

LOOKING FOR WILLIAM: BARDOLATROUS TOURISM

TURISMO LITERARIO: BUSCANDO EL BARDO DE AVON

Jennifer Ruiz-Morgan

University of Extremadura, Spain

jruizmorgan@unex.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2692-5979>

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Abstract

Literary tourism has recently emerged as a lively field of research, especially in nineteenth-century studies. As a cultural phenomenon it has proved to be particularly popular in the British Isles, where its origins can be traced back to the eighteenth century. This essay analyses literary tourism in relation to one of England's most renowned authors: Shakespeare. Garrick's 1769 Jubilee is explored to explain how this well-orchestrated commemorative event paved the way for the earliest pilgrimages to Stratford-upon-Avon. Secondly, the Shakespeare family homes, especially the Birthplace, are analysed as historical national icons that have elicited ideas of Englishness. Finally, there is a discussion on authenticity in relation to the Birthplace and The Globe. Using theoretical terminology coined by Lacan and Baudrillard, the essay seeks to demonstrate the inability to fully experience authenticity, as it is impossible to access a reality—Shakespeare's past—that has ceased to exist.

Keywords: Literary tourism, Shakespeare, Cultural Materialism, Cultural Studies, Lacan, Baudrillard

Resumen

Recientemente, el turismo literario ha emergido como un bullicioso campo de estudio, sobre todo entre estudiosos del siglo XIX. Entendido como fenómeno cultural, ha sido especialmente popular en las Islas Británicas, donde sus orígenes se remontan al siglo XVIII. El artículo analiza el turismo

literario en relación con uno de los autores ingleses de mayor renombre: Shakespeare. El Jubileo de Garrick de 1769 se examina para explicar cómo este evento conmemorativo, sumamente bien orquestado, dio pie a las primeras peregrinaciones a Stratford-upon-Avon. A continuación, se analizan las propiedades de los familiares de Shakespeare, especialmente el Birthplace, como iconos históricos y nacionales que generan ideas de Englishness. Finalmente, se debate la cuestión de autenticidad en relación con el Birthplace y el Globe Theatre. Empleando terminología de Lacan y Baudrillard, se pretende demostrar la incapacidad de experimentar la sensación de autenticidad, dado que es imposible acceder a una realidad—el pasado de Shakespeare—que ha dejado de existir.

Palabras clave: turismo literario, Shakespeare, materialismo cultural, estudios culturales, Lacan, Baudrillard

1. Introduction

Literary tourism understood as a cultural practice is a relatively recent phenomenon. Even though examples of tourists visiting locations associated with well-known writers can be traced back to the eighteenth century, it is often considered that it was not until the following century when literary tourism achieved its maximum refinement, by becoming an industry and establishing itself as a cultural commonplace. The United Kingdom is often regarded as the pioneer in this highly pleasant and popular literary practice. Indeed, this cultural phenomenon has been particularly popular in the British Isles where, as Watson quotes in her influential work *The Literary Tourist: Readers and Places in Romantic and Victorian Britain*: “Eighteenth-century culture saw the rise of this new phenomenon, and the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries its heyday” (5).

First and foremost, it is important to clarify what is understood by the concept ‘literary tourism.’ Devashish describes the term as follows: “literary tourism concerns itself with the places and events cited in fictional texts, as well as the life of the author” (256). Hence, this practice is not solely concerned with visiting places which appear in or which have inspired literary works, it also refers to visits made to locations strongly connected with the lives of writers. It is this second notion of literary tourism that is of interest to an essay that explores literary tourism, as a cultural phenomenon, in relation to the figure of William Shakespeare. His native town, the picturesque village of Stratford-upon-Avon, continues to attract, year after year, thousands of

curious travellers, but also quasi-religious devotees of the playwright, who wish to gain close access to the life of one of England's most renowned—yet highly enigmatic—literary figures.

The first aim of this essay is to explore the origins and gradual development of the phenomenon of literary tourism in Shakespeare's hometown: Stratford-upon-Avon. Another aim that this essay has is to explore how the Shakespearean properties located in Stratford have been employed to elicit and convey ideas of 'Englishness'. Finally, the essay also seeks to explore the problematic implications that the concept of 'authenticity' has in the literary tourist industry, by taking a closer look at the Birthplace and Shakespeare's Globe. Making reference to Lacan and to Baudrillard's theory of the three orders of simulation will reveal that there is no convincing manner of having access to the 'real' Shakespeare or to his reality (Homer; Lane).

2. Bardolatrous pilgrimage: Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon

Nowadays, the five properties connected with Shakespeare in his native hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon—the Birthplace, Anne Hathaway's Cottage, Hall's Croft, Nash's House, and Mary Arden's House—rank high in the list of most visited properties in Britain. The earliest visits to Stratford date back to the mid-eighteenth century. During this period, the type of tourism that existed in the town was dominated by forgery and the opportunism shown by local entrepreneurs, who initiated the tourist industry by selling relics and souvenirs from the wood of the mulberry tree which supposedly had been planted by Shakespeare himself at his own home (Holderness, *Cultural Shakespeare* 126-27). Nonetheless, it is the great Shakespearean actor David Garrick who is often credited with turning Stratford-upon-Avon into a must-see location after the organisation of the 1769 Jubilee, which was held in order to celebrate Shakespeare's 200th birthday (Watson, *Literary Tourist* 56).

Currently, tourists visiting Stratford would probably follow a biographical itinerary in their tour around Shakespeare's hometown and, thus, start their journey by visiting one of the most famous Shakespearean sites in Stratford: the Birthplace. This is the property located in Henley Street where the playwright is said to have been born. It was not until the 1769 Jubilee that the Birthplace gained importance since, as Virgili Viudes stresses, "Garrick's Jubilee placed the Birthplace as the principal site of Shakespearean memory in Stratford" (30). Garrick was the first to

incorporate the house where Shakespeare was born into the prototypical tourist itinerary. One of the activities included for the commemoration of Shakespeare's birthday was the organisation of a highly elaborate procession which was planned to stop at the Birthplace, so as to hang from the room regarded by Garrick as "the birthroom", an allegorical banner depicting the sun bursting out from behind the clouds to enlighten the world (Watson, "Shakespeare" 206). Even though the persistent rain forced Garrick to cancel the procession, the attempt to compare the Bard with the sun shows the Jubilee's efforts to elevate the status of Shakespeare by portraying him as the poet who illuminated the nation. This idealisation of the playwright displays a distinctive feature in the tourist industry related to Shakespeare, and that is the language of religious devotion used by some of the visitors that travel to Stratford. For instance, in 1793 the traveller Edward Daniel Clarke described his experience in Stratford employing images and expressions akin to religious worship: "STRATFORD! All hail to thee! When I tread thy hallowed walks; when I pass over the same mould that has been pressed by the feet of SHAKESPEARE, I feel inclined to kiss the earth itself" (cited in Watson, "Shakespeare" 208). Hence, at the time, many visits to Stratford could be considered examples of a literary pilgrimage, that is, a journey which models the pilgrimages that took place during the Middle Ages to visit the tombs of saints. It comes as no surprise, thus, that the eighteenth century in the British Isles coincides with the rise of bardolatry, described by Holderness as "a religion", characterised by "the worship of Shakespeare" (*Cultural Shakespeare* 126).

In the 1800s Victorians visiting the Birthplace—which functioned at the time both as an inn and as a butcher's shop—would have found themselves caught in the middle of a war between two widows: Widow Hornby, and a rival widow who was the legitimate owner of the property. The former had taken advantage of the Shakespeare trade by selling relics and pieces of a chair, which she claimed had belonged to the famous Swan of Avon until she was evicted by the true owner, who took over the bardolatrous trade (Holderness, *Cultural Shakespeare* 128-29). Once more, as it happened during the eighteenth century with the mulberry tree, tourism in Stratford was dominated by the interests of local inhabitants who were solely concerned with making a profit and, thus, often manipulated the internal appearance of the properties by adding so-called relics which apparently had belonged to Shakespeare.

One of the major attractions that the Birthplace has preserved up to this day is the famous window located in the room often referred to as the

birthroom. This window still holds on display the signatures of celebrated visitors, including, to name but a few: Lord Byron, Friedrich Schiller, Walter Scott, Robert Browning, and the Duke of Wellington. Nevertheless, Mary Hornby—the aforementioned Widow Hornby—chose to whitewash some of these early examples of graffiti (Zemgulyš 245-57). What would nowadays be viewed as a clear example of—historical—vandalism, in the past, as Reid explains, “was seen as a mark of pilgrimage or veneration” (2016). The act of leaving one’s personal mark at the place where Shakespeare was born is a clear indicator of the sacred status that the Birthplace had acquired since the final decades of the eighteenth century. Therefore, by writing their names, by leaving their own personal imprint, visitors were willingly associating themselves with a place that had achieved a mythical status, like Shakespeare himself.

The second most visited property in Stratford is Anne Hathaway’s Cottage in the village of Shottery. The thatched farmhouse did not feature as a prominent element in Garrick’s Jubilee, as the house was simply used as a location for horse-races (Watson, “Shakespeare” 211). As a matter of fact, it was not until the Victorians took an interest in the property that Anne Hathaway’s Cottage gained the importance that it has today. The Victorian public, with its strong emphasis on the idea of virtuous behaviour, was dissatisfied with the image of the adulterous man that the Sonnets offered, and thus turned to Anne’s Cottage in order to search for an image of, as Watson observes, “a sober and domestic Bard” (“Shakespeare” 211). The interest in connecting Shakespeare with images associated with domesticity can be found in literary works of the period in which Shakespeare features as a character. One example is Emma Severn’s three-volume novel *Anne Hathaway, or, Shakespeare in Love—1845—*, which depicts an ideal relationship between the famous writer and his wife Anne. As Watson highlights, the novel “expends a great deal of time and effort upon describing the cottage interiors” (“Shakespeare” 211). The English author William Howitt, who travelled to Stratford in 1839, exemplifies the nineteenth-century interest in pursuing the image of a domestic Shakespeare, as he decided not to visit the Birthplace in order to direct instead his steps towards Anne’s Cottage, which he found “authentic and unchanged, testimony to a newly domestic, marital, and retired Bard” (Watson, “Shakespeare” 212).

There are other Shakespearean properties which have elicited less interest amongst scholars analysing the phenomenon of Shakespearean tourism in Stratford. These houses are Nash’s House—the house of Thomas Nash and

Elizabeth Hall, Shakespeare's granddaughter—, Hall's Croft—the home of Dr. John Hall and Susanna, Shakespeare's daughter—, and Mary Arden's House—home of Shakespeare's mother—. Out of the three properties, the one which probably attracts a higher number of visitors is Nash's House, owing to the fact that it is situated next to New Place, the house bought by Shakespeare in 1597, and the one in which he lived permanently after his retirement. As it is well known, the playwright's last home no longer exists. In 1759 Reverend William Gastrell, tired of the increasing number of travellers who recurrently knocked on his door asking for permission to enter the house, demolished the property entirely. At the present, only the garden remains. It is worth highlighting that in the mid-eighteenth century, before its disappearance, New Place—rather than the Birthplace—was regarded by the English public as “our Shakespeare's House” (Schoch 188). There are different factors that explain why the house in which Shakespeare was born exercised at the time little interest among tourists. The Birthplace was the property of the descendants of Shakespeare's sister—not his own—, it had a gloomy appearance, and it was a house to which the writer probably had not returned after his marriage to Anne Hathaway (Schoch 188).

3. The properties understood as national icons

Visiting present-day Stratford still evokes a journey to a past time in the history of Britain. In the case of Shakespeare, the past could refer to either Elizabethan England or the Jacobean period. Nevertheless, as Calvo points out, Shakespeare is “often memorialized through his association with Elizabethan England and only rarely through his mature life as an artist in Jacobean London” (222). The fact that the vast majority of Shakespeare's monuments link the playwright with the reign of Elizabeth I evidences that history is a social construction, and that each nation decides which periods of their history they choose to highlight because they are worth remembering. Hence, in the case of the Bard, the British public prefers to connect their illustrious author with the Golden Age of the reign of Elizabeth I.

In an analysis of the phenomenon of literary tourism, it is useful to take into consideration Crang's conception of the industry as a semiotic system (111). This idea helps to understand how tourists and heritage managers such as the Birthplace Shakespeare Trust assign specific meanings to each of the properties. In the case of Shakespeare, these meanings inevitably have a dose of idealisation and nostalgia for the Golden Age of the Elizabethan Era. Indeed, since the eighteenth century, Shakespeare's homes—especially the

ones inhabited by the writer—have been regarded as emblems of a shared national identity that invokes a “traditional England”, what some critics have termed “Englishness”. No other property has attracted more interest than the Birthplace in terms of its conception as a national emblem. The significance that this building has had in shaping the English public’s identity is exemplified by David Garrick’s opinion of the Birthplace:

The humble shed, in which the immortal bard first drew that breath which gladdened all the isle, is still existing; and all who have a heart to feel, and a mind to admire the truth of nature and the splendor of genius, will rush thither to behold it, as a pilgrim would to the shrine of some beloved saint; will deem it holy ground, and dwell with sweet though pensive rapture on the natal habitation of the poet (cited in Holderness, *Cultural Shakespeare* 98).

Garrick’s words demonstrate the way in which the image of Shakespeare as the national poet, “the immortal bard”, is projected onto his childhood home which, in turn, also becomes a site that embodies England’s national identity. The Victorian period is of utter importance to fully understand why the Birthplace is regarded as an icon of England’s core identity. During the nineteenth century the rising number of Americans who travelled to Stratford was provoking the annoyance of several English citizens. Most tourists from the United States went to Shakespeare’s hometown because they considered that Britain’s history was also part of their history. Such was the interest that Shakespeare elicited at the time that some American citizens even donated money for memorial projects (Zemgulys 247). Nonetheless, as Zemgulys explains, “American appreciation was often understood not as Anglophilic featly but as bald acquisitiveness. Americans were depicted as aggressively and alarmingly repossessive of what is not (or no longer) theirs” (248). The increasing presence of Americans in Stratford reached its point of maximum tension when it was rumoured that an American businessman known as P. T. Barnum was planning to, as Lanier remarks, “buy the Birthplace at auction, ship it to America, and make it into a mobile tourist attraction” (152).

Barnum’s desire to purchase Shakespeare’s Birthplace for the American public arouse during his first European tour in 1844 (Adams 200). Nowadays, it sounds shocking that someone would want to remove the Birthplace from its original site, and rebuild it in The States so as to transform the building into a park attraction. Nevertheless, one ought to understand that Phineas Taylor Barnum was not merely a businessman, but also a showman, founder

of Barnum and Bailey Circus (Joynes). Barnum's role as showman explains his questionable attempt to turn the Birthplace into a public spectacle. The performative aspect of this highly ambitious enterprise is explained by Teague, who believes that the attempt to purchase the Birthplace was "a performance of national and social identity, as a well as a metaperformance in which Barnum calls attention to himself as the master showman who eschews the immortality of performance, simultaneously the trickster and the honest exhibitor" (51).

Above all, Barnum's intentions raised awareness amongst the Victorian public of the importance of the Birthplace as a crucial and valuable emblem of England's cultural heritage. Meetings were arranged to raise public funds. Concerns were voiced in the contemporary press. For instance, on 21 July 1847 the editor of *The Times* urged its readers to secure the property in order to "prevent [...] the house being moved from the country by passing into the hands of some foreign showman" (cited in Sturgess 185). Eventually, Barnum failed in his attempt to appropriate such an important English national icon, as he himself recorded in his autobiography, first published in 1855: "I obtained verbally through a friend the refusal of the house in which Shakespeare was born, [...] but the project leaked out, British pride was touched, and several English gentlemen interfered and purchased the premises for a Shakespeare Association" (cited in Sturgess 183). Indeed, as Barnum asserts, the final move to block his attempt was the foundation of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in September 1847. The fact that the fear of losing the Birthplace prompted the creation of the Trust clearly demonstrates that the building was, and still is, a powerful symbol of English national identity, as evidenced by the official website of the Trust, which affirms that "the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust was formed in 1847 following the purchase of Shakespeare's Birthplace as a national memorial".

One of the main reasons that explains why Shakespeare's Elizabethan England has been idealised is because it precedes the Industrial Revolution. The arrival of industrialisation has often been interpreted throughout history as a negative presence in English culture, since it disrupted the blissful tranquillity, and especially, the beauty of the past. An idealisation of the period prior to industrialisation also implies an idealised vision of the "common" people who lived during Shakespeare's time. Consequently, the population that inhabited England during the early modern period can be regarded as examples of what the Leavises called "organic folk communities". F. R. and Q. D. Leavis had an elitist and distorted perception of the British

culture that preceded the advent of the Industrial Revolution, owing to the fact that they believed that common people at the time— “country folk” —had a way of living that obeyed the natural rhythm of nature, and that the general public spent their time engaged in the Bible, country arts, traditional crafts, games and singing (Walton 33).

This idealisation can be said to have been projected onto the Shakespeare family homes and it explains, for instance, the pastoral and aesthetically pleasant setting surrounding Anne Hathaway’s Cottage. Since the eighteenth century, and partly motivated by the strong interest that the Romantics took in nature, the garden and the country house have been two quintessential features of rural England and of English culture in general. This fact explains one of the reasons why an American guidebook of the 1890s described Anne Hathaway’s Cottage as a “perfectly representative and thoroughly characteristic bit of genuine English rustic scenery” (Watson, “Shakespeare” 212). The current managers of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust have decorated the gardens with Tudor plants and traditional herbs to make it look “authentically” Elizabethan.

4. Literary tourism and the issue of authenticity

The notion of authenticity is a term that frequently appears in discussions on the industry of literary tourism. Travellers, especially those who regard themselves as literary pilgrims embarked on a journey towards a “sacred” place, would feel the need to visit locations connected with a particular writer in order to gain insight into the life of a particular author. This idea explains why in the late nineteenth century F. J. Furnivall affirmed, as is often quoted, that “Stratford will help you to understand Shakespeare” (cited in Holderness, *Cultural Shakespeare* 125). Nevertheless, this belief in the ability to fully understand Shakespeare from taking a tour around his hometown and family homes is not unique to the past nor to bardolatrous tourism. One need only take a look at literary tourism in relation to the figure of Jane Austen, another example of highly popular sights on the British literary tourist trail. In 2008 tour organiser Mary Lou White asserted the following: “the ideal Jane Austen tour is to see the places where she lived and the places she visited, the authentic places [...] The imagination is fuelled when you see the reality of what it was even though it was two hundred years before” (Adams et al. 97-98). The aforementioned words evidence the importance that heritage managers and tour managers attach to the act of visiting authentic locations, so that one can experience “the reality of what it was”.

Nonetheless, it is impossible to have actual access to a time that has already passed. Employing Jacques Lacan's terminology, in simplified terms, can be useful to understand this idea. One could argue that the realm of what the psychoanalyst calls the Real—in this case, Shakespeare's or Austen's time—is lost once that the individual enters into the realm of the Symbolic—the world we live in—and, automatically, is forced to submit to the law of language. In other words, Lacan would insist on the idea that there is no way that society can truly experience reality—whether it refers to the past or to the present—owing to the fact that everything is mediated through language. This argument can be applied to an analysis of literary tourism because travellers are constantly told that when they visit the homes of writers, they are being confronted with authenticity, that is, with the same reality that the writer would have experienced in the past. Nonetheless, it is not truly possible in the twenty-first century to experience Shakespeare's Elizabethan England or the Regency period—in the case of Austen—.

Regarding Shakespearean tourism, the family property which has attracted the highest amount of interest in terms of its value as an example of “authenticity” is the Birthplace since, after the unfortunate disappearance of New Place, it seems to be the only remaining location where one can feel as close as possible to the ‘real’ Shakespeare. As Ommundsen observes, “serious guides to Stratford all stress that most sites and stories are only ‘traditionally’ associated with the writer’s life, but that doesn’t prevent tour leaders from lowering their voices when they approach the ‘Birth Room’” (79). Showing reverential respect for the Bard together with adding a touch of mythical aura function as strategic and commercial strategies to attract a larger number of visitors since, as Holderness stresses, “tourists are still lured to Stratford by the deployment of an overtly religious language of pilgrimage and worship” (*Shakespeare Myth* 6).

Indeed, thousands of tourists, attracted by the mystic atmosphere which revolves around Stratford, travel to Shakespeare's hometown in an attempt to understand the author. This is definitely what Al Pacino and the scriptwriter Frederick Kimball had in mind when they visited the Birthplace, so as to comprehend *Richard III*, the play that they were producing back in 1996. As the documentary that they recorded evidences, the two Americans, especially Kimball, left the house feeling extremely disappointed after visiting the birth room and discovering that there was actually nothing inside it that allowed them to feel close to Shakespeare. The words that Kimball utters, immediately after entering the designated location, are the following: “You’ve got to

be kidding. Somehow it's a very very small bed. I was expecting to have an epiphany" (Al Pacino). Kimball's reaction probably resembles similar feelings experienced by present-day tourists eager to be taken back in time to Shakespeare's world once they enter into the place where Shakespeare first lived.

During the late Victorian period, observers were confronted with issues concerning the authenticity of the Birthplace, after the house had been renovated and turned into a museum. As Zemgulys explains: "with rooms dedicated to dubious relics and exhibited by fee-charging custodians, the Birthplace was felt to allow no room for any genuine act of pilgrimage and no room for the genuine Shakespeare" (247-48). As a result, during the Victorian and Edwardian periods, and partly motivated by the opportunism and lack of authenticity which characterised the Stratford tourist industry, the English public had the feeling that "the real Shakespeare, the real birthplace, the real English past, could not possibly be located in Stratford. [...] the Stratford Shakespeare was [...] far from gentlemanly ideal" (Zemgulys 246). Stratford was viewed simply as a market town and, hence, not as the ideal place to find the genius of one of England's greatest writers. This idea is exemplified in the Shakespeare Memorial located in Holy Trinity Church, which does not present the writer as a man of letters, but rather "as a contented, well-fed Jacobean landowner" (Calvo 216). In point of fact, Shakespeare's major achievements had taken place in London, where his plays were performed. In the nineteenth century, the city's importance was enhanced because London was the grand metropolis, the centre of the British Empire; consequently, it seemed reasonable to place and discover Shakespeare in London. According to Watson, the Victorians wanted to see Shakespeare in London as "a writer among writers, a writer moving in the highest circles" ("Shakespeare" 215).

Undoubtedly, the building situated in London which holds the strongest connection with the dramatist and, thus, is visited yearly by thousands of citizens from all over the world is The Globe. Amongst all the buildings associated with Shakespeare, The Globe is the one which poses the highest number of questions regarding the issue of authenticity, owing to the fact that it is a reconstruction of the original Globe, not even located at the original site where the former theatre stood. As a cultural artifact, the 1997 Globe must be considered a product of postmodern culture. As a matter of fact, it adjusts to Lane's definition of postmodern products: "a postmodern text, building, performance, and so on, is casually a mixture of styles, drawing upon different historical movements and features to produce a hybrid form"

(85). The current Globe construction was built based on available evidence obtained from the former Globe theatres erected in 1599 and 1614. Inevitably, its construction involved a blending of past and present, as it was built with present-day materials, but “using historical techniques of carpentry, finishing and thatching” (Lanier 161). In this sense, the building which currently stands overlooking the river Thames could be regarded as a hybrid form.

The American actor Sam Wanamaker—responsible for the project behind the reconstruction of Shakespeare’s Globe—defended the building’s status as a replica, in an interview conducted in January 1986 by Holderness: “To visit a replica or reconstruction is not quite the same, yet such places can acquire the patina of the original [...] and a reconstructed Globe, genuinely and carefully researched, and constructed with fidelity to the known facts, will absorb the spirit of the original theatre. People who come to it [...] will experience something of the past” (Shakespeare Myth 16-23). Wanamaker’s assertion that a tourist visiting the reconstructed Globe “will experience something of the past” reveals how difficult it is for a reconstruction to provide an accurate and relatively authentic image that will allow the visitor to experience a time period that no longer exists. The Globe can be considered an example of what Baudrillard calls third-order simulation or ‘hyperreal’. According to the French post-structuralist critic, third-order simulation produces “the generation by models of a real without origin or reality” (cited in Lane 86). Third-order simulation implies the loss of contact with reality. This loss of contact with a past reality, in this particular case, constitutes, to a certain extent, the experience that a twenty-first century observer can get, as the original Globe theatre has ceased to exist. Therefore, it is not possible to truly measure the degree of fidelity with the former early modern building. This idea evidences that the major consequence of ‘hyperreality’, the dominant form of postmodern cultures according to Baudrillard, is that the boundaries between reality and representation become blurred, and one is simply left with the simulacrum. One of Baudrillard’s main concerns with third-order simulation includes the fear that postmodern societies are constantly confronted with simulacra—imitations of reality—, and not with reality itself. Hyperreality also implies that “the model precedes the real” (Lane 86). This idea is precisely what comes to one’s mind from Wanamaker’s reference to the fact that the new reconstructed Globe “will absorb the spirit of the original theatre”. In other words, by trying to provide a ‘faithful’ reconstruction of the original Globe, Wanamaker intended visitors to forget about the inexistence of Shakespeare’s Renaissance theatre—‘the real’—, in

order to project onto the new building—‘the model’—the feeling of being present at Shakespeare’s original Globe.

5. Conclusions

The industry of literary tourism functions as a complex semiotic system, as such it allows tourists and heritage managers alike to attach different meanings to the various elements that are part of the tourist trail. This essay has focused on one particular instance of this thriving industry: bardolatrous tourism. As an example of a semiotic system, the relationship that exists between the signifier—the Shakespeare family homes—and the signified—the meanings assigned to the properties—is arbitrary; hence, the idealised images that the houses have evoked in the minds of curious beholders since the latter decades of the eighteenth century. The different properties located around Stratford-upon-Avon have often elicited, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, ideas of Englishness which, in turn, denote a deep nostalgia for a bygone era in the history of England, Shakespeare’s Elizabethan England. The property which throughout history has acquired the highest degree of prestige and affection amongst travellers is Shakespeare’s Birthplace. The old timber framed Tudor house can be considered a national icon because it is the place that gave birth to one of the nation’s most celebrated literary geniuses.

An intrinsic aspect of literary tourism is the desire that many travellers have to embark on such a journey, so as to gain insight into the life of a given author. In point of fact, there are—and have been—tourists that visit Stratford-upon-Avon with the deepest—perhaps even desperate—wish to gain access into the real and authentic Shakespeare. Nevertheless, does a visit to the Shakespeare family properties convey a feeling of truly experiencing authenticity? Do travellers truly get to experience Shakespeare’s reality? Heritage managers and tour guides often do insist on the “authentic” value of the properties. However, each of the Shakespeare family homes have undergone processes of reconstruction and/or restoration throughout time. This inevitably implies that none of these buildings have remained intact since the Tudor era. Less so in the case of the reconstructed Globe Theatre, a replica of an early modern building built as late as 1997. Taking into consideration Lacan’s and Baudrillard’s suggestions (cited in Homer; cited in Lane) on the impossibility to truly access the past, as pleasant an experience as it is, a visit to these quintessentially Shakespearean buildings cannot truly allow the viewer to genuinely and authentically experience Shakespeare’s reality, or to gain further insight into his persona.

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