

Balz Engler, "Shakespeare, Sculpture, and the Material Arts", *The Edinburgh Companion to Shakespeare and the Arts*, ed. Mark Thornton Burnett, Adrian Streete and Ramona Wray. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011. 435-44.

## Shakespeare, Sculpture, and the Material Arts

Sculptures, traditionally three-dimensional representations of human beings, have been popular in the history of Shakespeare reception. They usually show the writer himself, occasionally certain figures from his plays, and they do so in different sizes, from larger-than life to miniature knick-knacks, and in different materials, from marble and bronze to china and even Welsh coal. The knick-knack has been popular since the eighteenth century, in the shape of small statues, thimbles, wine-stoppers, tea-pots, and so on as they can be found today in Stratford souvenir shops; Batman, of course, used a switch hidden in a Shakespeare bust, to open the Batcave (copies continue to be available online). The following survey, however, will have to focus on public monuments, and it can only discuss some of them in an exemplary fashion. These monuments, which often served as models for smaller representations, can tell us a great deal about the cultural status of the person depicted by them. They do so if we do not simply consider them as aesthetic objects, but take into account their history and the place where they were erected.

In most respects a sculpture and a theatrical performance are opposites. In the theatre the presentation of a figure is transient, part of the flow of an action; with the sculpture it is fixed in place, and quasi permanent, though not as permanent, according to the debatable claim in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, as poetry: "Not marble nor the gilded monuments / Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme" (55, 1-2). Sculptures arrest the flow of time and freeze a person in a significant image; they call it back to life, as it were, at the same time as fixing it in *rigor mortis*., those who put up the sculpture publicly associate themselves with the person or the event commemorated. They are therefore important elements in a culture of memory. In Shakespeare's time sculptures appeared mainly on funerary monuments, as the many examples in English churches testify; and where monuments occur in Shakespeare's plays, on the scene or in the dialogue, they are always associated with the grave (e.g., in *Romeo and Juliet* 5.3.298-301, *Much Ado about*



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*public* monuments, public in several senses: in their function, in their location, and in being commissioned by public subscription. In the second half of the nineteenth century this led to a veritable monument-craze. Public spaces were adorned with the statues of historical personalities, statesmen, generals, poets, etc., but also allegorical figures, meant to represent the cultural and political values of the community (see Michalski, 1998).

An account of Shakespeare monuments has to begin in Stratford-upon-Avon. There is Shakespeare's grave in Holy Trinity church (between 1616 and 1623, of which more later). There is Thomas Banks' relief *The Apotheosis of Shakespeare*, originally at the entrance of Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery in London, commissioned in 1788 and moved to the garden of New Place in 1871, showing Shakespeare reclining on a rock between the admiring Dramatic Muse and the Genius of Painting. There is the American Fountain on the Market Square (1887), a strange neo-Gothic drinking fountain for cattle cum clock-tower, with inscriptions celebrating, as so often in Stratford, the brotherhood between the English and the Americans, offered by the Philadelphia newspaper tycoon George W. Childs. There is Lord Ronald Gower's Monument, now at Bridgefoot (1888), which shows Shakespeare sitting on a chair, holding a manuscript and a quill (since lost); the pedestal is surrounded by four figures from the plays, which also serve an allegorical purpose: Falstaff, standing for Comedy, Prince Hal, standing for History; and two figures representing Tragedy, Lady Macbeth and Hamlet (Kimberley, 1989). And among the many additional sculptures, the somewhat generic statue of a jester by James Butler (1994) at the end of Henley Street may be mentioned, which bears inscriptions from *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Hamlet*. Together with the buildings associated with Shakespeare, they mark off a precinct within which, even today, homage is done to Shakespeare by theatre-goers and tourists (Engler 1997, 344-56).

The oldest and most important sculpture is the Shakespeare monument on the wall of the chancel of Holy Trinity church, where Shakespeare is buried in front of the altar beside other members of his family. The arched niche contains the half-length limestone bust of Shakespeare, mouth slightly open, looking into the distance. His hands rest with pen and paper on a cushion before him. The bust is painted

in bright colours in the fashion of the period (in 1792 it was painted off-white, giving it a classical touch, then supposed to be the original colour, only to be painted again in 1861), Shakespeare's hair and beard are auburn, his eyes hazel, and he is wearing a scarlet doublet under a loose black gown. The bust by the London sculptor Gheerart Janssen is flanked by two black marble pillars supporting a cornice, on the edges of which two nude figures are seated on mounds, the one on the left carrying a spade, the one on the right with a skull and an inverted torch; they may represent labour and rest. Between them there is a square structure fronted by Shakespeare's coat of arms, and topped by another skull.

As the monument was erected not long after Shakespeare's death in 1616, we may assume that the bust shows Shakespeare as his contemporaries knew him. His somewhat rigid features (which led to the speculation that a death-mask served for a model) certainly do not agree with the image people came to associate with a natural genius; rather it shows the wealthy citizen that Shakespeare was after his return to Stratford. The iconographical type of the bust is that of a scholar or divine, according to Nikolaus Pevsner, and its expression has been variously described as that of a "self-satisfied pork-butcher" (John Dover Wilson) or a "self-satisfied school-master" (Nikolaus Pevsner). It is not surprising, therefore, that the likeness on the monument was replaced by other iconic images, and that the statues made in the eighteenth century only vaguely allude to it. Below the figure of Shakespeare, on a tablet, there are two inscriptions, one in Latin, the other in English; both celebrate Shakespeare as a dramatist, and the fact that his first name is not mentioned may itself be a sign of how well-known he had already become by then.

The need to commemorate Shakespeare publicly, in a fashion befitting his status, began to preoccupy Londoners soon after his death in 1616. This has resulted in several, usually undistinguished, monuments, stained glass windows, and memorial plaques. Here the focus will be on the monuments in Westminster Abbey (1741), and on Leicester Square (1874). One recent structure that would deserve discussion as a monument has to be dealt with elsewhere: the Globe theatre, which, when being reconstructed, was raised above its surroundings like a monument, put on a pedestal, as it were.

At the time of Shakespeare's death, Chaucer, Spenser and Beaumont had their monuments in Westminster Abbey already, because they were also buried there. The thought, however, that Shakespeare's grave should be moved there,

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or even more unusually, that a monument should be erected to him although he was not buried there, was new. But nothing came of such plans. Instead the Folio edition of his works (1623) presented itself as an alternative monument; as Ben Jonson writes in his prefatory verses:

My Shakespeare, rise; I will not lodge thee by  
Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lye  
A little further, to make thee a room:  
Thou art a Moniment without a tombe,  
And art alive still, while thy Booke doth liue,  
And we haue wits to read and praise to giue. (*Norton Shakespeare* 3351)

The monuments of Chaucer, Spenser and Beaumont were gradually joined by others, usually sponsored by wealthy admirers, among them those to Michael Drayton, John Dryden, Samuel Butler, Matthew Prior, John Gay, John Milton, and Nicholas Rowe. Not all of these writers were also buried in Westminster Abbey. Apparently beginning with Samuel Butler (1721) monuments were also erected to writers buried elsewhere, to mark their status in English literature. In 1734 it was suggested that the acting profession and theatre audiences should collect money for a Shakespeare monument, and the plan came to fruition in 1739. Its erection also had political implications. It was promoted by opponents of Walpole's corrupt regime; Shakespeare was claimed "as both a foe to tyranny and a genuinely national hero, above the reach of bribery or invidious patronage" (Dobson 1992, 138); it was, therefore, erected on public subscription and received the Latin inscription "Amor publicus posuit [the love of the public erected it]". While the design by William Kent and the sculpture by Peter Scheemakers is Palladian, the marble statue shows rococo features in the relaxed, somewhat theatrical manner Shakespeare stands there cross-legged, leaning on a pedestal. He supports his head on his left hand, on three Folio volumes, and pointing with his right hand to an open scroll. This scroll was at first left blank; the Dean of Westminster then had a conventional *memento mori* put there, a version of Prospero's speech in *The Tempest* 4.1.152-6: "The Clouds / The Gorgeous Palaces / The Solemn Temples / The Great Globe itself / Yea all which it Inherit / Shall Dissolve; / And like the baseless fabrick of a Vision / Leave not a wreck behind." By replacing Shakespeare's "this insubstantial pageant faded" in the penultimate line by words

from an earlier line (151), the words, now emphasizing transience, have been isolated from their context as a statement of general truth.

The statue presents Shakespeare not in a heroic pose, but as somebody very human turning towards the onlookers and drawing their attention to the words on the scroll. The head of the figure draws on all three likenesses then known, the bust at Holy Trinity in Stratford, the Droeshout and Chandos portraits. But as Erin C. Blake also notes in her chapter in this volume, it was the Chandos portrait, with its open collar, that best suited the tastes of those who were constructing him as a natural genius.

At the foot of the pedestal the three visible corners are decorated with the heads of Elizabeth I, Henry V, and Richard III. It is difficult to see what these figures have in common in relation to Shakespeare; it cannot be his biography or his achievement as a dramatist. Elizabeth, the queen of Shakespeare's youth, and Henry V, the successful warrior, may have been apposite at a moment when England was again going to war against France, but Richard III's presence is difficult to account for.

Soon the statue appeared on the stage in an entertainment at Goodman's Field, *Harlequin Student, or the Fall of Pantomime* by Garrick, and it became a popular icon for later representations, including china figurines. As Sidney Lee complained in 1906, this "set a bad pattern for statues of Shakespeare. Posterity came to invest the design with some measure of sanctity." (Lee, 1906, 216)]. As such it could serve those who wanted to enhance their status by associating themselves with Shakespeare.

This is borne out by the copy used in Leicester Square, and by the revised version Scheemaker made for Lord Pembroke at Wilton, a lead copy of which Garrick gave to the Stratford Corporation, and which now stands in a niche at the Town Hall. Garrick also had himself painted by Robert Edge Pine in front of it, reciting his own ode to Shakespeare. The one public open-air statue of Shakespeare in London today is in a small park on Leicester Square (1874), now aptly located in the centre of the entertainment district. Where the wide paths connecting the corners would intersect, there is a fountain, with Shakespeare on a high pedestal towering above it. The pedestal of the statue is decorated with four dolphins which, on occasion, may spout water into the basin of the fountain. Around it there is a round space where small plaques have been inserted indicating the distances to all the former colonies and dominions, suggesting the universal role that Shakespeare has acquired. Facing

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Shakespeare, and benevolently viewed from above by him, there is a bronze statue of Charlie Chaplin. An adaptation of the statue in the abbey, made of marble, was chosen, because it was recognizable by everybody at a glance. The prestige of Shakespeare was used to add dignity to the square. Here the figure points at the words "*There is no darkness but ignorance*", Feste's words to Malvolio in his dungeon (*Twelfth Night* 4.2.37-8). Again the words have been isolated from their context and reproduced as a statement of general truth, now expressing a Victorian belief in improvement.

Features of the Kent/Scheemakers sculpture are also to be found in another influential statue of 1758, by Louis-François Roubiliac (1702/5-62): Shakespeare's contemporary dress, his open cloak, his leaning against a pedestal, the hand supporting his chin. But Roubiliac's Shakespeare is holding a pen, like the figure in Stratford, and is shown in an altogether more pensive mood, the poet in the act of creation. But the familiarity so characteristic of the Scheemakers statue is also there, in the open buttons of his doublet which seems to be unable to contain his paunch. Garrick had this statue made for the Temple to Shakespeare in his own garden; he bequeathed it to the British Museum in 1779, where it can still be seen. Roubiliac was also the artist who created an influential bust of Shakespeare, which along with one by the French artist Emile Guillemin (1841-1907), is still reproduced and may be found on bookshelves in educated middle-class households all over the world.

Whereas the monuments in Holy Trinity church in Stratford and in Westminster Abbey may be understood as reminding people of Shakespeare and his achievement, the later monuments tend to work the other way round: they remind viewers of the association between a community and the famous dramatist. Monuments were erected all over the English-speaking world, emphasizing a shared culture. There were original monuments, for example, in Central Park, New York, by John Quincy Adams (1870), in Tower Grove Park, St. Louis, Missouri, by Ferdinand von Mueller (1878), in Lincoln Park, Chicago, by William Ordway Partridge (1894), at the Library of Congress in Washington by Frederick William MacMonnies (1896), in front of the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh by John Massey Rhind (1907), in Sydney, Australia, by Betram MacKenna (1926). Outside the English-speaking world, a statue by Paul Fournier

was erected in Paris (1888, commissioned by an Englishman and melted down in World War II). Here two monuments will be discussed in more detail, the one in Weimar, by Otto Lessing (1904), which specifically reflects what Shakespeare has meant to the Germans, and, perhaps surprisingly, the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC, a monument that combines all the functions so far mentioned.

It is no coincidence that the most important German Shakespeare monument is in Weimar (Engler 2002, 146-60), the city of the German classics Goethe and Schiller, the spiritual capital of the German nation, as it were. Weimar is full of monuments; the most prominent among them is the monumental one to Goethe and Schiller (1857) on the square in front of the Nationaltheater, to the authors who, as cultural heroes, played a crucial role in the unification of Germany; money for its erection was collected all over Germany. They are shown larger than life, confidently stepping forward like heroes.

In 1901 the Shakespeare-Gesellschaft informed of its plan to erect a Shakespeare monument. As with the Goethe-Schiller monument, the project was to be based on public subscription. It was to make evident “the veneration of the triumvirate Goethe-Schiller-Shakespeare by the German people”, in other words, to establish Shakespeare as an equal beside the German classics. The monument was to be erected opposite the one to Goethe and Schiller. But after lengthy debates, the view of the sculptor, Otto Lessing, won the day, who was of the opinion that large squares needed large monuments; “the monuments of princes and statesmen obviously fitted such squares; those of poets and artists a park”, classifying Shakespeare as a poet in the romantic tradition, and placing Goethe and Schiller among the princes and statesmen (Engler, 2002, 146-60). The contrast between them was made so stark as to contradict the original intentions of the project completely.

Lessing’s Shakespeare, unlike Goethe and Schiller, sits, lost in thought, holding a scroll, the attribute of the poet, in one hand, a rose in the other, the right arm supported, almost defiantly, on his hip. At his feet there are symbolic objects: a skull with a fool’s cap, a fool’s bauble, a dagger, and a laurel wreath. The figure shows Lessing’s own idea of the poet and his works rather than serving the purpose of reverence; his model was Prince Hal in Eastcheap as he had seen him in a production of *Henry IV, Part 1*. As the monument was to be placed in a park it was to show the poet as the writer of *A Midsummernight’s Dream*.



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The location of the monument in a park made sure that the problem of Shakespeare's place in the symbolic geography of Weimar did not come to rest; vandalism and the damage done to the marble by the fog rising from the nearby river may also have played a role. In 1950, finally, with Weimar in the socialist GDR, the Shakespeare monument was moved to a new place, beside the library in which Goethe had worked, with a view towards the Platz der Demokratie, closer to the market square, and in a symmetrical position to the newly erected Pushkin monument on the opposite side of the building. Now the monument was no longer to be understood as a sign of Germany's adoption of Shakespeare, but as an admonition that there should be a return to that openness toward things foreign that had once been characteristic of the Germans. The relation between the monument and the city was considered crucial rather than that to the other classics, and the closeness to the only other monument to a foreign poet at the time, the Russian Pushkin, was emphasized.

But in 1963, in time for the Shakespeare centenary in the following year, the monument was put back to its old place in the park, for which it had originally been conceived. The anniversary was celebrated in grand style in view of the important role that Shakespeare played in the cultural policies of the GDR: the head of state laid down a wreath. It was there again in 1990, after the collapse of the GDR, that Maik Hamburger, a man of the theatre and member of the board of the Gesellschaft, re-interpreted the figure, reminding his audience of the official pomp of 1964 and of the way Shakespeare was instrumentalized during the GDR period: "William would have greeted the claim that his visions were being realised in this country with that sceptical glance the sculptor Otto Lessing gave him *in effigie*."

The most splendid monument to Shakespeare outside England is certainly the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC (Engler, 1999), a huge white marble treasure chest in exquisite art déco style, raised above street-level on a pedestal, marked off by shrubbery, by a lawn in front of its main façade to the north, a small Elizabethan garden to the East, and a fountain in the West, towards the Capitol, showing Puck and his words „Lord, what fools these mortals be!“ (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 3.2.115). Between the two entrances of the building nine high rectangular windows are cut into its shiny surface, separated by flat pilas-

ters, without either base or capital. Above this middle section of the façade, where the classical arrangement would demand a sculptural frieze, there are inscriptions instead. The central one is from the First Folio: „HIS WIT CAN NO MORE LIE HID THEN IT COULD BE LOST. READE HIM THEREFORE: AND AGAINE AND AGAINE. John Heminge. Henrie Condell”. Strikingly, these inscriptions combine historical English spelling, Roman lettering, and, as a democratic gesture, an indication of their sources. Large, strongly sculpted reliefs instead appear below the windows, at eye level for the onlooker, depicting climactic scenes from nine Shakespeare plays, with the death of Julius Caesar in a central position. To the left there are scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (3.1), *Romeo and Juliet* (3.5), *The Merchant of Venice* (4.1), *Macbeth* (4.1), to the right *King Lear* (3.2), *Richard III* (3.1), *Hamlet* (3.4) and *1 Henry IV* (2.4).

The Folger was not originally conceived as the research library that it is now. Its founders, Henry Clay Folger and his wife Emily, first wanted it to be called the „Folger Shakespeare Memorial“, but then they felt that this name had inspired Philippe Cret, the architect, to propose too sombre a façade, and they eventually decided to call it „FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY“. The inclusion of their surname was never in doubt. The memorial was to be both to them and to Shakespeare. And indeed, at the eastern end of the reading room, their portraits are placed; and above them, in central position, there is a copy of the Shakespeare monument in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, and a plaque with the inscription, „To the Glory of William Shakespeare and the Greater Glory of God“, with the names and dates of the founders. Behind this plaque their ashes are immured.

The location of the memorial made it easy to give it a place in Washington's symbolic geography. In his address at Folger's funeral in 1930, William Slade, the first director of the library, observed:

[A] line drawn from the site of the Folger Shakespeare Memorial through the Capitol building and extended onward, will all but touch the monument to Washington and the memorial to Lincoln--the two Americans whose light also spreads across the world. (Slade, 1931, 41–2)

All three stand for union: Lincoln in the West „for the Union of the States as an enduring fact“, Washington for the foundation of the Federal Union, Shakespeare in the East for the transcendent unity that made it all possible, for „the

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age which produced a poetry that is capable of speaking to each successive age because its living content is itself the material of life" (Slade 1931, 42).

Unusually for a building of its kind, the Folger has two main entrances. Their symbolism is the same as the one Slade saw in the location of the Folger. The entry to the East is marked by the mask of tragedy, the one to the West by the mask of comedy. The east entrance leads to the Elizabethan Theatre and the Exhibition Gallery. The Theatre reconstructs the idea of an Elizabethan one, based on what was known when the theatre was planned in the late 1920s.

The Exhibition Gallery is a large long space between the two entrances. It combines simple square panelling in darkly varnished Appalachian oak, and a high, richly decorated Tudor-style plastered vault. The two ends of the hall again contrast two worlds. To the East, the mask of tragedy is to be found on the tiled floor, on the wall above the coat-of-arms of Queen Elizabeth I, and lines from Garrick's pantomime *Harlequin's Invasion* (1759), in which the Powers of Pantomime are finally overcome by Mount Parnassus, Shakespeare rises and Harlequin sinks, a moment celebrated in the final song, which starts with the lines quoted. In context the quotation may therefore be read as being critical of the English neglect of Shakespeare's serious art: „Thrice happy the nation that Shakespeare has charm'd./ More happy the bosoms his genius has warm'd! / Ye children of nature, of fashion and whim, / He painted you all, all join to praise him.“

To the West, there is the mask of comedy on the floor, the contemporary crest of the United States above, and the words of the American poet, essayist and drama critic William Winter (1836-1917), from his poem „At Shakespeare's Grave“: „There is not anything of human trial / That ever love deplored or sorrow knew, / No glad fulfilment and no sad denial / Beyond the pictured truth that Shakespeare drew.“ The arrangement of the Exhibition Gallery suggests a history, which takes us from East to West, like the symbolic geography of the capital, from England to the United States, from tragedy to comedy, from an old world to a new one, from the distant past, the periods of Elizabeth and Garrick, to the present (and future) of America, a history of progress. These contrasts and juxtapositions become crucial once we include the main reading room in our considera-

tions. Running parallel to the Exhibition Gallery, the main reading room is the heart of the Folger. It is a gigantic Tudor hall, which forms a complete contrast to the art déco exterior.

Several conflicting perspectives emerge: whereas the Exhibition Gallery looks from East to West, the perspective in the main reading room is clearly from West to East, towards the copy of the Stratford monument and the portraits and urns of the Folgers, from the modern world not simply back into history, but towards transcendental value offered by it. At the same time, the conflict between the Tudor reading room and the art déco façade—between inside and outside—remains unresolved. The Folgers wanted the scholars to be able to work in surroundings reminiscent of Shakespeare's England, whereas the architect saw the need to adapt the outside of the building to the classical style of its surroundings. But this only explains the conflicting intentions of those involved. As the exterior of the building and the interior of the main reading room, the container and its contents, now exist beside each other, their conflict marks both the attempt to appropriate Shakespeare in the idiom of imperial classicism and the impossibility of doing this in any way other than by ingesting it whole.

Today, there is an addition, the so-called new reading room, built in the early 1980s, which forms a striking contrast both to the old Tudor one just to the north of it and to the building's exterior. Its colours are simple white and sand, its shape based on rectangle and semi-circle. The barrel vault, defying the laws of gravity, hangs from the ceiling. From its edges and perforations indirect light streams into the room, creating a space of unearthly meditative beauty without obvious historical associations; where they are perceptible, they are to an idealised form of late eighteenth-century architecture, the period when Shakespeare acquired his universal role.

Strikingly, but not surprisingly, the American rhetoric of Shakespeare's universality, and paradoxically their special rights in him, resembled the one used in Germany for the same purpose before the war. As Slade suggestively remarked at Folger's funeral:

It was probably more by chance than by conscious direction that active operations looking to the construction of the Memorial building began on an Armistice Day. That anniversary is the annual reminder of the human kinship written large in Shakespeare's plays (Slade, 1931, 70).

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The Folger may not be a sculpture in the narrow sense defined at the beginning. But its sculpted exterior, its location, its association with a culture of memory, and the role ascribed to it, of connecting a community with a great personality, make it a perfect monument—even a monument in the Elizabethan sense if we consider the fact that the founders of the library are buried in it. Indeed, it is the connection between the Bard and the monument that ensures that any piece of Shakespearean sculpture, from the small tourist knick-knack to the Folger Shakespeare Library, is both an act of memorialisation and an aesthetic and ideological comment upon the multifarious cultural usages of "Shakespeare".

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