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## Forbidden Passion into Personal Collection

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Heidi E. Spear

Neureuther Competition Essay

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### Forbidden Passion into Personal Collection

Many of us spend our high school and college years constructing an identity, as beliefs we previously held dear become challenged. Ideologies we took for granted form subjects of debate with fellow classmates and dormmates. At this time, some of us yearn to conform and gain acceptance from our peers while others desire to be recognized as unique. I belong to the latter group, so imagine my dismay when I felt myself falling for Shakespeare and his theater. I tried to forbid myself, as I wondered what could more trite and precocious than adoring the study of Shakespeare.

Unbeknownst to me, the seed for seduction had been planted when my sixth grade English teacher taught us about the Globe --- a playhouse, unlike modern theaters, torn down in 1644. In that class, I read *Romeo and Juliet*; I felt positively challenged and moved as we read aloud. Two years later, my mother presented me with my first anthology of Shakespeare, which unintentionally started a collection.

In spite of my sixth grade fervor, I must blame Washington University and Shakespeare's Globe for placing me atop the slippery slope. As a sophomore at

Washington University, I participated in the Globe Summer Programme. I believed if I were to learn about Shakespeare, then I should try to do so at the best place possible. I stirred with excitement when I heard the Globe Theatre was being reconstructed, since I had been taught it could only live in our imaginations.

In 1995, I stepped into the Globe, utterly besotted. There, I realized the futility of my struggle to suppress my curiosity for Shakespeare, his life, and his work. My family, my friends, and my professors saw me glow; however, I knew I never could compete with the true Shakespeare scholars, especially those from his native country! Therefore, I decided to relegate Shakespeare to my personal life. I chose to collect a few books on Shakespeare and the Globe, but formally study modern literature, drama, and art. Again, an attempt in vain. Though I eagerly studied modernism and postmodernism, my passion for the Globe drove me further into Shakespeare studies. As an undergraduate, I interned with Globe Education for three summers, wrote a bachelor's thesis on the audiences of the Globe, and delivered a public lecture on the subject. At this point, I bought an anthology of Shakespeare's work from the Globe bookshop so it would have the red, circular "Shakespeare's Globe" sticker to remind me of my friends there. Since my experience at the Globe, I have felt that the 20<sup>th</sup>-century's mystification of Shakespeare can be reversed. My desire has been to collect books that showcase Shakespeare's appeal and accessibility across a spectrum of age and interest.

In 1997, the Performing Arts Department and the Comparative Literature Department at Washington University honored my thesis, and with the prizes I bought a facsimile of the First Folio of 1623. I never believed I would own my own copy of the First Folio, and this copy's sturdy design renders it reader-friendly. In my collection, I

want books that can be handled, and this Folio edition fits the bill. It is an affordable, flexible version of a rare book.

A short while after I graduated, Henry I. Schvey, as a thank you for lending him slides of the Globe, gave me the book *Shakespeare in Performance*. A colorful book of performance notes, photographs, and dates of theater and film productions, it is a pleasurable read. I particularly enjoy old photographs of Judi Dench, and I can use the book to answer some useful academic questions as well.

Thus, my collection grows, and I find its import in its role as a reminder of events in my life and Shakespeare's impact on those outside of academia. I am particularly fond of books like the children's book *William Shakespeare and the Globe* that might attract an unsuspecting or latent Shakespeare enthusiast. The illustrated children's book belongs to a small sample from last century that highlight the construction of the new Globe, which began as the dream of Chicago-born Sam Wanamaker. While two gift books of sonnets demonstrate Shakespeare the Romantic, I have two other books replete with Shakespeare's insults. My latest addition to the collection, *Play*, is a photographic journey highlighting the first five seasons at the new Globe, 1996-2001. Fortunately, I saw many of the plays, so the gorgeous reproductions on heavy cardstock (approximately 11" x 15" per page, some photographs span two pages) vibrantly bring back thrilling times.

Aside from modern books, I own two sets of Shakespeare's plays more than one hundred years old. Their age enhances their appeal, with brightly colored plates and an aura gained from surviving a century. One set belonged to my great-grandmother. Her plays are bound in red leather with gold seal imprints. Each volume contains a play, at

least one etching, and a glossary. Her handwriting survives on some of the pages, and bookplates with both her name and crest identify some of the books as hers. These volumes have been gently restored so one can read them. My other century-old collection comes from my father's dear friend, with whom we spent many holidays when I was a child. *Shakespeare's Works* belonged to his grandfather. The top of each volume is gilded, the cover and lining resemble a Florentine pattern, and the engravings inside are akin to other volumes of the period. Therefore, as with all the books in my collection, I value their ability to remind me of the legacy of those who have read Shakespeare over the centuries.

Thus far, I am pleased with the variety I have collected: from children's books to the First Folio; large to palm-sized volumes; and, rare to mass-reproduced copies. Most of the books were gifts to me, and the breadth and scope of the collection keeps me interested in the various ways Shakespeare and his theater live in print beyond their time period. The collection represents my interests, and because many were gifts, they conjure up memories of people in my life. I feel comforted when I read one of my sonnet books, given to me the first time I fell in love; the book of plays and film from an ever-supportive professor; my first anthology from my mother; a copy of *Twelfth Night* that bears my father's address sticker from his freshman year; or, the brilliant book of photography and commentary entitled *Play*, from my brother. Each time I turn to one of these books, I am reminded of my time at the Globe, inspired to continue my studies, and thankful for the family and friendships I treasure. Years have passed since I hopelessly resisted my inclination toward Shakespeare studies; now, I hope to broaden my collection, and eventually pass it on as others have done for me.

## Select Bibliography with Annotations

Aliki. William Shakespeare and the Globe. New York: Harper Collins, 1999.

Day, Barry. This Wooden 'O'. London: Oberlin Books, 1996.

*The title page reads, "A pre-publication first edition generously donated by Ammirati Puris Lintas," and I received it as a gift to commemorate Founder's Day in 1996. It is a reminder of festive times and the prologue season at the Globe.*

Eaton, Seymore. Shakespeare: Rare Print Collection. Connoisseur Edition, issued for private circulation. No. 441. Philadelphia: R.G. Kennedy, 1900.

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Salamander Books, 1995.

Rowse, A.L. The Annotated Shakespeare. New York: Greenwich House, 1988.

Rylance, Mark. Play. London: Shakespeare's Globe Publications, 2003.

*This book is dedicated to the Friends and Stewards of Shakespeare's Globe, and in the kind dedication my name is mentioned. Though this book already would have been a special memento, with my name printed inside it makes me feel as though I am not forgotten by those whose passion for the Globe I respect so deeply.*

Schoenbaum, S. Shakespeare: The Globe & The World. New York: Oxford UP, 1979.

Shakespeare on Love. Lincolnwood: Publications International, Ltd., 1999.

Shakespeare, William. King Lear. New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1946.

Shakespeare, William. Othello: The Moor of Venice. New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1946.

Shakespeare, William. The Comedy of Errors. New York: PDR/Royal, Inc., 1993.

The edition is a hardback copy covered in teal cloth. It comes inside a box covered with the same material. The text is printed in unorthodox fonts, complemented by representations of modern sculpture.

Shakespeare, William. The Temple Shakespeare. 14 vols. London: J. M. Dent, 1894-1904.

*This collection has been handed down from my great-grandmother, Elizabeth Frank. Recently, my parents had the collection gently restored so that I am able to handle each volume.*

Shakespeare, William. The Works of Shakespeare. Edition de Luxe. 20 vols. Boston: The C.T. Brainard Publishing Co., 1901.

*The title page of each volume is printed in color, with a protective sheet of tissue. The reverse side of the title page reads “this edition of The Works of Shakespeare, printed for subscribers only, is limited to one thousand numbered sets.” Several of the pages in the book remain uncut, particularly in the last volume which is an analytical index.*

Shakespeare, William. Twelfth Night. New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1946.

Shapiro, James. Shakespeare and the Jews. New York: Columbia UP, 1996.

*This copy was signed for me by the author, after he delivered a lecture in Chicago. I am interested in his research because I am Jewish and am researching the representation of the “other” in Shakespeare’s work.*

Wells, Stanley and Gary Taylor, ed. The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1988.