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**Statement on the Benefits of the  
Sir Stanley Wells Shakespeare Studentship**

As the recipient of a Sir Stanley Wells Shakespeare Studentship for Summer 2019, I would like to express my gratitude to the American Friends of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust for funding three weeks of research in the library and archives of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon. My time in Stratford, and the research I was able to conduct during my stay there, have proved extraordinarily helpful in making progress towards the completion of my dissertation and other scholarly projects.

I feel extremely fortunate to have met some of the numerous scholars and other Shakespeareans connected with the Birthplace Trust. The opportunity to receive research advice from world-class experts, including the Rev. Dr. Paul Edmondson and, of course, Prof. Sir Stanley Wells, afforded numerous insights into the field of Shakespeare studies, as well as several highly practical suggestions for my own work. I feel truly privileged to have discussed my research with both of these men. Additionally, the other visiting specialists and theatre practitioners who travelled to Stratford provided a chance to expand my sense of the possibilities modern Shakespearean performance. This was certainly the case with Dr. Dame Harriet Walter, whose talk on gender in modern Shakespeare productions challenged many of the easy assumptions we tend to make about casting Shakespeare today. Moreover, the other students who also received the Stanley Wells Fellowship this summer provided a small but strong research cohort; we supported each other's work through questions, encouragement, critical opinion, and practical advice, and communication between us remains ongoing.

In terms of the research itself, access to both the rare and modern collections of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust offered a unique aid to my ongoing study of early modern literature and culture. I look primarily at early modern reception of the middle ages – both what we might call “historical” works, as in

early modern printed chronicles, and “literary” works, as in Shakespeare’s history plays. The SBT’s collection of rare materials provided a fascinating window into how early modern thinkers engaged with their medieval past. To name one particularly generative example from the SBT’s collection: the early marginalia in a first edition of John Stow’s *Annals and General Chronicle of England* (1615) provided vivid insight into the ways that Shakespeare’s contemporaries interacted with books on English history, which both corresponds to and compliments Shakespeare’s own treatment of that same historical material in his plays. These marginalia are, of course, unique, since no two books ever have the same set of marginal notes, meaning that I could not have encountered this material anywhere other than Stratford.

In addition to these rare materials, as the home of the Royal Shakespeare Company’s archive, the SBT’s holdings provided me with some significant and rather surprising discoveries about the legacy of early English drama on the modern stage. Again, to name one example which is particularly relevant to my own research: The first chapter of my dissertation looks at a play which, as far as we know, has only ever been performed once, in 1538 – John Bale’s, *Kynge Johan*, an early precursor of Shakespeare’s own *King John*. Through access to the RSC’s archives, I was able to discover that several long passages from Bale’s play were incorporated into John Barton’s 1974 production of Shakespeare’s *King John*, making it perhaps only the second time since 1538 that Bale’s words were performed on a major English stage – even in this excerpted or abbreviated form. This discovery necessarily changes the scope of my focus, knowing that the performance history of this relatively overlooked early history play extends, in any form, into the twentieth century.

One final aspect of my experience which is difficult to quantify, but which I nevertheless feel is significant, is the sense of total immersion in the study of Shakespeare’s life, times, and legacy afforded by my time in the town of Stratford. The restored historical homes and public buildings relevant to Shakespeare’s life and career, the scholarly institutions active throughout the town, and the frequent repertory performances by the Royal Shakespeare Company, all combined to create a setting where the

legacies of late Tudor and early Stuart history and culture are very much alive and connected to our own lived moment. I am extremely grateful to the American Friends of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust for the chance to work and study in this environment.