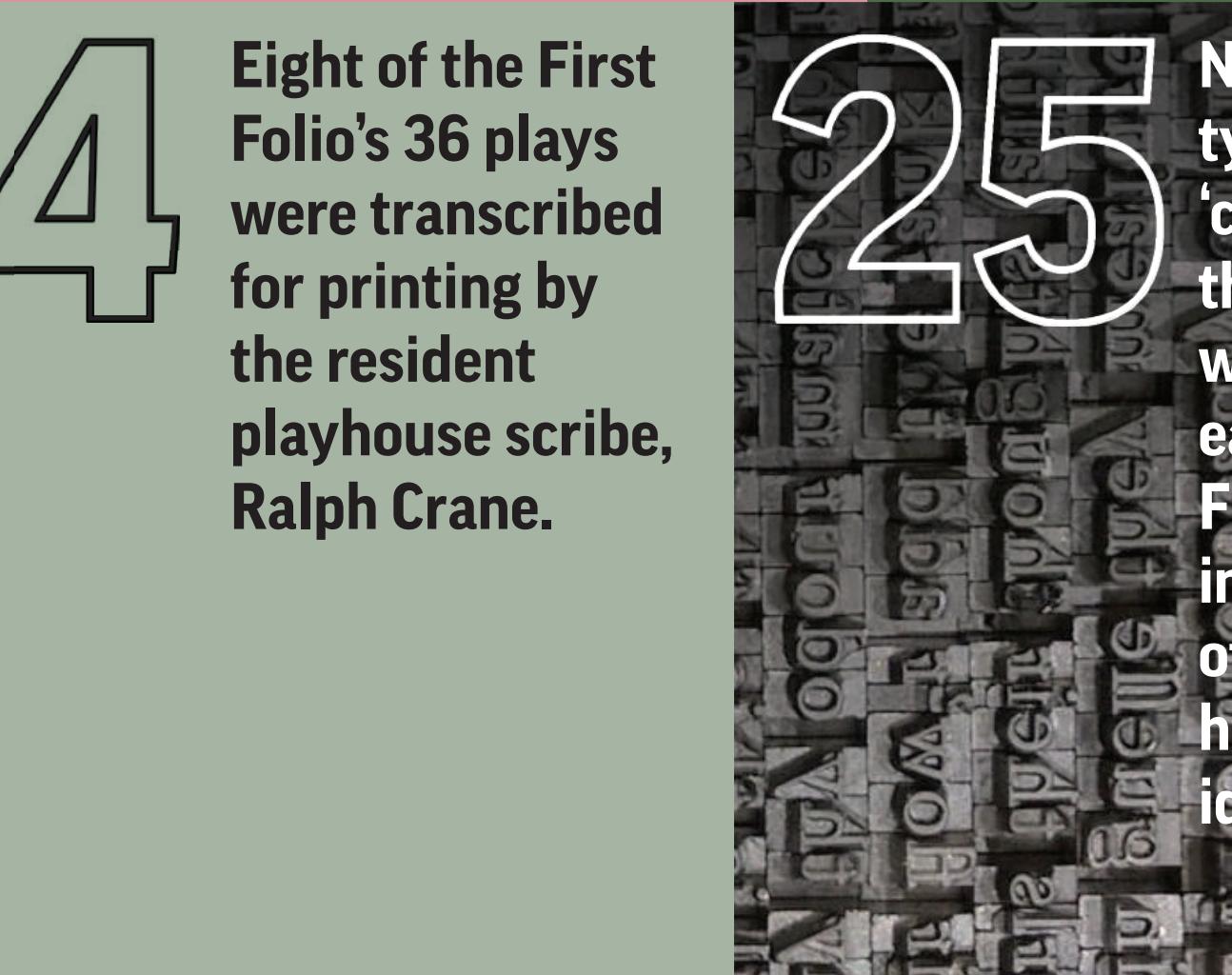
20 Around half of these plays had never been printed before, and may otherwise never have survived.



21 Not all the lines in the First Folio are by Shakespeare: his co-writers include George Peele (*Titus Andronicus*), Thomas Middleton (*Timon of Athens*), and John Fletcher (*Henry VIII*).



22 Two Shakespeare plays, *Cardenio* (co-written with John Fletcher) and *Love's Labour's Won*, were not included in the First Folio and are presumed lost forever.

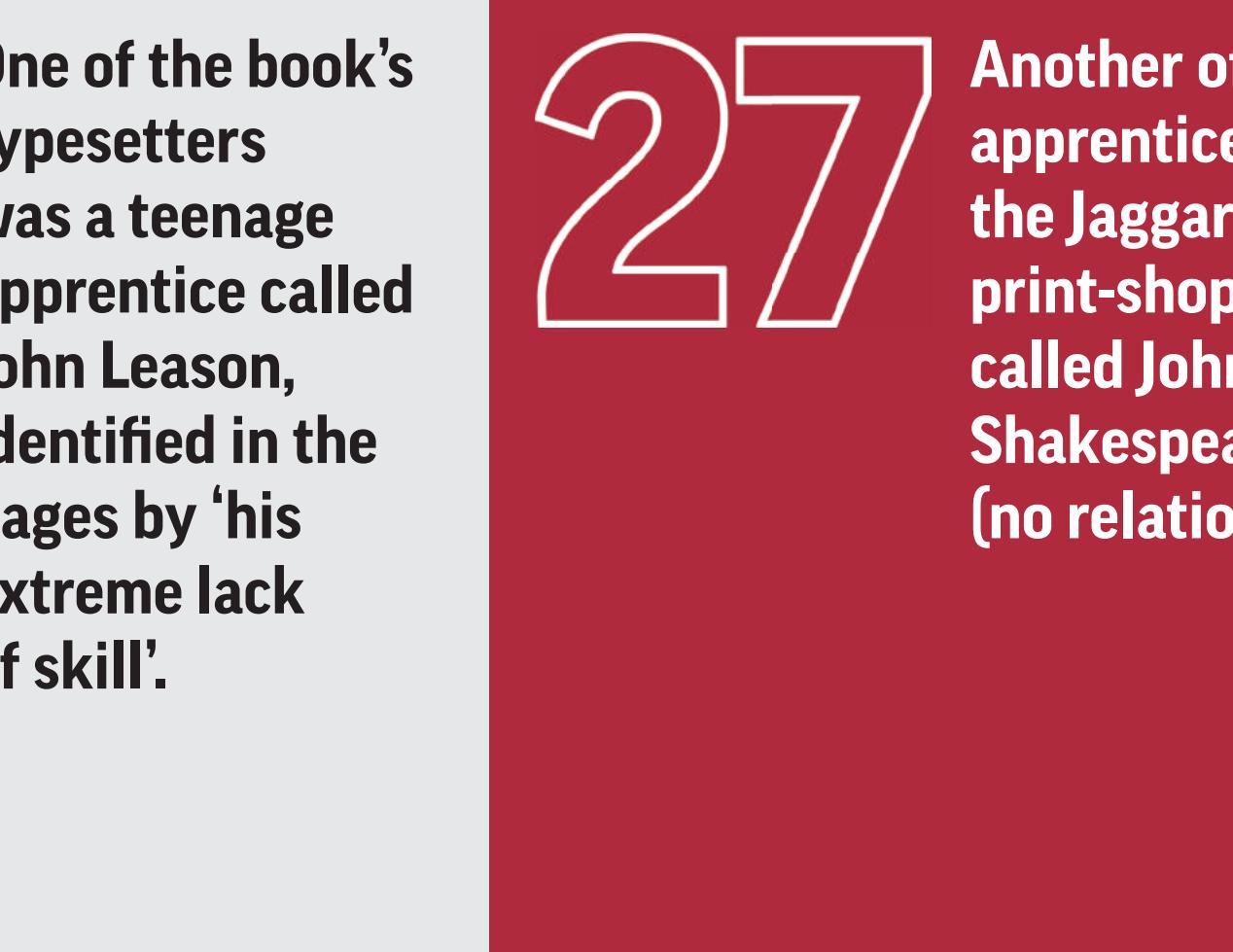


23 Two further co-written plays, *Pericles* (with George Wilkins) and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (with John Fletcher), were omitted from the First Folio, but published separately in 1609 and 1634.

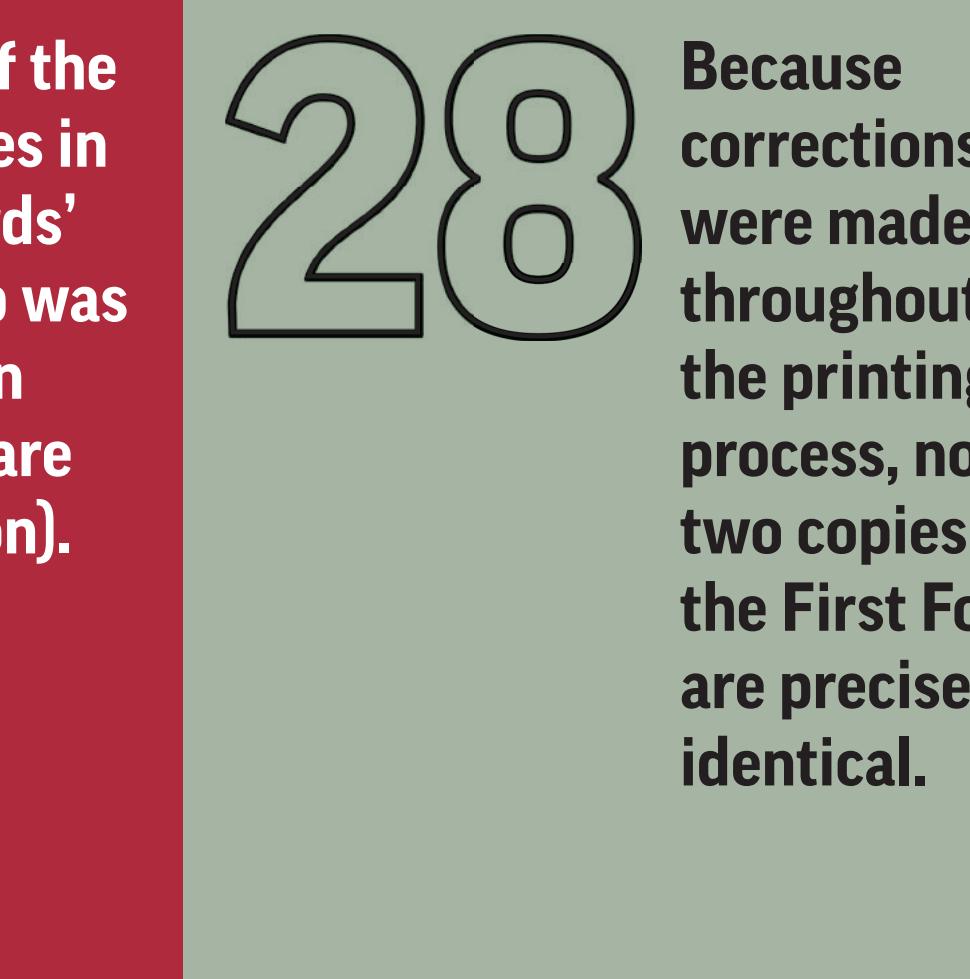
24 Eight of the First Folio's 36 plays were transcribed for printing by the resident playhouse scribe, Ralph Crane.



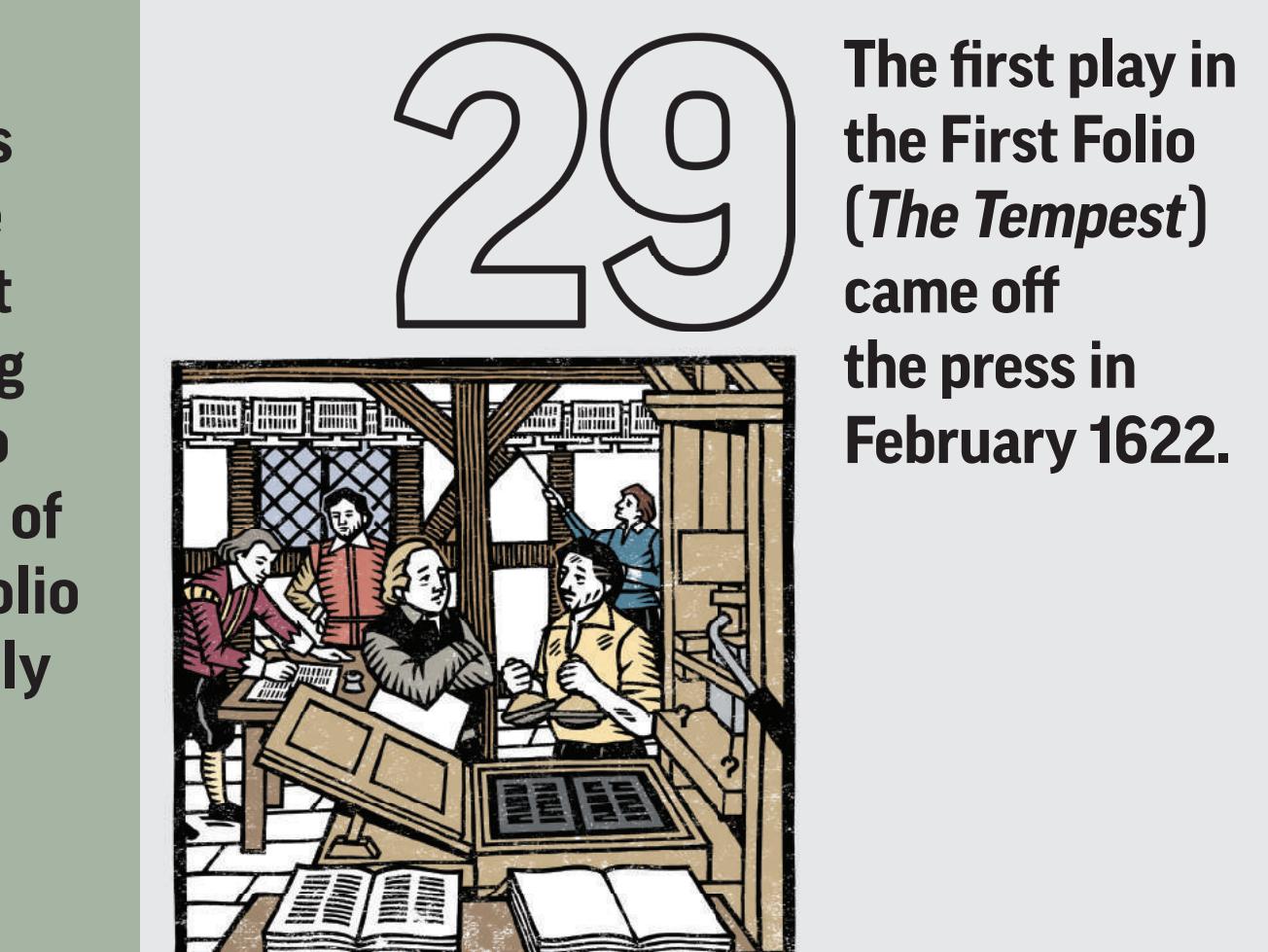
26 One of the book's typesetters was a teenage apprentice called John Leason, identified in the pages by 'his extreme lack of skill'.



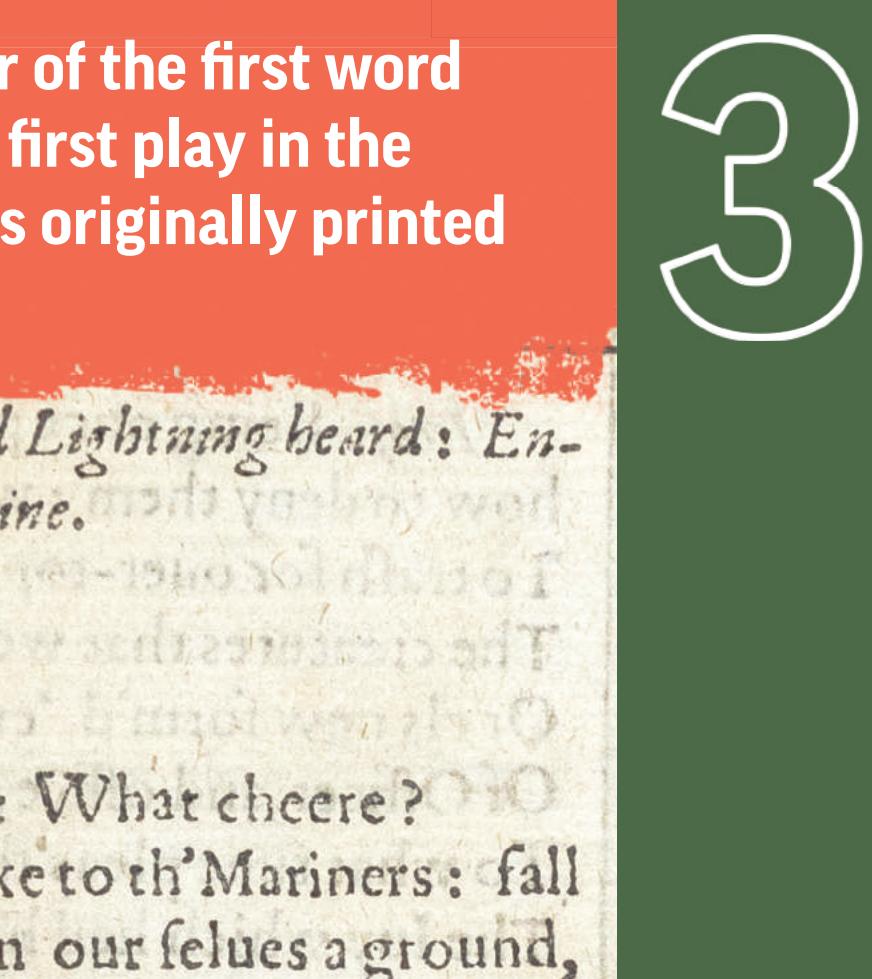
27 Another of the apprentices in the Jaggards' print-shop was called John Shakespeare (no relation).



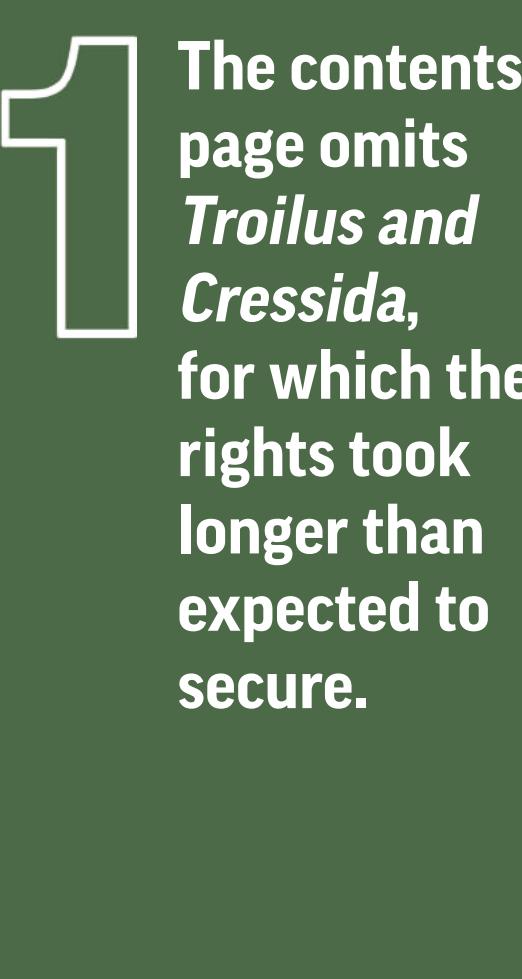
28 Because corrections were made throughout the printing process, no two copies of the First Folio are precisely identical.



29 The first play in the First Folio (*The Tempest*) came off the press in February 1622.



30 The first letter of the first word spoken in the first play in the First Folio was originally printed upside down.



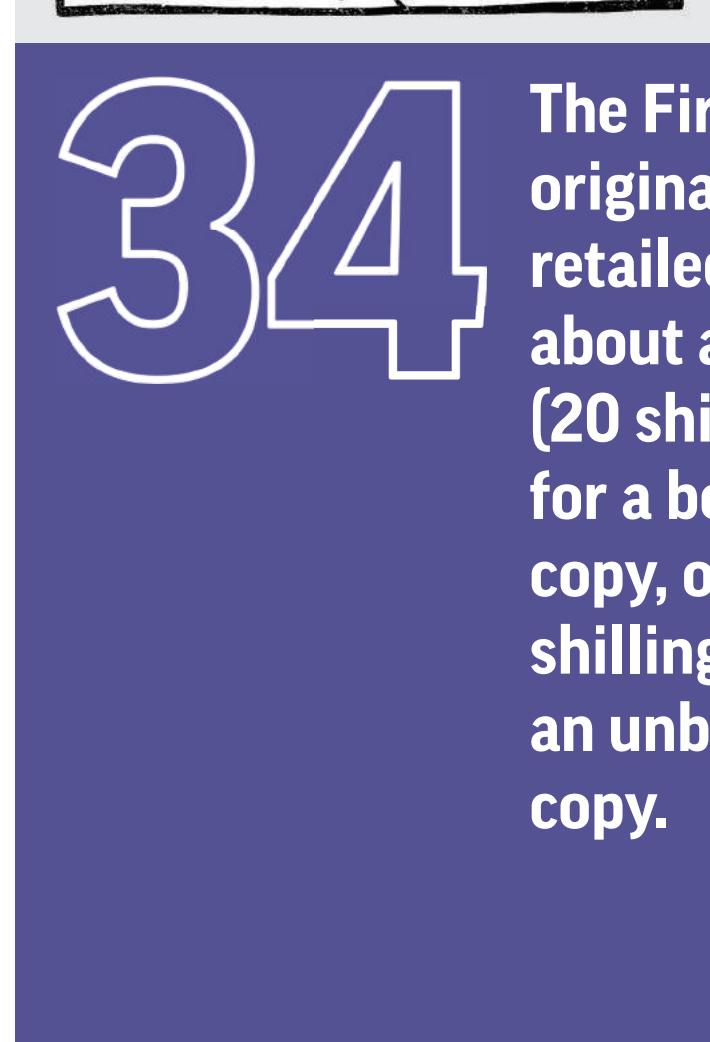
31 The contents page omits *Troilus and Cressida*, for which the rights took longer than expected to secure.



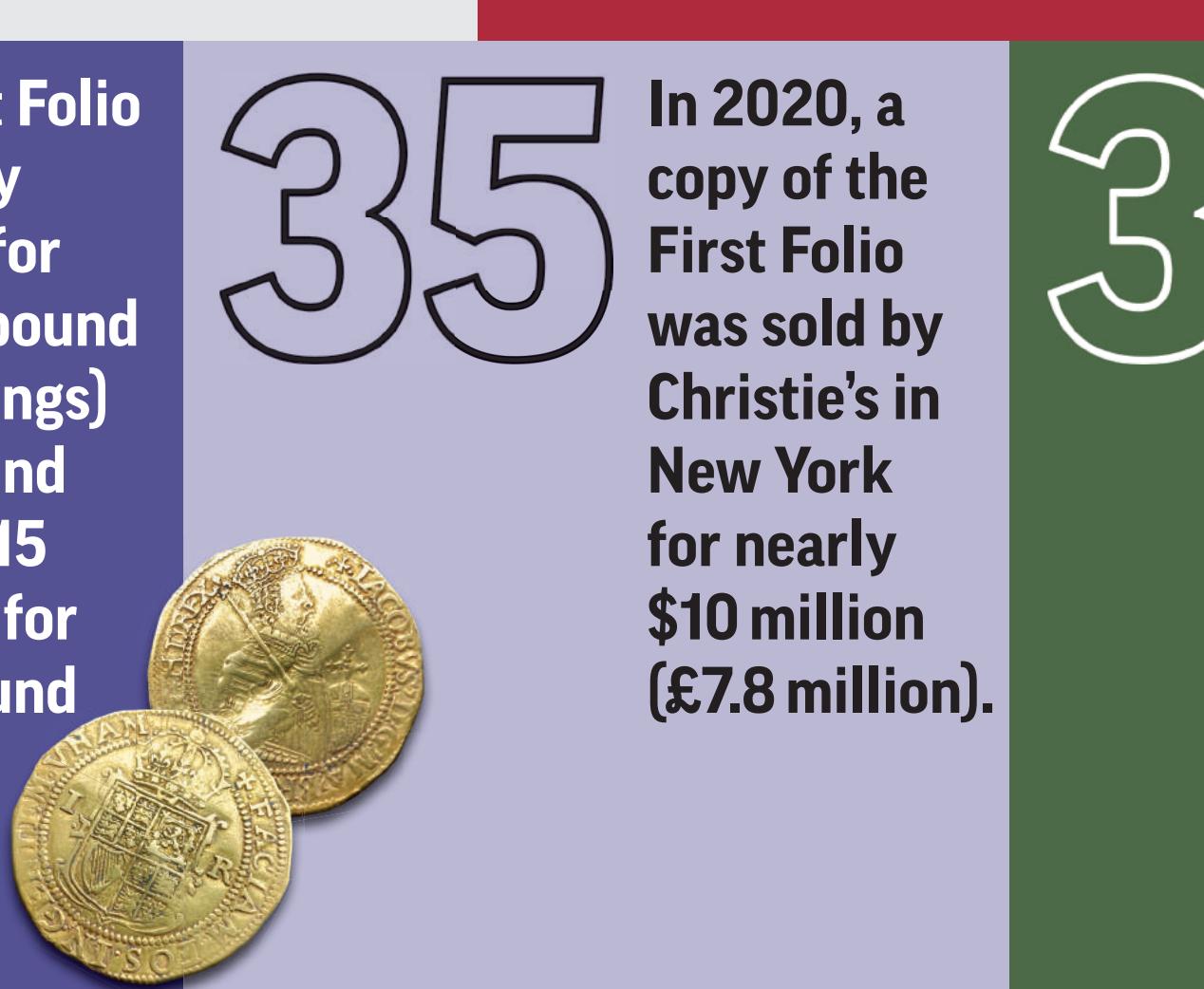
32 Four other books were printed on the same press before the First Folio was completed, in November 1623.



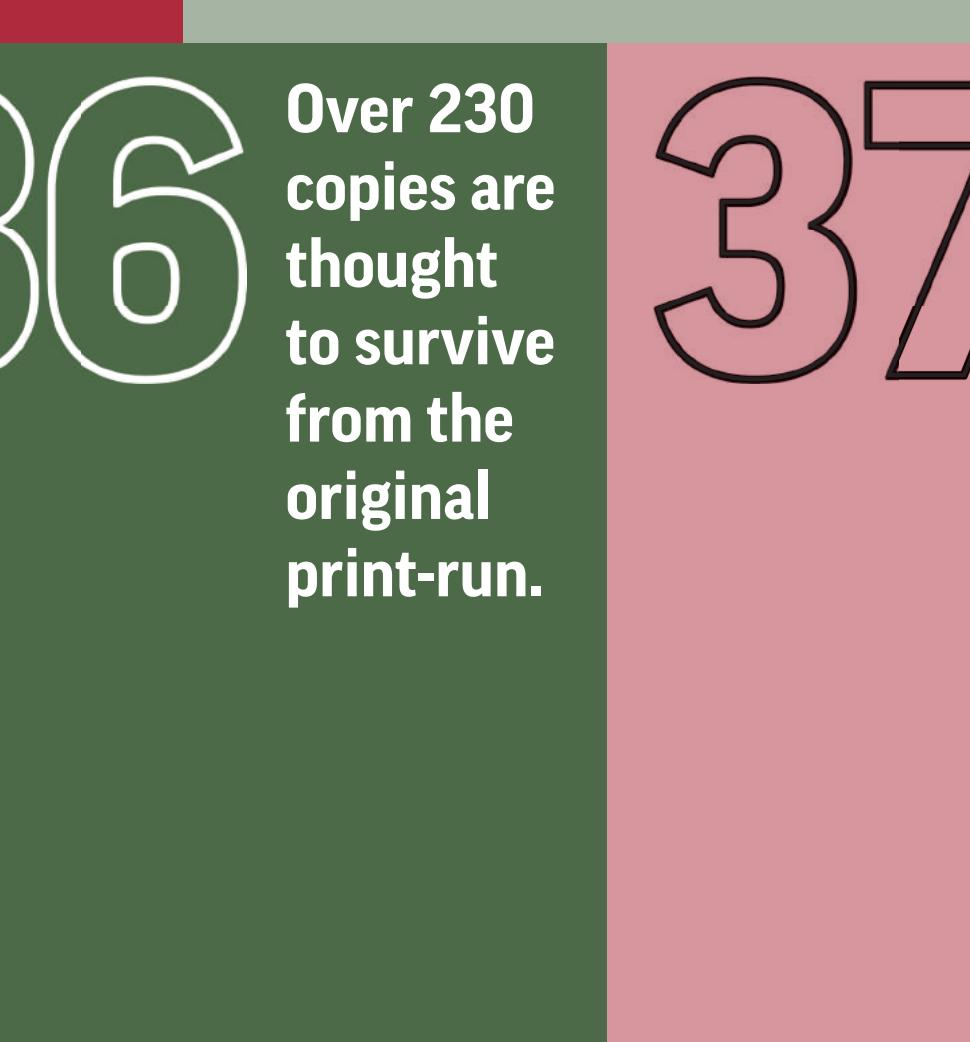
33 It is thought the First Folio's original print-run amounted to between 750 and 1,000 copies.



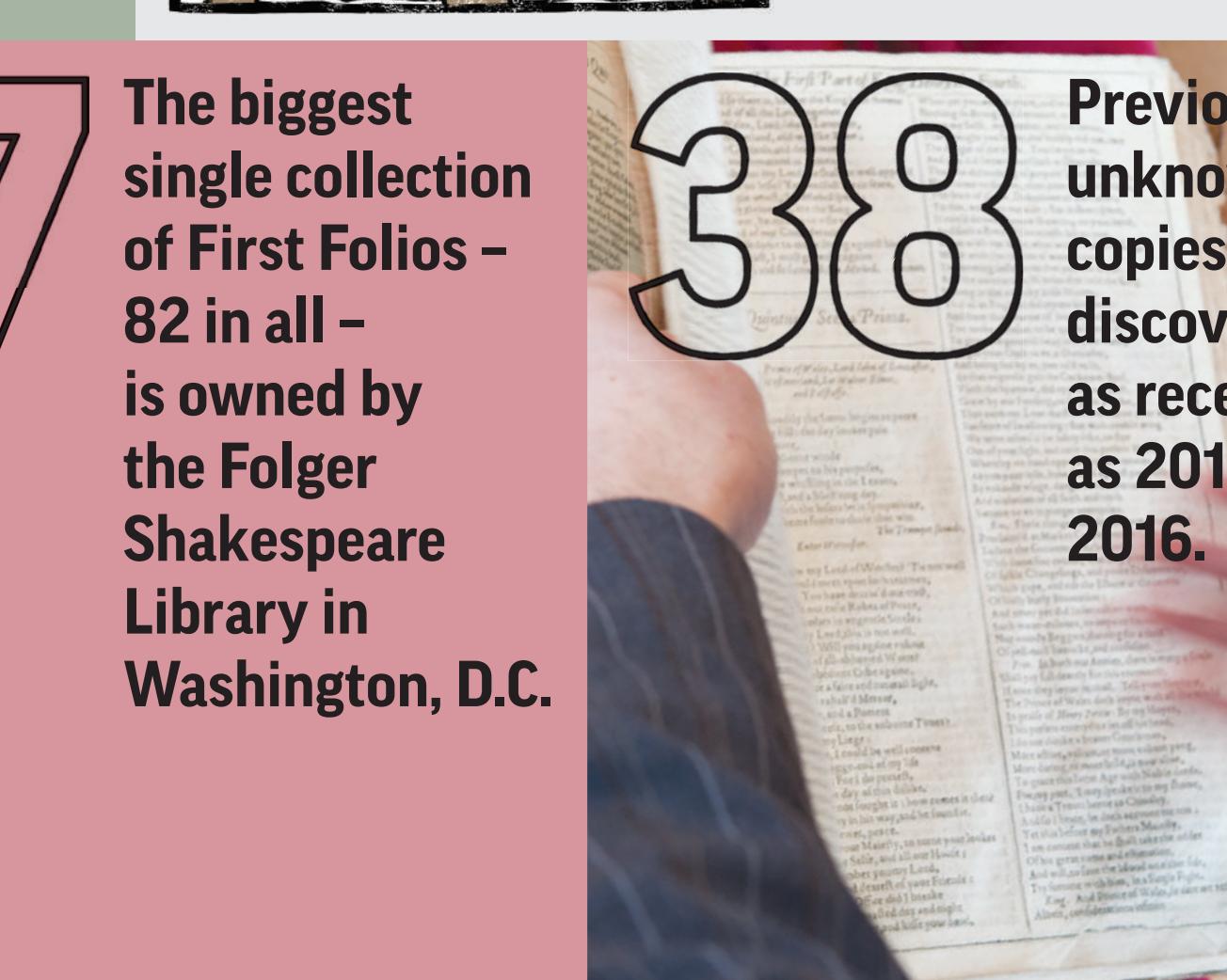
34 The First Folio originally retailed for about a pound (20 shillings) for a bound copy, or 15 shillings for an unbound copy.



35 In 2020, a copy of the First Folio was sold by Christie's in New York for nearly \$10 million (£7.8 million).



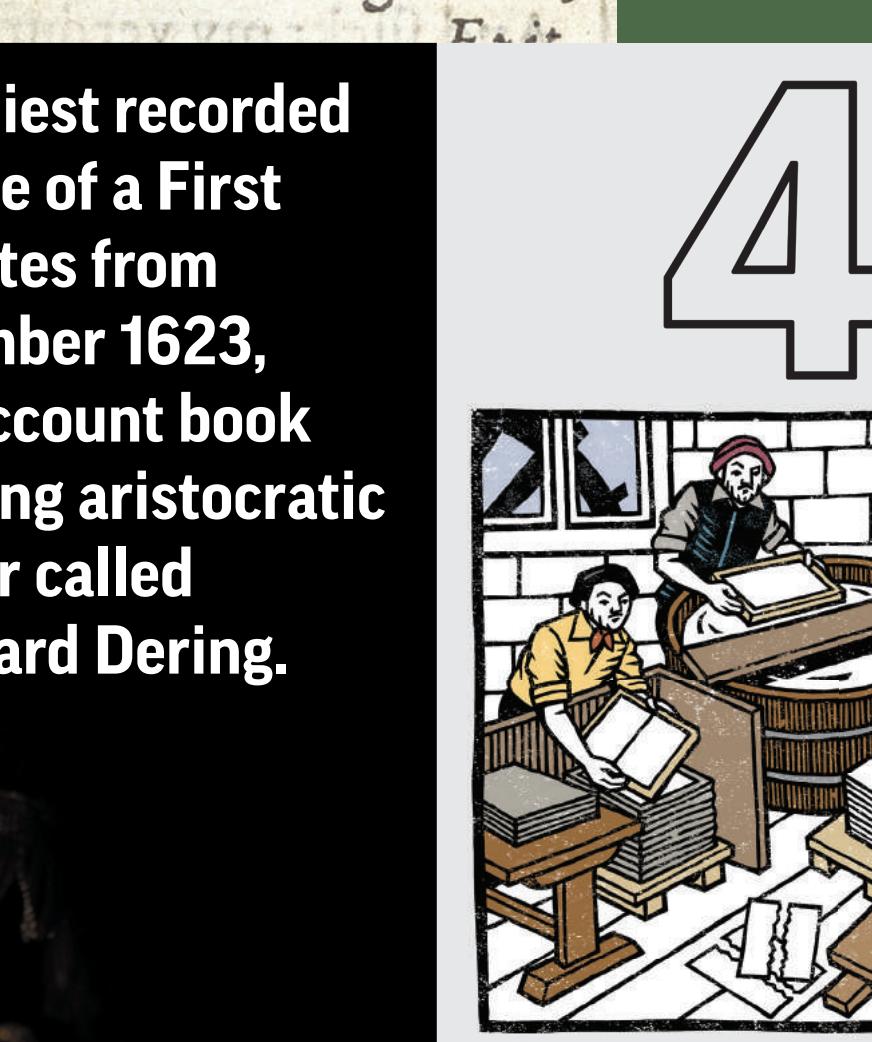
36 Over 230 copies are thought to survive from the original print-run.



37 The biggest single collection of First Folios – 82 in all – is owned by the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C.



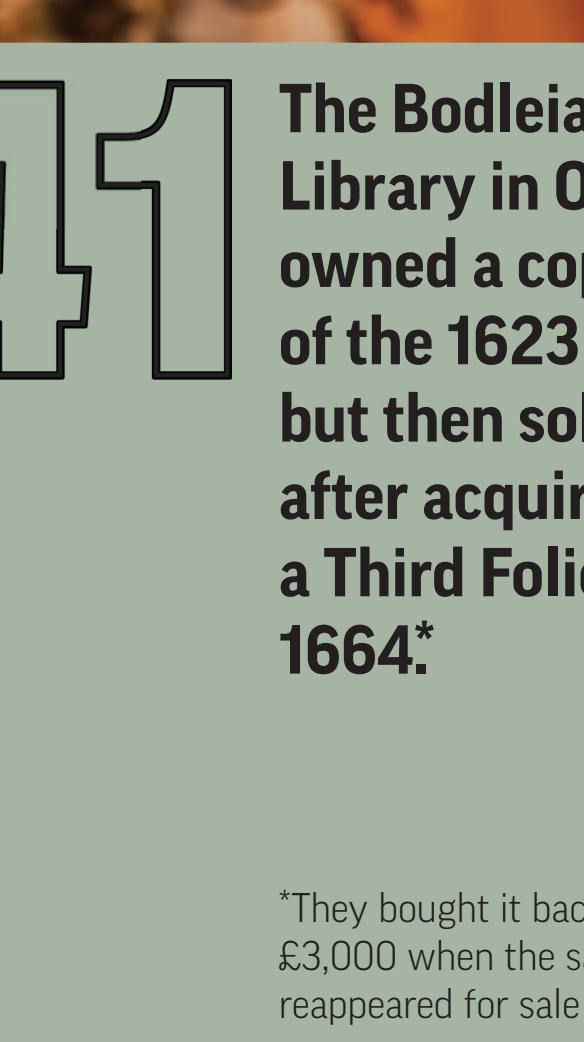
38 Previously unknown copies were discovered as recently as 2014 and 2016.



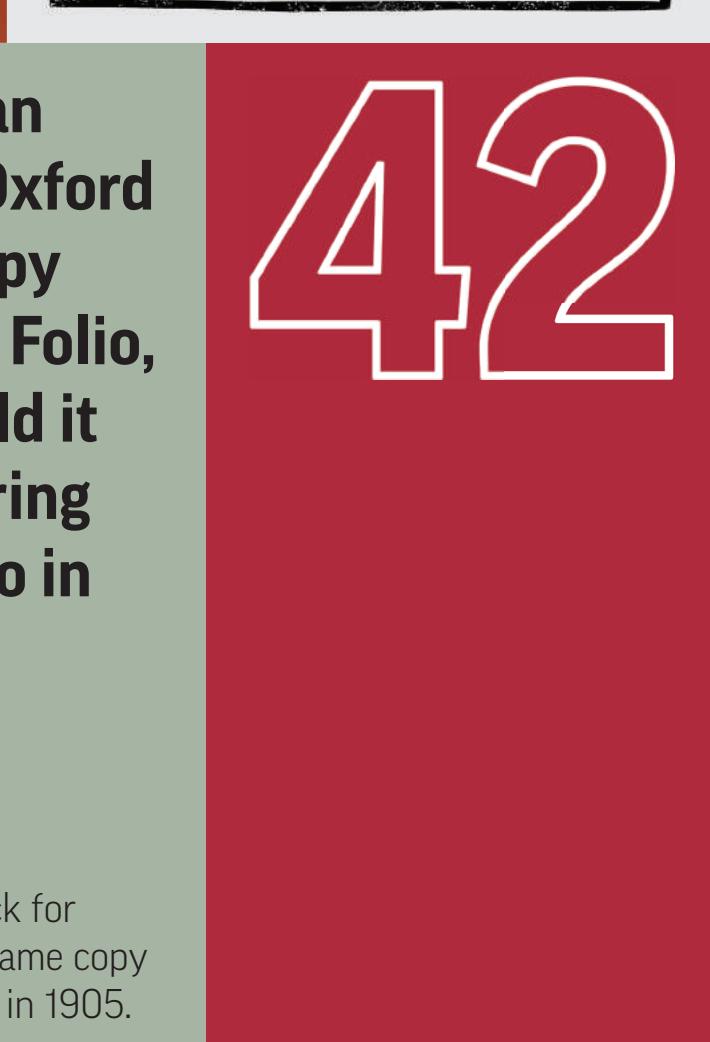
39 The earliest recorded purchase of a First Folio dates from 5 December 1623, in the account book of a young aristocratic playgoer called Sir Edward Dering.



40 The Puritan writer William Prynne complained that 'Shakespeare's Plays are printed in the best crown paper, far better than most Bibles'.

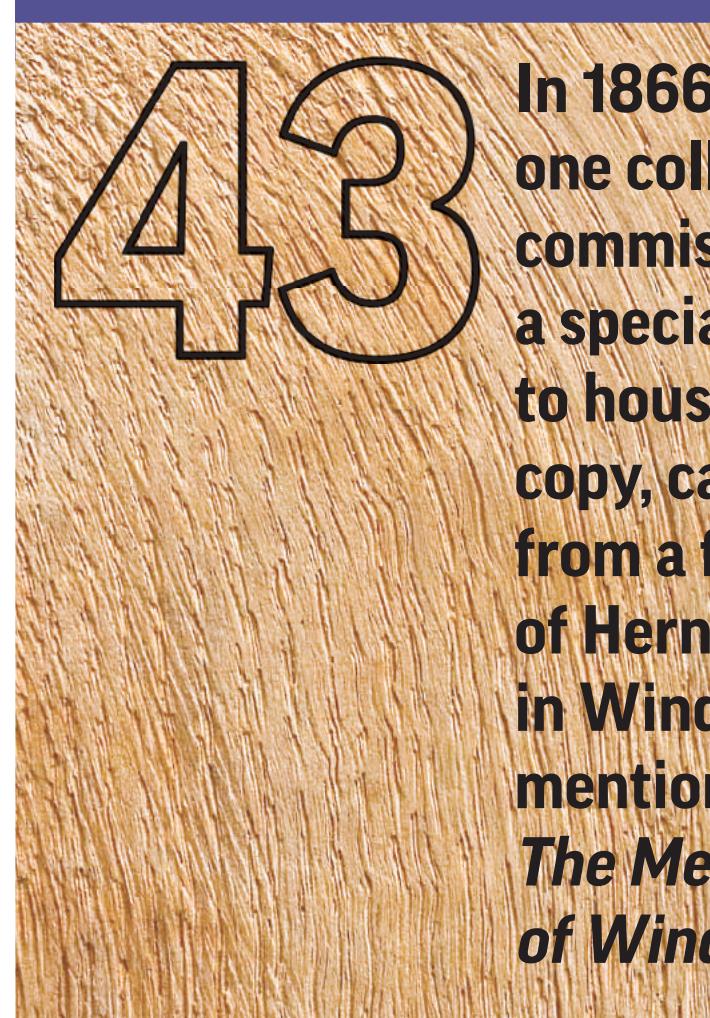


41 The Bodleian Library in Oxford owned a copy of the 1623 Folio, but then sold it after acquiring a Third Folio in 1664.\*



42 The earliest English playwright known to have owned a copy of the First Folio is the Restoration dramatist William Congreve.

\*They bought it back for £3,000 when the same copy reappeared for sale in 1905.



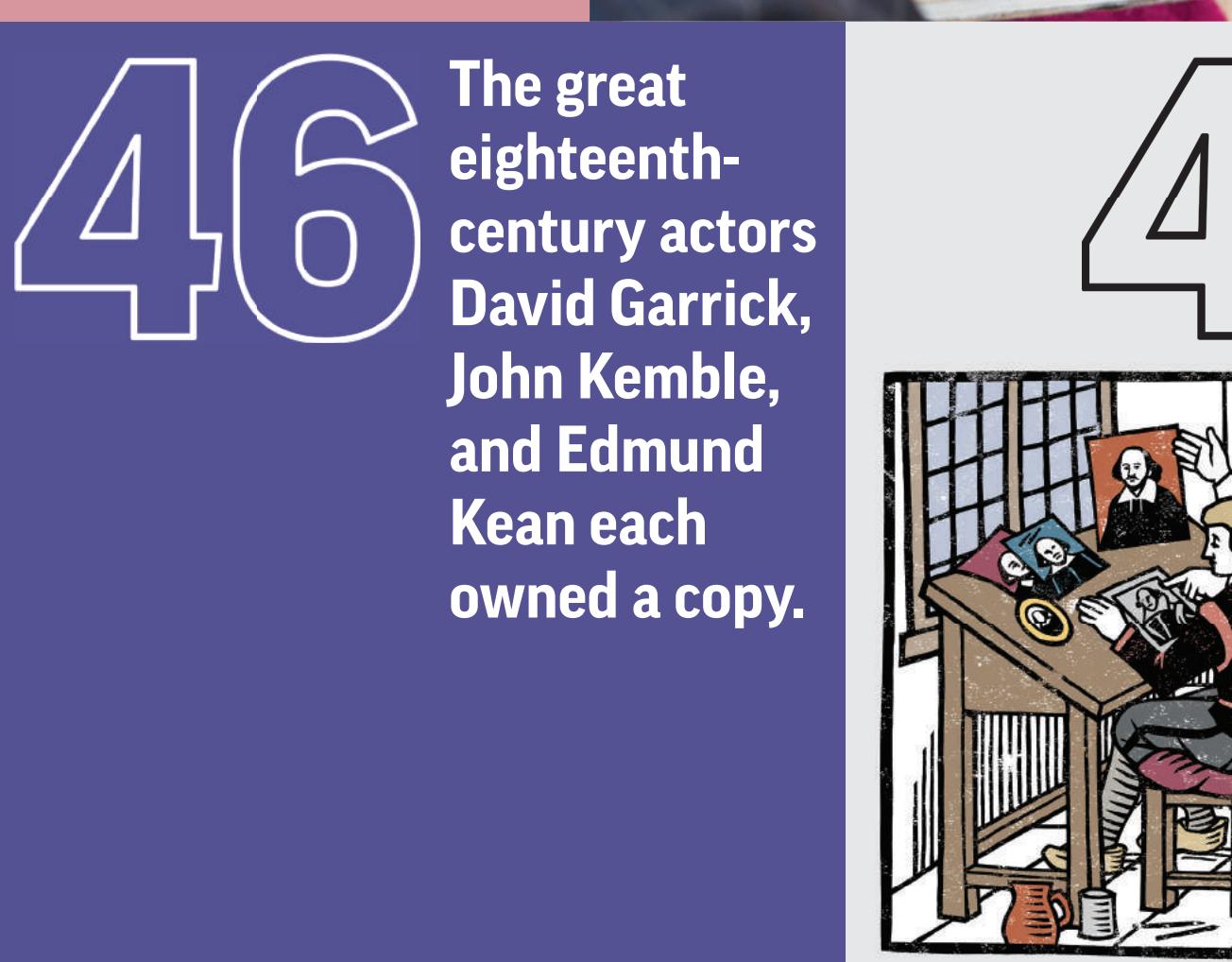
43 In 1866, one collector commissioned a special casket to house her copy, carved from a fragment of Herne's Oak in Windsor, mentioned in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.



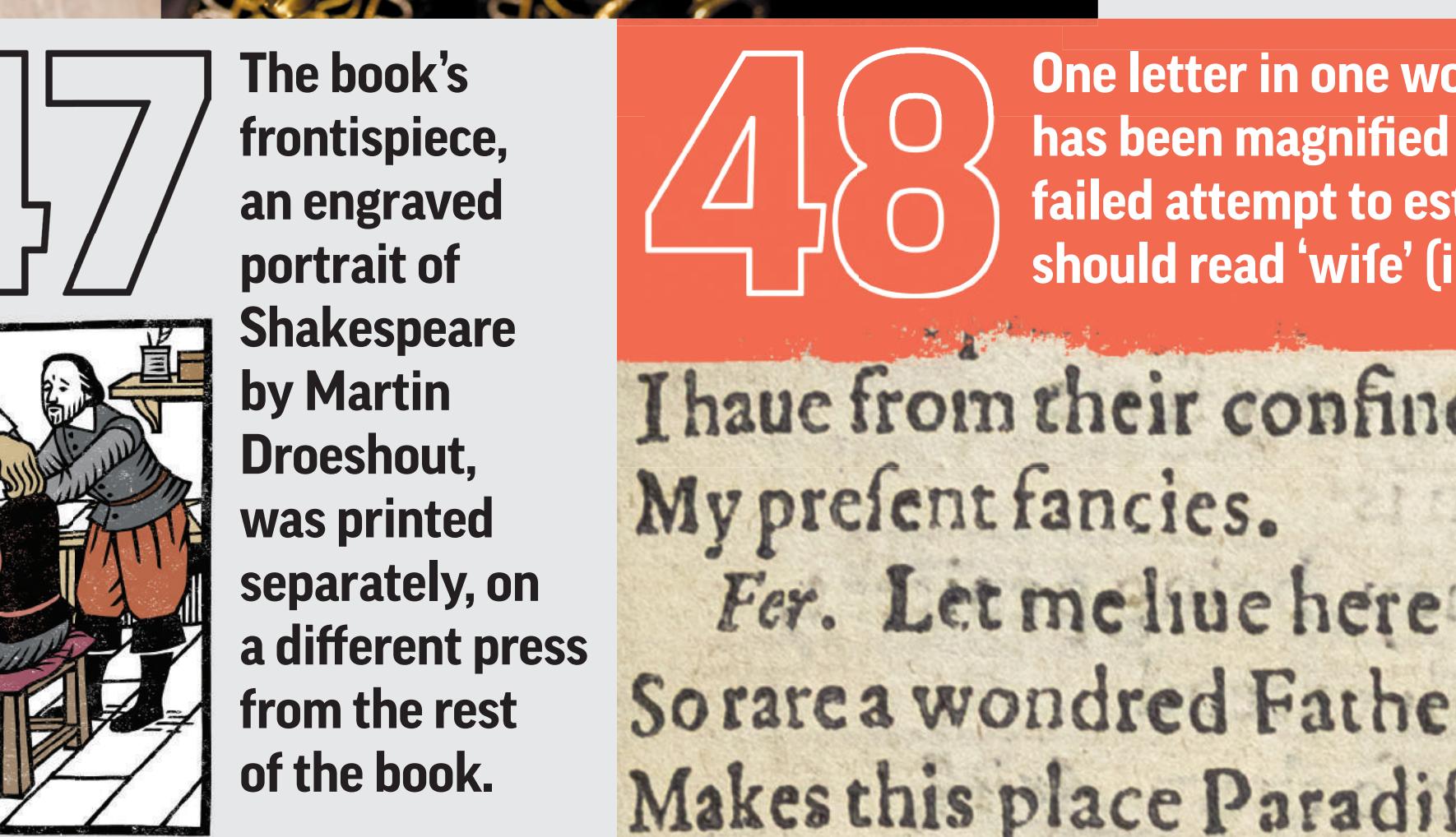
44 The remains of one copy of the First Folio, destroyed by fire in 1873, are on display in a glass sarcophagus in the University of Pennsylvania.



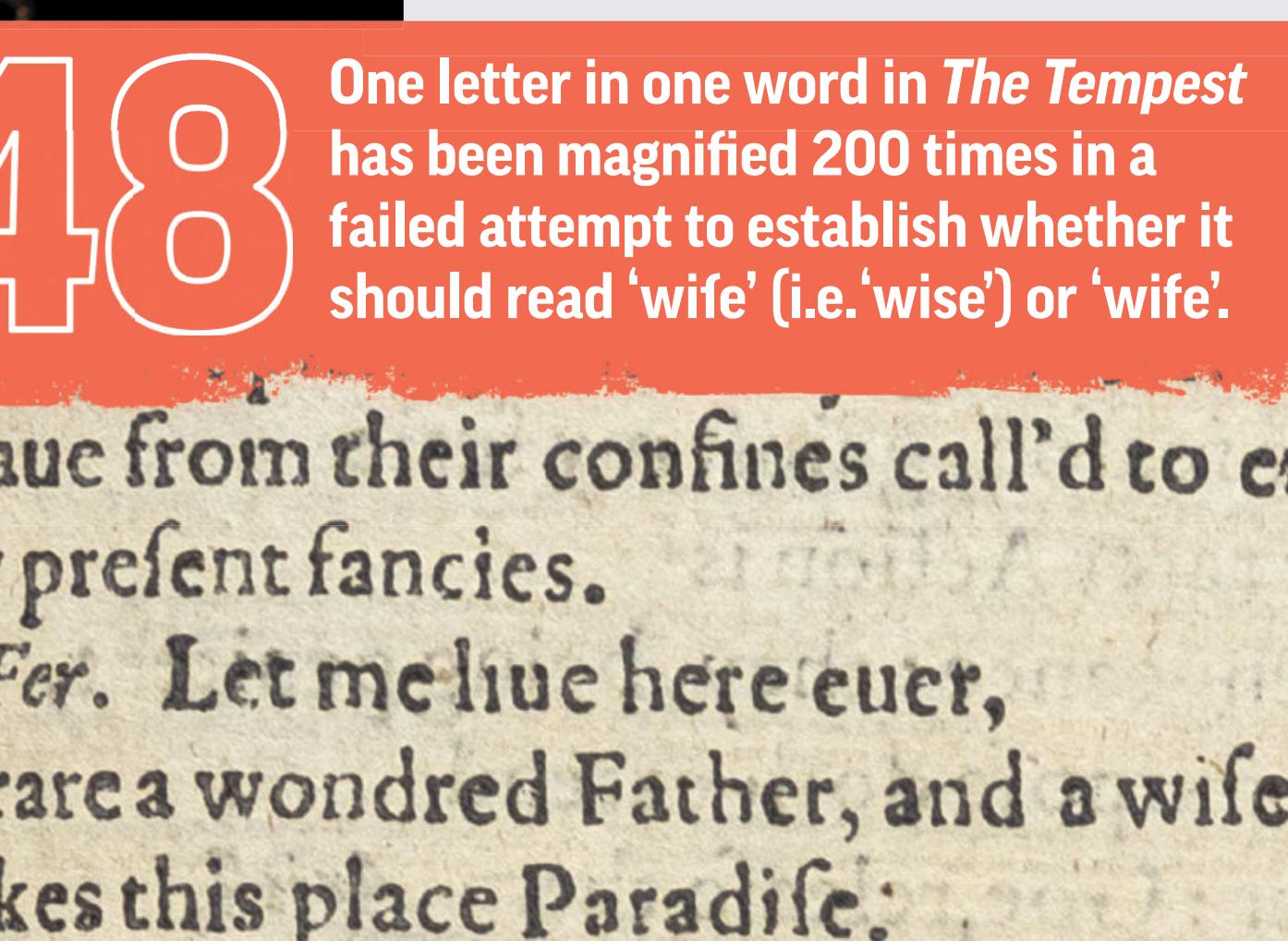
45 Many of the great eighteenth-century editors of Shakespeare, including Lewis Theobald, Edward Capell, Thomas Hanmer, and Edmund Malone, owned their own copies.



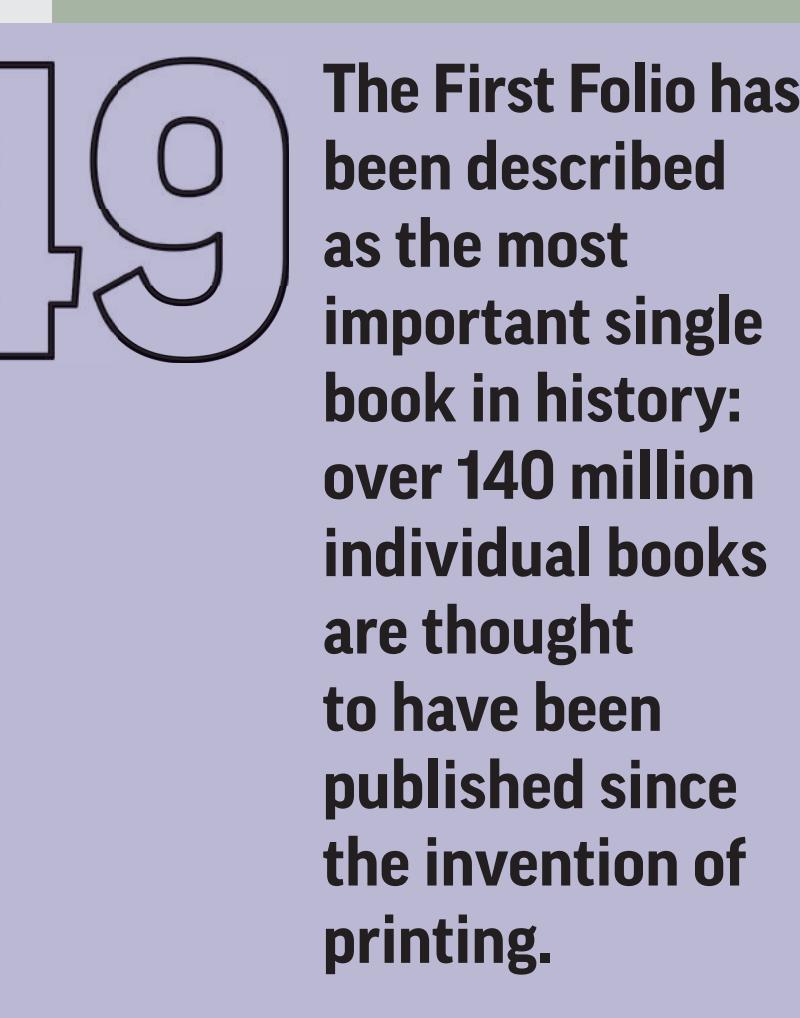
46 The great eighteenth-century actors David Garrick, John Kemble, and Edmund Kean each owned a copy.



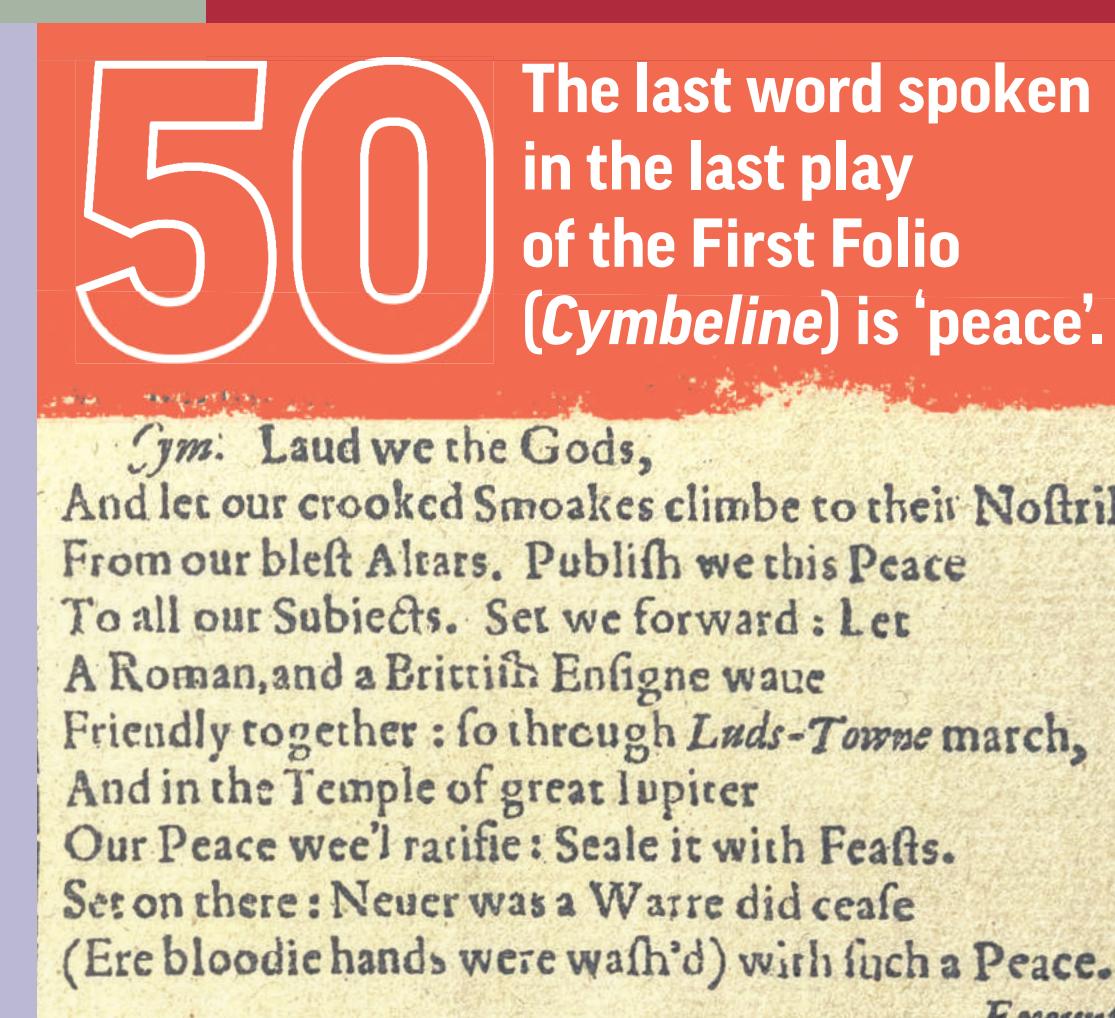
47 The book's frontispiece, an engraved portrait of Shakespeare by Martin Droeshout, was printed separately, on a different press from the rest of the book.



48 One letter in one word in *The Tempest* has been magnified 200 times in a failed attempt to establish whether it should read 'wife' (i.e. 'wise') or 'wife'.



49 The First Folio has been described as the most important single book in history: over 140 million individual books are thought to have been published since the invention of printing.



50 The last word spoken in the last play of the First Folio (*Cymbeline*) is 'peace'.

*Gm:* Laud we the Gods,  
And let our crooked Smokes climbe to their Nostrels  
From our blest Alars. Publish we this Peace  
To all our Subject. Set we forward : Let  
A Roman, and a Briton Ensigne wave  
Friendly together : so through Luds-Towne march,  
And in the Temple of great Jupiter  
Our Peace wee'f pacifie : Seal it with Feasts.  
Set on there : Neuer was a Warre did cease  
(Ere blodie hands were walth'd) with such a Peace.