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Author(s): Stephen Booth

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# Commentary

## Shakespeare at Valley Forge: The International Shakespeare Association Congress, 1976

STEPHEN BOOTH

P. T. BARNUM—who really knew from patriotic hoopla—may or may not have said “Nobody ever sees anything at a three-ring circus,” but whoever did say it was right. “Shakespeare in America,” The International Shakespeare Association Congress: a Bicentennial Congress, hosted by The Shakespeare Association of America and The Folger Shakespeare Library, funded by The National Endowment for The Humanities *with assistance from* The Rockefeller Foundation, The British Council, Houghton Mifflin Company, The Copernicus Society of America, Penguin Books, The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, and Scott, Foresman and Company *AND the cooperation of* The English Speaking Union, St. Albans School, The Washington Area Colleges and Universities, and The Washington Cathedral ran from about noon on Monday, April 19, 1976, to mid-afternoon on Sunday, April 25, 1976, was based at the Statler-Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C. (from which about one thousand delegates [1000! Count them gentlemen, 1000!] were or, when they pleased, were not systematically bused to side shows, after-shows, and parties in and around Washington), and was a three-ring circus—FEATURING: thirteen presidors; eight greetings to delegates; seven specifically scheduled and alcoholically enriched receptions (not counting an untold, but not necessarily large, number of embassy receptions and private parties on Tuesday evening); remarks delivered by four remarkers; seven lectures and addresses to

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STEPHEN BOOTH, Professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley, describes himself as still editor of a still (and perhaps forever) forthcoming Yale annotated edition of Shakespeare's sonnets; among his previous publications is *An Essay on Shakespeare's Sonnets*.

plenary meetings of the various sponsoring organizations (of which all delegates and *many* teeny boppers turn out to have been *ex officio* members); eleven dramatic or quasi-dramatic live performances of four different programs by twenty different performers, including—once only—a hokey but charming theatrical demonstration of a variety of stagings of two sample scenes from Shakespeare (a demonstration that also demonstrated that Carole Shelley can glisten as splendidly in a stuffy hotel ballroom at nine a.m. in Washington as she does at 8:40 p.m. on a stage in New York); five concerts by four consorts; one Interfaith Communion Service; twelve showings of nine Shakespearean or Shakespeare-related movies—PLUS one (1) continuous showing of the first six-and-one-half hours of Public Television's *The Adams Chronicles* (doubtless in observance of the *Hamlet* correspondence of John Quincy Adams [1767–1848—Sixth President of *The United States of America*] and James Henry Hackett [1800–1871—*grocer* and *actor*], the foremost American Falstaff of his time and, I believe, also a correspondent of A. Lincoln [1809–1865—Sixteenth President of *The U.S.A.*], who was left uncelebrated all week long); fifteen seminars, each with its own *Chairman* and anywhere from a low of ten to a high of twenty seminarians apiece for a grand total of *two hundred and thirty-eight* actively contributing participants (ninety-three on Tuesday, eighty-two on Wednesday, and sixty-three on Saturday)—among them several internationally honored critics and scholars in their *first appearances on these shores*; twenty-one moderators moderating; twenty-seven speakers (i.e., readers of scholarly papers) speaking; four respondents (i.e., readers of scholarly papers) responding; nine readers of scholarly papers reading; and sixteen panelists . . . (A. C. Partridge [University of Witwatersand, Johannesburg] was in fact a member of the seminar on Shakespeare's English at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday).

Figures like those in the foregoing list are never quite honest. For instance, the list includes three people several times: Kenneth Muir (as Chairman of the International Shakespeare Association), Maynard Mack (as President of the Shakespeare Association of America) and O. B. Hardison, Jr. (as Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library) account for twelve separate speakers, presidors, and greeters and could have been counted two or three more times each. On the other hand, my list doesn't count Ann Jennalie Cook at all. She is Executive Secretary of the Shakespeare Association of America and was ringmaster for the whole sprawling business. I have been at pains to insist on the scope and variety of the Shakespeare Congress to show the impossibility of anyone's having seen, heard, or taken note of more than a fraction of everything notable there was to see and hear. The one possible exception to that clear impossibility would be Ann Jennalie Cook. Most of the time on most days there were four formal scholarly events in progress during each ninety-minute interval. Anyone but Dr. Cook could only be in one place at a time; she was usually in a minimum of two—making announcements to inform, instruct, and comfort the dele-

gates, making them quickly, clearly, and gracefully, and never appearing twice in the same dress.

The inventory of events and attractions is still incomplete. The Congress (perhaps distinguishable from a convention or a conference by its location or the exaltation inherent in its internationality, perhaps by a fee of \$50 which was sprung on many participants after they had agreed to present papers) sponsored and presented a number of Special Exhibitions: "Shakespeare in America" (at the Folger Library, 10:00 to 4:30, all week); "Shakespeare and the American Musical," produced by Robert Hapgood, University of New Hampshire, and "Shakespeare's Money," produced by Sanford Sternlicht, SUNY—Oswego (both 9:00 to 5:00, Tuesday through Saturday); Alistair Cooke (Monday evening); Anthony Burgess (Wednesday afternoon); Clive Barnes (Friday noon); and Jorge Luis Borges (the Annual Shakespeare Birthday Lecture of the Folger Shakespeare Library, Friday afternoon). The Congress also occasioned a Commemorative Medal, commissioned by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, and a Commemorative Poster, commissioned by the British Council; they were, and must still be, complexly but hugely available—the medal in some metals at some prices at some places and in others at others, the poster (which I never consciously saw) in limited, unlimited, signed, and unsigned versions from the Folger. Moreover, light refreshments were served at 10:00 a.m., noon, and 2:30 p.m. most days; on Shakespeare's birthday we all had a sit-down lunch at the hotel (tolerable food), and—as the first event of the first day and as the last of the last—we had a stand-up, mill-around lunch at the Folger (very, very good food both times).

The Folger lunches served as bookends to the week—as did the two books the library published and celebrated on those two occasions. The first, *Shakespeare on the American Stage: From the Hallams to Edwin Booth* by Charles H. Shattuck, reflects and was reflected in the Folger's special exhibition of paintings, drawings, costumes, newspaper clippings, and memorabilia of the first hundred years of the American theatre. Although we twice had lunch all over the exhibition, it seems to have survived intact. My favorite thing in the show was Thomas Sully's intensely lovable portrait of Charlotte Cushman (reproduced in Shattuck's book in black and white); Sully had a curious knack for making *anybody* look cuddly; considering that she had the size, bearing, and strength to suggest Edwin Forrest in drag, a cuddly Charlotte Cushman was no mean achievement. All in all, the exhibition was intelligent, informative, easy to learn from, and surprisingly uncluttered. The same is true of Shattuck's book, which pulls together a great deal of previously published scholarly work (much of it by Shattuck himself), and makes it available to readers who want to know something but not everything about penguins. The book was hustled into production so that copies could be available for opening day of the Congress, but, except for a shuffled line of type in the introduction, the book shows no signs of haste. It's a physically pleasing book with lots of pictures, many

in color (including, on the cover, Thomas Hicks' full-length portrait of Edwin Booth as Iago, a portrait immensely flattering to Booth but one that includes all of anyone's conception of Iago—handsome, twisted, vicious, and debonaire). Shattuck provides a full and efficient index, and his notes embody a good working bibliography on American theatre history. I have now read about half the book, and I'm enjoying myself; I now know about Hackett's career in the wholesale grocery game and about the size and shape of Charlotte Cushman, and I am obviously prepared to amaze my friends with my newly acquired knowledge.

Six days to the minute after publication of the Shattuck book, the Congress ground gracefully to a halt punctuated by the publication of John E. Booty's new edition of the Elizabethan Prayer Book, the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer*. The publication, a reception, and, as I said, lunch followed immediately upon a special service at Washington Cathedral. The service was to have been unusual for a procession of Deans of North American Cathedrals (who seem all in fact to have been there) and visiting Shakespeare scholars in academic regalia (five showed up; we may be more secular than annual bibliographies suggest). The present Dean of St. Paul's preached; unlike John Donne, he followed the modern practice of keeping his wit, charm, and flourishes strictly segregated from the substance of his sermon. The service finished up with an abbreviated and inexplicably ersatz modernization of Booty's modernized text of the 1559 communion service. The service was a pious gesture—as all services should be. Its special Elizabethan/Shakespearean elements were a *mere* pious gesture.

The new Folger edition of the 1559 prayer book is like the service at the Cathedral. It is a handsome and carefully made book, but it might have been more. Although its publication performs the invaluable service of getting Elizabeth's prayer book back into print and available to libraries lucky enough to have one battered copy of William Keatinge Clay's *Liturgies . . . [from] The Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (Parker Society, 1847), this edition seems more concerned with being beautiful than with being useful. I wish Booty had done the bibliographic study of the prayer book that he rightly says needs doing; he could have advanced from the point where Clay left off; instead he too often refers his reader back to Clay. The edition's most striking—and probably most expensive—feature is its duplication of the two-color printing of its original. (The notoriously popular movement to put Christ back into Xmas may now have been succeeded by a scholarly movement to put the red back into rubrics.) I suspect that too many copies of this edition will end up on the coffee tables of the fashionably saved, and—putting aside buyers who want to have the book rather than use it—I'm not sure what kind of reader Booty edited for. His footnotes may be designed for a divinity-school audience; he explains a lot of stuff that we know that they don't and assumes knowledge of a lot of what divinity students must know and we don't. I don't understand

one of the notes—a note on *Epacta* (p. 35)—at all; at the end of the note, Booty refers to “the first day of the year—now January 1, but in 1559, March 22” (March 22, being the first day after the conventionally assumed date of the vernal equinox, is urgently relevant to the business of zeroing in on the date of Easter, but didn’t 1559 begin on March 25 as usual?). Booty, like Clay in 1847, presents a modernized text—even though no probable reader of this edition would be reading it if he were likely to be stymied by its seldom complex orthography, and even though the Folger’s clientele is more likely to study its language than its doctrine. Moreover, Booty’s modernizing is both erratically extreme (why change “Bethleem” to “Bethlehem,” “Jeremie” to “Jeremiah,” “forty and four thousand” to “forty-four thousand,” and the title page’s interesting “Richardi Jugge, & Iohannis Cawode” to “*Richardi Jugge & Iohannis Cawode*”?) and erratic (why, if he was modernizing proper names along with everything else, does he make a point of retaining the old spellings of the names in the first paragraph of Matthew?). I should not, however, be complaining about this edition at all. My objections really add up only to saying that the edition is quirky (the March 22-March 25 mixup is probably just an unluckily apt misprint). What is more, I haven’t had the book long enough to trust my initial disappointment (for instance, it contains long end notes and a “History of the 1559 Book of Common Prayer” that I have so far only glanced at). What is most, however, is my pleasure in the mere fact of a new edition of the 1559 Prayer Book; the publicity of publication and the ready availability of the book may, like the publication of Lloyd Berry’s 1969 facsimile of the 1560 Geneva Bible, diminish the number of critics who casually assume that “Richard Noble covered all that forty years ago in *Shakespeare’s Biblical Knowledge*.” (All of all that has never been covered; for instance, the fact that “till death us do part” in the marriage service used to be “till death us depart” lights up several small idiomatic corners of Renaissance literature, and any publication that publicizes that and similar half-lost linguistic commonplaces is too welcome to be sniped at.)

Between the two Folger publications, the Congress performed the bulkiest of its enterprises: reading and hearing scholarly papers. Most of the papers were specially commissioned and were grouped under large general headings assigned to the individual days (for instance, Tuesday was “Shakespeare and Our Time” [i.e., “Contemporary Approaches to Shakespeare”], and Wednesday was “Contemporary Approaches to Shakespeare” [i.e., “Shakespeare and Our Time”]). Individual sessions were organized under general sub-headings almost as large and almost as meaningful as the headings themselves. The headings and sub-headings appear to have been furnished by a fashion editor at *Vogue*. On Wednesday all the topics began with *Through* (e.g., “Through Myth, Archetype, and Emblem [with gun and camera?]”). Some of the topics were trendy, like “Shakespeare’s Portrayal of Women: A 1970’s View.” Some were blandly impossible, like “Shake-



speare's Tragic Sense as it Strikes Us Today" and "Shakespeare's Comic Sense as it Strikes Us Today" (those two were wrestled down by a moderator and two speakers each in adjoining rooms from 9 to 11:30 on Monday morning; to heighten the symmetry of the event, the two teams were assigned one Hunter each—G. K. on tragedy, R. G. on comedy). Some topics were plain impossible, like "The Man in the Work: Reflections on a Reflection"; L. C. Knights was stuck with that one, and—since the only solid thing we know about Shakespeare from his work is that he was an insomniac who hated pets—Knights had a good time despairing over the task to which he was driven. (L. C. Knights had a good time all week; he came equipped with an encyclopedic knowledge of the various art collections in Washington, and, by taxi between meetings, he chased around the city with joy and efficiency marvelous to behold.)

Although I am not at all squeamish about reviewing church services, to review scholarly papers read aloud at high speed would be in bad taste—not to mention cannibalistic. I will, however, say something about the audiences of such papers. Most of them are as social as Chaucer characters at Mass. They wander in and out, chat, write notes, organize their pockets, purses, and wallets, or leaf through programs and schedules to work out their plans for the near future; that last activity was particularly intense at the Washington Congress because much of the British contingent seems to have come to the United States for the specific purpose of mastering the details of their return flights. As to questions from the floor, there is a widespread and understandable impression that they are always disguised variants on "Have you read my work, and are you aware of my presence here this morning?" That impression is not altogether accurate. Some questioners are genuinely eager to assist in spreading light upon a scholarly field. They offer pertinent augmentations of a speaker's thesis. For instance—after a paper arguing that, from the time of the Armada to the accession of James, two and two were, in effect at least, ordinarily four—a distinguished scholar is likely to rise to say that, although he, the distinguished scholar, is in general agreement with what the speaker just so lucidly argued, he, the distinguished scholar, wonders plummily whether the speaker has considered the abundant evidence that in the last years of Elizabeth's reign two and two were commonly, if not almost universally, four.

(The chance to see deservedly revered scholars kick out with feet of clay—to hear them reveal patches of ignorance and the human capacity to get fuddled—is one of the real virtues of scholarly conventions. I mean that seriously. For all our glibness and confident posturing, academics are rather humble about their qualifications, and that humility can be pernicious. Each of us knows that he does not know a fraction of what he needs to know to profess his subject; all of us have memories of successions of undergraduates to whom we have issued hard facts that we later found to be puffballs generated in the dark and

damp of our own bad memories. Most of us, however, are inclined to think that we are unusual in successfully passing for the truly competent scholars whom we not only believe to exist but believe to be the norm we individually violate. However, when we our betters see baring follies just like ours, we scarcely think our own so unbearable or think ourselves so justified in giving each of our students the impression that he is unique in his ignorance or misimpression of what he has come to us to learn and understand. At the M.L.A. convention last Christmas, I attended a meeting that was twice interrupted boisterously by the most famous and successful scholar present. He first broke in to assume and correct a misunderstanding of the First Quarto stage direction that says the ghost in *Hamlet* enters the closet scene “in his nightgown”; he wanted us to know that “nightgown” didn’t refer to anything like pajamas [true] but referred instead to a ceremonial garment indicative of high rank [ridiculous]. A few minutes later the same man boomed forward to say that, in mentioning Lear’s entrance in IV. vi, “crowned with weeds and flowers,” an unassuming fellow member of the audience had sloppily taken an eighteenth-century stage tradition for a fact of the text of *King Lear* [the stage direction in modern texts is indeed an editorial interpolation, but it only reflects the detailed description of Lear at the beginning of IV. iv]. After the first interruption I suspected that I had once again found myself to be uniquely ignorant of a well-known truth. After the second we all started whispering to one another discreetly and tentatively; we ended up both reasonably sure that all of us were probably not out of step at once and ready to be charitable to a colleague who was having a rare bad day. That moment of revelation and charity probably encouraged some of us to begin practicing more charity at home.)

The Shakespeare Congress gave one the opportunity to spend a week on social terms with one’s bibliography. There is much to be said for that, even though my own bibliography turned out to be depressingly young and vigorous—just as awesome now as when I gathered it fifteen years ago. The Congress also gave one a vacation from the sense of proportion that even academic life in the real world demands. We got to spend a whole week among our own particular kind. We could throw *F*’s, *Q*’s, and their concomitant subscripts around like members of the Old Joke Club; we confidently exchanged killing comments on George Steevens’ editorial habits; we behaved as if there were no threat of ever again meeting or even acknowledging the existence of any human being indifferent to the continued progress of the New Arden Shakespeare.

Of course reality can break out unexpectedly even in an academic idyll. I was present during two startling incursions. On Friday morning we were addressed informally by two members of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Terry Hands’ production of *Henry V* had just opened at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (Clive Barnes had gone overboard in praising it a day or so before in *The New York Times*; I saw the production a week later; Barnes was entirely justified). Ian Richardson



was appearing in *My Fair Lady* on Broadway. They appear both to be former students of T. J. B. Spencer. They came down from New York for the morning and talked to us very intelligently (Hands) and spectacularly (Richardson). When they were through, Helen Gardner wanted to ask a question. She wanted to ask it very much indeed. Richard Coe was the moderator. Richard Coe is not a pushy man. Richardson had taken over crowd management. The sight of Dame Helen Gardner jumping up and down, vainly waving her hand, being addressed by Richardson as “madam,” being identified to Hands and Coe as “the woman next to Professor Spencer,” and being asked to stay calm and wait her turn in the queue was sobering in the extreme.

Reality struck again that same night. A select group of us, a group about the size of the student body at Purdue, were asked to an urgently splendid private party in Potomac, Maryland (a suburb directly across the poverty line from the District of Columbia). It was the sort of party where admirals drop in later. An admiral dropped in and was duly introduced to O. B. Hardison. Hardison said that his father had been captain of an aircraft carrier. Hardison and the admiral thereupon traded fond reminiscences of World War II and the aircraft carrier in question. When they were through, the admiral asked what Hardison was doing now.

The weather tied with Shakespeare as the pervasive topic of the Congress. During the first two days and most of the third, Washington had an unseasonable heat wave. All weather in Washington is unseasonable. The temperature hung around 100 degrees. That was outdoors. Indoors it was cooler but seemed hotter. The public meeting rooms of hotels are oppressive by nature—all gold, white, glass, and wood-grained brown plastic. They have low ceilings that lower like the Virgilian heavens—particularly in the daytime. To be in a hotel in the daytime is, if not perverted, always unreasonable. Being in a Washington hotel in an April heat wave was awful. By late June the air conditioners in Washington are in full stride; when you come in from the street, they make you feel like a homecoming popsicle. However, they need a two-to-three week run for the pole first; the air conditioners in the Statler-Hilton could not overcome a heatwave from a standing start. The air outdoors was also heavy, hot, and artificial; one was in constant danger of breathing something one should not breathe; for the air in Washington has lately become the American equivalent of the air in Los Angeles.

Aside from the weather, the one insurmountable problem of the International Shakespeare Congress was its occasion. Shakespeare doesn't really have anything to do with the American Bicentennial. We all knew that, but we were not ready to admit it. The Folger's “Shakespeare in America” exhibit and Shattuck's book, successes in themselves, also had some tangential success at providing the missing link between Shakespeare and American history; they thus got us off on a good start toward the impossible. Speakers monkeyed around with

relating Shakespeare and Colonial America all week. Their failure and frustration was a keynote of the Congress. The actual keynote address was delivered Monday night by Alistair Cooke. (Alistair Cooke really *is* bright pink; it's not your set.) As a one-man reunion of Great Britain and the United States—a British American and American Englishman by profession—he had a headstart on getting Shakespeare and the Bicentennial into one package. He tried—with energy, wit, and his usual goodwill—but failed, weighed down by the job of giving ideational flesh to a publicist's figment and by a truly Titanic load of misinformation.

While we were failing in our Bicentennial duties, others were doing better. We were not the only convention in town. The Daughters of the American Revolution were also meeting. Every morning they took their orchids down to Constitution Hall and, in this Bicentennial year as in all others, attempted to renegotiate the 1783 Treaty of Paris to include unconditional surrender of England and a war-crimes trial for George III. Most of the D.A.R. were presumably housed at the Mayflower, a big hotel. However, each individual daughter consumes a lot of space. Some of the overflow, the Arkansas delegation, joined us at the Statler-Hilton. They were not happy to be there, and, since a disgruntled razorback is not therefore mute, they spent their off-hours bullying barmaids and keeping the memory of Marian Anderson alive in all our hearts.

The Statler-Hilton was engaged in a Bicentennial Assault of its own. Every afternoon at exactly five o'clock a tape recorder and a bellhop ceremonially took down the flag (the sun always sets on the Hilton Empire at 5:00 p.m. local time, no matter what it's doing outside). First there were some trumpets, then a stone voice told everyone in the lobby to stand right where he was and watch the bellhop, who, in the gold-braided regalia of his office, stamped his feet, made several crisp military turns within a one-foot square of carpet, put his cap over his heart while the tape played the national anthem, made some more right-angle turns, picked up the flag, and took it away. (Hats off! A man is putting a flag in a closet.) I understand that at 8:00 a.m. the whole operation occurs in reverse, but I never saw it myself.

Actually, the Congress was both very American and very Shakespearean. Scholars and Americans have a common denominator as groups that pay strangers to come insult them. The relationship between the scholars at the Congress and the famous non-scholars who were our honored guests mirrored two centuries of American cultural history. Such visitors follow a predictable pattern. First they register mock surprise at addressing such an august company. They—they announce—have no scholarly credentials or aspirations. Thereupon, they define scholars as people with narrow minds, bad tempers, and false values. Then they assure us that they recognize false values and intellectual masturbation as cultural necessities of inestimable worth. They themselves, however, are only simple men who are ready to put us

straight on everything. Then they teach us to suck eggs. I can see why we put up with such speakers; we ourselves find academics ridiculous; it is we, after all, who taught smug civilians to mock us and who made up the elegant, but now stock, one-liners for doing so. I don't, however, see why we clap so much when one of them finishes his routine and sits down. There's a scholar born every minute.

I said that the Shakespeare Congress was Shakespearean. I said that because I have strong contradictory views about it. Evaluating it is like evaluating Malvolio or Henry V. Appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, I do think the Congress was something besides funny; in fact, I think it was worthwhile. I am, however, hard pressed to say what in particular *made* it worthwhile. A lot of people, notably greeters representing the various funding endowments, foundations, councils, companies, and societies, felt the need to justify the Congress and had trouble doing so. One of them made a stab at finding redeeming social value in reading Shakespeare, but didn't get very far. I kept worrying about what would happen if Senator Proxmire heard about the Shakespeare Congress while he was in front of a television camera. Some of the money for the Congress came from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The public monies poured off into the annual budget of the National Endowment for the Humanities are enough to finance a serious injury to a Southeast Asian. The fraction of that budget that backed the Shakespeare Congress could have been used as seed money in a campaign to get seed money for a pilot study of some socially significant project like the movement to bring back the Pacific Northwest. What were we accomplishing? During the first half of the week a lot of people gave commemorative medals to other people. Later in the week the early recipients gave medals to the people who had given medals to them. Much of the Congress was an exercise in sentimentalism—sentimentalism in that the Congress took and gave out outward signs of ignored graces.

This is a good point at which to explain why I earlier listed Alistair Cooke, Anthony Burgess, Clive Barnes, and Jorge Luis Borges among the Special Exhibitions. Except in the case of Burgess—whose address resembled a sequel to *No Bed For Bacon* written by Archie Rice in imitation of James Joyce—I do not intend that designation as the critical cheap shot it must seem to be. I mean only to point out that what mattered was that they appeared at the Congress, not what they said. Borges, himself a scholar, could not warm up the crowd by insulting it, but his lecture consisted largely of a reprise of Shakespearean controversies from around the time of Sidney Lee. (Indeed, the Congress generally sharpened one's sense of the distinction between beating a dead horse and giving it a really elegant funeral.) My opinion of Borges' lecture cannot diminish him; nor has the content of his lecture anything to do with the significance of the event. What Borges' presence offered to the delegates—and also offered to hundreds of teenagers who came to get books autographed and were suddenly

revealed when, just before Borges arrived, a whole wall of the hotel ballroom folded open—was the chance to see, hear, and be in the same huge room with a major fact of living literary history. The event was sentimental but not insignificant.

Back on Monday night, while I was taking scornful notes on Alistair Cooke's misrepresentations of Thomas Jefferson's indifference to Shakespeare, I stopped and asked myself what in the way of a ceremonial opening speaker I could possibly have preferred to Alistair Cooke. When the English have something in need of official opening, they can call in a duchess; we have Alistair Cooke. (By the way, the Folger exhibition was opened by Lady Ramsbotham—wife of Sir Peter, the British Ambassador; she did not fit the pattern at all; she knew all about the exhibition, talked about it lovingly, and talked about it well.) While I have achieved the wisdom to take a cheerful view of Alistair Cooke, I remain resentful of Clive Barnes. He spoke at lunch on Friday. He finally wandered to some anecdotes illustrating the smegmatically intended proposition that no reviewer should see a Shakespeare play for the first time (he might carelessly like something he shouldn't), but his principal topic was the degree to which the existence of The International Shakespeare Congress and his commitment to address it had slipped his mind. Clive Barnes is a busy man. He not only has to police the Broadway theatre, he has to be present every time a tutu flutters anywhere in the New York Metropolitan Area. I can understand why he had nothing to say and was unprepared to say it, but I will not forgive him for boasting about it.

If the virtues of the Congress were only social and sentimental, why am I glad it happened? No significant trends emerged. As a group, the Shakespeare scholars of the world still do not know what structuralism is, although we still decry it; since the Congress, however, many of us understand that structuralism is something different from structure and is, in fact, probably French (Lafayette, we are puzzled). Projecting from the papers they had heard, two different people told me in righteous despair that they foresaw a disproportionate upsurge in gloomy critical studies of *Timon*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *Coriolanus*; but that handwriting, which has been on the wall and unheeded for decades, ranks with the always impending Tennyson revival and the second coming of Charles Brockden Brown. Similarly, although the most repeated assertion all week was that we must remember that Shakespeare's plays have full being only on the stage, that shows a trend not at all new; moreover—since the delegates were eager to assure one another that they had no intention whatever of going to the Folger Theatre Group's [dogged, foreshortened, but competent] production of *Henry V*—the trend is not one to be taken seriously.

If I am to find a justification for my overall sense that the Congress was worth holding and worth going to, I will have to find it in the scholarly papers read there. I don't think many people learned many particular things. I think the value of the papers was, as it probably

always is at such conferences, in their potential for making individual scholars recognize the existence of a new angle of vision or range of considerations. The chances of that potential exercising itself are small because, where one has to choose between two or more groups of papers being read at the same hour, one naturally chooses to hear those on topics one is interested in and by speakers one admires. What we need is a new, industry-wide policy whereby everyone singles out and attends only papers on unattractive topics by scholars whose work one does not know and admire. Still, even though I worked to avoid it, my mind did find itself on some unfamiliar turf during the Congress and is, I think, the better for the detour. For instance, on the morning of the last day of regular sessions, I heard a paper called “Q and F *King Lear* and the Interpretation of Albany and Edgar” by Michael Warren. It went by fast. I cannot duplicate or summarize or even judge its argument, but it contained a notion new to me and not at all convenient to my thinking: the idea that the different versions of *Lear* might really be just that—distinct Shakespearean efforts to achieve distinctly different responses to some of his characters and situations. I don’t endorse that idea. In fact, I wish it would go away. But I will never look at Shakespearean texts in quite the same way again.

I don’t know that that last paragraph would reassure the National Endowment or the Rockefeller Foundation or the University of California committee that paid my way to Washington, but it reassures me. Any scholar worth his salt is, by definition, barred from recourse to the law of diminishing returns.

It was a bully circus.

During his first trip to England in 1844, Barnum was “constantly on the look-out for novelties . . . with a view to buy or hire such exhibitions as . . . would ‘pay’ in the United States”:

I obtained verbally through a friend the refusal of the house in which Shakespeare was born, designing to remove it in sections to my Museum in New-York; but the project leaked out, British pride was touched, and several English gentlemen interfered and purchased the premises for a Shakespearian Association. Had they slept a few days longer, I should have made a rare speculation, for I was subsequently assured that the British people, rather than suffer that house to be removed to America, would have bought me off with twenty thousand pounds.

Thirty-eight years later, in the last decade of his life, Barnum offered \$10,000 to the London Zoo for Jumbo, and—to the loud dismay of John Ruskin—was accepted. We are a young country. Last April in Washington we made some progress in the general direction of the great Shakespearean appropriation in which Barnum was thwarted. Give us just one more century, and we’ll make it.