

## **In Memoriam Marvin Spevack (1927-2013)**

Shakespeareans, scholars, and students around the world mourn the death of Marvin Spevack, who passed away on 6 February 2013 in his home in Muenster, Germany, at the age of 85. He is survived by his wife Dr. Helga Spevack-Husmann. Professor Spevack was scholarly productive until his death: his latest book, *A Shakespearean Constellation*, is forthcoming this year and was already in the press when he died.

Marvin Spevack was born in New York. After his undergraduate studies at the City College New York and Harvard University he received his PhD from Harvard in 1953 with a doctoral dissertation on “The Dramatic Function of Shakespeare’s Puns.” He was a Fulbright Lecturer in Munich and Muenster (1961-63), before, in 1964, he became Professor of English Philology at the English Department of the University of Muenster.

When Professor Spevack came to Muenster, the project which made him internationally known was already on his mind: his pioneering computerized concordance to Shakespeare founded his reputation as one of the first (if not *the* first) scholar ever to utilize the computer for research in the humanities. Spevack’s nine-volume *Complete and Systematic Concordance to the Works of Shakespeare* (Hildesheim and New York, 1968-80) and soon after the one-volume *Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare* (Cambridge, MA, 1973) not only broke new ground for other computerized research in non-numerical disciplines but has also been, since then, a source and inspiration for electronic Shakespeare scholarship world-wide. Moreover, his *Shakespeare Thesaurus* (Hildesheim and New York, 1993) is the first in a row of similar attempts at classifying Shakespeare’s vocabulary.

It seems natural that a philologist and man of letters like Marvin Spevack

would also become an editor. Among the Shakespeare plays he edited, the facsimiles of *Shakespeare: The Second, Third and Fourth Folios* (Cambridge, 1985), the New Variorum Edition of *Antony and Cleopatra* (New York, 1990), and the New Cambridge Edition of *Julius Caesar* (Cambridge, 1988; updated 2004) need to be singled out.

Before and after his retirement, Professor Spevack was a versatile, enthusiastic, and productive scholar. In addition to his substantial contributions to Shakespearean scholarship, his enormous output of publications in other fields testifies to his range of interests as well as to his eloquence and beautiful prose. Among his numerous articles and books are, for example, studies on the Beat Generation or on Tennessee Williams; editions of theatre texts as far apart from each other as Byron's *Werner* or a series of *Renaissance Latin Drama in English*; pieces about ongoing changes in the current secondary education systems as well as about communication and the new media; and items on such subjects as dictionaries and book or library studies.

In the course of his professional career, Marvin Spevack received not only numerous invitations to teach at prestigious institutions but was also honored, on both sides of the Atlantic, with several awards and fellowships. He was Senior Fellow at the Folger Shakespeare Library; Guggenheim Fellow; Honorary Research Fellow at University College, London; Visiting Fellow at Wolfson College Cambridge; Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, Edinburgh University; Andrew Mellon Foundation Fellow of The Huntington Library; Fellow at the Centre for the Book of The British Library.

Although Marvin Spevack's research focus has always been English Studies and especially Shakespeare, he understood his teaching appointment "English Philology" to include such areas as American Literature, Book

Studies, and Linguistics, and, as a true “generalist,” he taught also American drama, aspects of historical linguistics, and lexicography. Marvin Spevack was a dedicated, charismatic, and inspiring teacher who was deeply humane and outgoing; his openness for unorthodox topics—always based, however, on serious and sound research—was famous and his great sense of humor proverbial. He had the admirable ability to convey complicated matters in an understandable and accessible style. On the occasion of his sixtieth birthday he was honored by colleagues, friends, and students with a festschrift: *Shakespeare—Text, Language, Criticism: Essays in Honor of Marvin Spevack*, ed. Bernhard Fabian and Kurt Tetzeli von Rosador (Hildesheim, 1988).

Since the 1990s, Professor Spevack has turned to literary figures of the nineteenth century and written books like *James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps: A Classified Bibliography* (Hildesheim, 1997), *James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps: The Life and Works of the Shakespearean Scholar and Bookman* (New Castle, Delaware, 2001), *Isaac D’Israeli on Books: Pre-Victorian Essays on the History of Literature* (London, 2004), *Curiosities Revisited: The Works of Isaac D’Israeli* (Hildesheim, 2007), *Sidney Lee: Biographer, Shakespearean, Comparatist, Educator* (Hildesheim, 2009), and *The Works of Francis Turner Palgrave: A Descriptive Survey* (Muenster, 2012). He also selected and edited *A Victorian Chronicle: The Diary of Henrietta Pillipps* (1999).

Marvin Spevack’s last book combines his two foremost interests—Shakespeare and the Victorians—in *A Shakespearean Constellation: J. O. Halliwell-Pillipps and Friends* (forthcoming Muenster, 2013).

Marvin Spevack will be greatly missed and remembered for his brilliant teaching and scholarship as well as for his humanity and generosity.

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