

Anne Lancashire
Address in Austin, 14 April 1989

Fellow Members--

The first of 2 very important things that I have the pleasure of doing today, in standing up here before you, is thanking, on behalf of all of us, all the people who have worked so hard to make this meeting the success that it is.

The Local Arrangements Committee members are listed at the front of your printed meeting program—and I'm going to read out their names and universities, and ask them to stand. Please hold your applause until the end of the list. [*Read--*]

And the Committee leader, coordinating all of these people and their work, and the sponsors, and coping superbly with all the initiatives, problems, triumphs, and headaches, has been: John Velz, the prime mover of all things Texan.

Let's all thank *them* all! [*Applause*]

Sponsoring universities are also listed in your program, in alphabetical order. I won't read them all out—because you've heard all of the names already, attached to the Local Arrangements Committee members. But please do read them over again in your program; we're very grateful to them all. [*Applause*]

Other thank-you's: [*hold applause*]

--Trustee Alan Dessen has chaired the Program Committee: consisting of himself, Lena Orlin, Meredith Skura, and Paul Werstine. They met at ungodly hours of the morning, and in the afternoon, almost every day of our meeting in Boston last year, to work out the basics of the program for this meeting; and they'd done a good deal of paperwork and brainwork in advance as well. And then their good work went through the Trustees, and was put into effect by:

--Nancy Hodge, our Executive Secretary: the one without whom everything and everyone would have fallen apart. Nancy juggles all the details of program, hotel, coffee hours, etc., aids with local arrangements organization, and in general makes sure that everything works—and if you think that's easy, it's only because Nancy's skill makes it look so deceptively easy! She's been aided by 2 administrative assistants:

--Chris Fronjillo and Lee Moore. [*Applause*] This is Chris's last year with us as an administrative assistant; he's accepted a tenure-stream position at Louisiana State University at Shreveport.

--And, of course, thanks go also to all of the Trustees (whose names are at the front of your program), and to panelists, chairs, participants:-- i.e., to all of you. *Everyone* is making this meeting a success. SAA annual meetings are great *group* occasions.

Now, the second very important thing that I have the pleasure of doing here today is making the announcement of the results of the 1989 election of officers. This is the second, not because the officers are second in importance, but only because I can't announce two things—both annual meeting thanks and election results—simultaneously. (If only I were Robin Williams, I probably *could* announce them both simultaneously. But I haven't had his kind of practice. (“Good morning, Austin . . .”))

Your 2 new Trustees, 1989-1992, are: Ed Berry and Meredith Skura. [Applause]

Your new Vice-President, to become President in 1990-1991, is: Michael Warren. [Applause]

And I'd like to congratulate not only the 3 new officers but also all the others who allowed their names to go forward on the election slate. I'm sure those elected this year feel as I did last year when elected: that, given the wealth of talent, and generosity of time given, in this Association, the results of any election have something of the turn of a roulette wheel about them; but—as not with roulette—really everyone wins, simply in participating in the election process, as a candidate and/or as a voter.

I have one other announcement to make, today, relating to office: since we last met, in Boston last spring, Ann Cook has been seated as the Chair of the International Shakespeare Association. We're proud and delighted. [Applause]

Well, now the important things are over. This means that things now get more difficult for me. (I'd rather hoped that by now you'd all have finished lunch and wandered off to the swimming pool—but that hasn't happened.) Thirteen months ago, I would never have expected to be standing here today, speaking to the SAA membership; indeed, they're still laughing at the University of Toronto, when they remember the day thirteen months ago that I took a long-distance call from the Association in the college secretarial office and learned that I'd been elected President. The look on my face was apparently a mixture of incredulity, delight, —and sheer horror: in short, just what you'd expect, as a facial mixture, on such an occasion.

1986-1987 President Jeanne Roberts spoke, two years ago in Seattle, of her own amazement at *her* election as President—since, as one of the comparatively few female full professors of her generation, she had always thought of herself as something of an outsider in the profession. Like Jeanne, I too had always thought of myself in that way: and not only because of being one of those scarce female full professors (the next generation, we trust, won't have this same problem), but also because of being both a Canadian and, heaven help me, an editor not of Shakespeare but of his contemporaries (even sometimes of his *anonymous* contemporaries), and a theater historian working largely on pre-1580 material. The openness of the SAA never ceases to amaze me. (You people are interested in ANYTHING!)

Now, however, the horror I first experienced 13 months ago reaches its peak. WHAT does one say, as President, to the assembled membership of the SAA at its annual meeting?—when all of one’s inspiration has already been used up on the presidential message in the Bulletin (and with one inspired line even having been dropped out in the printing process: the line in which I proved that theater historians can use terms like “cultural materialist” and “new historicist”). More than one shot of inspiration per year is awfully difficult to manage. There are no self-help books available to a President in such a crisis. (How to improve your manners, your morals, your sex life, or your front lawn don’t seem quite suitable handbooks under these circumstances.) Nor do past presidential addresses lend any aid. Quite the opposite, in fact; for who could hope to match, for example, Jeanne Roberts’ Seattle 1986 string of hilarious anecdotes about past SAA meetings and their attenders. (Jeanne—were you and I really at the same meetings? I seem to have missed a lot!)

So—I thought long and hard about what to talk to you about. And I discarded all of my first three ideas. First, I had said to myself: we’ve heard a good deal about Shakespeare as possibly a lawyer, Shakespeare as possibly a soldier, Shakespeare as possibly a doctor, and so forth. What about, in this historic year of the first Canadian SAA President and of the beginnings of the Free Trade Agreement between the USA and Canada, Shakespeare as an incipient Canadian? What better topic for the Shakespeare Association of (all of North) America? And since it was snowing in Toronto on Monday 10 April—and since I’d assumed, from all I’d heard, that Texas weather would be quite different—I looked into my copy of Marvin Spevack’s Shakespeare concordance for Shakespeare’s uses of words like “snow,” “frozen,” and “ice,” hoping for oblique references to Canada: but, alas, I discovered that Shakespeare apparently had no prescient interest in Canada whatsoever. He made two references to Iceland (both in *Henry V*, of all places)—and of course there are those notorious sledged Polacks (if not pole-axes) on the ice, in *Hamlet*; but there’s nothing about the true north strong and free, as our Canadian national anthem puts it. There *are* various references, it’s true, to the north as a hotbed of wrongheaded liberalism and rebellion—as in “I will speak as liberal as the north,” in *Othello*, and as in all those hotheaded Percies of the north, in *1* and *2 Henry IV*; but of course no one in the US, noted as it is for its left-wing preferences in governments, would think particularly of Canada in relation to such references.

So, foiled on Canada, I tried another idea. What about a radical new theory about Shakespeare’s texts?—based on what happens to my own lecture texts when I feed them into my recalcitrant personal computer? Certainly they often come out mangled: bits here that I didn’t want, bits there from two versions ago, strange spellings and phrasings that I’m convinced have nothing to do with me. But, of course, once Michael Warren was elected as Vice-President, I realized that I’d better steer clear of showing my ignorance in textual matters. *A burst of automatic rifle fire is heard, and Sylvester Stallone shouts*— Oh, I’m sorry!—that was apparently a computerized textual fossil from my talk last month to a Toronto seniors’ group on the pleasures of film violence.

Well, for the obvious reason also of my technological incompetence, I discarded computer-based textual theory as a possible topic. And by then becoming desperate, I thought

that perhaps a truly useful thing for me to do would be to speak on how NOT to become an SAA President: to compile a small list of rules to be followed if anyone wished to avoid being in the dilemma that I myself was now in. Surely it would be easy to compile such a list. Since *I* had been elected, I would just have to advise everyone to do the OPPOSITE of what I myself had done over my years in the Association. So I tried compiling the list: but you'll see what happened.

HOW TO AVOID BEING ELECTED AS PRESIDENT OF THE SAA.

[Have a few pieces of paper; throw them away as I go along.]

1. Be an American. *[Pause. Crumple and throw away a piece of paper.]* Well—no set of rules is perfect. Try again.
2. Be a man. *[Pause. Crumple and throw away another piece of paper.]* Sorry, Michael; that doesn't seem to work any more either.
3. Work directly on Shakespeare, and not in esoteric areas of the field, such as anonymous plays and 15th-century performance areas. *[Reaction. Long pause. Throw last piece of paper.]* Uhh—well—sorry again, Michael.

So much for how to avoid having to make a presidential speech. There's clearly just no knowing what strange things the SAA membership will do at election time.

So—finally I realized what I should do *[bend down—get huge package out and put on podium]* as a really special surprise and pleasure for you. I decided that I would read to you today, for a few hours, from my last three years of work on accounts of building repairs, bylaws, and tenancies in London, 1275 to 1558.

I've brought a concise, three-hour selection with me of the best parts, including of course the footnotes.

And I thought I'd begin a bit out of alphabetical order but with one of the most exciting parts—the bibliographical description of the mid-sixteenth-century manuscript minutes of the meetings of the London Barbers' Company. This will be a special treat, I know, for the Trustees. *[Start to read first entry. Cue boos, hisses, "siddown!" etc. from the Trustees at front table.]*

[Sigh deeply.] I can't understand it—but this happens wherever I go, every time I try to read these bibliographical descriptions and records. I tried to read them to the Trustees at a business meeting at 7:00 this morning—and they even woke up to boo then—but I thought it was because they simply wanted to anticipate their pleasure a bit longer.

Well—clearly I can't go against the wishes of the Trustees. And it MAY be that the rest of you also really feel that you have a duty to get to the afternoon sessions, instead of enjoying yourselves here listening to manuscript records. So, under the circumstances, I'll do something

REALLY novel, and, instead of reading to you from these fascinating minutes and accounts, I'll give you a very quick business report on the Association: its current state, and what the Trustees have been up to—and not up to—over the past year. I'll comment only on a few points: some facts about the Association that have surprised and intrigued me, and that I think would be of general interest, and some few items of business the Trustees have been dealing with *at* this meeting and that you might like to hear about.

THE STATE OF THE ASSOCIATION: as of 1988-1989.

First, membership. We had 771 members in 1988: about 25% more, again, than we had ten years ago. And our growth over the seventeen years of our existence has been modest but steady (except in ISA World Congress years, when we get a bulge). Some facts that have surprised me: about 7% of the membership is Canadian, and another 3% or so comes from another 26 countries around the world: the U.K., East and West Germany, Japan, Israel, India, France, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, China, Australia, Finland, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Switzerland, the U.S.S.R., Hungary, Austria, Bulgaria, Italy, Korea, Malaysia, the Netherlands, South Africa, Tunisia. (I made that list last fall, from an incomplete membership print-out, so if your own country has been omitted, my apologies; but the list I've read will at least give you an idea of how international we are.) And, at this meeting, we have members present from all of Japan, Norway, the U.K., Poland, Russia, New Zealand—have I left anyone out? [*Pause—add if any.*]

Second, annual meetings. Our meetings have taken place all over the U.S.; past locations have been Washington D.C. (twice), San Marino, New Haven, New Orleans, San Francisco, Boston (3 times), Ashland, Minneapolis, Nashville, Seattle; twice we have met in Canada (Toronto and Montreal), and once in Stratford, England, in a joint meeting with the ISA in 1981. Since 1981 we've cooperated with the ISA on their World Congress every fifth year, but we've held our own meetings separately. The last ISA meeting was in Berlin in 1986; the next one is coming up in Tokyo in 1991. Our own next annual meeting will be taking place in 1990 in Philadelphia, with Georgianna Ziegler as Local Arrangements Chair. [*Introduce her if she is present.*]

And this seems a good time to let you all know that the Association is always open to location invitations, from the membership, for the annual meeting. If, however, you are thinking about making an invitation, best check first with the Executive Secretary before getting down to even preliminary work on it. There are certain basic necessities without which no invitation will work, such as the availability of a hotel we can afford, with 375-400 bedrooms and LOTS of meeting rooms large and small. And there are also geographical factors to be taken into account: such as our flexible but existing geographical pattern for meetings (with the North American west, north-east, and south alternating).

Third, volunteers. I'd like to mention something many members may not realize: the SAA is virtually a 100% volunteer-run organization. Our only paid assistance is some part-time administrative assistance for the Executive Secretary; otherwise everyone donates their time and efforts—the Executive Secretary, Trustees, annual-meeting organizers, committee members, etc.,

etc.—*everybody*. This accounts, I think, for our consistently *studious* orientation; we're *all* students, and teachers, and performers, together, of Shakespeare. It also may mean, however, that the Association's officers, scattered across the country, may sometimes miss something they should catch; please let us know when this happens. The Trustees rely on you to come to us with any problems you may have or perceive.

These have all been very general matters, so I'd like to conclude with a few examples of what the Trustees have specifically been doing, of interest to you, over the past year.

1. We've made the language of the Association's constitution gender-neutral—and you will be asked sometime during the next year to approve of this by mail ballot. ("He," e.g., has become "s/he," "his" is now "his/her," and so forth.) We had been intending to do this to the constitution for several years, and this year we finally got around to it. I used to think that gender-neutral language wasn't important—but I became a convert to its importance some four years ago. I now believe it IS important, both psychologically and as a signal of an organization's commitment in this area.

2. We're also looking at the constitution to see if any other changes might be advisable, as the Association grows and develops. So your ballot may have a few other minor constitutional changes proposed on it as well: for example, the deletion of the constitution's reference to section chairmen (in relation to the annual meeting program), since the SAA has *not* developed an MLA-type meeting structure as had been originally envisioned in that reference.

3. We're giving top priority to the publication of a new membership Directory as soon as possible. We do apologize for the long gap since the last one, but the delay was unavoidable. We know you want it, and you'll get it as soon as it can be managed. You'll probably find that it won't be as glamorously printed this time as last time—but glamour isn't everything.

4. The new dues structure is a leap of faith and hope; we debated it for some time at the Boston meeting last year. We THINK it is working out well, though it's early in the dues-paying year yet to tell. We're also hoping to be able to hold dues at the same levels for 1990. Please keep in mind, though, that dues will have to rise as inflation does, within this structure, if not in 1990 then probably by 1991. In the past we've sometimes been too hesitant to raise dues, and have then sometimes been temporarily pressed in meeting rising costs. The new structure will allow for dues increases, as necessary, without being overly hard on members at lower income levels. At least, that's what's intended and hoped for.

5. You've heard that Trustee Alan Dessen and his Program Committee for *this* meeting labored long and hard on program design in Boston last year. Well, here in Austin, Scott McMillin as the 1990 Program Committee chair, and *his* committee, have been working long and hard on the program for Philadelphia. At this meeting in Austin, 1990 program planning will be near-finalized (in a seemingly endless series of meetings!), and 1991 program planning will be initiated. Incoming President Carol Neely will shortly be announcing to you the 1991 program committee chair, with whom you're urged to get in touch, with suggestions and proposals, for *that* meeting. It's not possible to use all suggestions received, because of the need for a program

balanced in various ways: in fields, in kinds of topics, in speakers, in panelists, and so forth. But every suggestion or proposal is nevertheless useful and important, and the chair and the committee need all members to keep saying loud and clear what they want.

6. Finally, the Trustees have been struggling with the problem of meeting-program accuracy. Our policy, as you know, is that any one member of the Association may normally participate in only one session per annual meeting: whether a paper session, a panel, a workshop, or whatever. Sometimes, however, special problems occur which result in a very few members participating in two sessions. The Trustees and Executive Secretary *have* been managing to keep double participation to a minimum; but every second or third year we worry over this matter yet again—and in significant part because our policy has also been to signal our unhappiness with even a few double participations by listing only one participation per member in the meeting’s printed program. This means that at every meeting the program is inaccurate, in respect to the few double participations occurring.

As of 1990, your printed meeting program *will* be accurate (except for the inevitable printer’s errors and any last-minute crises); and you will therefore find a very few people listed twice in it. Please do *not* interpret this as a policy change towards approval of double participations; it’s simply a recognition of the importance of program accuracy—and will be accompanied by an even fiercer determination to keep double participations down to an absolute minimum!

And, in conclusion, an urging. DO keep at the Trustees (including the Vice-President, President, and Immediate Past President) about whatever irks you, pleases you, confuses you, whatever, about the Association. The Trustees want and need to be kept at: otherwise they may not know what *you* want and need. Every year the Association gets a bit older; but it won’t necessarily get wiser without everyone’s help, or change over time as you want it to. And without change comes stagnation—so we all have to work at changing wisely.

Now—I’m about to ask Carol Neely, your incoming President, to make a few announcements to you; but first, please note two things. (1) Carol’s university affiliation as printed in your program is wrong! (So much for program accuracy.) She’s on leave this year from Illinois State University, and is a visiting professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she’ll be moving permanently in the next academic year. (2) And from 4.30 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. here, tomorrow, I’ll give a special reading of the accounts and bylaws of the London Curriers’, Haberdashers’, and Skinners’ companies—for all of you enthusiasts disappointed at not having heard these here today—full of entertaining details of building tenancies and the like. See you then?

