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Welcome to the Fortieth Anniversary Meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America.

Recently I was standing in front of the book stall in the lobby of the Chicago Shakespeare Theatre on Navy Pier and I picked up an odd-looking copy of *Timon of Athens*, which the theater is going to produce later this spring. Turning it over, I realized it was effectively a reproduction of some nameless and hence out of copyright nineteenth-century text, presumably downloaded from the internet or scanned from a library copy, and then bound. There was no editor's or publisher's name, nor any other identifying bibliographical marks, and I was horrified enough to point this out to my husband in a disgusted voice. Our conversation was overheard by a woman browsing nearby, who seemed puzzled by my reaction. When I explained, very briefly, who I was and why the other paperback texts I had subsequently noticed on the CST stall – the Arden three, the Penguin, some Bantams – were better, she told me she was a voice coach at another Chicago university, and she objected very much to those scholarly editions. After all, she said, the audience hates it when there are changes; they know the play and that's what they want to hear. Scholarly editions interfere with their pleasure.

I found myself speechless – the audience knows *Timon* well enough to recognize textual corrections? – and fortunately the bells rang for the first act. But I believe that this incident sums up some of the major issues that today face a “Shakespearean,” as I now identify myself, and not only a Shakespeare editor, which I admittedly am. These issues include not only what apparently most intrigues that audience – “who is this anonymous guy and does he have an incestuous relationship with his royal mother” – Shakespeare as Oedipus – but what exactly did he write, can it be determined, why do we care, and how do we share it, with those who are already familiar with the texts, on page or on stage, and those for whom it is new. Her comment also challenges us to think about whether the other “they” – that is *we*, the scholarly editors—are really remote from the interests of those who love the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, as poetry, as drama, as investigations of what is sometimes called the human condition, and sometimes just as a rollicking good read or an intensely pleasurable evening in the theater.

In preparation for this talk I have been thinking about why I disagree with the no doubt well-meaning voice coach, and have realized it has a lot to do with how I got here – here being a senior professorship, the stage of this hotel, the presidency of the SAA. This history may explain some of my reaction. That I would be standing on this platform, presiding over this huge and wonderful gathering, is certainly not what forty years ago the first president of this organization, my very own dissertation director the distinguished scholar G. E. Bentley, expected for his female advisee. He had had none at Princeton before, and my presence displeased him because, as he told me, of his women graduate students in his previous position at Chicago, some of whom were “good, damn good,” none remained in the profession. So one part of the story is the full integration of women into the profession. This is by now an *old* story, but one that I have lived, both organizationally – I started and ran a Women's Studies program – and in my scholarship, which took on authors, like Lady Mary Wroth, and topics, like rape, that my own professors would never have countenanced, much less written about.

But, in light of my encounter and its challenge to scholarly editors, I think it is worth considering more specifically how I got to be one of them – *us* – especially because this little personal history encompasses so many of the aspects of our profession represented by the people here at this luncheon, and demonstrates the combination of attraction, training, and coincidence that goes into a scholarly career in literature. It certainly began with a teacher – which makes me happy about everything the SAA does to reach out to those who are working in classrooms below the college level. Mine was a splendid 8<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher who assigned her – admittedly chosen – students to read a Shakespeare sonnet, and looked just curious and surprised when I reported back that I had gone on and read them all. “Did you

understand them?" she asked, and when I replied "Yes," *she did not laugh*. Who knows what I understood at thirteen, but the music of the verse got into my ear and the attraction has never left. The next two landmarks – skipping courses at Oxford and Princeton, including those with Bentley – show how careers develop from unexpected events. In the first example, Maurice Kelly at Princeton, teaching a general graduate course on Renaissance literature – Maurice would not have understood the term early modern – handed out a photocopy of a sixteenth-century manuscript and told us to transcribe it. No further instructions. Then, almost as an afterthought, he pulled out of his pocket a quill. He had, he said, made it into a pen explicitly for me – presumably because I was the only woman in the class, the first he had taught in decades, maybe ever. Though I didn't use the quill, it intrigued me about the material construction of texts and made me more attentive to the strange forms in the manuscript, which I learned I could decipher. Then, in a subsequent coincidence, I met Sam Schoenbaum at a cocktail party. Casually he suggested that if I was going to spend a year in Rome on a maternity leave (though they didn't really have them then), I should go to the Venerable English College on the Via Monserrato and look at the dramatic manuscripts in their archive. He had listed them in *Annals of English Drama*, but they had never been examined by a literary scholar, including himself. On and because of those manuscripts, and the associated College records written in a mess of English, Italian, and neo-Latin, and using the skills I had developed for Maurice Kelly's class, I taught myself to edit. It had never occurred to me that I – young, female, American – could edit Shakespeare, but it was obvious that I could and should edit those plays in the English College, because otherwise they would remain lost to the tradition.

What interests me today are the changes from that long-ago time, changes that spring into clearer view if we look back at two essays by distinguished Shakespeareans. The first, published in *Shakespeare Quarterly* in 1993 by Peter Stallybrass and Margreta De Grazia, was called "The Materiality of the Shakespeare Text"; the second, by James Shapiro, was published in 1997 in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and was called "The Shakespeare Wars: The Most Unkindest Glut of All." Both pieces were responding to the first signs of what I think of as the revival of editing, largely stimulated by the publication of the Oxford Shakespeare in the late '80s and its anticipated reappearance, only slightly changed, in the first Norton Shakespeare. The earlier article in *SQ* argued for considering the physical characteristics of texts as the necessary basis for critical work: the latter raised a number of fears about what might happen as the dire result of "the concentration of talent on editing Shakespeare" – a phrase I applaud. From the perspective of almost 20 years ago, both of these articles implicitly assumed a Berlin wall between editors and critics, one that de Grazia and Stallybrass attacked but presumed was unlikely to come down. Shapiro raised a further fear: namely, that "the current crop of editors may gain the reputation of having saved Shakespeare at the cost of killing off his fellow dramatists." Series and single editions of these playwrights were vanishing, with a consequent reduction in teaching of what was often called, inevitably focusing on the big guy, "Shakespeare's contemporaries."

Well, nobody says that Shakespeare scholars also have to be soothsayers – for every one who foretells the ideo of March there are those, as we know from *Cymbeline*, who do best at interpretation only *after* the complex plot, with its twists and turns, has revealed itself. Today, like the *Cymbeline* soothsayer, I want to applaud two developments only now visible: first, that rather than the anticipated *loss* of critical talent to editing, there is enormous, profitable, cross-over between textual work and interpretive analysis, something our graduate students and younger colleagues take for granted; and second, that the expansion of Shakespeare editing has in fact had a positive effect on knowledge and editions of "the others." I am particularly qualified to note both of these developments because I have spent a career both writing criticism and editing plays, and have seen how increasingly the two are not separated. My own earliest articles were formalist and "feminist," but as time went on I wrote about collaboration – a topic I became interested in *because* the plays I was editing were the products of collaboration. And then I wrote about the kinds of discoveries in the "meaning" of plays that – as happens to editors— I found after staring and staring at lines that posed editorial problems that could only be solved through critical interpretation. As we know if we look at the emendations of the much-too-maligned Theobald, an editor who becomes

deeply engaged in a text can solve the riddle of an apparently meaningless series of letters by entering into the texture of the play – whether that is Henry V’s table of green fields, or the whole of *Double Falsehood*.

Now, about the survival of those contemporaries, or as they are sometimes known, “the others.” I feel strongly about this. Partly because when I was a graduate student I, perhaps like some people here today, thought “I will never have anything original to say about *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*” – who ever imagined in those long ago days that we would have feminist readings of Hippolyta, post-colonial readings of the Indian boy, ecological readings of the ass’s head, new historical readings of the “little ice age” – in any case I wrote a dissertation on Beaumont and Fletcher, and I was hired at a university so traditional that the English department still required a specialist in “the others” along with its Shakespeareans. So I entirely sympathized with Shapiro’s complaint about the disappearance of the editions of those plays from which I had been taught and had begun teaching, as well as the disaster that ensued when the only remaining classroom collection, itself not very well edited and so poorly glued that it fell apart on first opening, began to be priced out of accessibility. There was at least a decade in which I did not teach “English Renaissance Drama,” as it was known, and it looked as if Shapiro’s worst fears had been realized.

That was 1997. Where are we now? Well, we have at least two available teaching anthologies, the Bevington from Norton and the Kinney from Blackwell. And to look first at collections in which I have taken part personally, we have – it took a while, but we have – the first *Collected Middleton* since the nineteenth century. Besides the Revels texts we have an entirely new series, Arden Early Modern Drama, now producing several volumes a year. We have forthcoming this year a new *Cambridge Works of Ben Jonson*. And we have a new generation of editors – and they have the internet. Among the results are *Brome online*; the OUP-announced *Works of James Shirley*; the new edition of Heywood; the *Internet Shakespeare*; *Digital Renaissance Editions*. These editions, in a change beginning to be noticed in the ’90s, involve as many women editors as men, and a full spectrum of the generations of scholars active in our field.

So I am unconvinced that what audiences and readers want is everything unchanged, any more than the people in this room do. Shakespeare’s works may be Yeats’ “monuments of unaging intellect,” but they are not frozen in time. Even unscholarly Shakespeare readers and CST audiences should not be handed a text – or see a performance – whose provenance is unknown and that doesn’t take account of the research that has given us, for example, a new understanding of the differences between the surviving texts of *King Lear*. “Unchanged” is a misnomer in any case: the year I came into class and was startled to discover that all my students suddenly assumed Ariel was female, I learned about Disney’s *Little Mermaid* and how current popular culture impacts and revises our understanding of the past. Furthermore, a little research informed me that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries many productions of *The Tempest* had already had female Ariels. As many editors discover, we are not the first to pass this way, and the emendations and proposals of earlier editors, like the recycling of popular culture, are always worthwhile inspecting.

So, do we have a glut of Shakespeare, and will anything new interfere with our pleasure? I don’t think so. Editions, like productions, do different, often equally worthwhile things. Ralph Fiennes is brilliant in a 2011 Balkan-war *Coriolanus*; half a century earlier, so was Lawrence Olivier, dying upside down in reminiscence of the death of Mussolini. Similarly, the things editors are learning to do – and are able to learn – now that we have tools like LION and technologies like XML, are different from those that Harold Brooks or Una Ellis-Fermor or Fredson Bowers were able to do or learn. And yet, I’d like to end with a plea for respecting our elders. In a paper I gave recently called “the temptation of originality,” I looked at specific Shakespearean cruxes. Some have never been more brilliantly and satisfactorily solved than by Theobald, or Malone, or P.A. Daniel. As we move forward, we remember the Shakespeareans

who have gone before us – all the critical and editorial minds that have preceded us, all the wonderful presidents this organization has had from Ged Bentley onwards. They have brought us where we are today, and everyone here, from the first time graduate student attendee to those of us who have known the organization from its earliest inception, is indebted to them. Thus, in conclusion, may I ask all the former presidents present, and everyone who was present at the first meeting 40 years ago, to stand? Thank you very much.