

## IMAGINING SHAKESPEARE'S WIFE

What has been the appeal of Anne Hathaway, both globally and temporally, over the past four hundred years? Why does she continue to be reinterpreted and reshaped? *Imagining Shakespeare's Wife* examines representations of Anne Hathaway, from the earliest depictions and details in the eighteenth century to contemporary portrayals in theatre, biographies, and novels. Residing in the nexus between Shakespeare's life and works, Anne Hathaway has been constructed to explain the women *in* the plays but also composed *from* the material in the plays. Presenting the very first cultural history of Anne Hathaway, Katherine West Scheil offers a richly original study that uncovers how the material circumstances of history affect the later reconstruction of lives.

Katherine West Scheil is Professor of English at the University of Minnesota. Her previous works have focused on the reception history of Shakespeare, and include *The Taste of the Town: Shakespearian Comedy and the Early Eighteenth-Century Theater* (2003), *Shakespeare/Adaptation/Modern Drama*, co-edited with Randall Martin (2011), and *She Hath Been Reading: Women and Shakespeare Clubs in America* (2012).

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-41669-6 — Imagining Shakespeare's Wife  
Katherine West Scheil  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

IMAGINING SHAKESPEARE'S  
WIFE

*The Afterlife of Anne Hathaway*



KATHERINE WEST SCHEIL

University of Minnesota



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-108-41669-6 — Imagining Shakespeare's Wife  
 Katherine West Scheil  
 Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India  
 79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.  
 It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of  
 education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
 Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108416696](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108416696)  
 DOI: 10.1017/9781108241724  
 © Katherine West Scheil 2018

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
 no reproduction of any part may take place without the written  
 permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2018

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd. Padstow Cornwall

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

NAMES: Scheil, Katherine West, 1966– author.

TITLE: Imagining Shakespeare's wife : the afterlife of Anne Hathaway / Katherine  
 West Scheil, University of Minnesota.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2018. |  
 Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2017061801 | ISBN 9781108416696 (alk. paper)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Hathaway, Anne, 1556?–1623. | Authors' spouses – England – Biography. |  
 Shakespeare, William, 1564–1616 – Marriage. | Shakespeare, William, 1564–1616 – Relations  
 with women. | Hathaway, Anne, 1556?–1623 – In literature.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC PR2906 .S34 2018 | DDC 822.3/3–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017061801>

ISBN 978-1-108-41669-6 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-40406-8 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of  
 URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication  
 and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain,  
 accurate or appropriate.

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	<i>page</i> vi
Acknowledgments	ix
Preface	xiii
PART I ESTABLISHING ANNE	I
1 Origins	3
2 Forging the Shakespeare Marriage: Anne Hathaway in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries	19
3 The Legacy of Anne Hathaway’s Cottage	48
PART II IMAGINING ANNE	89
Interlude: Fact and Fiction	91
4 “Fit to Marry”: Early Imaginary Annes	101
5 Dark Ladies and Faithful Wives: Post-World War II Imaginary Annes	137
6 Millennial Anne Hathaways and Women Audiences	170
Conclusion	202
Appendices	207
Notes	214
Bibliography	249
Index	263

ILLUSTRATIONS

1.1	Drawing of New Place by Phillip Watson. Used by permission of Phillip Watson.	page 11
1.2	Shakespeare family graves, Holy Trinity Church. Photo courtesy of David Scheil.	15
1.3	Grave of Anne Hathaway, Holy Trinity Church. Photo courtesy of David Scheil.	16
2.1	George Vertue's sketch of the Shakespeare monument, 1737. © The British Library Board. MS Portland Loan 29/246, p. 17.	20
2.2	The courting chair, from Samuel Ireland, <i>Picturesque Views on the Upper, or Warwickshire Avon</i> , 1795.	36
2.3	The courting chair, Anne Hathaway's Cottage. Image courtesy of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.	37
2.4	"Shakespeare's Monument," from Samuel Ireland, <i>Picturesque Views on the Upper, or Warwickshire Avon</i> , 1795. Image courtesy of the Folger Shakespeare Library.	38
2.5	William Henry Ireland, forged letter to Anne Hathaway, 1805. Image courtesy of the Folger Shakespeare Library.	40
2.6	Glass relic probably from New Place, reproduced in F. W. Fairholt, <i>The Home of Shakspeare</i> , 1848.	44
2.7	Casket, carved in an Elizabethan style, 1866. Image courtesy of the Folger Shakespeare Library.	45
3.1	"House at Shottery, in which Ann Hathaway the wife of Shakspeare resided," from Samuel Ireland, <i>Picturesque Views on the Upper, or Warwickshire Avon</i> , 1795. Image courtesy of the Folger Shakespeare Library.	52
3.2	Anne Hathaway's Cottage, mid- to late nineteenth century. Image courtesy of the Folger Shakespeare Library.	55
3.3	Charles Cattermole, <i>May Day Sports at Shottery</i> .	58
3.4	Illustration from James Walter, <i>Shakespeare's True Life</i> , 1890.	59

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS vii

3.5 James Leon Williams, “At Shottery Brook,” from <i>The Home and Haunts of Shakespeare</i> , 1892.	61
3.6 Mary Baker with the Hathaway family Bible. Image courtesy of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.	63
3.7 Thomas Brooks, <i>Shakespeare’s Courtship</i> , c. 1860. Image courtesy of the Folger Shakespeare Library.	66
3.8 Postcard of the old well, Anne Hathaway’s Cottage.	67
3.9 The Hathaway family Bible. Image courtesy of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.	68
3.10 Mary Baker at Anne Hathaway’s Cottage, 1896. Image courtesy of the Folger Shakespeare Library.	69
3.11 Postcard of Anne Hathaway’s Cottage, 1902.	72
3.12 Admission ticket to Anne Hathaway’s Cottage, 1898–1899. Image courtesy of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.	73
3.13 Postcard of Anne Hathaway’s Cottage, c. 1940, exterior.	77
3.14 Postcard of Anne Hathaway’s Cottage, c. 1940, interior.	78
3.15 American servicemen outside Anne Hathaway’s Cottage. Image courtesy of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.	79
3.16 <i>There’ll Always be an England</i> , by Hugh Charles and Ross Parker. Used with permission of Alfred Music.	82
3.17 Postcard of Anne Hathaway’s Cottage, Green Lake, Wisconsin.	85
3.18 Sign at Anne Hathaway’s Cottage, Asheville, North Carolina. Photo author’s own.	87
4.1 “Shakespeare with his family, at Stratford, reciting the tragedy of <i>Hamlet</i> ,” c. 1869. Image courtesy of the Folger Shakespeare Library.	112
4.2 Illustration of Anne Hathaway from James Walter, <i>Shakespeare’s True Life</i> , 1890.	113
4.3 Illustration from Sara Hawks Sterling, <i>Shakespeare’s Sweetheart</i> , 1905. Image courtesy of the Folger Shakespeare Library.	123
4.4 Cover and illustration from Anna Benneson McMahan, <i>Shakespeare’s Love Story</i> , 1909.	124
5.1 Cover of Anthony Burgess, <i>Nothing Like the Sun</i> , 1965 US edition. Used with permission of W.W. Norton.	141
6.1 Cover of Laurie Lawlor, <i>The Two Loves of Will Shakespeare</i> . Used with permission of Holiday House.	173
6.2 Cover of Carolyn Meyer, <i>Loving Will Shakespeare</i> . Used with permission of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.	177
6.3 Cover of Karen Harper, <i>Mistress Shakespeare</i> . Used with permission of Penguin Random House.	183
6.4 Cover of Arliss Ryan, <i>The Secret Confessions of Anne Shakespeare</i> . Used with permission of Penguin Random House.	189

6.5	Cathy Fuller as Anne Hathaway in <i>Shakespeare's Will</i> , directed by Bain Boehlke, Jungle Theatre, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Photo copyright Michal Daniel.	195
7.1	Elin Pritchard in <i>Hathaway – Eight Arias for a Bardic Life</i> , Helios Collective. Photo courtesy of Ella Marchment.	203
7.2	New Place display. Photo author's own.	205



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many colleagues and friends have been encouraging and influential in this book's fruition, and I am grateful for their support: Clara Calvo, Christy Desmet, Michael Dobson, Frances Dolan, Andy Elfenbein, Paul Franssen, Shirley Nelson Garner, Ton Hoenselaars, Graham Holderness, Peter Holland, Doug Lanier, Jill Levenson, Randall Martin, Nabil Matar, Ellen Messer-Davidow, Andrew Murphy, Lena Cowen Orlin, Julie Sanders, Robert Sawyer, J. B. Shank, Jim Shapiro, Monika Smialkowska, John Watkins, Nicola Watson, and Stanley Wells. I am especially grateful to Paul Edmondson, who has done so much to bring the world of Shakespeare's Stratford to life, and who has been an advocate and supporter for my work on Anne from the start. Ewan Fernie has offered encouragement and advice on multiple aspects of the project. This book has benefitted from the specific expertise of Robert Bearman on the Shakespeare family graves; Amanda Bevan on Shakespeare's will; Jacqueline Green on Anne Hathaway's Cottage; Jeffrey Kahan on the Irelands; Michael Lackey on biofiction; Marek Oziewicz on young adult literature; Peter Seary on Lewis Theobald's travels; Tom Reedy on William Dugdale; and Kate Rumbold on Garrick's Jubilee. M. J. Kidnie shares my enthusiasm for Carol Ann Duffy's poem about Anne Hathaway, among other mutual interests. My early modern graduate students at the University of Minnesota continue to inspire me — Amy Bolis, Ashley Campbell, Clara Biesel, Melissa Johnson, Marc Juberg, Jenna Lester, Caitlin McHugh, David Moberly, Katie Sisneros, and Amanda Taylor. Gale Mason-Chagil, Jackie Smith, and Tobi Tanzer have kept me grounded in the real world (and on the running path), and offered crucial advice on the cover.

The anonymous readers from Cambridge University Press made this a much better book than it was before their thoughtful feedback. I have also benefitted from the wisdom of two editors at Cambridge, Sarah Stanton and Emily Hockley, both of whom provided enthusiasm and guidance for

the project. Tim Mason has been invaluable for keeping track of multiple details and illustrations, and Sarah Lambert kept the production process moving forward on time.

Thanks to Ella Marchment from the Helios Collective for the photo from the production of *Hathaway*, and to Bea and Leah Koch of the Ripped Bodice bookstore for advice on women readers of historical fiction. Phillip Watson ([phillip.g.watson@me.com](mailto:phillip.g.watson@me.com)) generously provided his beautiful illustration of New Place for me to use in Chapter 1.

I owe a special gratitude to the staff at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust library – especially Maddie Cox, Mareike Doleschal, Hazel Gatford, Amy Hurst, and Julia Nottingham – who have tracked down countless documents and texts related to Anne Hathaway, and have answered too many queries to count. The Folger Shakespeare Library, The National Archives at Kew, and the British Library have provided exquisite spaces to work in and generous access to crucial materials. Wilson Library at the University of Minnesota, especially the Interlibrary Loan staff, supplied copious materials related to Anne from near and far.

Much of this book was written in the interstices of my two sons' lives, amid sports practices and games, school runs, and homework. The many youth baseball fields across small-town Minnesota, in between innings, provided green space to edit and contemplate issues related to this early modern woman who made her life on the other side of the world.

My husband Andy has made the journey from Stratford to Shutterbury with me more times than I can count, and still maintains enthusiasm about Anne Hathaway. I am grateful to him for his encouragement, his critical reading of the entire book, his ability to endure multiple conversations about Anne, and his unending confidence in me. My two sons, William and David, have grown up as this book was being written, and their sense of humor, their kindness, and their contagious energy make motherhood a complete joy for me. My parents, Bob and Jan West, and brother Jim West and family, have always been dedicated supporters of all of my endeavors, and I am so thankful for their love and encouragement. My in-laws, George and Jeanne Scheil, have likewise been caring and supportive.

This book benefited from much support at the University of Minnesota, including the Grant-in-Aid program, the Single Semester Leave program, the Institute for Advanced Study, and the Scholar of the College Award. Earlier versions of some material have been published in *The Shakespeare Circle: An Alternative Biography*, ed. Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells (Cambridge University Press, 2015); in *Celebrating Shakespeare: Commemoration and Cultural Memory*, ed. Coppélia Kahn and Clara Calvo (Cambridge University Press,

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

xi

2015); as “The Shakespeare Courtship in the Millennium,” in *Critical Survey: Special Issue on Shakespeare and Biography*, edited by Paul Edmondson and Paul Franssen 25.1 (2013), 6–18; “Filling in the ‘Wife-Shaped Void’: The Contemporary Afterlife of Anne Hathaway,” in *Shakespeare Survey* 63 (2010), 225–236; and “The Second Best Bed and the Legacy of Anne Hathaway,” in *Critical Survey* 21.3 (2009), 41–53.

The epitaph on Anne Hathaway’s grave in Holy Trinity Church, likely written by her daughter Susanna, immortalizes her as “so great a gift.” I can’t think of a better phrase to describe my own mother Janet West, to whom this book is dedicated, in honor of her steadfast loyalty, her warm friendship, and her supreme companionship.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-41669-6 — Imagining Shakespeare's Wife  
Katherine West Scheil  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

## PREFACE

Bill Cain's 2014 play *Equivocation* centers on the idea of Shakespeare writing a play about the 1605 Gunpowder Plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament and King James I. In the process of writing the play, Shakespeare discovers another side to the famous plot, and must decide whether he will tell the truth or not. The play takes place in London, and although Shakespeare's wife Anne Hathaway never appears, she is referred to several times. Early on, Shag (short for the alternate spelling of "Shakespeare") asks his daughter Judith how things are at home:

SHAG: (Offstage.) How's your mother?  
JUDITH: An embarrassment. Like my father.  
SHAG: (Offstage.) What's she up to these days?  
JUDITH: Seducing nineteen-year-olds.  
SHAG: (Offstage.) She sees it as her civic duty.

Later in the scene, when Shag gets irritated with Judith, he chastises her, "You're just like your mother. Why must you take up what others throw away?" Further on in the same scene, Shag asks Judith if she is interested in Sharpe, a member of his acting company. "You like him?" Shag asks. "Well, he hasn't slept with my mother. It's a start," responds Judith. Anne comes up one more time in a confrontation with Sir Robert Cecil, who threatens Shakespeare, "If, in the future, you wish to make people laugh, I suggest you leave my family alone and write a comedy about your dead son, your foolish father and your endlessly rutting wife."<sup>1</sup> In a play where Shakespeare's wife Anne Hathaway does not appear and has no bearing on the plot, she nevertheless hovers in the margins as a predatory and promiscuous woman, with an "endless" sexual appetite for young men.

*Equivocation* was developed as part of the New Works Festival and the Ojai Playwrights Conference at TheatreWorks in Palo Alto, California, produced

at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, subsequently widely performed, and generally well received. Charles Isherwood's review in the *New York Times* points out that Cain, who founded his own Shakespeare company in Boston, "brings a scholarly dedication and an impish humor to his portrait of history's most famous playwright at work."<sup>2</sup> The review in the *Washington Post* by Peter Marks notes that "Those with abundant passion for all things Bard-tastic may find much here to nod and chuckle over," and calls the play "catnip for iambic pentameter-parsers."<sup>3</sup> When the play was performed in Chicago, it was similarly praised for its "theatre nerd-friendly laughs" and "gags that will make Shakespearean experts and theater insiders feel as if their membership in that sophisticated club is being fully appreciated."<sup>4</sup> The *Chicago Tribune* reviewer observes that Cain "quite cleverly works Shakespeare's biography (such as it is) into his yarn." Not a single reviewer commented on the disparaging remarks about Shakespeare's wife – indeed, as only a point of reference and not a fully realized character, this Anne would not ordinarily merit attention in a review. Yet Cain's persistent off-hand derogatory comments about her are in some ways even more disturbing, since his play has been passed off as a work designed with "scholarly dedication" for "Shakespearean experts," and praised for its incorporation of Shakespeare biography. What would compel a contemporary playwright to create this version of Anne, and what needs does Cain's promiscuous Anne serve?

Cain's 2014 play, like the texts discussed throughout this book, raises questions about the long history of imagining Shakespeare's wife. Because a full archive does not survive for Anne (or even a modest archive), is she fair game, to be manipulated and exploited in order to create a particular Shakespeare? Given the fact that there is no way to retrieve an "original" or "real" Anne Hathaway, is there a responsibility to acknowledge the possible "Annes," or is her only purpose to shed light on her famous husband? Michael Lackey poses just such a question in his study of biographical novels: "Given that authors use the life of an actual historical figure in order to project their own vision, what kind of liberties can writers ethically take with their subject?"<sup>5</sup>

*Imagining Shakespeare's Wife* examines these representations of Anne Hathaway, from the earliest depictions and details in the eighteenth century, to contemporary portrayals in biographies of Shakespeare and in imaginative literature. Throughout this book, we will meet a widely divergent cast of characters, from an eighteenth-century teenager forging documents to please his father, to a twentieth-century young adult novelist writing primarily for young women, from Ivy League biographers to World War II soldiers.

No one Anne emerges from this mix, but instead, we will encounter a multitude of Annes, in conjunction with their equally fictive Shakespeares. Together, these Annes represent the many attempts to find the key to “unlock Shakespeare’s heart,” to paraphrase Wordsworth; to bring him into alignment with various social, political, and personal agendas; and to transform him from a Genius to a man.

As the following chapters will show, Anne’s afterlife is interwoven with the history of the Hathaway family, the survival and disappearance of physical spaces to represent stages in Shakespeare’s biography, and the desire for particular stories about Shakespeare. The afterlife of Anne Hathaway would not be the same if she had been allocated something else in her husband’s will instead of the famous “second best bed,” such as the “broad silver gilt bowl” that daughter Judith receives in Shakespeare’s will. Similarly, Anne might have been constructed differently if the Hathaway cottage had not survived, or had been purchased by a private individual instead of by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in 1892. These hypothetical scenarios explore a central tenet of this book – that the material circumstances of history (like beds, wills, and houses) affect the later reconstruction of lives. Most important, if not for her marriage to Shakespeare, Anne Hathaway would have suffered the same fate as her sisters, inheriting a sheep or a small dowry from her father, but not the second-best bed in one of the most famous wills in history.

The Annes that have been constructed over the last several hundred years are not just efforts to reconstruct the past; they are also commentaries on the present, and on how the past is filtered through contemporary mindsets and attitudes. As Alexa Alice Joubin and Elizabeth Rivlin point out, “the ethics of appropriation have a transformational force for the participating texts and textual agents.”<sup>6</sup> With regards to Anne, the fact that she is linked to Shakespeare, and to his cultural power, offers unusual opportunities for her to give voice to various positions; she has the potential to unleash, authorize, endorse, and promote a wide variety of conceptions of women, motherhood, and marriage. Some of the ways that Anne’s afterlife has taken shape have given credence to regressive views of shrewish controlling wives, lusty calculating paramours, or passive devotees who yearn for the return of Shakespeare to give their lives meaning. Indeed, many of the Annes discussed in this book are trapped forever in subservient roles, outshone by the glory of a famous husband, doomed to an afterlife of fantasy scenes in a picturesque English cottage, or cast in the role of angry wife. Others, though, take on Shakespeare, commandeering his plays, his genius, and even his fan base. Always constructed in relation to her famous husband and his canon of plays and poems, this most famous of literary wives provides a case study of how

ideas about women, wives, marriage, artistic inspiration, domesticity, and sexuality have shifted over the last few centuries.

\*\*\*

Henry James's story *The Birthplace* (1903) tells the story of the Gedges, who are brought from a "grey town-library" to take over as caretakers of Shakespeare's Birthplace in Stratford. As they are getting adjusted to life in the Birthplace, the Gedges experience "the wonder of fairly being housed with Him, of treading day and night in the footsteps He had worn, of touching the objects, or at all events the surfaces, the substances, over which His hands had played, which his arms, his shoulders had rubbed, of breathing the air – or something not too unlike it – in which His voice had sounded."<sup>7</sup> Breathing the same air, treading the same floors, touching the same objects – all characterize the desire to commune with Shakespeare, to locate his absent presence, to participate in what Brian Cummings calls "the cult of the past" by getting closer to Shakespeare.<sup>8</sup>

Over the last several centuries, many readers have mourned the absence of personal biographical details about Shakespeare. Nineteenth-century biographer James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps lamented that "the general desire to penetrate the mystery which surrounds the personal history of Shakespeare cannot be wholly gratified."<sup>9</sup> A similar yearning for "Shakespeare the man" animates the major twentieth-century archival discovery of Shakespeare's London life. Not long after James's story was published, American Charles William Wallace, along with his wife Hulda, uncovered Shakespeare's deposition in the Bellott–Mountjoy case in the Public Record Office, linking Shakespeare to the Huguenot Mountjoy family's rented London lodgings. After searching through countless documents, the Wallaces announced their discovery in 1910 not so much as factual details about Shakespeare's London life, but rather as an unearthing of "Shakespeare as a man among men. He is here as unmythical as the face that speaks living language to you across the table or up out of the jostling street. He is as real and as human as you and I who answer with word or touch or look." Wallace proclaimed his excitement to discover a Shakespeare "as the world would gladly know him, an unpretentious, sympathetic, thoroughly human Man." For Wallace, these documents have "lifted the veil for a moment and shown us a man among men, whom we call poet and seer and know as friend."<sup>10</sup> To know Shakespeare as a "man among men," to call him a "friend," and to see him in "the play of Everyday Life" necessitates a personal story – a life.

In the ongoing quest to discover a private side to Shakespeare, to make him a "man among men," Anne Hathaway offers a particular mode of access,



connected to sexual intimacy, reproduction, domesticity, and maternal power. Through imagining Shakespeare's relationship with his wife, he becomes more human, mortal, even fallible – a husband with a wife and children – the opposite of the celebrated immortal bard and genius that eighteenth-century actor-manager David Garrick envisioned. Likewise, Anne counteracts Goethe's 1796 description of Shakespeare as a "celestial genius, descending among men."<sup>11</sup> Anne works against this sanctioned version of Shakespeare the immortal poet, and as the mother of his children, she provides a personal story for him. These accoutrements of his private life, however, do not always blend with the agendas of biographers and other writers of Shakespeare's life. The presence of Anne Hathaway, Shakespeare's wife, interferes with the theory that Shakespeare's vigorous urban sex life was connected to, and even inspired his literary output. There is rarely a place for Anne in such narratives. She either needs to be consigned to a "disastrous mistake" which Shakespeare must escape, as in Stephen Greenblatt's biography *Will in the World* (2004), or cast as the shrewish nagging wife who makes Shakespeare miserable, as she is in the film and stage play *Shakespeare in Love* (1999; 2014). It is thus no surprise that Anne has not always been recognized, celebrated, and esteemed. Shakespeare's Stratford wife can humanize Shakespeare as a mortal man, but she can also make him conventional rather than subversive, and the domestic, maternal, familial associations that Anne represents have been both embraced and suppressed.

This study will show that as the desire to know Shakespeare developed, and especially to know more about his private life, so too did the body of literature featuring Anne Hathaway. And, because of the survival of Anne Hathaway's Cottage (discussed in Chapter 3) and the fact that she spent her life in Stratford, she is the closest link to Warwickshire, and thus to ideas of heritage, Englishness, homes, and haunts. One reaction to Grace Carlton's play *The Wooing of Anne Hathaway* (1938) evokes just such a sentiment. The reviewer in the *Poetry Review* notes that Carlton's "construction of the speculative life of Shakespeare is a very satisfying one," because she shows him as "an impetuous man of noble and tender impulses, driven into days of despair and recklessness by the blow of little Hamlet's [sic] death and returning to the harbour of wife and home and ambition of re-building New Place in the end. Anne is not the shrew but the patient loyal wife."<sup>12</sup>

Nineteenth-century writers and tourists created even more Annes who complemented romantic and domestic Shakespeares. One 1896 writer thought that by connecting Anne to William, "the man who is to move the whole world with his words," one could connect with a writer who "compresses the fervor of his soul into the story of his love."<sup>13</sup> In other

words, if one could get closer to Shakespeare's "love," it might offer access to his "soul."<sup>14</sup> Thomas De Quincey similarly described (in 1838–41) Shakespeare as one of "the great poets who have made themselves necessary to the human heart."<sup>15</sup> The history of Anne's afterlife is linked to the history of Shakespeare's changing reputation – as a national poet, godlike and ethereal; a boy husband; a writer "necessary to the human heart"; or a "bloke."<sup>16</sup>

In biographies of Shakespeare, Anne is an inescapable component, yet she has proven difficult to integrate into Shakespeare's life story. With no evidence that she ever spent time outside of Stratford, her position in the London phases of Shakespeare's life is unclear, but Shakespeare's presence in Stratford at the end of his life necessitates that biographers construct a narrative to explain the Shakespeare marriage. The story of Shakespeare the happily married man is often incompatible with the image of Shakespeare as the child of nature, the national poet, or the artist inspired by a robust London sex life. Overcoming, explaining, or obscuring Shakespeare's Shottery wife in order to produce a particular "Shakespeare" has been a long-standing enterprise. Anne's position as a touchstone for readers and audiences to connect with Shakespeare has given her a crucial part in the "involvement and affection and fidelity," as Deidre Shauna Lynch puts it, of literary love, particularly for Shakespeare.<sup>17</sup>

As part of what early biographer Nicholas Rowe called Shakespeare's "personal story," Anne Hathaway inhabits the space between Shakespeare's life and his works, constructed to explain the women *in* the plays but also frequently composed *from* the material in the plays as well. Creating an Anne out of Shakespeare's oeuvre, however, can be a very questionable enterprise. It is a truism that there are few happily married couples in his canon of plays; as one critic puts it, marriage in Shakespeare "isn't always a happy ending; sometimes it's an unhappy beginning."<sup>18</sup> The shortage of favorable wives in Shakespeare's works complicates the possible ways Anne is imagined; she is often cast in the role of a shrew or domineering, manipulative wife, like Kate or Lady Macbeth, but also has been fashioned as a strong-willed, independent-minded woman like Rosalind or Beatrice. Andrew Hadfield cautions against "anchor[ing] the works in the life, because not enough facts remain for us to be able to do this: we must use the works to explain the life, so that the two exist in a problematic symbiotic relationship."<sup>19</sup> However, we can never be certain which works, if any, Shakespeare wrote in reaction to, or inspired by, his wife. The Anne Hathaway narrator in Carol Ann Duffy's 1999 poem about Anne reflects that "Some nights, I dreamed he'd written

me,” and in a sense, Shakespeare *has* written her into existence, or at least, he has inspired the construction and memorialization of multiple Annes.<sup>20</sup>

*Imagining Shakespeare's Wife* outlines how readers, audiences, critics, biographers, novelists, and others who have been “drawn, moth-like, to the Shakespearean flame” (to use Samuel Schoenbaum’s phrase) have invented an “Anne Hathaway” to suit their own needs and desires, moving from speculation to certainty in pinning down various details about her life in their quest to invent a private life, a marriage and a wife for Shakespeare. These Annes often reflect the inadequacy of facts to address cultural needs and desires. As Andrew Hadfield puts it, Shakespeare “has had an eventful life invented for him,” and Anne Hathaway has often played a major role in these imagined life stories.<sup>21</sup> The central argument of this book is that the afterlife of Anne Hathaway is connected more with developments in literary criticism, in literary forms, and in ideological aims over the last three centuries, than with an accumulation of newly discovered factual evidence that eventually coalesces into a fully formed, definitive result. Although factual information has been available about Anne since the seventeenth century, she has been wildly exaggerated, outrageously degraded, enthusiastically embellished, and completely ignored. Throughout this book, I interrogate these various Annes, within their own historical contexts but also as texts that contribute to a collective sense of the possibilities for how Anne can be constructed. Organized chronologically, this book explores how and why Anne Hathaway has remained a significant figure of worldwide fascination and global obsession, analyzing why various populations and individuals have invested in, reimagined, reshaped, and even disregarded her for over three centuries.

Anne has not always had a place in Shakespeare’s biography, and the first part of this book, *Establishing Anne*, chronicles her emergence to a position in his life story. While I set out the basic details about her life in Chapter 1, the remaining chapters examine how these points emerged to provide a collective and at times selective portrait of her. As the first three chapters in this book will show, the circumstances that produced Anne Hathaway are entwined with the history of property, the history of families in Stratford, the increase in tourism, and the development of literary biography. Although I cover representative works about Anne Hathaway throughout this book, it would be impossible to include discussion of every work; readers are encouraged to consult the Appendices, where I provide a full list of imaginative works together with the documentary evidence about Anne.

In the century following Anne’s death, she was virtually absent from narratives about Shakespeare, in part because she had no place in conceptions

of Shakespeare as a poetic genius or as the national poet. Many of the earliest travelers to Stratford literally stood on Anne's grave in order to get a better view of her husband's monument in Holy Trinity Church, without acknowledging her existence, and some illustrators have even erased the personal epitaph on her grave in favor of enlarging Shakespeare's. Likewise, actor David Garrick deliberately suppressed knowledge of Anne for his Stratford Jubilee of 1769, choosing to emphasize Shakespeare's Warwickshire influences in the countryside itself but ignoring his country wife. Only in the marginal forms of William Henry Ireland's forgeries, and Charles Dibdin's incidental music, did Anne receive any extended treatment in the eighteenth century. Chapter 2 chronicles the emergence of Anne, from her overlooked grave of little interest, to a full-fledged character in stories of Shakespeare's courtship at the end of the nineteenth century, commanding her own three-volume novel to preserve the beauty and significance of her family home and its nationalistic resonances. As the most prominent woman in Shakespeare's life story, Anne's afterlife developed alongside women's investment in Shakespeare. It is no coincidence that interest in Anne increased in the second half of the nineteenth century, in large part due to the enthusiasm of Victorian women. "Shakespeare is both known and made known by the Victorian period and its women," as Gail Marshall notes.<sup>22</sup>

Literary tourism, combined with the efforts of the surviving Hathaway family members at Anne Hathaway's Cottage, promoted and circulated a pastoral, domestic version of Anne that invited personal involvement and intimacy for guests to her family's Shottery property as well as for a developing audience of women. Chapter 3 shows how the Hathaway family capitalized on the Cottage's place as a commemorative space, memorializing a romantic courtship, and later serving as an enduring symbol of British perseverance and stability in times of global turmoil.

The second part of this book, *Imagining Anne*, traces how Anne is constructed in various forms of fiction and biography, from the eighteenth century to the present. This section opens with a brief interlude where I discuss the relationship between literary biography and fiction. This nexus, in fact, is where this book began, with a classroom discussion about Stephen Greenblatt's biography *Will in the World* and Grace Tiffany's novel *Will*, both published in 2004. My students were surprised that a biographer would engage in just as much speculation as a novelist; I was intrigued by the conflicting portrayals of Anne in both works. In some ways, this book is the answer to our initial questions about why, how, and for whom Anne could be constructed in such divergent ways.

Chapter 4 looks at the vastly diverse and contradictory Annes in Shakespeare biographies from the eighteenth century until the end of World War II. The expanding fields of Shakespeare biography and Shakespeare biofiction in the second half of the twentieth century comprise Chapter 5, where Anne is given a major role well beyond her documented presence. In Chapter 6, I examine the millennial texts written largely by and for women readers and audiences, where Anne plays a major part in bringing Shakespeare into alignment with feminism and with a more general female readership, as part of the long-standing interest in Anne by women. While many of these works extend past the bounds of believability, they are crucial for keeping interpretive possibilities about Anne in play.

\*\*\*

It has been nearly fifty years since the publication of *Shakespeare's Lives* (1970; 1994), Samuel Schoenbaum's magisterial study of the people and processes behind the stories of Shakespeare's life. Inspired by Schoenbaum's work, I take up a narrower but no less important topic, looking at the lives of the woman closest to Shakespeare, and the only woman intimately linked to him for which there is documentary evidence – his own wife.

*Imagining Shakespeare's Wife* owes a debt to the growing field of Shakespeare's cultural afterlife, including such mainstays as Gary Taylor's *Reinventing Shakespeare* (1989); Michael Dobson's *The Making of the National Poet* (1992); Jonathan Bate's *The Genius of Shakespeare* (1997); and Jack Lynch's *Becoming Shakespeare* (2007). Other works that explore the cultural, literary, and historical genealogy of Stratford have influenced this study, including Julia Thomas's *Shakespeare's Shrine: The Bard's Birthplace and the Invention of Stratford upon Avon* (2012); Paul Edmondson's *Finding Shakespeare's New Place: An Archaeological Biography* (2016); and Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells's collection *The Shakespeare Circle: An Alternative Biography* (2015). Germaine Greer's biography of Anne Hathaway, *Shakespeare's Wife* (2007), came out early on in my work on Anne Hathaway. While Greer does not deal with Anne's afterlife, her concern to redeem Anne from the "traditional disparagement of the wife of the Man of the Millennium" was a consistent inspiration in the face of the frequently disturbing portrayals of Anne over the last several centuries.<sup>23</sup> Lena Cowen Orlin's essay "Shakespeare's Marriage" (2016) shares a commitment to reconsidering the vexing narratives about Shakespeare's marriage that have been "stubbornly resistant to change," especially in the twenty-first century.<sup>24</sup>

The other important historical woman in Shakespeare's life, Queen Elizabeth I, inspired several works that have been important to this book.

Helen Hackett's *Shakespeare and Elizabeth: The Meeting of Two Myths* (2009) provides an exemplary analysis for tracing the representation of literary and cultural myths through different periods, genres, and historical contexts. Similarly, Michael Dobson and Nicola J. Watson's *England's Elizabeth: An Afterlife in Fame and Fantasy* (2002) served as a model for this book, notably in their serious analysis of a wide variety of both scholarly and popular texts and in their appreciation of the complexities and complications of afterlives. Paul Franssen's excellent *Shakespeare's Literary Lives* (2016) demonstrates the wealth of rich analyses possible for Shakespeare's afterlife. Franssen observes that "constructions of Shakespeare's relations with Anne Hathaway" merit their own study, and *Imagining Shakespeare's Wife* fills this gap.<sup>25</sup> Ewan Fernie's inspiring *Shakespeare for Freedom* (2017) shares a conviction that Shakespeare matters in the contemporary world.

Consider two diametrically opposing views of Anne Hathaway. In one rendition, she is a loving, devoted wife who ran the Shakespeare household at New Place, embarked on a project to see her husband's plays gathered together in his memory in 1623 (the year of her death), and was immortalized in her epitaph as a caring mother. In another version, she is a disastrous mistake Shakespeare made in the heat of teenage lust, a woman he gladly left behind for a more glamorous life in London, who experienced a slow decline until her death in 1623, illiterate and unaware of her husband's literary output.<sup>26</sup> We have no way of knowing which of these versions is the closest to the historical Anne Hathaway. However, each time an Anne Hathaway is constructed, her creator makes a series of choices that have implications for the final product, and that reveal the current desires of readers, critics, and audiences for a version of Shakespeare's private life. Throughout *Imagining Shakespeare's Wife*, I am not making a case for a "correct" interpretation of Anne, or about the "true" Anne – such a claim, while tempting, would be impossible – but I *am* arguing that there needs to be more responsibility in how this malleable early modern woman has been made to serve various constructions of her famous husband with little regard for what's at stake. We can never recover the real Anne, but we should examine the motivations behind the ways she has been fashioned, and the implications of these aesthetic and historical choices.

When American clergyman Henry Ward Beecher visited Anne Hathaway's Cottage in 1887, he lamented that Anne "has left not a single record of herself, [but] she and her home are immortal, because hither came the lad Shakespeare, and she became his wife." He then declared, "This is my Anne Hathaway. Whether it was Shakespeare's, I find nothing in this cottage and these trees and verdant hedges to tell me."<sup>27</sup> Readers of this book may

notice the recurrence of the terms “likely,” “probable,” and “desirable,” all of which animate this study. Having spent a great deal of time immersed in the plethora of Annes that I chronicle in this book, I am acutely aware of my own desires about Anne — “my Anne Hathaway,” as Beecher puts it — to represent her fairly, to uncover the myths and misconceptions about her, and to bring to light the diverse Annes that have resonated with real lives for over three hundred years, even if they are at times unpalatable and unsettling. In the absence of a definitive (and unattainable) Anne, the more Anne is adapted, reshaped, and reworked, the better, for keeping alive the multifarious possible Annes and not allowing one narrow account to dominate. In Frank McGuinness’s play *Mutabilitie* (1997) the character of Shakespeare comments, “I do exist but not as you imagined.”<sup>28</sup> Likewise, we can never know what the historical Anne Hathaway was really like, but we can imagine — that’s what this book is about.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-41669-6 — Imagining Shakespeare's Wife  
Katherine West Scheil  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---