

Carol Thomas Neely
Address in Philadelphia, 13 April 1990

My first pleasant duty is to thank all the people who made this meeting possible and simply reading this list of names does not convey how grateful the Association and I are to them. First I want to thank the Local Arrangement Chair, Georgiana Ziegler, the members of her committee, Rebecca Bushnell, Gabriele Bernhard Jackson, Arthur Kinney, Cary Mazer, Marianne Novy, James Sanderson, Barbara Traister, and the graduate students who have worked at this meeting. I also want to thank the program committee chair, Scott McMillin, and his committee, Judith Dunbar, George Williams, and Heather Dubrow. And a special thanks to Nancy Hodge and to her two assistants, Jill Bagwell and Mary Courtney; Nancy's sanity, smarts, and organization have made my job easy. Finally I would like to thank the outgoing Trustees, Maurice Charney, Alan Dessen, and Steve Urkowitz, and to introduce the new trustees, Lynda Boose, Mary Beth Rose, and the new Vice President, Jill Levenson.

Remembering the Shakespeare Association Differently

I begin with a quiz and three epigraphs.

1. Is Eastern Illinois University north, south, east, or west of the University of Illinois, Urbana?

2. What percentage of your department's English majors are 1) women, 2) African American, 3) Asian American, 4) returning students, 5) first-generation college-goers? If you know the answers, do you take this into account when planning your curriculum?

Time would pass, old empires would fall and new ones would take their place, the relations of countries and the relations of classes had to change before I discovered that it is not quality of goods and utility that matter, but movement: not where you are or what you have but where you come from, where you are going and the rate at which you are getting there.

C.L. R. James, quoted by James Clifford "Traveling Selves, Traveling Others" at "Cultural Studies Now and in the Future" (University of Illinois, Urbana, April 1990).

A place on the map is also a place in history.

Adrienne Rich, *Blood, Bread, and Poetry* (1986, 212).

Theory is always written from some "where" and that "where" is less a place than itineraries: different concrete histories of dwelling, immigration, exile, migration.

Traveling Theories, Traveling Theorists. Inscriptions 5 (1989), ed. James Clifford and Vivek Dhareshawar.

Locations and travel have been on my mind for several reasons. I recently traveled back to a university in the town I call home and this weekend I have traveled for the first time to a conference in Philadelphia, the place that was my home for half of my life. So I feel divided, half native, half tourist in this place on the map. The Shakespeare Association has also moved—with Nancy Hodge—from Vanderbilt in Nashville to SMU in Dallas, following the westward migration of the U.S. population. We probably think too little about how important Nancy and the support of the places she lives and works are to this Association.

My remarks are in three parts: first, a search for the origins of the Shakespeare Association which turns out to be a series of itineraries and places on the map; second, a brief autobiographical itinerary which marks a beginning for me; third, an analysis of some itineraries of the Association as it perpetually relocates and re-imagines itself. What I try to pass off as scholarship, history, and autobiography here may be partly fiction—like all travel writing.

In its current guise, the Shakespeare Association of America held its first annual meeting in Washington D.C. in 1973, attended by over 200 people, one source reports (Berry 798); there followed a second annual meeting and second annual lecture in Pasadena, California in 1974. This national organization was imagined at an International Shakespeare Congress in Vancouver in 1971. It was incorporated when it usurped the name and the place of the original “Shakespeare Association of America.” The thirteen members attending that Association’s 1972 annual meeting and the 247 members represented by proxy ceded the *Shakespeare Quarterly* (that it had run since 1950) to the Folger Shakespeare Library and disbanded, later that year passing on its name to “a group of scholars we consider worthy” (Hyde 228). This older association was incorporated in 1923 when it replaced the Shakespeare Society of Washington, which was one of many local Shakespeare societies or clubs. The Washington Society re-named itself to become an umbrella organization to link the local societies—apparently with little success. Although, in 1950, when the *Shakespeare Bulletin* was given the “more significant title” of *Shakespeare Quarterly* (Hyde 223), there was a budget surplus for the first time, and a doubling of membership, local clubs had not affiliated with the national organization as expected and a hope that the membership goal of 5,000 would be reached “sooner than expected” now seems optimistic (“Notes,” 1950, 293).

But the local clubs thrived; from the late nineteenth century until past the middle of the twentieth century there were over five hundred Shakespeare clubs in cities and small towns all over America. And although Cary Mazer’s talk early in this conference taught us about the structure of the all-male nineteenth-century Shakespeare Society of Philadelphia, in fact the vast majority of club members were women. Their activities can be sketched from a 1972 *Shakespeare Quarterly* notice from the Shakespeare Club of Cuba, New York (“Notes,” 1972, 229). In April of that year, the Club celebrated its eighty-fifth birthday with a banquet and a reading of *Antony and Cleopatra*. The year’s meetings had been spent studying *Hamlet* and the club’s twenty-three members were all women and included one grandmother, daughter, and granddaughter and two other mother-daughter pairs. The original Shakespeare Association of America grew out of these local clubs and hoped to unite and publicize their activities—which often included publication of articles.¹ In 1972 when it became us, Mrs. Donald F. Hyde (Mary Crapo Hyde), with a Ph.D. from Columbia and a published dissertation from Columbia Press, had been one of four members of the editorial board of the *Shakespeare Quarterly* since 1950 and had been President of the

Shakespeare Association of America since 1956. When the group ceded its name to our Shakespeare Association, Mrs. Hyde lost her position on the editorial board and her presidency, was demoted to trustee for a year, and disappeared from the record. G. E. Bentley became the first president. Only one of the Association's first fifteen presidents and only one of the first fifteen annual lecturers was a woman—the same woman, Madeline Doran. Thus the effect of the re-birth of the Shakespeare Association in 1972 was to centralize, professionalize, and re-gender the study of Shakespeare in America. In the light of this history, we might interpret the fact that next year, for the first time in *this* organization's history, a majority of the trustees (six of eight) will be women, not a sign of progress but as a return to origins. So what is this organization that has always already existed under the name of Shakespeare, a name that Randy McCloud taught us and Peter Stallybrass recently reminded us was regularized by printers to alleviate printing problems.

The Association's itinerary and mine were linked in my first and most arduous journey to SAA in New Orleans in 1977. Jobless and with more time than money, I sat up on the seedy City of New Orleans train from Champaign for 18 hours and arrived at the elegant Fairmont Hotel in 100 degree weather filthy, exhausted, and scared. My conviction that I was crazy to come was intensified by my first—of many—SAA journeys, by streetcar though lush New Orleans to the opening reception at the beautiful home of the President of Tulane. I knew not a soul on the streetcar but everyone else knew everyone and had forever it seemed. They talked about each others' parents, children, vacations, love life, past SAA meetings, Association and Folger gossip. Unlike many later SAA buses (the bus from Cambridge to Brandeis that arrived hours late, the bus back to Seattle after a lovely outing that broke down, the bus to East Berlin at ISA in 1986 that left hours late), this streetcar arrived in timely fashion.

In spite of my unpropitious journey there, that SAA reception and meeting were crucial to my future intellectual and collegial life (and employment). I met there for the first time Gayle Greene, a meeting that turned out to be the catalyst to our co-editorship with Carolyn Swift (Lenz) of *The Woman's Part*, and Joe Barber, who was later an enthusiastic press reader for the volume. Paper sessions included, among others, "New Thoughts on Comedies" with feminist talks by Coppélia Kahn and Charlie Frey and "New Theories on Psychological Development" with C. L. Barber and Richard Wheeler. This meeting marked the further coming together of a loose group of feminist/psychoanalytic/marriage-and-family critics, first visible in special sessions at the 1976 MLA meetings in New York. The point of this locating of myself is not to tell a Horatia Alger story but to represent some of the contradictions of this Association: its occasional appearance of exclusiveness, elitism, hierarchy, but also its perpetual openness, diversity, opportunity—of the vitality and collegiality that characterize both the formal sessions and their interstices.

Tracking the Association's itinerary through programs from 1973 to 1990, I have been struck by its hospitableness to new developments—for example a seminar on early modern women writers at this meeting. Its programs repeatedly stress newness, promising not only "new" thoughts and theories, but also "New Directions," "New Dimensions," "Fresh Voices," and most emphatically, "The Thrust of Thought." One can watch these new directions become old and disappear, only to reappear, relocated, years later. I had thought that the 1980s had invented fierce ideological contestation until I came across two formal debate sessions in the mid-'70s: "Resolved: Thematic Criticism of Shakespeare is a Snare and a Delusion" and "Resolved:

Shakespeare's Romances have fewer claims to be called "Great" than his Comedies and Tragedies." While these debates could not be staged today, relocated versions perhaps can be or will be.

Many of the signs of the Association's current trajectory emerged at the 1984 Boston meeting (not to be confused with the 1980 or 1988 Boston meetings). The ubiquitous "chairmen" of seminars and panel sessions became chairmen and chairwomen—then were replaced in 1987 by gender-neutral "moderators" and "leaders." Seminars had exploded from four in 1977 to fifteen in 1984, and seven of these were doubled for a total of twenty-two sessions; they were "Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Women," "Post-Structuralist Approaches to Shakespeare," "Shakespeare in Modern Drama," "Shakespeare and Psychology," "Teaching Shakespeare to Undergraduates," "Shakespeare's Directing Hand," and "Shakespeare and the Classical Tradition." A welcome invasion of Brits began that year with Lisa Jardine and Jonathan Dollimore, and ideological debates heated up, especially in two simultaneous sessions, "Shakespeare and the New Historicism" and "Shakespeare and the Limits of Psychological Criticism," separated by what Lynda Boose later called an Iron Curtain, and that marked the beginning of an agon between new historicism and feminism. (But there were feminists on each side and the curtain turned out to be more permeable than first imagined.) For the last time an annual lecture was given by Joseph Summers, nostalgically—or perhaps prophetically—titled "Dreams of Love and Power: *The Winter's Tale*," to be replaced by the president's luncheon remarks.

Since 1984 further structural and ideological change has occurred. I was the first elected Vice President of the SAA—a good innovation that makes the President work longer and harder and do more of the institutional housework. When the new Constitution is ratified, Nancy Hodge's title will change from Executive Secretary to Executive Director, a crucial name change that should have occurred long ago and signals her important role (and Ann Cook's before her) in directing the Association's itinerary. 1988 was not only the first Vice President but, more importantly, the first annual dance—perhaps replacing the annual lecture. This year we have the first plenary session on "Erotic Politics," and next year, as someone commented at the end of the annual trustees' meeting, we may have panels with few literary texts and almost no Shakespeare.

It's been an exciting journey and one that will continue in good hands. I am happy at this moment, on Friday the 13th in Philadelphia, to pass the presidency of the SAA on to Michael Warren—who immigrated from London to Santa Cruz; Jill Levenson, our new Vice President, is an indigenous Brooklynite who immigrated to Toronto.

Works Cited

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1.I have recently learned much more about these amazing organizations in Katherine Scheil’s wonderful history of their contributions to women’s education and American culture.