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## The Birth of Shakespeare's Birthplace

Schoch, R. (2012). The Birth of Shakespeare's Birthplace. *Theatre Survey*, 53(2), 181-201.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0040557412000038>

**Published in:**  
Theatre Survey

**Document Version:**  
Early version, also known as pre-print

**Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:**  
[Link to publication record in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal](#)

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‘The Birth of Shakespeare’s Birthplace’

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*Theatre Survey*  
53.2 (September 2012), pp. 181-201  
ISSN 0040-5574

‘There is, indeed, little doubt’, the formidable scholar James Orchard Halliwell-Phillips confidently explained to the Victorian readership of his *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, ‘that the Birth-place did not become one of the incentives for pilgrimage until public attention had been specifically directed toward it at the time of the Jubilee’.<sup>i</sup> That’s broadly true. The earliest reference to the three-gabled half-timbered house (two houses, originally) on Henley Street in Stratford-upon-Avon as being the birthplace of William Shakespeare dates only from the late 1750s, when it was so named in Samuel Winter’s town map.<sup>ii</sup> During the Stratford Jubilee led in 1769 by David Garrick, the ‘small old house’, as the actor’s first biographer called it, was fully recognized and promoted as the place where Shakespeare was born.<sup>iii</sup> Even so, Halliwell-Phillips’s observation conceals more than it reveals. Because there is also little doubt that the dwelling which tradition calls Shakespeare’s birthplace did not suddenly acquire that status during the first week of September 1769. The process by which the unremarkable piece of real estate that John Shakespeare purchased sometime in the late sixteenth century was transformed into what Barbara Hodgdon has rightly called the ‘controlling ideological center’ of Shakespeare biography was long, slow, and far from inevitable. That process is the subject of this essay.<sup>iv</sup>

Repositioning the methods and concerns of scholarship on the Birthplace produced since the middle of the twentieth century, I will explore that portion of the Birthplace’s history—its ‘pre-history’, if you will—that has been almost entirely

ignored in accounts of Shakespeare's formation as a cultural icon: the period from the playwright's death in 1616 to the Jubilee in 1769. My recuperation of this history does not turn on the discovery of new facts because the archival record was firmly established by the late nineteenth century.<sup>v</sup> Rather I take a fresh look at archival, critical, and literary materials—some neglected, some nearly canonical in their familiarity—to tell the overlooked story of how the Birthplace *became* the Birthplace. I tell this story not because it is overlooked but because it is important. By not taking for granted the status that has been conferred upon the house since the late eighteenth century we can better understand the attitudes, events, and choices that led to the conferral of that enduring status. In other words, I am interested in undertaking a longer-range historical study, one that instead of accepting cultural categories as 'given' (as existing scholarship on the topic so often does) seeks to understand how those categories emerged and became defined in the first place.

Such an investigation, I propose, will unsettle the foundations of Bardolatry by demonstrating that the Birthplace's status as a key Shakespeare heritage site was a conditional historical outcome produced by identifiable causes, some part of broader trends and some unique to Shakespeare: the rise of critical biography, the popularity of literary tourism, the lack of alternative sites in Stratford, the involvement of those who occupied the premises, and a sympathetic public press. Without the alignment of all those forces in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Birthplace as we know it would not exist. Moreover, by understanding how the Birthplace became the Birthplace we can more perceptively appraise our own engagement with Shakespeare heritage sites. A deeper articulation of the Birthplace's origins reveals that the discourse of authenticity (or 'original practices') which informs the experience of today's visitors to places like the reconstructed Globe retraces patterns of behavior

first associated with the Birthplace more than two hundred and fifty years ago. As I will argue, the playfulness associated with Globe audiences today was also evident in how the earliest visitors to the Birthplace experienced the site. These unexpected historical continuities work to break down the rhetorical divide between Stratford and London that has so strongly marked the history of Shakespeare's cultural and theatrical afterlife.

My revisionist contention that the Birthplace possesses a qualitatively distinctive 'pre-history'—one that simultaneously complicates our understanding of the past and repositions our experience of the present—departs from standard academic and institutional accounts of Shakespeare's Stratford. More than six decades ago Levi Fox, then the newly appointed Director of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, penned a brief narrative history of the site, occasioned by the Trust's one hundredth anniversary. His account is most notable for articulating a nationalist historiography of redemption: a determined band of 'Shakespeare lovers' rescued the derelict Birthplace in 1847 and preserved it for the people of Great Britain. The story of the house before it was elevated into a 'national memorial' in the mid nineteenth century was told in a few pages.<sup>vi</sup> It was as if the Birthplace's function as a shrine to Shakespeare was an immutable fact: the unmoved mover of Bardolatry prior to which nothing could have existed.

In the wave of cultural materialist Shakespeare scholarship that gathered force in the 1980s, the very institution whose centennial Fox had celebrated was attacked for being an instrument of conservative ideology. A leading example is Graham Holderness's much-cited essay 'Bardolatry; or, The cultural materialist's guide to Stratford-upon Avon' (1988), which asserted that the Shakespeare myth was propagated in Stratford through 'unscrupulous opportunism, commercial exploitation

and gross imposture'.<sup>vii</sup> Because Holderness's aim was to demystify the ideological underpinnings of Bardolatry 'as an organised evangelical movement', the site's early history—that is, when Bardolatry was still comparatively unorganized—fell outside the scope of his inquiry.<sup>viii</sup> In consequence, though, Holderness did not stop to ask how the 'evangelical movement' became organized in the first place.<sup>ix</sup>

In different ways, Fox and Holderness both demonstrate how scholarship on Shakespeare's afterlife and how the institutions charged with maintaining that afterlife have tended to treat as unproblematic the Birthplace's emergence as a key site of Shakespearean heritage and authenticity. The site's cultural value, whether championed by Fox or contested by Holderness, has been largely assumed. But a closer scrutiny of the full historical record will show just how quickly such assumptions come unraveled, just how contingent the Birthplace's rise to prominence has been, and just how unexpectedly the site anticipates contemporary debates about the authenticity of the Shakespeare tourist trade.

*'Some Account of the Life, &c. of Mr. William Shakespear'*

The public identification of Shakespeare with Stratford-upon-Avon began early—seven years after the dramatist's death—with Leonard Digges' reference to 'thy *Stratford Moniment*' in his prefatory elegy in the 1623 First Folio.<sup>x</sup> Yet it was an identification premised on death, not life. The unsurprising theme of Digges' short poem was that brick-and-mortar memorials to Shakespeare—that is, the grave and funerary statue in Stratford's Holy Trinity Church—would in time disappear whereas his printed 'Workes' would survive forever. Ben Jonson shared that view in his more famous commendatory verse from the same volume, proposing that the late author

would remain ‘alive still’ so long as his ‘Booke doth live’.<sup>xi</sup> With Shakespeare figured as disembodied genius—‘Soule of the age’, as Jonson lastingly put it—how easy it must have been for readers of the First Folio to ignore the Warwickshire market town where the first son of Mary Arden and John Shakespeare was born, baptized, grew up, married, acquired land and tithes, bought one house and inherited another, sued his debtors, retired, wrote his will, and died.<sup>xii</sup>

Nowhere in the various prefaces to the First Folio is there any mention of two houses in Stratford that then would have carried Shakespearean associations, if not necessarily sentiments: New Place, the handsome residence on the corner of Chapel Street and Chapel Lane, which the thirty-three year old Shakespeare had bought in 1597, and where nineteen years later he died; and on the north side of Henley Street, the humbler tenement where in 1564 he was born.<sup>xiii</sup> The ownership of New Place has been amply documented from the time when Hugh Clopton bequeathed it to his brother’s heir during the reign of Henry VII, a full century before it was purchased by another Stratford native who had made a name for himself in London. The history of the property that tradition names Shakespeare’s birthplace is much cloudier. John Shakespeare was residing in Henley Street by April 1552, when he was fined one shilling for amassing a dung heap in front of his property. In 1556 he purchased the eastern wing (sometimes called ‘The Woolshop’) and acquired the freehold of the entire premises no later than 1590.<sup>xiv</sup> Though it lacks documentary proof, and has not gone unchallenged, the tradition that William Shakespeare was born in the western half of his father’s property in Henley Street is perfectly credible and contradicts no known fact.<sup>xv</sup> After John Shakespeare’s death in 1601 the property almost certainly passed to his only surviving son, likely subject to a life tenancy held by the widowed Mary Arden, who died in 1608. At the time of his father’s death, however,

Shakespeare already owned New Place, the grander property where his wife and daughters lived, he himself residing primarily in London.

When the First Folio appeared, the Shakespearean provenance of these two houses was more than a recent memory; it was a continuing fact of Stratford daily life. When Shakespeare dictated his will in March 1616 he instructed that his elder daughter Susanna (1583-1649), married to the physician John Hall, should inherit both properties: ‘I Gyve Will bequeath & Devise unto my daughter Susanna Hall...that Capitall Messuage or tenement with thappurtenaunces in Stratford aforesaied Called the newe place wherein I nowe dwell & twoe messuages or tenements...in Henley streete...<sup>xvi</sup> Susanna Hall and her husband took possession of New Place upon Shakespeare’s death. The will also granted to the playwright’s indigent and by then widowed sister Joan Hart (1569-1646), his only surviving sibling, a life tenancy in the residential part of the Henley Street property ‘wherein she dwelleth’ for an annual peppercorn rent of twelve pence.<sup>xvii</sup> Here we see Shakespeare cannily controlling the future of the estate that he amassed yet not forgetting to provide for his sister and her children, who had fallen on hard times.

Anyone reading the First Folio would be highly unlikely to know such intimate details about Shakespeare and his family because biographical curiosity about the poet had not yet developed. Until it developed, the places where Shakespeare lived would not be regarded as important for understanding the man, the works, and the relationship between them. It is well known that the invention of Shakespeare biography was part of a larger story: the birth of literary criticism.<sup>xviii</sup> As René Wellek explained in his landmark *The Rise of English Literary History* (1941), the collective biographies of poets and playwrights that first appeared in the late seventeenth century, exemplified most famously by Gerard Langbaine’s *An Account*

*of the English Dramatick Poets* (1691), were intended to create a national literary canon.<sup>xx</sup> The primary tool for interpreting that canon—in which dramatic texts were a mainstay—was the life of the author. It was within this context of the ‘life-work’ that biographical interest in Shakespeare emerged: to understand the plays you needed to understand the playwright’s life. This critical imperative gained yet deeper urgency given Shakespeare’s commanding place in the inherited theatrical repertoire following the reopening of the theatres in 1660.

With biography the dominant mode of literary criticism it was inevitable that the reading public would become interested in visiting places associated with an author’s life. Initially this desire was attached to classical writers, as when Fynes Moryson, traveling throughout Europe in the 1590s, toured the ruins of the village south of Rome where the exiled Cicero had lived.<sup>xx</sup> Before the century was out the dwelling places of modern authors were duly recorded. John Aubrey, when compiling his *Brief Lives* (c. 1681), carefully noted that Ben Jonson had lived in London above a ‘Combe maker’s shop, about the Elephant and Castle’.<sup>xxi</sup> A decade later Anthony à Wood reported that ‘out of pure devotion’ some foreign admirers of John Milton visited ‘the house and chamber’ on Breadstreet, near St. Paul’s, where the poet had been born.<sup>xxii</sup> But it was not until the mid eighteenth century that the homes of modern authors—and Shakespeare in particular—would regularly receive visitors. Whichever their destination, the first modern tourists presumed that if reading biographies of playwrights and poets enhanced appreciation of their works, then occupying sites of their creative genius would yield even deeper insights.<sup>xxiii</sup> So the critical question now becomes: how were author and place intertwined in the earliest accounts of Shakespeare’s life?



In 1709 the dramatist Nicholas Rowe launched full-scale Shakespeare biography by prefacing his six-volume edition of the plays with ‘Some Account of the Life, &c. of Mr. William Shakespear’. Just as Rowe, writing a quarter-century after the publication of the Fourth Folio, produced the first proper edition of Shakespeare, he also produced the first proper biography of Shakespeare, not simply recounting the events of the dramatist’s life but appraising his achievements and evaluating his legacy. In accordance with the prevailing critical tradition, the biography was intended to shed light upon the collected plays: ‘the knowledge of an Author’, Rowe explained, ‘may sometimes conduce to the better understanding his Book’.<sup>xxiv</sup> But that ‘knowledge’ did not extend to where Shakespeare had lived in his ‘native *Stratford*’, beyond a vague observation that he ‘had the good Fortune to gather an Estate equal to his Occasion, and, in that, to his Wish’.<sup>xxv</sup>

Yet Rowe would have known of the folk belief, as reported in 1699 by the critic Charles Gildon, that Shakespeare ‘writ the Scene of the Ghost in Hamlet at his House which bordered on the Charnel-House and Church-Yard’.<sup>xxvi</sup> Although Gildon totally confused the geography (New Place bordered the old guild chapel, but the charnel house and churchyard were found only at Holy Trinity Church) the image was important. Shakespeare the working dramatist was placed, not in London, but in his Stratford home, drawing inspiration from the world outside his window. Moreover, tradition from Rowe onward has urged us to believe that Shakespeare played the Ghost himself.<sup>xxvii</sup> This conjectural yet symbolically powerful image reminds us just how necessary it had become by the early eighteenth century to blend the life with the work, that blending expressed in the anecdote that New Place and its atmospheric environs inspired Shakespeare to create a character that he went on to act at the Globe. And yet Rowe chose not to develop this scenario when he prepared the

biography—a decision that is itself significant for the historical process that I am charting. Rowe was content to hint that Shakespeare’s extensive real estate portfolio reflected his desires and therefore implied something about his character; but he was equally content to leave that implication unexplored. Although the explicit triangulation of the poet, his plays, and the place where he lived held no interest for Shakespeare’s first biographer, Shakespeare the man was nonetheless firmly located not in the London theatre but in his hometown of Stratford.<sup>xxviii</sup>

A generation later, in 1733, Lewis Theobald included in his edition of the plays a handful of references to New Place. The scattered allusions formed the first brief chronicle of what Theobald called ‘our *Shakespeare’s* House’: a partial history of its changing ownership (though he mistakenly claimed that Shakespeare was the first to call it ‘*New-place*’); a reference to its modification and survival over time (‘*Shakespeare* became the Purchaser...having repair’d and modell’d it to his own Mind’); an anecdote concerning a famous visitor (‘K. *Charles* the *First’s* Queen...kept her Court for three Weeks in *New-place*’); and a favorable comparison with neighboring residences (‘the best private House in the Town’).<sup>xxix</sup> More directly than Rowe, he implied that the house expressed Shakespeare’s character—the refurbished dwelling was ‘modell’d...to his own Mind’—but then neglected to specify what was expressed or what the renovated house meant to its owner apart from its presumed value as a status symbol. The dramatist’s final dwelling place did not translate, then, into what the editor himself termed a ‘Method of Information’: a biographical fact that deepened appreciation of the plays and poems.<sup>xxx</sup> An admirer of Shakespeare reading Theobald’s preface in 1733 would be unlikely to conclude that a visit to New Place was warranted. Nevertheless, Theobald advanced the state of biographical commentary: Shakespeare had been linked to his Stratford home, a place that

possessed a history, a relationship to its owner, and a symbolic value understood by others.

*'Both your houses'*

The biographies compiled by Rowe and Theobald tell us two important things. Firstly, that the desire to visit the places where Shakespeare lived was not deeply felt as late as the 1730s. It bears recalling that only eight years after Theobald published his preface, David Garrick, the person chiefly responsible for turning Stratford into the ritual center of Shakespeare worship, made his London debut. Significant changes were about to occur in a short period of time. Secondly, the early biographies tell us that New Place, rather than the Birthplace, was the residence that mattered. Because the purpose of knowing about the sites associated with Shakespeare's life was to enlarge one's appreciation of the plays, it made sense to focus upon the places where some of them might have been written. The *Hamlet* anecdote notwithstanding, there was no evidence that Shakespeare wrote anything at New Place. Still, it was conceivable. But it was utterly inconceivable that Shakespeare wrote for the stage while growing up under his father's roof. Never a site of artistic achievement, the Birthplace could not yield dramaturgical insight. Its eventual prominence depended upon the diminished appeal of New Place, the house whose changing fortunes now become central to the story.

Stratford's second best residence, New Place remained in the possession of Shakespeare's lineal descendants until the death in 1670 of his granddaughter, Lady Barnard. The property was then sold to Sir Edward Walker, Garter King at Arms, whose heir, his daughter Barbara, married Sir John Clopton, thus bringing the house

back into the possession of the family that first owned it. Sir John gave it to his younger son, a second Hugh, who modernized and largely rebuilt the premises (though the details are obscure) and lived there until his death in 1751.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Sir Hugh ensured that New Place became identified even more strongly with Shakespeare, not least through the mulberry tree that the poet himself was said to have planted in the large garden. In early summer 1742, if legend can be credited, the young Garrick and his mentor Charles Macklin made a pilgrimage to New Place and were received by Sir Hugh under the shade of his well-pedigreed tree.<sup>xxxii</sup> Their reverential visit was precisely the sort of activity that marked the rise of Bardolatry, the formal cult of Shakespeare worship that required shrines where acolytes could pay homage. A decade earlier, this way of understanding Shakespeare's house—as holy ground—was absent from the biographical prefaces to editions of the plays. But the rituals were now being formalized and it was increasingly expected that cultural tourists generally, not just those associated with Shakespeare, would find an imaginative dynamism in the union of author and place.

The very opposite of the burial monument in nearby Holy Trinity Church, which honored a deceased poet, the mulberry tree at New Place was fully alive. Because Shakespeare was believed to have planted the tree he was symbolically alive in and through it. The tree thus functioned not as a static memorial to the Bard but as what Aaron Santesso, in his study of eighteenth-century literary tourism, has called 'an imaginative meeting place where the reader might engage with the author'.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Tourists wanted to be 'on the spot' where the author had once been bodily present but was now metaphorically present. It was not essential that the 'spot' be a fully authentic or reconstructed site. The eighteenth-century cult of the ruin reminds us that tourists often preferred sites that were incomplete and imperfect, because it

empowered them to mentally reconstruct the scene and thereby control it. As Garrick and Macklin must have understood, the mulberry tree at New Place brought Shakespeare to life not by conveying any fixed meaning but by inviting tourists to attribute meaning to it—and then to take a piece of that meaning home with them. Neither relic nor hoax, the tree stood somewhere between history and mythology. Yet as cultural theorist Chris Rojek has remarked, the ‘interpenetration of factual and fictional elements’ is precisely what allows the tourist to frame—and thus to derive meaning from—the destination site.<sup>xxxiv</sup> As we will see, authenticity was never the standard for the successful operation of Shakespeare heritage sites—including the Birthplace—during or well before the Jubilee.

Had the traveling London actors visited the Birthplace they would have found a resolutely factual tradition, for it was then owned and occupied by the elderly Shakespeare Hart, great-grandson of Joan Hart and Shakespeare’s great-grandnephew. He might have told his guests about the rapid extinction of his famous ancestor’s direct line and the consequent legal maneuvers initiated to keep the Birthplace within the extended family. Upon Joan Hart’s death in 1646 the Birthplace reverted to Susanna Hall, after whose death three years later the property passed to her only child, Elizabeth Barnard. The Harts, however, continued to live there, just as they had been doing since Shakespeare’s lifetime. The entail of Shakespeare’s Stratford estate to his direct descendants seems to have become redundant when Elizabeth Barnard died without issue in 1670, by which time Judith Quiney, his other daughter, had also died, with no issue surviving.<sup>xxxv</sup> Shakespeare’s direct line was thus extinguished only fifty-four years after his death. The childless Lady Barnard instructed that ownership of the Birthplace be transferred upon her death to her second cousin Thomas Hart (b. 1634), Joan’s grandson.<sup>xxxvi</sup> When Thomas Hart died

without issue the house passed to his younger brother George (1636-1702), who by deed poll transferred it to his son Shakespeare Hart (1666-1747). The house then passed to his son, the glazier William Shakespeare Hart (1695-1750), whose children predeceased him, resulting in the property being inherited by his cousin George Hart (1700-78), who lived there at the time of the Jubilee.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Despite being occupied by Shakespeare's nearest relations, the Birthplace, as we have seen, was for many years not much on the mind of those paying homage to the national poet. In the middle of the eighteenth century there was indeed the concept of 'our *Shakespeare's* House' (as Theobald's 1733 edition made clear) but it meant New Place. There was no need for the Birthplace. It was a jumble of a structure, a family dwelling on one side and the Swan and Maidenhead Inn on the other; it was dismal in appearance; it belonged not to Shakespeare's descendants but to his sister's; and it appeared unlikely that the playwright lived there much beyond his eighteenth year, when he married Anne Hathaway.<sup>xxxviii</sup> All these associations led away from Shakespeare the poet, not toward him. Most regrettably of all, there was no mulberry tree to fire the imagination. For a Shakespeare tourist in the mid eighteenth century there was little to recommend the Birthplace, either in historical substance or aesthetic possibility. One Shakespeare house was enough, and New Place was it.

All that changed in 1753 when a dyspeptic clergyman named Francis Gastrell purchased New Place. After three years of enduring sightseers determined to gaze upon the famous mulberry tree, Gastrell took revenge on the rising Shakespeare tourist trade by having the full-grown tree cut down and chopped for firewood.<sup>xxxix</sup> In a remark confirming the rapid ascendancy of Shakespeare's reputation in the second half of the eighteenth century, Stratford historian Robert Bell Wheler later observed that the infamous owner of New Place felt 'no consciousness of his being possessed

of the sacred ground which the Muses had consecrated to the memory of their favourite Poet'.<sup>xl</sup> But the parson's spite had not exhausted itself. Spending much of his time in Litchfield, Gastrell resented having to pay a tithe on New Place to aid the poor of Stratford. In 1759 he initiated the ultimate tax avoidance scheme by tearing it down. No house, no tax.

It was not Shakespeare's house, exactly, that was destroyed. At the turn of the century Sir John Clopton had altered the dwelling and put up an elegant façade in the Queen Anne style of the day, all without provoking any extant comment. In 1737 the antiquarian engraver George Vertue described a 'handsome brick house' whose exterior Shakespeare would not have recognized.<sup>xli</sup> But just as with the mulberry tree, inexactitude was not an issue. Even though New Place no longer resembled the Tudor house that Shakespeare knew, it still mattered: because from the 'relic-lover's point of view', as Ivor Brown and George Fearon observed in an early and perceptive account of the Shakespeare industry, it was 'a continuously occupied house which was in the hands of the poet and his family for over half a century and had been reconstructed by a descendant of the original owners, a family which had been paramount in Stratford for centuries'.<sup>xlii</sup> But after Gastrell wrought his vengeance there was no house and no mulberry tree. All that remained were half-buried stone foundations in an otherwise vacant plot. Such topographical barrenness, even for tourists enchanted by picturesque ruins, hardly conduced to an imaginative encounter with Shakespeare.<sup>xliii</sup>

*'Letter from the Place of Shakspear's Nativity'*

Enter, at long last, the Birthplace. With New Place pulled down, the house on Henley Street became the only surviving residence where Shakespeare was known to have

lived. Exactly when the house first attracted visitors is uncertain, but it is revealing that the earliest known reference to it as the ‘birthplace’ occurred around the same year, 1759, that Gastrell demolished New Place. Local schoolmaster Samuel Winter’s ‘Plan of Stratford’, mentioned at the beginning of this essay, designated the tenement’s western end as the ‘Place where Shakespeare was born’, one of twenty-seven sites identified on the official town map.

Winter’s designation of the Birthplace was more a prompt for residents and visitors to experience Shakespeare’s Stratford in a new way than confirmation that this experience had become widespread. New Place was also identified on the map (as ‘Where Died Shakespeare’) although it might have already been demolished. A traveler’s account published the following year in *Gentleman’s Magazine* invites similar caution—it focused mainly on New Place, with no mention of the Birthplace.<sup>xliv</sup> The destruction of ‘the house in which *Shakespear* lived, and a mulberry-tree of his planting’, as the ‘Lady on a Journey at Stratford’ explained, was tantamount to the poet’s second death. Indeed it was a death worse than his actual one, because gratuitous and violent. At least for this tourist, Shakespeare had been alive at New Place, but not, however, in the house where he was born.

Gradually, perceptions shifted. In 1762, a ‘Letter from the Place of Shakspear’s Nativity’ appeared in the *British Magazine*, in which the Birthplace eclipsed Holy Trinity Church as the preferred tourist attraction in ‘the town which gave birth to the prince of dramatic poets’. The unknown correspondent had lodged for a few days over the summer at the White Lion Inn on Henley Street. Over a bottle of claret, the tourist and his ‘cheerful landlord’ shared their mutual admiration for Shakespeare, which prompted them to visit ‘the house where the poet was born’. Fortunately, it was just down the street. ‘There I saw’, the traveler recounted, ‘a



mulberry-tree of that great man's planting, a piece of which I brought away with me, to make a tobacco-stopper for our vicar. His monument in that noble old church likewise afforded me great satisfaction'.<sup>xlv</sup>

In 1762 the house would have been owned and occupied by George Hart. A tree stood on the grounds but it was walnut, not mulberry, as the letter writer (confusing it with New Place) erroneously reported. After the walnut tree was cut down sometime in the 1760s, it, too, was converted into relics, including a replica of Scheemakers' statue of Shakespeare in Westminster Abbey.<sup>xlvi</sup> The imagined transplantation, as it were, of the mulberry tree from New Place to the Birthplace was far from an out-of-towner's mistake. It was a firm reminder that for the Birthplace to make an encounter with Shakespeare possible it had to borrow the rituals formerly associated with the now demolished New Place. Ironically, although the Birthplace was original in strictly architectural terms it was belated in its powers of signification, and thus prior to the Jubilee it was obliged to copy the model set by its predecessor. In a performative sense the Birthplace was a replica of New Place.

Published testimony thus affirms that a distant blood relative of Shakespeare allowed visitors to be received at the only surviving residence of his ancestor as early as 1762. Whether George Hart charged a fee for the privilege is not clear. Carvings from the walnut tree spurred the trade in relics, the whole enterprise aided by the timely intercession of a genial neighboring publican eager to exploit the potential of an appealing tourist attraction virtually next door. Given that the earliest known reference to the Birthplace appeared just three years earlier it is remarkable how quickly the site accommodated itself to visitors. Moreover, the Birthplace, despite being a new tourist attraction, appealed more strongly than the tomb and burial monument, which for one hundred and fifty years had been the canonical Stratford

memorials to Shakespeare. Far from being given importance, those enduring memorials were merely acknowledged for ‘likewise afford[ing] ... great satisfaction’.

There is danger in reading too much into a single piece of evidence, particularly when it appears, as this one does, to mark a shift in popular attitudes and experiences. So it is salutary to remember that seven years later Samuel Richardson’s continuation of Daniel Defoe’s *A Tour Thro’ the Whole Island of Great Britain*—a native Grand Tour in book format—hailed the ‘inimitable *Shakespeare*’, but then neglected to mention in its account of Stratford the still standing house where that unequalled personage had been born and raised.<sup>xlvii</sup> Such omission was counterbalanced, however, that same year by the first publication of an image of the Birthplace. An engraving based upon Richard Greene’s drawing (c. 1762) appeared in *Gentleman’s Magazine* two months before the Jubilee as part of its advance publicity campaign.<sup>xlviii</sup> The eastern and western wings of the property were together identified as ‘The House in Stratford in which Shakspeare was born’. To liberate the viewer’s imagination the structure was depicted as freestanding and situated in a field when in actuality it formed part of a row of unprepossessing domestic and commercial premises. The falsification of the scene, though consistent with topographical drawings of the period, nonetheless confirms that the Birthplace’s value was not fully self-evident. Shakespeare’s house had to be rendered *untrue* to life in order to create the truth of the desired experience, in this instance the vicarious tourism of the magazine reader. Authenticity has been effectively displaced from the imperfect original to the improved mass produced likeness.<sup>xlix</sup>

This tension between actuality and efficacy—the house as it was, the house as it needed to be—was similarly operative in the description by ‘T.B.’ of Litchfield that accompanied the illustration:

There is a certain degree of pleasure, better felt than described, excited in the mind, upon visiting...the places of nativity of extraordinary personages deceased... I do not know whether the apartment where the incomparable Shakespeare first drew his breath, can, at this day, be ascertained, or not; but the house of his nativity (according to undoubted tradition) is now remaining. My worthy friend Mr Greene, of this place, hath favoured me with an exact drawing of it (here inclosed) which may not possibly be an unacceptable present to such of your readers as intend to honour Stratford with their company at the approaching jubilee...<sup>1</sup>

This brief account alluded, equivocally, to the longstanding supposition that Shakespeare was born in the house on Henley Street that belonged to his father. Moreover, it attested to the belief that ‘places of nativity’ were pleasurable to visit—or rather, *ought* to be pleasure to visit—because the experience could fire the visitor’s imagination and, in the case of major literary figures, deepen ‘the impressions and improvements we have received from their writings’. Such opinions, far from novel in the 1760s, remind us just how well established literary tourism had become over the preceding century. Nevertheless, birthplaces continued to present problems for tourists because they were the sites *least* associated with the life being venerated. That inconvenient fact was so much of a lingering problem that ‘T.B.’ evaded the challenge of articulating what the visitor experienced at the Birthplace, pleading that it was ‘better felt than described’.

*‘A good deal of money by shewing the room where he was born’*

Judging from the foregoing account's liminal tone—there's something new to be experienced, but it can't yet be properly expressed—the Birthplace was poised to come into its own during the Jubilee, when the visitor's experience was forthrightly directed and regulated. As is well known, Garrick's heavily trailed and much mocked three-day celebration of Shakespeare (and himself) featured performances, masquerades, orations, concerts, breakfasts, banquets, and spoiling torrential rain.<sup>li</sup> Fireworks were not set off, the parade of Shakespeare's characters was cancelled, and the newly built rotunda on the banks of the Avon soon flooded. A short-term failure, the Jubilee nonetheless established the town of Stratford not just as a shrine to the Bard but also as a cultural factory that has successfully engaged in the production, marketing and retail of Shakespearean commodities ever since. So successfully did the Jubilee deify Shakespeare—'Tis he! 'Tis he! / "The god of our idolatry", Garrick exclaimed in his quasi-operatic ode recited while looking upon the poet's image—that 'any object associated with the Bard', as Jonathan Bate has remarked, 'would have been treated with reverence'.<sup>lii</sup> If a mere cup supposedly carved from the legendary mulberry tree was endowed with talismanic powers, as Jubilee lore would have it, then Shakespeare's birthplace merited veneration on a grand public scale. Yet the veneration of the house proceeded along precisely the same lines as the veneration of the mulberry wood. Both succeeded as objects of popular fascination by occupying the indeterminate space between authenticity and fraudulence.

As Boswell sardonically remarked in his letter from Stratford, Garrick had stationed his literary agent Thomas Beckett inside the birthroom where he hawked official Jubilee publications, notably Garrick's *Ode on Dedicating a Building and Erecting a Statue to Shakespeare*. 'Whether inspiration poetical hath impregnated his

mind', Boswell dryly queried, 'time must determine'.<sup>liii</sup> Beckett was not the only merchant in the temple. Naval surgeon turned historian James Solas Dodd was surprised to discover that the 'mistress' of the house—'whose name is Shakespear'—earned 'a good deal of money by shewing the room where he was born in [*sic*], and the chair in which he used to sit when he wrote'.<sup>liv</sup> We must imagine this woman gleefully running a lucrative sideline under Garrick's nose, welcoming into her abode, and out of the spoiling rain, many of the tourists who had descended upon Stratford only to have their enthusiasm quickly chilled. Whether she and bookseller Beckett collided in the birthroom and tussled over customers remains a mystery for the ages.

Dodd was wrong about the enterprising cicerone's surname because among Shakespeare's lineal descendants the family name ended with him. Moreover, the house then belonged to the elderly widower George Hart. The woman whom Dodd encountered could have been one of Hart's older daughters or daughters-in-law, but we don't know. Whatever her true identity, she must have surmised that her takings would increase by borrowing the immortal name of the Hart family's distant uncle. Just as the name was an imposture, so, too, was the hallowed chair, to say nothing of the claim that Shakespeare wrote anything while living in the Birthplace. To these compounded errors we may add Dodd's equally fantastic claim that the hostess's fourteen-year-old daughter 'has many features which resemble the best painting we have of Shakespear'.

The conjectures, half-truths, and outright lies first propagated at the Birthplace during the Jubilee (and which to an extent are still propagated there, as scholars like Hodgdon would argue) tell us something fundamentally important: that historical authenticity was not the unit of measurement in determining the efficacy of the tourist's engagement with Shakespeare heritage sites.<sup>lv</sup> It had not been true of New

Place, which had been altered beyond recognition by a later owner; it had not been true of the mulberry tree, for which there was no evidence of its having been planted by Shakespeare; and it had not been true of the subsequent trade in relics, for which a mulberry tree of infinite abundance was required. Still less was it true of the Birthplace. There was no proof that Shakespeare had been born in the house, let alone in the upstairs chamber that Garrick peremptorily declared to be the birthroom; the tour guides were not Shakespeare's lineal descendants, even if they claimed to share his name; and the one person who never sat in the downstairs chair was Shakespeare the working dramatist. The illustration published at the time of the Jubilee depicted an Elizabethan building that no longer existed and indeed may never have existed. Although the Birthplace was a genuinely original structure, the visitor's experience of it in the late eighteenth century was marked by repeated acts of imposture: fake façades, fake rooms, fake furniture, and fake descendants.

The point, however, is that this conflict between truth and falsehood did not invalidate what visitors encountered. As had been noted with reference to the mulberry tree at New Place, the interpenetration of fact and fiction was the defining aspect of the tourist's experience. And so it was not a matter of gullible visitors defrauded of their money during the Jubilee by unscrupulous tour guides. Rather, it was a matter of a relationship being negotiated between the tourist and the site itself, a relationship premised on—not compromised by—the discontinuity between the Birthplace and the Shakespearean past whose purpose it was to resurrect. For as Susan Stewart has compellingly argued, nostalgia—the desire to recover a lost past—is '[h]ostile to history' precisely because it depends upon history remaining irretrievable.<sup>lvi</sup> By necessity, historical sites fail to be fully historical. The Birthplace's successes turned on the relationship produced between the site and its visitors.

That relationship required commitment on both sides. Like all shrines, the Birthplace depended upon the pilgrim's intercession, without which the charm failed to work. Or as Paulina explained to the disbelieving court of Leontes when unveiling the life-like statue of Hermione, 'It is required / You do awake your faith' (*The Winter's Tale* 5.3.94-5). Yet the awakening of faith was not so easily achieved. One of the earliest, and most revealing, private accounts of a visit to the Birthplace was written by Samuel Vince, who stopped in Stratford in the summer of 1777. Vince's manuscript account of his journey through England and north Wales reveals that he was an enthusiastic, open-minded, and curious traveler. But he was not a Bardolator. For that very reason his impressions are all the more valuable. Written just eight years after the Jubilee, and composed as a diary, a work never intended for publication, and still unpublished, his little-known travelogue conveys the appeal that the Birthplace held for a culturally literate tourist in the late eighteenth century. Here in full is the relevant passage:

The Country from thence to Stratford is very beautiful & rich, a Place justly famous for giving Birth to Shakespear. The House, where he was born, is still standing. It is a small cottage, & in one of the Rooms below stairs, there is still remaining an old chair, fixed in one of the chimnies, in which the Poet used to sit. The Woman of the House informed us that M<sup>r</sup>. Garrick & many other Gentlemen had sung many a good Song in that Chair. We found that most, who visited this Place, had cut off a small Piece from the Leg of the Chair, to preserve in Honour of Shakespear, and as we were not wanting in curiosity, each took a small Piece, though I have not the Faith to believe I shall find any Inspiration from it. This is the only piece of his Furniture now

remaining. We also visited the Room in which he was born, and found that the floor had suffered much, as the Chair below had done. We also paid our respects to his Tomb and Monument, which are in the Chancel, belonging to the Church.<sup>lvii</sup>

Vince's experience followed the pattern set no later than Dodd's visit during the Jubilee: the 'Woman of the House' conducted a tour whose highlights were the display of Shakespeare's chair, now placed in a hearth, and a look inside the upstairs birthroom. The famous chair (and, apparently, the floorboards in the birthroom) had acquired the status of a holy relic, such that believers were anxious to depart with slivers of precious wood in the belief that by the power of synecdoche Shakespeare was fully present in them. Perpetually regenerative, the chair remained miraculously whole no matter how much was sliced off. If relics were insufficient, the reluctant, the doubtful, and the wavering could have their faith bolstered through stories of illustrious visitors. Although there is no record of Garrick leading a chorus *ex cathedra* during a pilgrimage to Henley Street, that was precisely the sort of charming anecdote that was required. It offered tourists a seemingly unimpeachable guarantee that an authentic experience awaited them. Even so, the need to nudge visitors into better appreciating their own experience by citing a history of superior visitors implies that the site was not performing in the intended manner.

Samuel Vince knew that he was an ambivalent visitor to the Birthplace. Sufficiently curious to pocket a 'small Piece' of the chair he nonetheless admitted in private that he would be unlikely to 'find any Inspiration from it'. Nor could he help but observe that, compared to the surrounding countryside, the elegance of Warwick Castle, and the 'handsome' Stratford Town Hall, the 'small cottage' on Henley Street



left him unenthused. And yet Vince felt that he *ought* to have been enthused. The charm ought to have worked. He ought to have been better at playing the game of Birthplace authenticity. How else to explain why the site received more attention in his diary than the ‘Tomb and Monument’, which merited only a name check? Vince played the game of authenticity less enthusiastically and less proficiently than Dodd, but the point is that there was no alternative to the game. One had to take a ‘small Piece’ of the chair. Whether the Birthplace succeeded or failed from the visitor’s perspective in staging an encounter with the Shakespearean past depended not on any objective measure of archaeological correctness but on whether the site itself made available what Susan Bennett has called ‘the performance of authenticity’.<sup>lviii</sup>

*‘For all time’*

The performance of Shakespearean authenticity through heritage sites has never been a phenomenon unique to Stratford. Its other ancestral home is London. Foreshadowed more than a century ago in William Poel’s Elizabethan Stage Society—or even earlier, in Garrick’s wildly popular *The Jubilee*, staged at Drury Lane in October 1769, a month after the Stratford festivities—its most recent manifestation in London dates from the opening of the reconstructed Globe in the mid 1990s. Bennett’s influential study *Performing Nostalgia*, which investigates ‘how in the contemporary moment the [Shakespearean] past prevails upon both performance and criticism’, captures an important insight about the (then unfinished) Globe, which she describes as

[l]ying somewhere between a restored building (restoration of a phantom past) and a souvenir (reconstruction of a myth)...[and] despite its own best aims, [it] marks the discontinuities of history. It gives performance to what we do not know, yet are obliged to invent, so as to anchor ourselves in the turbulent experience of the present.<sup>lix</sup>

The broader implication toward which this essay has been building is that the critical maneuvers which have taken place on London's Bankside over the past fifteen years first took place in Stratford in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with respect to New Place and the Birthplace. Different times, different places, different structures. But the same interpretive agenda: how have consumers of Shakespeare been able to recover a lost past? how has the Shakespearean past been made present to a community of tourists? The history of how the Birthplace has troubled the idea of a continuous Shakespearean past that can be at any time unproblematically encountered resonates with contemporary debates over what visitors actually experience at Shakespeare heritage sites, and most particularly the reconstructed Globe. Like the mulberry tree, which is their common ancestor, the Birthplace and the Globe do indeed lie somewhere between the reanimation of history and the propagation of a myth.

Although I would query Dennis Kennedy's fixed distinction between the 'original' Birthplace and the 'invented' Globe—that is true, but only in the most literal sense—I would nonetheless argue that his account of Globe spectators and visitors is fundamentally relevant to our understanding of the Birthplace's history, and vice versa. Starting from the post-structural view that authenticity is a constructed relationship between subject and object rather than a quality inherent in the object,

Kennedy has argued that the commodification of the spectator's experience at the Globe 'does not in itself destroy the meaning of cultural products or represent fraud; in fact authenticity may gradually emerge, even in situations that are eminently counterfeit'.<sup>lx</sup> His insight about how Globe spectators work through the blatant inauthenticity of their own experience—modern building, modern actors, modern selves—directly relates to understanding the experience of visitors to the Birthplace during and before the Jubilee. Like today's audiences at the Globe, some visitors to the Birthplace were aware that their manufactured and purchased experience was not totally genuine—and yet they were willing to pretend that it was. Even visitors who seemed to accept the site's historical credibility at face value also recognized that their active involvement was required. As Kennedy astutely observes, the tourist's readiness to play the game of authenticity is akin to an audience's willing suspension of disbelief, in which they 'give a part of themselves up to the performance' in order to sustain a theatrical illusion.<sup>lxi</sup>

Whatever the visitor's initial belief or skepticism, some combination of authenticity and pretence will always be at work. James Solas Dodd was a talented and enthusiastic co-creator of Birthplace authenticity during the Jubilee. Upon learning that the woman showing him the house was named 'Shakespear' he enriched the scenario by adding a new 'fact': the woman's daughter resembled a portrait of the great playwright himself. His actions were not so far removed from spectators at the Globe today, some of whom convivially add a 'fact' to the experience of original practices by assuming the role of groundlings and thereby sustaining a culture of audience response that is presumed to capture something of how early modern spectators behaved. And the eighteenth-century tourist Samuel Vince is not so very

different from an ambivalent Globe spectator reluctant to keep up time-traveling appearances.

In a way that scholarship has failed to recognize, the patterns of visitor and audience behavior at the reconstructed Globe do not depart from, but rather reprise, the patterns of behavior first associated with the Birthplace and New Place. By recognizing this continuity we can go some distance toward overcoming one of the most entrenched binaries in the historical study of Bardolatry: the perceived opposition between Stratford and London over which site is the more authentically Shakespearean. The rivalry between the Warwickshire town and the capital city began with the First Folio, surged at the time of the Jubilee, exploded during the 1864 Tercentenary, was symbolized by the RSC's (former) institutional presence in both places, is continually played out in biographies of the playwright, and has flared up again with the Globe, which has made Shakespeare one of the most popular tourist attractions in London. Indeed, one could write a history of British Bardolatry largely in terms of the persistent rivalry between the town where the dramatist was born and the city where he became famous. Both have been scrutinized as sites of authenticity, but in different, though occasionally intersecting, modalities: Stratford for the life, London for the plays. It has been an enduring part of one version of the Shakespeare myth that the dramatist remains genuinely present in his hometown—'Yes, Stratford will help you to understand Shakespeare', as F.J. Furnivall once preached—but a counterfeit presentment in London, where no tavern, lodging house or theatre associated with the playwright has survived whole and intact.<sup>lxii</sup> Conversely, the development of the reconstructed Globe was premised upon the belief, inherited from Poel, that because Shakespeare lives in performance, a reconstructed working theatre near the original site would be the best place to find him. As W.B. Worthen has

remarked ‘[t]he experience of playgoing at the Globe is surely framed by the regimes of restoration’, an experience which the institution itself has from the beginning promoted as ‘a direct expression of the Shakespearean past’.<sup>lxiii</sup>

But I suggest that the differences in these geographically and spatially coded routes back to a presumed Shakespearean past can to a considerable degree be effaced if we focus upon the experiences, both historical and contemporary, of the people who have visited those places. There is, of course, an abundance of material documenting the experience of audiences at the reconstructed Globe, including blogs, postings on social media sites, interviews, and videotapes of the various productions. The sheer density of material makes it impossible to do it justice in the confines of this essay, which offers a necessarily compressed perspective.<sup>lxiv</sup> But the point remains that the experiences of visitors at Shakespeare heritage sites in Stratford and London turn out to be more similar than expected. True, both are invented; but the invention does not render the experiences fraudulent. Rather, the invention is the agreement between site and spectator that allows for the event of authenticity to occur. So instead of seeing the Birthplace as enshrining traditions and standards of authenticity that necessarily place it into a relationship of conflict with the replicated Globe that is necessarily characterized as inauthentic, let us acknowledge that the Birthplace’s long history—the history before the Jubilee, well before the institutionalization of the site in the Victorian era, the history examined in this essay—prefigured our contemporary moment, as embodied in and around the Globe, when authenticity is unveiled as an efficacious performance. Which is another way of saying, although for a wholly different set of reasons than Ben Jonson intended in 1623, that Shakespeare is, indeed, for all time.

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<sup>i</sup> James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps, *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, 2 vols. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (London and New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1890), 1:386-7.

<sup>ii</sup> Samuel Winter, Map of Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England, c. 1759, Folger Shakespeare Library Art D74, fol. 1a. See also Folger Maps S83a 3 and 5.

<sup>iii</sup> Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq...* 2 vols. (London, 1780), 2: 216.

<sup>iv</sup> Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances & Appropriations* (Philadelphia, U of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), p. 195.

<sup>v</sup> Major sources containing transcriptions of historical documents include Halliwell-Phillipps, *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare* (1882); E.K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of the Facts and Problems* 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930); and Samuel Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975. Of the seventy-nine surviving manuscript documents naming Shakespeare that were produced during his lifetime only his will mentions the property now known as the Birthplace. See *Shakespeare in the Public Records*, PRO Handbook No. 5 (London: HM Stationery Office, 1964) and Robert Bearman, *Shakespeare in the Stratford Records* (Phoenix Mill, England: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1994).

<sup>vi</sup> Levi Fox, 'The Heritage of Shakespeare's Birthplace', *Shakespeare Survey* (1948), pp. 79-88; quotation at p. 82.

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<sup>vii</sup> Graham Holderness, ‘Bardolatry; or, The cultural materialist’s guide to Stratford-upon-Avon’, in *The Shakespeare Myth*, ed. Graham Holderness (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988), pp. 2-15; quotation at p. 5.

<sup>viii</sup> Holderness, ‘Bardolatry’, p. 3.

<sup>ix</sup> Though largely presentist in focus, Hodgdon’s *The Shakespeare Trade* reveals how the Birthplace attempted to suture the gap between Shakespeare’s time and our time, fantastically pretending that nothing has happened between the yesterday when Shakespeare lived there and the today when we arrived on the doorstep looking for him (pp. 191-205). Similarly, Julia Thomas explains in *Shakespeare’s Shrine* that the experience of visitors to the Birthplace today is a nineteenth-century invention, coincident with and expressed by restoration of the site undertaken between 1857 and 1862. Thomas, *Shakespeare’s Shrine: The Bard’s Birthplace and the Invention of Stratford-upon-Avon* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 2012). See also Nicola J. Watson, ‘Shakespeare on the Tourist Trail’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture*, ed. Robert Shaughnessy (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007), pp. 199-226.

<sup>x</sup> Leonard Digges, ‘To the Memorie of the deceased Authour Maister W. Shakespeare’, in *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies: published according to the true originall copies*, ed. John Heminge and Henry Condell (London: Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount, 1623). Apart from the Folio editions, early couplings of Shakespeare and Stratford can be found in *A Banquet of Jests, or Change of Cheare* (1632[?]), Edward Phillips’s *Theatrum Poetarum* (1675) and the dedication of John Banks’ *Virtue Betrayed* (1682).

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<sup>xi</sup> Ben Jonson, ‘To the memory of my beloved, The Author Mr William Shakespeare: And what he hath left us.’, in *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies...*

<sup>xii</sup> Related to this point see Graham Holderness, *Nine Lives of William Shakespeare* (New York and London: Continuum, 2011), p. 16ff.

<sup>xiii</sup> The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust now owns both properties and the original 1597 deed of conveyance for New Place. For a summary of the title documents see Chambers, *Facts and Problems*, and Halliwell-Phillipps, *An Historical Account of the New Place...* (London: J.E. Adlard, 1864).

<sup>xiv</sup> *Minutes and Accounts of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon and Other Records 1553-1620*, ed. Richard Savage and Edgar I. Fripp vol. 4 (Oxford: Dugdale Society, 1930), p. 96.

<sup>xv</sup> See, for example, Halliwell-Phillipps, *New Evidences in Confirmation of the Traditional Recognition of Shakespeare’s Birth-Room A.D. 1769-1777* (Brighton, 1888).

<sup>xvi</sup> Last Will and Testament of ‘William Shackspeare of Stratford upon Avon in the countie of warr gent’, 25 March 1616, in Chambers, *Facts and Problems*, 2: 172; full transcription 2:170-74. No one outside the family seemed to know of the will’s existence until 1737 when George Vertue observed that the elderly Shakespeare Hart, Joan Hart’s great-grandson, possessed a copy (British Library MS Portland Loan 29/246, fol. 19).

<sup>xvii</sup> Halliwell-Phillipps, *Historical Account of New Place*, p. 95; Chambers, *Facts and Problems*, 1:171. The commercial half of the Birthplace, the Maidenhead Inn, was



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then rented to Lewis Hiccox, who probably acquired the lease from Shakespeare soon after he inherited the property in 1601. See Jeanne E. Jones, 'Lewis Hiccox and Shakespeare's birthplace', *Notes and Queries* 41 (1994), pp. 497-502 and Bearman, *Shakespeare in the Stratford Records*, p. 43.

<sup>xviii</sup> The fullest history of Shakespeare biography is Samuel Schoenbaum's *Shakespeare's Lives* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1991). A helpfully succinct account can be found in David Bevington, *Shakespeare and Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010).

<sup>xix</sup> Important later studies on this topic include Lawrence Lipking, *The Ordering of the Arts in Eighteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970); Kevin Pask, *The Emergence of the English Author: Scripting the Life of the Poet in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996); and Paulina Kewes, *Authorship and Appropriation: Writing for the Stage in England, 1660-1710* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

<sup>xx</sup> Fynes Moryson, *An itinerary written by Fynes Moryson, gent...* 3 parts (London: John Beale, 1617), part 1, p. 118.

<sup>xxi</sup> John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, ed. Oliver Lawson Dick (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 1957), p. 178.

<sup>xxii</sup> Anthony à Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses, an Exact History of All the Writers and Bishops Who Have Had Their Education at the University of Oxford...* ed. Philip Bliss (1691; London: F.C. & J. Rivington, 1820), 5:485.

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<sup>xxiii</sup> See, for example, John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (London: Sage, 1990) and Jennifer Craik, 'The Culture of Tourism', in *Touring Cultures*, ed. Chris Rojek and John Urry (London: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>xxiv</sup> Nicholas Rowe, 'Some Account of the Life, &c. of Mr. William Shakespear.', in *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear; in Six Volumes* (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson, 1709), 1:i.

<sup>xxv</sup> Rowe, 'Some Account', 1:xxxv. The problem facing Shakespeare's first biographer was that everyone who could have shared intimate details about the poet was dead: in London, colleagues like John Heminges and Henry Condell, the compilers of the First Folio; in Stratford, his sister Joan Hart and his elder daughter Susanna Hall. The poet's younger daughter Judith (1585-1662) and his granddaughter Elizabeth Barnard (1608-70) survived into the Restoration but no one sought them out. Archival records lay buried and unvisited, biding their time until sleuthing historians like Malone brought them to surface more than a century later. As is well known that Shakespeare himself left behind not a single testament to his private thoughts or beliefs. Plenty of references to him were recorded while he was alive, but they were more about his work than the circumstances of his life. The materials available to Rowe constituted a haphazard mixture of fact, anecdote, and legend, each not easily discernable from the other. He was assisted by the veteran actor Thomas Betterton, the greatest Hamlet in living memory, dispatched to Stratford 'to gather up what Remains he could of a Name for which he had so great a Value' ('Some Account', 1:xxxiv). No antiquary, Betterton brought back more than a few errors and untrustworthy anecdotes. John Aubrey's minimally researched account of Shakespeare in his *Brief Lives*, compiled

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around 1681, would have interested Rowe had he known about the random manuscript notes in Oxford's Ashmolean Museum.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Charles Gildon, *The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets...* (London, 1699), p. 126.

<sup>xxvii</sup> '[T]he top of his Performance was the Ghost in his own *Hamlet*'. Rowe, 'Some Account', 1:vi.

<sup>xxviii</sup> The biographer's desire to place Shakespeare the working dramatist at his Stratford home survives to this day. 'We know little about the contents of New Place', Stanley Wells observes, 'but my guess is that it contained a comfortable, book-lined study situated in the quietest part of the house to which Shakespeare returned from London at every possible opportunity...' *Shakespeare: For All Time* (London: Macmillan, 2002), p. 37. Adopting a more London-centric approach, Peter Ackroyd proposes that Shakespeare 'wrote where he was, close to the theatre and close to the actors'. Ackroyd, *Shakespeare: the Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2005), p. 257.

<sup>xxix</sup> Lewis Theobald, Preface, *Works of Shakespeare: In Seven Volumes...* (London, 1733), 1: xiii-xiv, xii, xiv.

<sup>xxx</sup> Theobald, Preface, *Works of Shakespeare*, 1:iv.

<sup>xxxi</sup> For transcriptions of relevant legal documents see Halliwell-Phillipps, *Historical Account of New Place*, pp. 170-90.

<sup>xxxii</sup> If true, Garrick and Macklin were the first London actors to visit to Stratford since Betterton at the turn of the century.

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<sup>xxxiii</sup> Aaron Santesso, 'The Birth of the Birthplace: Bread Street and Literary Tourism before Stratford', *ELH* 71.2 (Summer 2004), pp. 377-403; quotation at p. 378.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Chris Rojek, 'Indexing, Dragging and the Social Constructions of Tourist Sights', in *Touring Cultures*, pp. 52-74; quotation at p. 53.

<sup>xxxv</sup> 'Pedigree in the hand of Robert Bell Wheler of the Shakespeare and Hart families of Stratford', 1813-14, Folger Shakespeare Library, ms S.b. 123.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Elizabeth Barnard executed a deed on 18 April 1653, confirmed subsequently in her will dated 29 January 1669, stipulating that New Place should be sold if she and her husband, Sir John, died without issue, as was the case (Halliwell-Phillipps, *Historical Account of New Place*, pp. 160-61, 163). The entail as defined in Shakespeare's will would not necessarily have ended on the death of Elizabeth Barnard without heirs. In that eventuality Shakespeare had asked that his estate pass to his unspecified 'right heirs'. The Harts may well have believed that this referred to them. I am grateful to Robert Bearman, former Head of Archives and Local Studies at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, for explaining to me this ambiguity in Shakespeare's will.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Shakespeare Hart's widow, Ann, bequeathed the Birthplace to George Hart in her will dated 24 April 1754: 'I Ann Hart...being Advanced in years but of Sound Mind and Understanding...[do] give and donate unto my kinsman George Hart...All those my several Messuages or Tenements Situate...in a Certain Street there called or known by the name of Henley Street...' Register of wills and probates of the parish of Stratford-upon-Avon, Peculiar, 1699-1849, Folger Shakespeare Library, ms W.b.272. The Harts began renting out the Birthplace in 1794 when they moved to Tewksbury.

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They sold it in 1806 to Thomas Court, whose widow lived there until her death in 1846. At an auction the following year the house was purchased for the nation. See Robert Bell Wheler, *An Historical Account of the Birth-Place of Shakespeare* (1824; Stratford-upon-Avon, 1863), pp. 11-15.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Interestingly, some modern biographers have proposed that Shakespeare, Anne Hathaway, and their children may well have lived in the Henley Street property until he left for London sometime in the late 1580s. See, for example, Edgar Fripp, *Shakespeare's Stratford* (London: Oxford UP, 1928), p. 23, and Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Ungentle Shakespeare: Scenes from his Life* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2001), p. 22.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Gastrell, quickly cast as the villain in the story, might have thought only that he was tearing down a decaying tree, one grown so large that it overshadowed the windows of his house, keeping out sunlight and warmth. See Halliwell-Phillipps, *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, 1:411-412. Whether Shakespeare himself actually planted the tree must remain a matter of speculation for there is no written evidence of the mulberry tree's existence prior to its being cut down in 1756.

<sup>xl</sup> Wheler, *History and Antiquities of Stratford-upon-Avon*, p. 136.

<sup>xli</sup> '[T]hen was built a handsome brick house. by. and now in possession of the Cloptons'. Vertue, quoted in British Library, MS Portland Loan 29/246, fol. 19. See also the testimony of the retired Stratford shoemaker Richard Grimmitt (b. 1682), 'Account of New Place by Joseph Greene, 1767', Folger Shakespeare Library, ms S.a.115.

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<sup>xlii</sup> Ivor John Carnegie Brown and George Fearon, *Amazing Monument: A Short History of The Shakespeare Industry* (London and Toronto: William Heinemann Ltd, 1939), p. 61.

<sup>xliii</sup> And so New Place began to be overlooked by pilgrims journeying to Stratford. In 1815, when Washington Irving visited, he marveled at the ‘extraordinary powers of self-multiplication’ enjoyed by Shakespeare’s felled mulberry tree but took no interest whatsoever in the place where the tree had been planted. Irving, *The Sketchbook* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1843), p. 304.

<sup>xliv</sup> ‘Extract of a Letter from a Lady on a Journey at Stratford upon Avon in Warwickshire’, *Gentleman’s Magazine* (1760), p. 308.

<sup>xlv</sup> ‘Letter from the Place of Shakespear’s Nativity’, *British Magazine, or Monthly Repository for Gentlemen and Ladies* 3 (1762), pp. 301-02.

<sup>xlvi</sup> ‘An old walnut-tree, which flourished before the door of Shakespeare’s father at Stratford upon Avon, at the birth of that poet, having been lately cut down, several gentlemen had images, resembling that in Westminster-abby, carved from it’. *The Annual Register...for the Year 1765* 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: J. Dodsley, 1784), p. 113. The tree could not have stood ‘before the door’ because the house abutted the pavement; it must have been planted in the back garden.

<sup>xlvii</sup> Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Thro’ the Whole Island of Great Britain...continued by the late Mr. Richardson...* 7<sup>th</sup> ed., 4 vols. (1724-27; London: J. Rivington et al, 1769), pp. 329-30.

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<sup>xlviii</sup> Richard Greene's original 1762 watercolor of the Birthplace, later owned by Halliwell-Phillipps, is now in the Folger Shakespeare Library (Art Vol. d75 [27c]). Greene was the brother of the headmaster of the Stratford grammar school.

<sup>xlix</sup> As Julia Thomas has shown, the Birthplace was reconstructed in the nineteenth century to make it look like the structure depicted in Greene's 1762 drawing, which was itself supposed to indicate what the house might have looked like in Shakespeare's time. See her essay 'Bringing Down the House: Restoring the Birthplace', in *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture* ed. Nicola J. Watson (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 73-83.

<sup>l</sup> 'The House in Stratford in which Shakspeare was born', B. Cole's engraving based upon Richard Greene's 1762 drawing, *Gentleman's Magazine* XXXIX (July 1769), p. 344-45. This is the earliest known reference to the 'undoubted tradition' that Shakespeare was born in the Henley Street property.

<sup>li</sup> Scholarship on the Jubilee is vast but two works are notable: Christian Deelman, *The Great Shakespeare Jubilee* (London: Michael Joseph, 1964) and Dobson's *The Making of the National Poet*.

<sup>lii</sup> David Garrick, *Ode upon Dedicating a Building and Erecting a Statue to Shakespeare, at Stratford Upon Avon* (London: T. Becket and P.A. De Hondt, 1769), p. 1; Bate, *Genius of Shakespeare*, p. 82.

<sup>liii</sup> James Boswell, 'A Letter from James Boswell, Esq., on Shakespeare's Jubilee at Stratford-upon-Avon', *London Magazine* (September 1769), p. 453.

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<sup>liv</sup> James Solas Dodd, ‘A Detail of the Whole Diversions of the Jubilee at Stratford Upon Avon’, in *Essays and Poems, Satirical, Political, Moral and Entertaining* (Cork: Eugene Swiney, 1770), p. 278.

<sup>lv</sup> By the end of the century, as is well known, open deception was being practiced in order to enhance the Birthplace’s claim to be Shakespeare’s authentic ancestral home, most notoriously by the poet and Stratford historian John Jordan (1746-1809), who in 1792 memorably duped Samuel Ireland, then preparing his *Picturesque Views on the Warwickshire Avon* (1795), into purchasing fraudulent relics. See, for example, Jordan’s *Original memoirs and historical accounts of the families of Shakespeare and Hart...with drawings of their dwelling houses, and coat of arms...* (1790; London: T. Richards, 1865).

<sup>lvi</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1984), p. 23.

<sup>lvii</sup> Samuel Vince, ‘A tour through part of England and North Wales in the summer of 1777’, Folger Shakespeare Library, ms M.a. 208, fol. 30. The manuscript once belonged to Halliwell-Phillipps. Seven years later, George Augustus Walpole’s published account was virtually the same, though he noted the poverty of Thomas Hart (1729-93) and his family: ‘Three doors from this inn [The White Lion] is the house in which Shakspere was born, and here is shewn his chair, in which he sat in the chimney-corner: it has been pretty much cut by different visitors, who have been desirous of preserving a relic of something belonging to the immortal bard. The people who live in the house say they are his next relations; they are poor...’ Walpole, *The new British traveller...* (London: Alex Hogg, 1784), p. 151.



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<sup>lviii</sup> Susan Bennett, 'Shakespeare on Vacation', in *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, eds. Barbara Hodgdon and W.B. Worthen (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 494-508; quotation at p. 498.

<sup>lix</sup> Bennett, *Performing Nostalgia: Shifting Shakespeare and the Contemporary past* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 17, 35.

<sup>lx</sup> Dennis Kennedy, 'Shakespeare and Cultural Tourism', *Theatre Journal* 50. 2 (May, 1998), pp. 175-188; quotation at p. 182.

<sup>lxi</sup> Kennedy, 'Shakespeare and Cultural Tourism', p. 186.

<sup>lxii</sup> F.J. Furnivall, 'Shakespeare's Will, Tomb and Descendants', in Furnivall and John Munro, *Shakespeare: Life and Work* (London: Cassell and Co Ltd, 1908), p. 208.

<sup>lxiii</sup> W.B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), p. 103.

<sup>lxiv</sup> See, for example, Pauline Kiernan, *Staging Shakespeare at the New Globe* (London: Macmillan, 1999) and Bridget Escolme, *Talking to the Audience: Shakespeare, Performance, Self* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2005).