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On this twentieth anniversary of our last meeting in San Francisco, I thought it might be appropriate to say a few words about the health of the SAA—a brief medical history, if you will. For some reason lines of a play I've been editing come to mind as an apt analogue for our condition. Falstaff asks his boy, "Sirrah, you giant, what says the doctor to my water?", and the reply is ambiguous: "He said, sir, the water itself was a good healthy water, but for the party that owed it, he might have more diseases than he knew for."

Now I don't mean to suggest that we have grown old and fat; nor that we've become weary of the critical wars we love to fight; nor that the chief attractions of our annual meetings are the food, the drink, and the luxurious tubs we come to sweat in—though these Falstavian comforts do, of course, have their allure, especially on Good Friday. But the growth of the organization since its inaugural meeting in 1973 *has* brought changes: success has made us different, though not complacent; and if we are not ravaged by disease, our body has nevertheless spread—our pressure is up, our leanness in question, our humours occasionally out of balance, and some think we should bleed for it.

I attended my first SAA meeting in 1975, in New Haven, as a graduate student. The organization was much smaller then, with attendance hovering around 200. And though grad students were not members, we were encouraged to attend as auditors. My adviser, Eugene Waith, suggested that I go to hear some lively debate about issues of current interest to Shakespeareans. (Gene, I'm happy to say, is still an active member, twenty years after retirement, and he is here today.) Everyone fit easily into a small ballroom back then; and I remember how exciting it was to watch people whose names I knew, whose books I'd read, have at one another.

In those days, the SAA was a close-knit community of scholars intent on sharing their research and setting new directions for graduate study. The membership drew heavily from large universities—not many came from smaller universities or colleges such as the one where I teach. But the '70s marked a radical shift in the job market. The bottom fell out: graduate students began to seek alternate careers; and, in response, graduate programs began to shrink. My own institution graduated 35 PhDs in English the year I finished; the following year, it admitted only a dozen students. As a result, those graduates who once might have anticipated working at major research universities—the goal to which many of us aspired—now felt lucky to find tenure track positions *anywhere*: at less prestigious universities, at small liberal arts colleges, at community colleges. And conditions haven't changed.

All this has meant that in the past twenty years, young faculty interested in pursuing scholarly careers have come to occupy positions at all sorts of institutions—both those that value scholarship and those that don't—and to find in the networking and collegiality afforded by the SAA a welcome cordial, an annual transfusion of bardic plasma. With the advent of seminars in the late '70s and workshops shortly thereafter, the SAA became a more egalitarian organization, allowing every member—not just speakers at plenary sessions—to participate in scholarly exchange. The opportunity to present one's work in such forums each year provides a wonderful incentive for all Shakespeareans to maintain a research agenda as seriously as if they were teaching at a major university. One touch of the SAA thus makes the whole world kin.

When I first joined, I felt a bit out of place. As an assistant professor at a small college, I had no opportunity to teach graduate students; yet only by teaching graduate students, I was convinced, could I acquire scholarly validation, become a member of the club, have my research taken seriously. Perhaps some of you have felt the same way. Membership in the SAA helped to change that: the democratic spirit in which the organization is run, the opportunity to talk with others who have the same interests and do the same kinds of work we do, is its own validation. And as I soon came to appreciate, teaching undergraduates can be at least as rewarding as teaching graduate students. Many undergraduates are as keen readers of Shakespeare as the best

Ph.D. candidates. They become doctors, lawyers, economists, chemists; and they carry the torch for Shakespeare into the world outside the academy. They have the passion, and often the money, to keep cultural institutions vital; and if we have taught them well, they will attend performances at regional Shakespeare festivals, they will become a primary audience for Shakespeare films, and as parents, they will ensure that Shakespeare remains central in school curricula. Sharing our passion with undergraduates is therefore the mission of virtually everyone in this room, and the SAA has encouraged us to keep that mission central.

Another mission embraced by the SAA more passionately today than 20 years ago is to offer graduate students the opportunity to take an active part in meetings, to learn that there *is* a community of scholars to help support and sustain them. This is doubly important because, as the job market fails to produce sufficient numbers of new jobs for them, students spend *years* longer to complete their PhDs than once was the case. Many of us here spent four, five, possibly six years in graduate school; it was customary to find a job while we were in our 20s, still green in judgment. Today, it is more typical to spend nine or ten years finishing the Ph.D.; and, with several hundred Shakespeareans on the market competing for perhaps thirty tenure-track jobs annually, students may spend three, four, or five years in the search. During that time, they become more seasoned scholars and teachers than many older members were when they got their first jobs. As anyone who has participated in seminars with these graduate students realizes, their work is often exceptionally good, and their lean and hungry look encourages others of us to cut the fat from our diets and exercise our minds more than we otherwise might. The SAA thus provides a forum for young scholars to be accepted as the professionals they are; and for the 20% of you here today who are still in graduate school, we are healthier for having you among our ranks.

Now the growth of the organization has had, and will continue to have, practical consequences. With over 1000 members on the books and over 700 in attendance at this meeting, there is less collegiality of the sort older members once enjoyed. There are fewer opportunities for the membership to come together for plenary sessions, and it's easy to regret the loss of intimacy that once allowed all members to participate in the same conversation in one room. Furthermore, we no longer have the option of convening in smaller venues: we need big convention hotels with meeting rooms sufficient to house our seminars and workshops. And ballrooms? Even the Grand Hyatt's wasn't big enough for us this year. On the other hand, we now have an array of seminars and workshops undreamed of when we last met in San Francisco: eleven choices then; forty now. This growth attests to a wide and healthy dispersal of scholarly interests; and if we have fewer opportunities for common experience, the variety of shared contact we have in smaller groups provides ample compensation.

One last item. As we grow, we gain the clout to set the direction of Shakespeare studies worldwide. The SAA, of course, has long done that: seminars in particular have inspired members to publish much of their best work and to teach in new ways. But I suspect we need to think more seriously about how our work can *influence* the market rather than be *dictated by* it. Let me cite, for example, the proliferation of Shakespeare editions in recent years. Among one-volume editions, we may choose from the Riverside, the Harper Collins, the Oxford, the Norton, the Pelican. In competition for scholarly single-play editions are the Ardens 2 and 3, the Cambridge, the Oxford, and—available more cheaply for a student market—the Folger, the Bantam, the Signet, the Pelican, the New Penguin, the Everyman, and more. I wager that at least a hundred of us in this room have recently been, or are currently, involved in editing these volumes. Editing a single play can take thousands of hours. And to what end? The potential for redundancy, for duplication of our efforts, is great; the importance of small distinctions becomes ludicrously magnified. I, for one, am ecstatic when I discover a reading that changes with the insertion of a comma; I can't sleep for excitement when I discover a Quicklyism that hasn't been thoroughly glossed; I spend hours fretting over whether I should elect a sensible eighteenth-century emendation or leave a word uncorrected; I agonize over how to characterize distinctions between Quarto and Folio in a way that will look different from what other, worthier editors have done. And I ask: Is this the best way for so many of us to spend our time?

True, much can be discovered by editing Shakespeare's texts; many valuable books and articles have

come out of editorial projects. But such benefits don't answer the question, "Do we *need* all these editions?" A marketing demon is at my elbow, whispering, "O reason not the need! Our basest editions are on the bottom line profitable!" "Superfluous!" echoes my conscience. "Profitable!" says the demon. And so we are pressed to proceed. After all, we are in ink stepped in so far that returning were as tedious as—

But what if we had chosen to spend those thousands of hours differently, on less redundant projects? On rereading Shakespeare's contemporaries, for instance, and providing good, cheap critical editions of plays currently unavailable? In the past two decades, the academic market for non-Shakespearean drama has all but dried up. Where once *any* reputable graduate program, and most undergraduate programs too, offered courses in Shakespeare's contemporaries, now it is exceedingly difficult even to find an anthology to use in such a course (though I understand David Bevington will soon remedy that). Paradoxically, as Shakespeare has spawned an industry, his contemporaries have been laid off; and I suspect that we—we, who have gotten so caught up in commissions that we have been inattentive to the fact that Shakespeare was one in a community of writers—are in part responsible. By paying more attention to those writers, we may revive the market for them. By turning our gaze on Elizabeth Cary; on Lily and Peele, Kyd and Marlowe; on Jonson and Marston, Decker and Heywood; on Middleton and Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster and Chapman; and on those undervalued late-bloomers Ford and Shirley, we may find gainful employment for them yet. How? By reintroducing them into the undergraduate curriculum, at first in our Shakespeare courses, where they could provide useful contexts for assessing Shakespeare's achievement, then, as their names grow more familiar, in courses of their own. After all, we cannot be confined within the weak list of a publisher's fashion. We are the makers of markets! Students will follow our lead; we can educate them to appreciate the merits of dramatists other than Shakespeare. And the SAA provides an ideal forum to focus that endeavor.

This, then, is my wish for the organization as it enters the next century: for it to continue to grow and be inclusive in new ways, to welcome an ever widening membership with more diverse interests, and to bring Shakespeare's contemporaries within its ample embrace; so that if, twenty years from now, some skeptic among us asks, "What says the doctor to our water?", we may reply, pithily, that good works still flow from us; that we enjoy blood-letting as much as ever; that an annual sweat in the best tubs of North America continues to cleanse our foul body of its worst excesses. And as for age? It hasn't withered us yet, nor custom staled our infinite variety.

It's now my privilege to introduce the person who will lead the SAA into the new century, a wonderful teacher, scholar and friend, Jean Howard.