Stepping on Butterflies: Shakespeare Tourism on the Screen

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Writer's Comment: *In my own mind, for a long time, the words "to be or not to be" or "the play's the thing" were not holy grails of English literature, but painful reminders of high school English class. Likewise, to me, Shakespeare was not a magnificent playwright, but the author of annoyingly difficult reading homework. I still remember trudging through* A Midsummer Night's Dream *during my sophomore year of high school and feeling as if I was reading instructions for a vacuum cleaner. I did not, however, have trouble following BBC's 2007* Doctor Who *episode, "The Shakespeare Code" — recognizing all the famous lines and witty puns as distinctly "Shakespeare." At the same time, a question began to form in my mind: What is "Shakespeare?" To me, this BBC Shakespeare was not the same Shakespeare I had met in high school English class. For one, this guy was funny! Five years after first viewing the episode, I sat in a college Shakespeare class and my original question resurfaced: What is "Shakespeare?" After watching "The Shakespeare Code" again (and again!), I realized that though the episode consistently quotes Shakespearean verse, it does not center around the playwright's work, but rather his life. In fact, the episode repeatedly attempts to connect Shakespeare's life with his works — a phenomenon that is unique to literary tourism. From here, I was able to form an answer to my initial question and investigate how this Shakespeare adaptation operates as an imperfect tourist site for its viewers. In other words, "The Shakespeare Code" encourages viewers to create "authentic" meaning by playing the "game" of Shakespeare tourism — a game that was, for me, far more intriguing than my vacuum cleaner reading homework.*

Instructor's Comment: *The course that lead to Annika's paper was Advanced Shakespeare, one of several classes in the English department designed to teach research skills to upper-level English majors. Like some others in the class, Annika had taken my Shakespeare lecture class earlier in her undergraduate career and was ready to bring her study of Shakespeare to the next level. Students worked throughout the quarter on reading challenging literary criticism and applying it to the plays assigned. The final paper asked students to craft their own topic, read extensive scholarship on that topic, and*

then produce a critical essay that responds to this literary critical field, making an intervention into it. Among the topics in Shakespeare criticism that we studied in the class was popular cultural appropriations of Shakespeare in a range of media, including popular films, television, and even board games. Annika remembered having seen an episode of the television series Doctor Who *that included Shakespeare references and decided to think about how the episode, called "The Shakespeare Code," participated in what some scholars have called Shakespop. Annika's essay makes a sophisticated contribution to scholarship on Shakespeare and commercialism in mass media culture, arguing that "The Shakespeare Code" operates as a Shakespeare tourist site not unlike the Shakespeare Birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon. Building elegantly on the work of scholars Richard Schoch, Dennis Kennedy, and others, she argues that the episode enables viewers to imagine themselves as producing "authentic" Shakespeare meanings while at the same time troubling viewers' tourist impulses.*

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In BBC's *Doctor Who* "The Shakespeare Code," almost 400 years back in time, the Doctor, an alien time traveler, and his companion, Martha Jones, attend an early modern performance of *Love's Labour's Lost* for a glimpse of the play's famous author. Watching from our own television sets, as if we too are in the crowd of Globe spectators, we see the playwright mount the stage. The Doctor turns to Martha and enthusiastically says, "Now we're going to hear him speak. Always, he chooses the best words. New, beautiful, brilliant words!" (Roberts). As the author walks towards the chanting crowd, we hold our breaths, anticipating the promised beautiful words and hear "Shut your big fat mouths!" Wait. What? Kennith Rothwell's question runs through our heads: "Is it Shakespeare?" (qtd. in Walker 82). And, if it is, what do we *do* with this Shakespeare? While several critics have produced different meanings for BBC's "The Shakespeare Code," I wish to investigate *how* contemporary viewers create these meanings.[1] Jeremy Lopez believes that "the meaning of a play is to a large degree always shaped by its audience," indicating that meaning for "The Shakespeare Code" originates in its viewership (51). Dennis Kennedy, however, argues that the spectator's search for meaning in performance is identical to how the tourist finds meaning in a historical site (175). I will demonstrate

[1] Two recent interpretations of the episode include Hector Kollias's reading of queer intervention and Sarah Annes Brown's reading of the "Bard effect" (163).

how "The Shakespeare Code," in the same manner, operates as a tourist site so that viewers can play tourist to develop authenticity and then produce authentic meanings. However, this process is complicated by the fact that the episode engages Shakespeare tourism on multiple levels. On one level, in the plot of "The Shakespeare Code," the Doctor and Martha demonstrate how to establish authenticity by playing the game of Shakespeare tourism. On another level, the historical ignorance in "The Shakespeare Code" complicates the viewer's ability to play tourist – indicating that the episode must function as an imperfect tourist site so that viewers can locate authentic meaning.

Shakespeare on Holiday: Tourism and the Bard

Shakespeare tourism survives by what Kennedy has coined the "Bardification of culture" – essentially a nostalgic understanding of the Shakespearian past (187). This widespread "Bardification" in Shakespeare tourism, I believe, involves two main disciplines that demonstrate how the tourist establishes authenticity to then develop authentic meaning. First, Shakespeare tourists regularly attempt to link the bard's fictional work with historic tourist sites, or what Richard Schoch classifies as an inclination to "blend [the author's] the life with the work" (Schoch 185). Schoch explains how many eighteenth century tourists visited New Place, Shakespeare's home in Stratford from 1597 until his death (183), because they believed, despite a lack of concrete evidence, that "New Place and its atmospheric environs" had inspired the playwright to write the ghost scene in *Hamlet* (185). In this way, fiction blurs with fact and historically accurate authenticity falls victim to nostalgia. This process is similarly played out in the second main discipline of Shakespeare tourism: commercialization. In his descriptions of mass-produced, romanticized drawings of Shakespeare's birthplace, Schoch concludes that even at the start of Shakespeare tourism, "authenticity [was] effectively displaced from the imperfect original to the improved mass-produced likeness" (191). The mulberry tree in front of New Place is another example of how commercialization in early Shakespeare tourism generated authenticity. The tree was popular because it was rumored to be planted by Shakespeare himself, and for forty-three years after the tree was cut down, supposedly authentic cuttings were sold to tourists as souvenirs (Lanier 147). In both examples, the drawings and the wood cuttings, authenticity was established through early modern commercialization

and mass production of nostalgic commodities. Just like blending "the life with the work," commercialization of the bard demonstrates that authenticity in tourism is established not by historical accuracy, but rather the tourist's nostalgic expectations. It is also significant to note that this negotiation of authenticity is prevalent in a third tourist process unique to early modern tourism – a preference for inaccurate historical sites. What Schoch describes as an eighteenth century "cult of ruin" would flock to "imperfect" or "incomplete" sites to reconstruct their own authentic versions of the site in their minds (187). For example, by the mid-eighteenth century, New Place had been so altered by previous owners that it "no longer resembled the Tudor house that Shakespeare knew" (Schoch 189). However, this fact mattered little to tourists who employed nostalgia to ignore inaccuracies and establish authenticity (Schoch 187). It was not until owner Francis Gastrell tore down New Place in 1759 that the site became too incomplete for even the most skilled tourist to remedy with nostalgia (Schoch 188-9).

According to Schoch, only practicing these two main disciplines of Shakespeare tourism – (1) linking text and place, and (2) commercializing the bard – would not be enough to fully achieve "authenticity," but instead, one more element is needed: sentiment. In his study of Shakespeare tourism, Schoch argues that the tourist must not only "play the game" of tourism, but play it well with appropriate nostalgic sentiment (182). Schoch recalls one eighteenth century tourist, Samuel Vince, who failed at playing the game. During his tour of Shakespeare's birthplace, Vince was shown an "old chair … in which the Poet used to sit" and saw that many tourists had cut off small pieces to keep as souvenirs. Vince too took a small piece, though he wrote that he did not feel any enthusiasm for the souvenir (Schoch 193-4). While Schoch underscores that Vince's disappointment in the birthplace suggests that this early modern tourist has failed at playing the game of tourism, Vince's failure can give us an idea of what playing the game entails and why Vince was so bad at it. First, Vince describes the old chair as a seat for the "Poet," which seems like an attempt to associate the life of the author with his work, but his inability to link the chair with any specific fictional text suggests that this attempt is a feeble one. Moreover, Vince participated in the tourist traditions of commercialization and commodification when he received a souvenir to take home, but it is clear that he received no satisfaction from it. What is even more prominent in Vince's narrative, however, is his

implication that the piece of chair *should* have helped him play the game by inspiring appropriate emotions. This implication, Schoch underscores, demonstrates the sentimental requirements of playing the game of tourism (194). In 1795, Samuel Ireland published a guidebook for eighteenth and nineteenth century tourists and instructed them in what Nicole Watson calls "appropriate tourist sentiment" (208). Both Vince's narrative and Ireland's guidebook indicate then that a Shakespeare tourist accessing an authentic Shakespearean past required the practice of proper nostalgic feeling. In Vince's failure to perform these feelings, Schoch suggests that authenticity requires the tourist to not only practice the two main disciplines of Shakespeare tourism, but to feel proper sentiment while doing so (193). The development of authentic meaning consequently is not dependent on how adequately one associates the author's work with a historical site or how frequently one participates in commercialization of that site, but on how enthusiastically one plays the game.

Let's Pretend: Playing the Game with *Doctor Who*

Two hundred and twelve years after Ireland published his guidebook, BBC aired "The Shakespeare Code," which appears to similarly instruct its television viewers in the "appropriate tourist sentiment" of playing the game. While Vince struggled to play the game, the Doctor and Martha have no trouble performing correct, nostalgic tourist sentiments that allow them to establish authenticity and authentic meanings. Watson describes tourism in Stratford as a pretend "tour through time between the Bard's birth and death" (200). The Doctor and Martha *literally* travel through time to Shakespearean London in 1599 where they consistently remind the episode's viewership that they are tourists. The episode opens with images of the Doctor's time machine traveling to a new tourist destination: early modern London. After the two arrive, the Doctor and Martha stay the night in an inn, and Martha even complains that she's forgotten her toothbrush. Furthermore, the two time travelers prove that they are tourists who can play the game of Shakespeare tourism. Using twenty-first century Shakespeare nostalgia, the Doctor and Martha continually and enthusiastically idolize the bard to demonstrate proper sentiment. Moments before Shakespeare mounts the stage at the Globe Theatre, the Doctor romanticizes Shakespeare's place in the history of humanity when he excitedly tells Martha, "Genius! *The* genius! This is the most human human there's ever been!" (Roberts). Moreover, after Shakespeare finally

comes into view, Martha proceeds to compare him with his portraits, showcasing her nostalgic, sentimental understanding of Shakespeare that allows her to successfully play the game of Shakespeare tourism.

With this appropriate nostalgic sentiment, the two time travelers are able to successfully practice the two main disciplines of Shakespeare tourism to establish authenticity and authentic meaning. The Doctor and Martha both regularly (1) associate text and place, and (2) commercialize their experiences, succeeding where Vince failed. In contrast to Vince's weak attempt to associate the old birthplace chair with "the Poet," the Doctor repeatedly and dramatically quotes Shakespearean verse to identify the bard's text with specific tourist locales and authenticate his experience. After the time travelers land in early modern London, the Doctor prepares to open the door to the time machine and tells Martha that outside the door is a "[brave] new world" (Roberts). Thus, before he and Martha have even stepped foot in Shakespearean London, they have already matched their tourist destination with the fiction of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. In a similar moment, the Doctor uses his knowledge of Shakespearean language to commodify the bard's verse. When the Doctor refers to an alien race called the "Sycorax," Shakespeare claims that he will "be having that off of him [the Doctor]," and the Doctor jokingly replies that he should receive a 10 percent commission (Roberts). The Doctor's plan to commodify Shakespeare's word "Sycorax" is just one of several attempts in which he participates in commercialization and commodification. Martha also attempts to commodify her touristic experience when she hears of an upcoming performance of *Love's Labour's Won*, the lost Shakespeare play. She enthusiastically asks the Doctor, "Have you got a mini-disk or something? We could tape it … Sell it when we get home" (Roberts). Although the Doctor immediately rejects this idea, Martha's desire to turn the legendary lost play into a commercialized souvenir represents tourist desires to commodify personal experiences of nostalgic Shakespeare tourism. Unlike Vince, who unenthusiastically takes a piece of Shakespeare's old chair, Martha eagerly attempts to create her own souvenir through which she can repeatedly use cultural nostalgia to idolize the bard and authenticate her Shakespeare experience. In this fashion, the Doctor and Martha both demonstrate to their viewership how to successfully play the game by using appropriate Shakespeare nostalgic sentiment to connect fictional texts with historical locations and commercialize their tourist experience. Thus, on one level, the

plotline of "The Shakespeare Code" teaches its viewers how to practice the two main disciplines of Shakespeare tourism to establish authenticity as a foundation for developing authentic meaning.

What's that doing there?: Resisting the Game with *Doctor Who*

On another level, however, the episode's historical ignorance defies cultural expectations and pushes the concept of authenticity to its limits, making it extremely difficult for viewers to play the game. In one analysis of "The Shakespeare Code," Hector Kollias notes that the episode's depiction of Shakespearean London suggests that BBC "writers clearly intended the audience to 'know their Shakespeare stuff'" (198). However, if "The Shakespeare Code" demands an audience that "knows their Shakespeare stuff," it is only so the episode can defy these nostalgic expectations with historical inaccuracies. For example, the Doctor and Martha's modern clothing and speech regularly remind viewers of the present.[2] When Martha first meets Shakespeare, the surprised playwright remarks, "Such unusual clothes. So fitted" (Roberts). Unsure of how to respond, Martha answers, "Um. Verily, forsooth, egads" (Roberts). Martha's unsuccessful attempt to properly excuse her modern clothing only emphasizes that she is outside of her time, wearing inappropriate clothes and speaking inappropriate English. As a result, Martha frequently disappoints viewers' nostalgic expectations for early modern London and disrupts the development of proper nostalgic sentiment. Similarly, time travel, witches, and magic insinuate further outrageous historical inaccuracies. In "The Shakespeare Code," three witches control characters with magic potions, spells, and magic poppets to open a portal on earth that will free their banished witch sisters. In one scene, Shakespeare inhales a magic potion that allows the witches to control his writing with a puppet-like poppet and alter the ending of *Love's Labour's Won*. The witches' magic both establishes a fantastical and unbelievable historical representation of Shakespeare's life that de-idolizes the bard and again disrupts the creation of appropriate sentiment. Unlike Martha and the Doctor's ceaseless praise of the famous playwright, the witches' puppet-master control of Shakespeare discredits nostalgic ideas of Shakespeare as a self-produced genius. Instead, the bard is putty in the hands of witches who mold his plays for their own purposes.

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[2] These reminders of the present contradict Douglas Lanier's belief that "Shakespeare tourism is a symbolic alternative to… the alienation and fragmentation … of postmodern life" (145).

The episode continues to de-idolize the playwright by dissociating Shakespeare's text from tourist sites. In an investigation of Shakespeare film adaptations, Elise Walker argues that while some films demonstrate a "nostalgic desire to claim the truth and authenticity attached to Shakespeare's language," others practice "textual infidelity" and purposefully defy this "nostalgic desire" (14-5). Likewise, the fictional histories in "The Shakespeare Code" contribute to the episode's "textual infidelity," distancing text from place. When Shakespeare haphazardly recites his famous "to be or not to be," the Doctor suggests that the bard write it down, but Shakespeare disagrees, believing the line is "a bit pretentious" (Roberts). In this way, the episode not only demands a culturally knowledgeable viewership that can identify Shakespearean verse, but also denies nostalgic expectations of this viewership by indicating that Shakespeare found what is arguably his most famous line "a bit pretentious." Thus, the paragon of Shakespearean verse is denied importance in the history of early modern London by the bard himself. Similarly, as he fights evil witches invading the Globe, Shakespeare repeats a *Harry Potter* quote he hears from the Doctor, again distancing his own Shakespearean text from its London home – the theatre. Instead, Shakespeare recites words that are neither his own nor from the early modern time period. The recurrent disassociation of text and location de-idolizes Shakespeare, debunking myths concerning the playwright's famous verse and equating him with modern authors like J.K. Rowling. In this manner, working against tourist viewers' nostalgic expectations, "The Shakespeare Code" pushes the limits of authenticity and resists playing the game.

Paradoxes, as well, muddle audiences' expectations for Shakespeare tourism and make it hard for viewers to play the game. When the Doctor and Martha first arrive in early modern London, Martha worries about "step[ping] on a butterfly" and changing the course of history (Roberts). A bit sarcastically, the Doctor responds that she should stay away from butterflies; however, throughout the episode, both the Doctor and Martha step on many butterflies. The two repeatedly contaminate the Shakespearean past with cultural knowledge, practices, and ideologies from the present – creating multiple paradoxes. For example, the Doctor's futuristic Shakespeare quotes that link text and place also create paradoxes that complicate our sense of authentic authorship. At one point, the Doctor exclaims that "All the world's a stage!" and Shakespeare responds

enthusiastically "I might use that!" (Roberts). In another scene, the Doctor shouts, "The play's the thing!" and, glancing at Shakespeare, adds, "Yes, you can have that" (Roberts). In both cases, these famous Shakespearean lines that the Doctor – and the episode's viewership – may associate with nostalgic Shakespeare tourism are paradoxically spoon-fed to the bard. Martha too practices nostalgic twenty-first century expectations as she and the Doctor applaud a performance of *Love's Labour's Lost* in the Globe. Excited to catch a glimpse of Shakespeare, Martha begins to shout "Author! Author!" and then turns to the Doctor and asks, "Do people shout that? Do they shout 'Author?'" Hearing the surrounding crowd begin to take up the chant of "Author," the Doctor responds, "they do now" (Roberts). As a result, Martha establishes another paradox: employing her own modern obsession with authorship to inspire an early modern obsession with authorship. In this manner, the Doctor and Martha use time travel to paradoxically redo history and impose their own expectations on early modern London to authenticate their Shakespeare tourist experience. However, the birth of these paradoxes complicates television viewers' ability to play the game of tourism by alerting the audience to gaping historical impossibilities – or rather some very smashed butterflies.

As "The Shakespeare Code" continues to resist playing the game, it becomes clear the adaptation's textual infidelity and paradoxical historical inaccuracies do not discredit but rather *encourage* the tourist to establish authenticity and authentic meaning. The imperfectness of the episode's representation of Shakespearean London aligns the sci-fi adaptation with Schoch's "imperfect" sites and therefore allows viewers to control the episode and create meaning. Schoch reminds us that "eighteenth-century … tourists often preferred sites that were incomplete and imperfect, because it empowered them to reconstruct the scene mentally and thereby control it" (187). Thus, like New Place, "The Shakespeare Code" purposefully deviates from seemingly accurate historical adaptations to identify itself as an imperfect tourist site. The episode incorporates time travel, modern clothing, contemporary language, witches, magic, paradoxes, and even quotes from *Harry Potter* to very noticeably stray from nostalgic expectations for Shakespeare tourism. As a result, these alterations equate television viewers with eighteenth-century tourists, challenging audience members to reconstruct the imperfect tourist site to play the game and create meaning. In her book on Shakespeare performance and nostalgia, Susan Bennett analyzes the Globe Theatre

as a reconstructed tourist site: "Lying somewhere between a restored building (restoration of a phantom past) and a souvenir (reconstruction of a myth), the Globe Theater Project, despite its own best aims, marks the discontinuities of history. It gives performance to what … we are obliged to invent" (Bennett 35). Bennett describes Globe tourism as both a "reconstruction" and a "restoration" of a nostalgic, "discontinuous" (or inaccurate) Shakespeare history that tourists must imagine. Similarly, viewers are called to imagine different histories in "The Shakespeare Code." The Doctor describes early modern London as an unstable Shakespeare tourist site that can be reconstructed. When the Doctor explains to Martha that the world might end if the witches are not stopped, Martha replies, "The world didn't end in 1599. It just didn't. Look at me — I'm living proof" (Roberts). The Doctor replies that history works like the film *Back to the Future* – time travel can rewrite the past to alter the future. Likewise, "The Shakespeare Code," as an imperfect tourist site,[3] can also be rewritten by modern-day touristic viewers who control the site, establish authenticity, and attach their own authentic meanings.

Last stop, gift shop: *Doctor Who* and Souvenirs

From the screen, Shakespeare adaptations like "The Shakespeare Code" not only function as incomplete tourist sites but incomplete souvenirs as well. Through the touristic processes of commercialization and commodification, "The Shakespeare Code" becomes a souvenir that further encourages viewers to control and create meaning. Schoch believes that commercialization presents tourists with more opportunities to create and personalize meanings (Schoch 197). He argues that the infamous mulberry in front of New Place "invit[ed] tourists to attribute meaning to it – and then to take a piece of that meaning home with them" – just like Martha's plan to record the early modern Globe performance of *Love's Labour's Won* and sell it back home in the twenty-first century (Schoch 187). In the same manner, the televised, episodic form of "The Shakespeare Code" allows touristic audience members to objectify it and consequently create and personalize meaning. Susan Stewart argues that

[3] It is significant, I believe, to note the similarities between the apocalyptic removal of the altered play *Love's Labour's Won* in "The Shakespeare Code" and Gastrell's destruction of New Place. Both incomplete sites seem to contemplate Walker's question of "textual infidelity" and "what's at stake in the process of claiming Shakespeare in … contemporary terms" (12). In both cases, episodic and historical, the warning is clear: over-alteration begets extermination.

"the restoration of the souvenir is a conservative idealization of the past … for the purposed of present ideology" (Stewart 150). Like Bennett's description of the Globe Theatre, Stewart uses the term "restoration" to describe the souvenir as another incomplete tourist site to which the tourist must establish authenticity and then create meaning. In the same way, "The Shakespeare Code" is mass-produced as a souvenir that allows viewers to attach meaning. Although the episode was originally broadcast in an expendable televised form – essentially a one-time tourist visit – modern technology has transformed many of these dispensable episodes into tangible, material commodities. Thus, similar to Martha's mini-disk that will help her to commodify the performance of *Love's Labour's Won*, consumers can own copies of "The Shakespeare Code" as a souvenir and repeatedly control and create authentic meanings for this imperfect site-souvenir in their own homes.[4] While Douglass Lanier fears the "dehumanizing effects of mass production" (Lanier 115) in the Shakespeare tourist industry, "The Shakespeare Code" demonstrates how commercialization and mass production make televised forms of Shakespeare tourism entirely personal. So personal, in fact, that the tourist does not even have to leave his or her couch.

It is from the couch then that meaning is born. The episode simultaneously operates on two levels, demonstrating how to play the game of Shakespeare tourism to its viewership and also complicating viewers' abilities to play the game. However, *because* "The Shakespeare Code" makes it hard for viewers to play the game, we become deeply aware that this sci-fi adaptation is imperfect. Consequently, this adaptation functions as an imperfect tourist site and souvenir where touristic viewers are allowed to control the site and create meaning. Lopez not only believes that the meaning of a play is constantly influenced by the viewer, but that "the meaning of Shakespeare is always in a state of flux" (50). "The Shakespeare Code" suggests that Lopez's "state of flux" is not limited to the stage, but that it also exists on the screen as touristic viewers continually produce and reproduce meanings for imperfect, butterfly-squishing adaptations.

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[4] In 2008, Olwen Terris predicted the divorce of Shakespeare and British television, believing that "[the] future for Shakespeare on British television is bleak" (Terris 212). On the contrary, television adaptations like "The Shakespeare Code" seem to ensure their own survival through the tourist processes of commercialization and commodification.

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