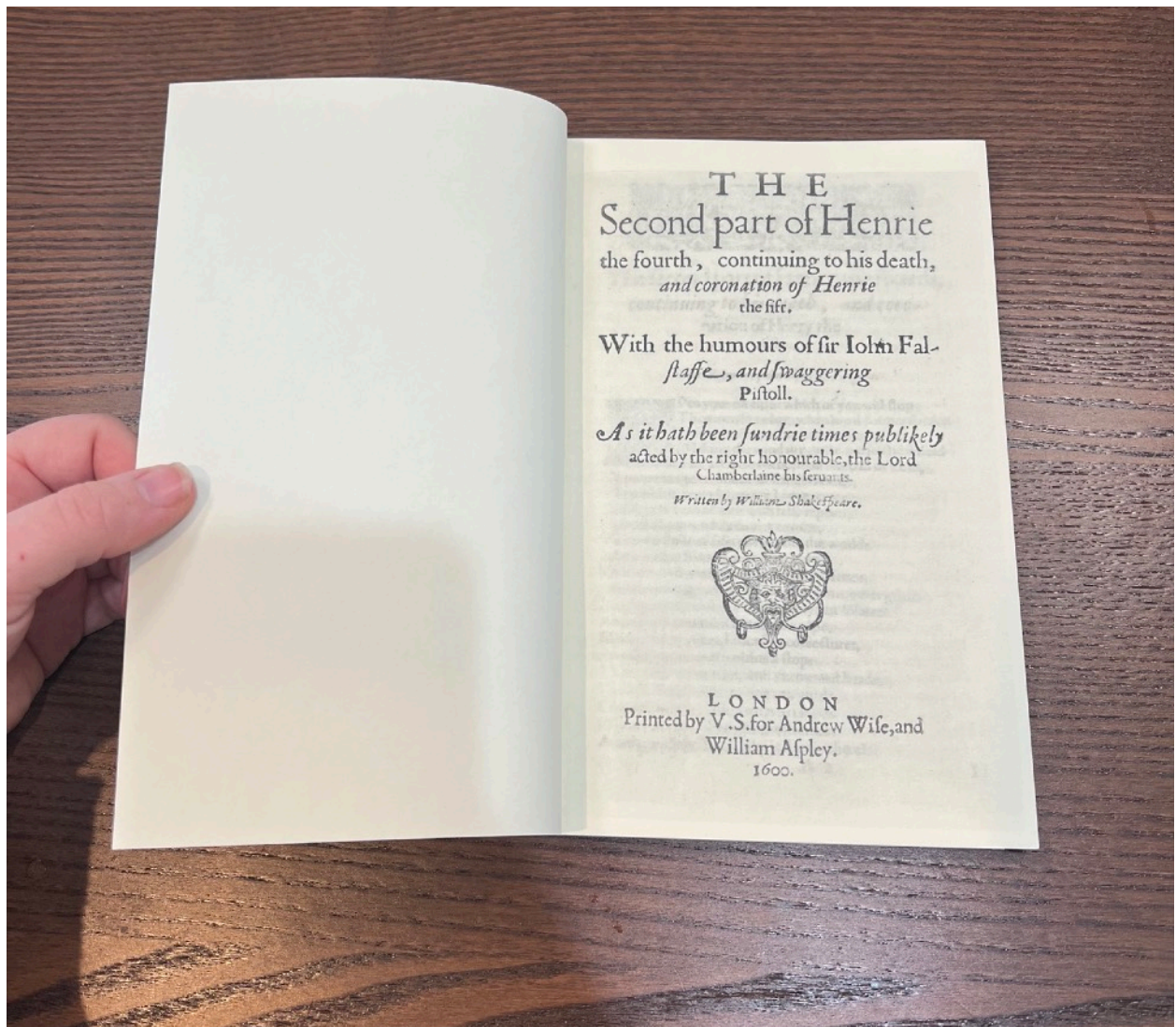


Henry IV part 2

By William Shakespeare

As published in Quarto form in London in 1600



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This is a...

Stab-stitched copy of *Henry IV, Part 2* by William Shakespeare, printed in quarto form and bound as it would have been at the time of publication in 1600 CE. The text on the pages is sourced from an extant copy of the 1600 edition of the quarto held by the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC, and the binding is inspired primarily by a copy of the London Prodigall, also held by the Folger. Due to necessities of economy and scale the pages are printed on modern cotton paper using a laser printer, however all other techniques and materials are historically accurate making this as reasonable a facsimile as I can manage without a moving type press.

This quarto has been an exercise in research as much as in bookbinding, and in this documentation I will outline both my process on creating and binding these pages as well as some of what I've learned about renaissance bookbinding and the publishing of plays in 1600's London along the way. My preconceived notions were turned completely on their head by a helpful research librarian, and my only regret on this project is that the Folger reading room is closed to the public through June so I cannot request to view either the two extant quartos which inspired this piece.

A brief note for those unfamiliar with bookbinding practices: The terms 'Folio', 'Quarto', 'Octavo', and so forth refer to the dimensions of a book. Books were printed on large sheets of paper which could then be folded to create the signatures, or quires, which make up a book. A full piece of paper is a 'Sheet'. A sheet folded once results quires for the largest size book, a 'Folio'. This is the format of the First Folio, a collection of (almost) all of Shakespeare's works published several years after his death. Fold the pages a second time and you get four pages, called a 'Quarto'. This is the format that was most often used to print Shakespeare's plays and other works during his lifetime.

Sometimes, it's a journey. Or, when you miss your target but land somewhere fascinating anyway.

It's funny what happens when you send questions to librarians at major research institutions who focus on rare books and manuscripts. This item is not at all what I expected to be presenting when I began planning my entry for the Pentathlon.

Based on a strong memory from a trip in my late teens to the Globe Theater in London, I thought that in Shakespeare's time, individuals could purchase copies of the plays loose - without a cover, just a bunch of pages loosely held together - and then take them to their favorite bookbinder to be turned into a book. Based on that memory, I planned to create a copy of one of the Quartos of Shakespeare, published while the plays were being presented on stage, bound using the gothic binding style which was still practiced in the 1600s for books deemed worthy of binding¹. I intended to level up my exploration of bookbinding by using historically accurate glues for the first time, finding a better source for the incredibly thin leather useful in bookbinding, and otherwise integrate feedback given to me on my first pair of bound books while building a reproduction of an item near and dear to my Shakespearean actor's heart.

Ah, the more fool I.

I gathered primary source images from an extant quarto and started to prepare files for printing when I hit a stumbling block: size. None of the documentation I had on the quartos listed a consistent size, and the images I found did not include a reference scale. My first thought was to book time at the Folger to see the physical quarto I was reconstructing, but unfortunately the library was closed for renovations through at least June 2024 so I instead used the library's query form to see if they would give me much-needed detail.

A few days later I got a response which answered my questions on size (and coincidentally helped me understand how to determine the dimensions of printed matter from a research library listing in the future), but also included a curious note:

... like almost all surviving Shakespeare quartos, Folger STC 22288 is in a fancy 19th- or early 20th-century binding. In Shakespeare's time, a quarto like this wouldn't have been

¹ Navarra, Antonio. *The Art of Bookbinding*

sewn and bound. It would have been left untrimmed in a stab-stitched paper wrapper, or even just stab-stitched through the printed pages, without a wrapper. ...

To get an idea what it would have looked like, see Folger STC 22333 copy 2, a 1605 quarto edition of *The London Prodigal*. It still has its original "binding" -- a plain paper cover with stab stitching through three holes in the gutter. ...

For more, see Aaron T. Pratt, "Stab-Stitching and the status of early English playbooks as literature," *The Library*, 7th series, vol. 16 (Sept. 2015), 304-28.²

Intriguing!

The suggested article, authored by the the current curator of Early Books and Manuscripts at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin and who describes himself as "the guy who works on stab-stitching in the early modern English book trade" ³, outlined how modern scholars tended to view stab-stitched books as throwaway bindings, but in fact in-period a stab-stitched binding a perfectly appropriate way to maintain your book collection.⁴

This shift in mental paradigm led me down a fascinating rabbit hole on publishing and specifically the publishing of plays and other reading materials in the latest part of our period. To consider more deeply than before how perception of value affected the handling of these items at different points in their lifecycle - even just a few decades after their initial publication. It also led me to change up my project plan completely and create the item displayed here: a stab-stitched copy of *Henry IV, Part 2*, as it might have looked when first available for purchase in 1600.

² Blake, Erin. Correspondence with Jacqueline Chenault, January 2024

³ aarontpratt.com, "Stab-Stitching in *The Library*"

⁴ Pratt, Aaron T. "Stab-Stitching and the Status of Early English Playbooks as Literature"

A Brief History of Plays, their Publishing, and their Bindings

It is hard to argue that the Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the movable type printing press around 1436 was not a pivotal moment in the way humankind shares information and knowledge about the world. However, England was not particularly quick to jump onto the printing press bandwagon - it was not until 1475 that the first printing office was established in the British Isles, within Westminster Abbey.⁵ In 1557, the Stationer's Company was granted a charter which gave it a virtual monopoly on printing - only those who were members of the Company or had special privilege or patents were permitted to print matter for sale in the Kingdom.

The Stationers's Company regulated printing well beyond 1600. "After licensing by the authorities, all books had to be entered in the company's register, on payment of a small fee. The first stationer to enter a book acquired a right to the title or "copy" of it, which could then be transferred as might any other property."⁶

Publication of drama - along with poetry and popular literature - was left to publishers who were not members of the Stationers' Company, leaving them to scramble for what they could get and constantly search for new material.

The first of Shakespeare's plays to be published was *Titus Andronicus* in 1594, which was printed by one John Danter seemingly without the permission of the author. A copy of *Romeo and Juliet*, believed to be constructed from shorthand notes made during a performance, was published by Danter in 1597.

Henry IV, part 1 - the prequel to *Henry IV, part 2* - was first published in quarto form in 1598, and survives today only in an 8 page fragment from a single copy which is held in the collection of the Folger Shakespeare Library. The next printing in 1599, termed Q1 by scholars, was the basis for subsequent quartos printed in 1604, 1608, 1613, and 1622 - it was a very popular

⁵ Library of Congress, *England and the Printing Press: A Subject Guide*

⁶ Encyclopedia Britannica, *History of Publishing*

play⁷. This copy is generally considered 'good', and may have been sanctioned by the author or his associates.

Other pieces of the Henriad were also seeing their way to the printing presses of London in the final years of the 16th century. Richard II, which precedes Henry IV, part 1, was first published in 1597 with additional printings in 1598 (twice!), 1608, and 1615⁸. Henry V, which follows Henry IV part 2, was first printed in 1600 with reprints in 1602 and 1619.⁹

So - it seems that Shakespeare's plays, particularly the Histories, and most particularly the ones which told the story of Prince Hal and his erstwhile 'friend' Falstaff, were popular enough to be printed and re-printed starting in or around 1600. *Henry IV, part 2* - the subject of this project - first appears in Quarto form in 1600.

The Quartos which survived the intervening 424 years do not, in their current form, much resemble how they looked when first published and sold. They were of course sold unbound, and purchasers had the option to keep them as they were, send them to a binder immediately, or take a collection of books to be bound at a later date. A playbook typically cost sixpence, and the cost for even the cheapest binding would have doubled or tripled the total retail price of a quarto¹⁰. There are indications that the price did not increase (or did not increase much) based on the thickness of the book - the main factor considered in pricing a binding was the size (quarto, folio, octavo, etc).

Therefore, "when early modern book-buyers opted to bind plays, it appears they did so when they'd amassed enough to make the cost of a binding, per copy, far less excessive. Sir Edward Dering ... recorded having fourteen 'volumes of play bookes' bound." It is clear that most of the time he brought playbooks to his binder that he had previously purchased to be made into *sammelband* - books comprising a number of separately printed or manuscript works that were subsequently bound together.¹¹ Most playbook *Sammelbande* that have survived contain nine or ten playbooks.

⁷ Folger Shakespeare Library, *Shakespeare's Works: Henry IV, Part 1*

⁸ Folger Shakespeare Library, *Shakespeare's Works: Richard II*

⁹ Folger Shakespeare Library, *Shakespeare's Works: Henry V*

¹⁰ Pratt, Aaron T. *Stab Stitching and Early English Playbooks*

¹¹ Pratt, Aaron T. *Stab Stitching and Early English Playbooks*

If the plays were not sold bound in leather - how were they sold? This question can be answered by one of the only playbooks to survive in its original form: a copy of *The London Prodigall* held in the collection of the Folger Shakespeare Library. Printed in 1605, it is bound in a manner bibliophiles refer to as 'stab-stitched'. "A single piece of thread travels through the entire thickness - or, more accurately, the entire thinness - of the assembled quires at three points, from front to back and back to front, near the gutter edge."¹² This allows the book to include a simple paper wrapper, or in some exemplars to have no covers at all. Stab stitched books were put together as frugally as possible, because for the independent booksellers and printers who produced and sold them every penny mattered.

Sixpence in 1600 translates to roughly £5 in 2024, or \$6.34¹³. Even notorious collectors like Sir Edward Dering - best known as one of the earliest recorded owners of a First Folio - did not consider quarto playbooks important enough to have them bound individually, keeping them in *sammelbande*. Yet today, Shakespeare's quartos are almost exclusively found in individual, fine bindings - usually datable to at least a hundred years after the quarto's initial publication.

What happened? Why are the quartos individually bound in our modern era? The answer is, of course, money. Around the time of the publication of the First Folio, the perceived value of plays and playbooks began to shift. It appears collectors began to want to highlight the size and importance of their collections and add value to them by breaking up *sammelbande* into their individual plays and encasing them in the highest quality bindings of the time. This trend was especially popular in the late 1800's and early 1900's, and has resulted in no extant copies of plays which appear in the First Folio remaining in their original stab stitched form. Some bindings do allow astute researchers to see tantalizing glimpses of the holes from stab stitches past.

In attempting to create a reproduction of a Quarto as it would have appeared when printed in 1600, this history must be taken into account. What can be seen and observed today in most quartos is NOT how the items would have appeared in their initial form, and it is only by returning to something like their original appearance that we can truly begin to appreciate how early modern readers might have interacted with these objects.

¹² Pratt, Aaron T. *Stab Stitching and Early English Playbooks*

¹³ Converted from 1600 - 2017 via <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter>, 2017 - 2024 via <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>, and £ to \$ via Google's currency converter.

Design Decisions & Historical Accuracy

My reproduction of this quarto is based off of two primary sources: A copy of *Henry IV, Part 2* held in the collection of the Folger Shakespeare Library¹⁴, and a copy of *The London Prodigall*, also held in the collection of the Folger, which was preserved in its original stab-stitched binding¹⁵.

As previously outlined, book lovers and collectors over the past 400 years have not always cared to maintain the original condition of their items. The exemplar copy of *Henry IV part 2* was rebound in a fancy 19th- or early 20th-century binding¹⁶, in keeping with the high perceived value of the item. Because of that rebinding, I've taken clues for the original binding from a copy of another play purportedly by Shakespeare but not included in the First Folio. That piece "... still has its original "binding" -- a plain paper cover with stab stitching through three holes in the gutter." ¹⁷

Decisions: Printing

From the start of this project, I intended to make as historically accurate a copy of the quarto as it might have appeared in the collection of a theatergoer in or around 1600 as feasible. While it would be fabulous to locate a 1600's-era printing press still in operation, set each page of the quarto as it would have been done in-period, make or locate a period-accurate paper stock, and run off a single copy of the quarto... that fabulousity would be neither practical, economical, or wise.

As an alternative, I chose to get as close as reasonably possible using the modern tools and materials available to me in my home. I started with a full set of all 81 pages of text as images from the exemplar quarto held in the collection of the Folger.

¹⁴ Folger Shakespeare Library Collection, STC 22288

¹⁵ Folger Shakespeare Library Collection, STC 22333 copy 2

¹⁶ Blake, Erin. Correspondence with Jacqueline Chenault, January 2024

¹⁷ Blake, Erin. Correspondence with Jacqueline Chenault, January 2024

The original text would have been printed on a single large sheet of paper which was folded into quarters after printing, hence the name 'Quarto'. Untrimmed, the quarto would likely have been about 21cm high and 15 cm wide¹⁸, or approximately 8.2" by 5.9".

Given that modern letter paper size is 8.5x11 which can be single-folded to form an 8.5" x 5.5" book, I chose to print my version onto letter-sized pieces of paper which I would then fold 2 sheets to a signature. This gives me a reasonable approximation of a signature from a single sheet in-period: 4 leaves, each one 8.5" x 5.5" tall, printed to follow the signature pattern listed for the Quarto of A-K⁴ L².¹⁹

I chose to use a higher-end modern cotton paper, which is as close as I can easily come to the linen rag paper used for printing in Shakespeare's day. I chose it for its strength as well as the slight off-white color - optic white being a color not really accessible for most paper in 1600.

Decisions: Binding

In choosing how to bind or tie the quarto, I started from the comments of my Folger reference librarian: "a plain paper cover with stab stitching through three holes in the gutter". So - I knew to cover it with a piece of plain paper and put three holes in the gutter for stab stitching.

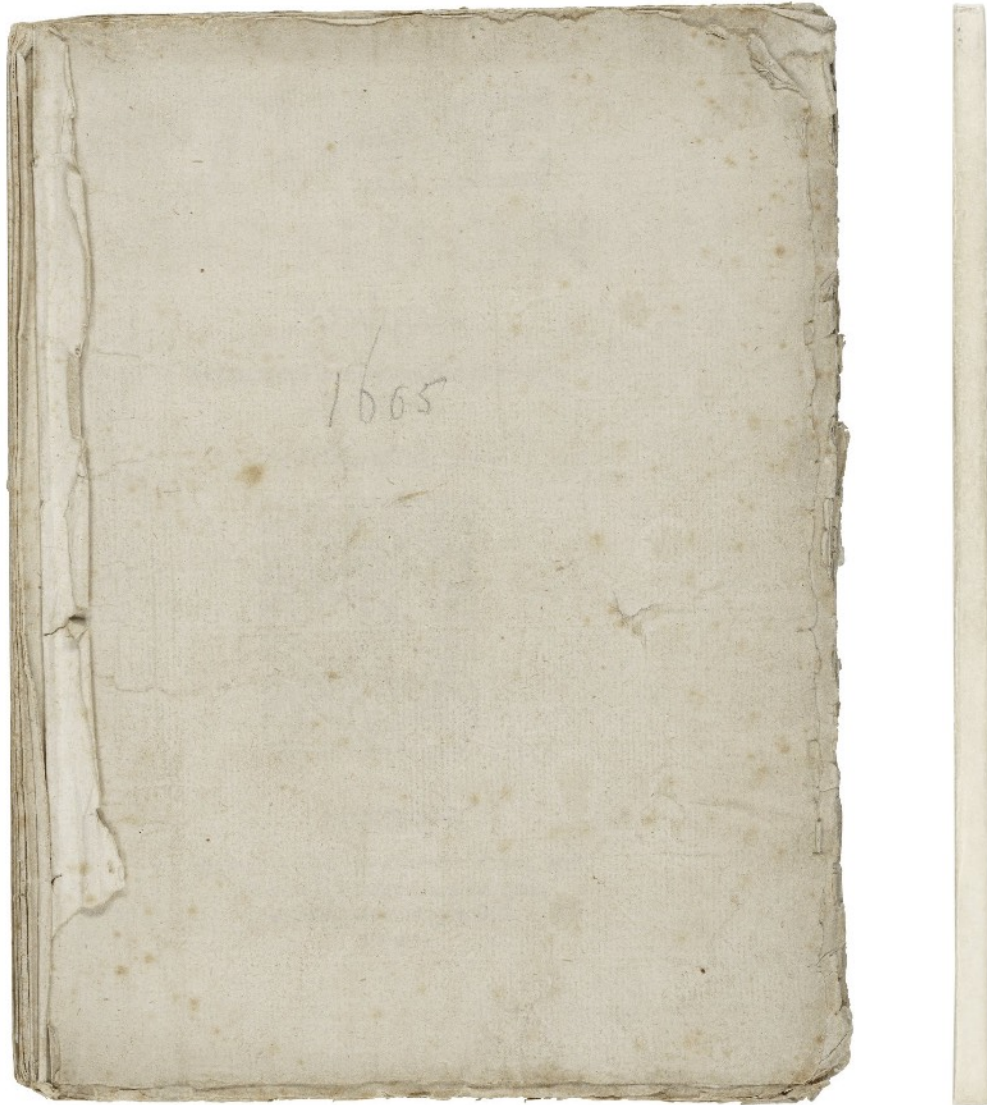
But... what is stab stitching, exactly?

Research on the topic seems particularly thin. I found references to it being akin to staples in-period. Here and there would be comments about how it was similar to sewing a pamphlet. But almost nowhere could I find a diagram of what path the threads actually take through the three holes. Searches for details inevitably ended up with Japanese stab-stitched bindings which is a beautiful art form but does not result in a book that looks anything like my second exemplar, the stab-stitched copy of *The London Prodigall*.

It seems stab stitching is either common enough even today that scholars just don't notice it, or is incredibly rare to survive to the modern era without being rebound.

¹⁸ Blake, Erin. Correspondence with Jacqueline Chenault, January 2024

¹⁹ Folger Shakespeare Library Collection, STC 22288



First page and spine of *The London Prodigall*, from the Folger Shakespeare Library Collection

Instead, I must look only to the images of my exemplar for binding details. The first page was not particularly useful - the strings are not visible in the image and for all I can tell, the pages are loose. The spine image is somewhat helpful, in that it shows the book is wrapped, as described, in a piece of paper - the edges of the signatures are not visible. When looking at inner pages, I can see the three points that cords pass through to hold the book together, but no additional detail.

272
STC
22333
copy 2

The London Prodigall.

Unc. Say it and do it Cozen, all is well. (man,
Lanc. Wel being in hope youle proue an honest
I take you to my fauour brother *Flowerdale*,
Welcome with all my heart: I see your care
Hath brought these acts to this conclusion,
And I am glad of it, come lets in and feast.
Oly. Nay zoft you awhile, you promised to make
Sir *Arthur* and me amends, here is your wisest
Daughter, see which ans theele haue. (hers,
Lanc. A Gods name, you haue my good will, get
Oly. How say you then Damfell, tyters hate?
Delia. I fir, am yours.
Oly. Why, then fend for a Vicar, and chil haue it
Dispatched in a trice so chill,
Delia. Pardon me fir, I meane I am yours,
In loue, in dutie: and affection.
But not to loue as wife, shall neere be said,
Delia was buried married, but a mayd.
Arth. Doe not condemne your selfe for euer
Vertuous faire, you were borne to loue. (it
Oly. Why you say true fir *Arthur* she was ybere to
So well as her mother: but I pray you shew vs
Some zamples or reasons why you will not marry?
Delia. Not that I doe condemne a married life,
For tis no doubt a sanctimonious thing:
But for the care and crosses of a wife,
The trouble in this world that children bring,
My vow is in heaven in earth to liue alone,
Husbands howfoeuer good, I will haue none.
Oly. Why then chil will liue Batcheller too,
Che zet not a vig by a wife, if a wife zet not a vig
By me: Come shalls go to dinner? (lanc:
Fa. To morrow I craue your companies in *Mark*.
To night weele frolike in *M. Caines* house,
And to each health, drinke downe a full carouse.

F I N I S.

Final page of *The London Prodigall*, courtesy Folger Shakespeare Library Collection

2024.02

Kingdom Arts and Sciences Festival 2024

Lady Marguerite Honoree du Cheneau

Barony of Storvik

Persona Pentathlon

Category 1: Manuscript & Fine Arts

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This leaves the final page, and that is where I can glean the most information. The top and bottom holes are clearly visible, while a large knot sits right over where I would expect the third hole based on the other images. I can see two lengths of thread or cord between the top hole and the knot, and between the bottom hole and the knot. Studying the cords themselves, they seem to be under at least a small amount of tension - they lie flat, and the holes are slightly stretched or pulled toward the middle. These details led me to experiment and finally settle on a pattern for my thread with an end result that to my eye matches the reference image.

I chose to use waxed linen thread based on my previous experiences and research into bookbinding, which revealed waxed linen to be a typical material used in binding and one that matches what is seen in the exemplar.

Materials

This project was relatively simple in terms of the required materials for construction:

- Images of each page from a Quarto edition of *Henry IV, part 2* from the collection of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC [Modern substitute for pages printed on a press]
- Southworth 24lb paper (90g/m²), 100% Cotton, Ivory Wove, 8.5"x11"
- Linen 60/2 thread²⁰
- Beeswax

Additional tools used included:

- Adobe Photoshop (cleaning text images & centering for printing)
- Adobe InDesign (formatting prepared images into a booklet format for printing)
- Brother laser printer
- Bone folder
- Bookbinding awl
- Bookbinding needles
- Bookbinding press
- Finishing Press
- Hot iron (to melt wax into thread)

²⁰ Source: Wm. Booth, Draper.

Process

Building this facsimile involved 2 main parts: Printing a copy of the pages in a manner as close as I can manage to the exemplar, and binding those pages in the manner likely used in-period for newly printed books and pamphlets.

Printing the Pages

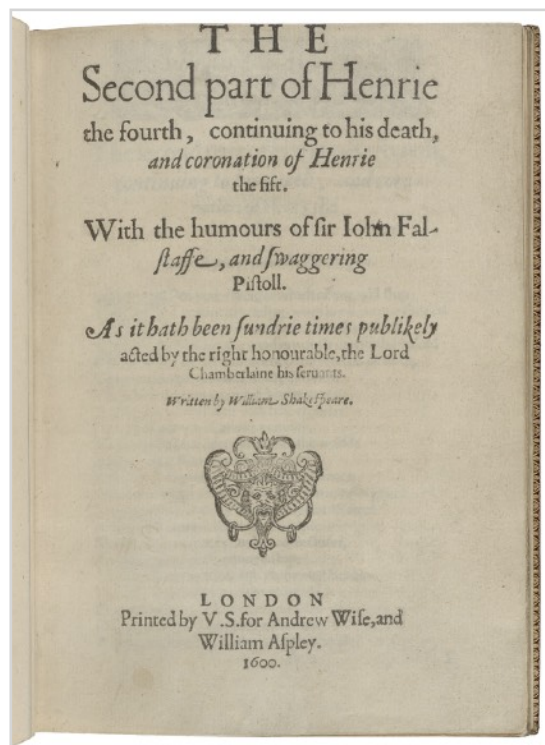
I began by locating a copy of the book in question in the Folger Shakespeare Library's collection and downloading large-format images of the 81 pages in the book.

The images of the pages from the copy are slightly yellowed and have elements of the cover, binding, etc included, but I wanted to work from something as close to what the printer would have worked with as possible - a block of text printed on a simple page.

This meant I needed to first whiten the images, ensuring that when I print in black and white what is being printed is the text and not the texture taken on by the paper of the book as it aged.

In Adobe Photoshop, I applied a series of filters to each image to take it from the slightly yellowed image in the photograph to a black-and-white text-only image that my printer could handle. The secret sauce ended up being a custom black and white filter at R 252, Y 273, G -80, C -129, B 128, M 100, which worked with minor adjustments across all of the pages.

Next I needed to isolate the text on each of the 81 images, removing the binding edge on one side, the fold on the other, and the pure white background throughout. I needed to do this without cutting off text - not a simple task given trimming of the extant object that was likely undertaken as part of a later precious binding of the quarto - and position the text in a



Original page from Henry IV p2.
Courtesy Folger Shakespeare Library,
Washington DC.

somewhat regular manner on each page, following the positioning of the text in the book itself. I needed to be careful in my adjustments to not warp or resize the text in any way.

Still working in Photoshop, I defined the size of my pages based on the measurements of the quarto. I then cropped each image and positioned it on a page of that size in Photoshop. The book moved slightly between each page turn during photography, so this work had to be done on a per-page basis over several hours.

The resulting files were all uniform in size/dimension, with text positioned on the page in text blocks in the same size as in the original and shifted just slightly downward to allow for trimming if necessary.

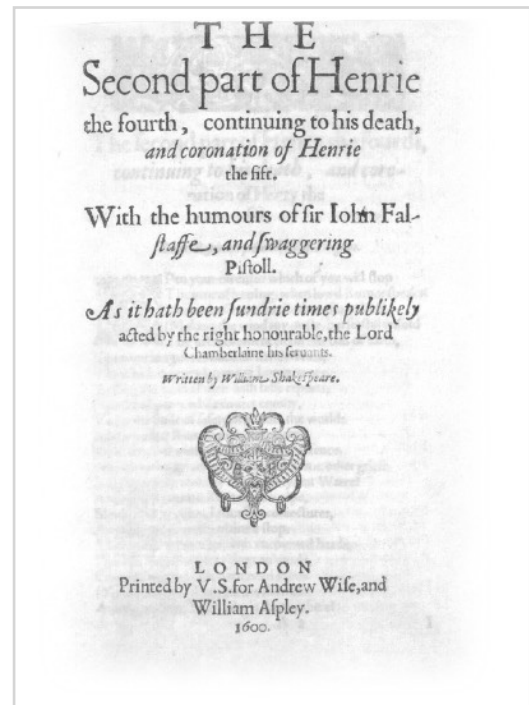
The final step to prepare for printing was to arrange the individual images in a booklet form. I did this in Adobe InDesign, arranging all 81 images in a (mostly) 2-up layout. After significant trial and error, I found print settings to get the layout I was after: signatures of 2 sheets each, printed so that one modern letter-sized page had 4 images printed on it, meaning 8 images per signature. This is the closest imitation of historical practices (1 sheet, with 4 text blocks on each side, folded into a signature and trimmed) that I could manage without engaging a specialty printer and larger format paper.

This meant that in InDesign, I used settings to print with the 'booklet' option, booklet type 2-up perfect bound and a signature size of 8. My printer settings needed to be double-sided, on the (short edge) selection.

After I printed all the pages, I folded them into their signatures and pressed them in my book press to get them nicely melded together and ready for binding.

A Bound Quarto

The process of stab sitting is relatively simple. I first secured the text block in a finishing press, backing it with a piece of wood add stability. I then took an awl and added 3 holes: one xx



Prepared page from Henry IV p2. Courtesy Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington DC. Prepared by the author.

inches from the top, one xx inches from the bottom, and one in the middle of the other two, all roughly matching the distances seen on the stab-bound copy of *The London Prodigall*.

I took an additional piece of paper and used it to wrap the book, adding holes in the same spots on the wrapper as I had on the book.

I waxed and ironed some heavyweight linen thread, then removed the backing board from my press. I stab-stitched the book with the following pattern, assuming the holes are numbered 1, 2, and 3 from top -> bottom and the ends of the thread are "A" and "B":



Diagram of hypothetical stitch path from the side, back of book 'up', knot at center.
Copyright Jacqueline Chenault.

1. Insert End A through Hole 1 and End B through Hole 3, traveling from the front to the back of the book. Pull through until the middle of the thread is above Hole 2 and the lengths are roughly even.
2. Moving from book-back to book-front, insert End A through Hole 2, then going from front to back insert it through Hole 3. Mirror this with End B - go back-to-front through Hole 2 and then front-to-back through Hole 1.
3. Bring both ends above Hole 2 and tie a knot. The book is now bound.



Comparison of back page of exemplar & final piece

Binding Process in Images



Book block with wrapped plain paper cover, secured against board in finishing press



Piercing the book block with an awl to create the third stitching hole



Board removed, checking and slightly enlarging holes with a needle



Linen thread, waxed and prepared for binding.



Sewing: Thread from front to back through holes #1 & #3



Sewing: Thread from back to front through hole #2



Sewing: Thread from front to back through holes #1 & #3



Tighten & Knot. Book is bound.

Final Result & Next Steps

I cannot express how delighted I am at my final product. Simple as the item may seem, holding a stab-stitched book of the same size and density as a quarto has shifted my perception of what these items were and the role they might have played in a theatergoer's life. I was expecting the book to be flimsy, to feel like something that would be easy to discard or throw away. To be a bit like the program you get when you go to see a modern play, something you *could* choose to keep but really just fills up space in a drawer because it can't really stand up.

Instead, my book feels like a paperback book. It could easily sit on the shelf and be right at home alongside my many modernly-printed plays. In fact, the binding feels more substantial and solid than the basic binding used to print the plays and promptbooks used by MTI and other modern theatrical licensors.

The only real flaw I have noticed in my item is that the back cover is a bit short of the back edge of the book. This was purely a material issue - I did not have plain paper long enough to cover the book in an appropriate weight and style to the project, and opted to use a blank sheet of the printer paper I'd used to print the book itself. I could have trimmed the entire book, but felt it was more important to keep the dimensions of the piece closer to the original than it was to eliminate the gap.

Otherwise, I've truly fallen in love with this form of simple binding. I am considering other places to utilize it - mundanely to hold together copies of scripts or journal articles I've printed, and within the Society as a way to bind documentation. With some streamlining of the process, I could easily use this technique to create largess or notebooks for myself or even to sell.

I do intend to explore more intensive bookbinding processes in the future. Hide glue, better wood, and properly thin leather still beckon. But this additional tool in my A&S arsenal has me well pleased, and I look forward to making my next stab-stitched items.

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