Shakespeare as Man and Monument in Two London Museum Exhibitions: Theatricality and the Interplay of Subject and Object in the National Portrait Gallery's *Searching for Shakespeare* (2006) and the British Museum's *Shakespeare: Staging the World* (2012)

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The National Portrait Gallery's *Searching for Shakespeare* in 2006[1] and *Shakespeare: Staging the World* at the British Museum in London in 2012,[2] invited visitors to make connections between surviving records of early modern material culture and the regard for and use of Shakespeare today. Each required the visitor to bring previous knowledge and past experience to bear, along with a willingness to create and acknowledge new layers of understanding prompted by these exhibitions. Each used very different curatorial strategies to skirt potentially dangerous receptive implications. Because this article's main interests are in the areas of overlap between artifact and performance, the greater weight of attention below falls to the exhibition at the British Museum.

Seven years ago, the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) shot straight at its viewers' desires to know more about Shakespeare's biography by bringing together available documentation from his life record. Last year, The British Museum presented over 190 objects from its own collection as well as 38 outside lenders that could easily have seemed to be unrelated cultural artifacts, from Africa to the New World and from ancient Rome to the

Searching for Shakespeare (2006) Museum Exhibition
Photo provided by National Portrait Gallery

Shakespeare: Staging the World (2012) Museum Exhibition
Photo provided by the British Museum

most recent productions by the Royal Shakespeare Company. Museum staff curated the exhibit with narrative information and "digital interventions" of excerpts from Shakespeare's plays performed by past and present actors from the Royal Shakespeare Company, which amplified the interdependence of Shakespeare's

oeuvre with the Empire that both fostered and benefitted from it.[3] Ultimately, both exhibitions embraced Shakespeare not only as a defining element of what it means to be English, but also as a synthesizing force in the development and influence of British culture within Western civilization. Beyond the differences in the missions and scopes of these exhibitions (one as portraiture and the other as cultural anthropology) is the way that the NPG offered a conventional museum display where the visitor-as-student was asked to gaze into static cases presenting evidence as if part of a legal argument. The exhibition avoided overt acts of interpretation or the performance of Shakespeare's drama. The British Museum more actively immersed the visitor along a circuitous path through time and place and more directly implicated the visitor in the worldly and temporal legacy of Shakespeare, Elizabethan theatre, and the British Empire. The exhibition provided a more sensory experience, one that embraced drama, performance, spectacle, and narrative in a way that was itself boldly theatrical.

The opposite would have been dangerous: The NPG would have been at odds with the mission, scope, and reception of its display if it had used theatricality in its "portrait" of Shakespeare. Conversely, the overt use of theatricality and performance by The British Museum safely softened what could have been a more exclusive, more colonial, "Rule-Britannia" celebration of empire. Indeed, if the *Searching for Shakespeare* exhibit had used obvious theatricality in its display, it would have risked making the exhibition less serious, more superficial, and appearing full of guesswork; it would have perhaps unintentionally, but certainly undesirably, amplified the "authorship question" by posing the possibility of "finding" the biography of Shakespeare (or some other contender) in authorial fancy of action and character contained in the plays and poetry. It would have given those involved in curating *Searching for Shakespeare* (such as Mark Rylance, associate advisor to the exhibition and Chair of the Shakespeare Authorship Trust) the power of interpreting the drama as part of the evidence offered by the exhibit, and could have skewed its mission toward finding the "true" poet in the drama.[4] Instead, the NPG exhibition stayed safely within its simpler approach, bringing together available documentary evidence (e.g., Shakespeare's last will and testament) to piece together a portrait of the playwright's biography.

The NPG's conventional display of artifacts, visual art, and documents was like walking into an archive collection of the source material of Samuel Schoenbaum's *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (1975).[5] It allowed the visitor to choose his or her own path through the exhibition's displays of documents, manuscripts, clothing, maps, and portraits. The visual spectacle of the exhibit was made up almost entirely of historical artifacts and by the people in the room navigating around each other, queuing to see popular displays, and politely sharing the space by moving on in a timely manner.

The companion book for *Searching for Shakespeare* likewise focused on biography in scholarly contributions from Stanley Wells, "Sweet Master Shakespeare 1564-1616"; James Shapiro, "Shakespeare's Professional World"; and Tarnya Cooper, "Silent Oratory: Portrait Painting in England around 1600."[6] The exhibition catalog was then divided into two sections, one for portraiture ("Shakespeare's Face, Likeness and Myth") and the other for artifacts that helped bring a narrative of his life together (The Early Years; Elizabethan Theatre; The Established Playwright; At Court; Poets and Playwrights: Shakespeare's Contemporaries; and Death and Legacy).[7] Anyone with more than a passing interest in Shakespeare would find portions of the catalog both obvious and thrilling: the parish register of Holy Trinity Church showing the baptism of daughter Susanna (1583); the Grant of Arms document (1595); the New Place contract (1597); first and early editions of the plays in print; the DeWitt drawing of the Swan interior (after Buchell, 1596-97); the "platt" (or plot) of *The Second Part of the Seven Deadly Sins* (c. 1592), complete with its square hole; the manuscript page and drawing of *Titus Andronicus* (1594); *The Book of Sir Thomas More* (c. 1592-1604), showing "Hand D"; the First Folio (1623); the first Royal Patent for the King's Men (1603); excavated items, including a bear skull found near the new Globe, along with buttons, pins, and an oak baluster from the Rose Theatre; and the last will and testament of William Shakespeare (1616). In keeping with its primary mission of exploring the art of portraiture, the National Portrait Gallery also brought together for the first time six available contested portraits of Shakespeare: The Chandos Portrait (c. 1600-1610), which was the first painting establishing the NPG in 1856 (150 years before this exhibition in

2006); the Grafton Portrait (1588); the Sanders Portrait (1603); the Droeshout engraving (1623); the Soest Portrait (1667); and the Flower Portrait (1820-40), as well as a plaster cast of the bust of Shakespeare near his tomb in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon.

To help the visitor place Shakespeare in his context and better populate the world where Shakespeare lived and worked, it also displayed several portraits of his contemporaries: Queen Elizabeth I; King James I; Henry Wriothesley; Robert Devereux; Ben Jonson; John Donne; Edward Alleyn; Richard Burbage; John Fletcher; Christopher Marlowe; Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford; and others.[8] The exhibition both questioned and proved what Shakespeare's life was like, what he did, when, and with whom. It put biographical record on display, including the mysterious portraits side-by-side, so that the visitor might discern a picture of the man, or at least a picture of the palette from which he or she might create a picture of the man.

The NPG exhibition was designed to transfer to the Yale Center for British Art (23 June to 17 September 2006), so architectural requirements were minimal, unintrusive, and not site-specific. The collection could have been presented with similar effect in nearly any large room. The British Museum exhibition, however, was designed specifically for its central rotunda and was timed to participate in the national celebrations of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the London 2012 Festival, the Summer Olympics, the Cultural Olympiad, and as part of the World Shakespeare Festival. Its mission was to provide "a unique insight into the emerging role of London as a world city, seen through the innovative perspective of Shakespeare's plays."[9] Exhibition designer, Alan Farlie, described his interdisciplinary strategy: "Our challenge was to blend the visual language of performance-based design with that of object-based exhibition design and to come up with something new and unexpected."[10] To accomplish this goal, he collaborated with Tom Piper, Associate Designer at the Royal Shakespeare Company. Together they transformed the Reading Room into an exhibition that was both museum display and theater, where the visitor played a number of active parts.

The unusual design and scope of *Shakespeare: Staging the World* evoked four categories of overt theatricality: 1) the Monumental:

the architecture and authority of The British Museum in its presentation of Shakespeare; 2) the Ephemeral: the temporal nature of performance in the video and audio recordings of actors from the Royal Shakespeare Company performing the drama; 3) the Conjectural: the mimetic theatricality of "make believe" (using contemporary events and people to tell stories "as if" particular things could happen within the world of a play) versus "make belief" (the use of drama and the performance of drama to define or reinforce the condition of the "real" world); and 4) the Political: the performance of power as seen in Elizabethan and Jacobean spectacle created for and demonstrating the role of the State.[11] All four categories of theatricality moved the visitor from passive learner about past events focused on finding a clearer perception of a single person (as in the NPG exhibition) to implicated participant—to inheritor of the rich theatrical and literary tradition and a part of the tradition's legacy in the social and cultural structures of the present.

The Monumental

While visitors approached the NPG exhibition through what seemed like a humble side-door of the National Gallery, the exhibition visitor's approach to the British Museum provided much more of a grand experience. After reaching the middle of the block on Great Russell Street, one passed through the imposing south-facing gates and across the British Museum's large plaza filled with visitors from all over the world. There were many layers of protection and reminders of occasion imposed by the architecture as the visitor moved toward the entrance to the 2012 Shakespeare exhibition: the visitor crossed the plaza, passed under the nineteenth-century pediment depicting *The Progress of Civilisation*, ascended the wide front stairs, moved through a double row of classical stone columns and through the stately doors of English oak. The visitor entered the vestibule, met one or two sets of security guards, and passed through an entrance hall dominated by a central, well-lit acrylic donation box holding a visible mound of foreign currency given in support of the Museum. This spot is a gathering place for people from around the world.

A bit further along, the visitor entered into sunlight again when he or she came to the Great Court with its now-iconic glass

roof designed by Sir Norman Foster in 1997. Many visitors were probably aware that just a short walk around to the left one could see the Rosetta Stone from Egypt and the Elgin Marbles, now renamed the Parthenon Marbles, from Athens. As of this writing, off to the right is a gallery housing many of the artifacts from British Museum Director Neil MacGregor's *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, including the oldest of the Museum's artifacts, the 1.8 million-year-old Olduvai Stone Chopping Tool. Straight ahead, and around to the right of the central rotunda, was the entrance to the *Shakespeare: Staging the World* exhibition, held in the very core of the complex. The British Museum is not about individual portraiture (indeed, it is hard to find a set of eyes to stare into). It is more broadly about civilization. It is about empire.

Once through the glass doors and into the small reception area of the exhibit, allowed entry by another set of security guards, and set up with an audio guide, the visitor was invited through the last doors to the exhibition space, housed in the former central Reading Room of the old British Library. The exhibition visitor was segregated from others in the museum upon entering a dark hallway with black walls, ceiling, and floor, very much like a backstage area of a modern theatre space. On the carpeted floor, one could no longer hear one's footfalls. It was quickly apparent, and perhaps somewhat disorienting, to be primed for the interior space of the exhibition by passing through the transitional space from "out there" to "in here." The first presentation the visitor encountered once inside the exhibition was an audio recording of an audience as it arrived for a performance of *Twelfth Night* at the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) in Stratford-upon-Avon on 15 May 2012. This entrance and recording implicated the visitor in its action, though it was unclear whether one was to join in with this audience or about to walk onstage in front of it. The exhibition entrance seemed familiar from art installations figured as movement from darkness into light, and seemed to suggest as a part of its framing that "all the world's a stage," and that all stories are performances.[12] The exhibition's entrance suggested a theatrical event created for and including its visitors.

Unlike the NPG's open layout of documentary displays, upon entry into the British Museum exhibition, there was a path through a series of specially defined galleries and the visitor was to follow

it. The weight of Empire surrounded the visitor; the only color visible was in the emergency exit lights, the dim glow of the audio guide, and the gilt and mahogany leather-bound books one could see lining the circular walls of the old British Library above. The curving hallway with overhanging library walkway and murmuring audience from the RSC on the accompanying soundtrack made the early part of the journey much like the trek to find one's seat in one of the upper galleries at the new Globe.[13] And then one heard Neil MacGregor's voice saying that since Shakespeare's theatre "is for *everyone* about *everything*, it is no accident he called his theater The Globe" (emphasis MacGregor's).[14]

The exhibition did some things that are obvious: it was framed around the questions of both how the British Empire was made possible by Shakespeare and how Shakespeare's career was made possible by burgeoning empire. In his forward to the exhibition's companion book, Neil MacGregor describes how "the professional theatre was a new phenomenon in Shakespeare's time, the first mass medium for the presentation of the cultures of the world to a wide public," and that "in Shakespeare's time the globe was brought to life on a bare platform of the Globe Theatre in Southwark."[15]

In keeping with the British Museum's wider cultural focus, the visitor was invited by curators Jonathan Bate and Dora Thornton to think generally about life in the country, not specifically about Shakespeare's life in the country: "Our approach . . . is new and distinctive: through a series of case studies, focused on a wide range of locations, cultures and themes, we create a dialogue between Shakespeare's imaginary worlds and the material objects of the real world of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. . . . Both Shakespeare and his world are seen anew when we use objects to illuminate dramatic texts and dramatic texts to illuminate objects."[16]

MacGregor provided an illuminating example of the interplay in this exhibition between objects, texts, performative events and understandings: "To look at a woodcut of a Jewish household in Venice and a sixteenth-century Caribbean wood carving of a spirit imprisoned in a tree and a pack of playing cards in which Cleopatra and Queen Elizabethan appear side-by-side is to be given a new historical and intellectual perspective on the characters of Shylock,

Ariel and Cleopatra. The journey through our exhibition opens up the diverse cultures of the early modern world as it stood on the threshold of globalization."[17]

In this way, the exhibition used artifact to inform the drama and performance, and the drama and performance to inform the artifact. The visitor was implicated as inheritor of the far-reaching scope of the story and storytelling, partly defined by the relationship of Shakespeare and his drama to the world in which he lived.

The Ephemeral

The first and last performances selected for the exhibition were obvious choices: After leaving the RSC *Twelfth Night* audience in the hall behind, the visitor was welcomed by the consummately theatrical, even meta-theatrical prologue from *Henry V*:

> O for a muse of fire, that would ascend
> The brightest heaven of invention:
> A kingdom for a stage, princes to act,
> And monarchs to behold the swelling scene.
> . . . Can this cock-pit hold
> The vasty fields of France? Or may we cram
> Within this wooden O the very casques
> That did affright the air at Agincourt?
> O pardon: since a crookèd figure may
> Attest in little place a million,
> And let us, ciphers to this great account,
> On your imaginary forces work. (1.1.1-4, 11-18)

The passage invited the visitor to use his or her imagination in a way similar to how Shakespeare asked his audience to imagine the action on stage in the theater. The passage primed exhibition visitors to fill in the gaps between event and memory through reading the performances and artifacts displayed.

At the end of the exhibition Sir Ian McKellen's dulcet and assured performance of Prospero redelivered the visitor to the everyday world:

> Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
> Are melted into air, into thin air;
> And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,

The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep. (4.1.148-58)

The Conjectural

Between these opening and closing selections from *Henry V* and *The Tempest*, the exhibition used performance in each of eight galleries to show how Shakespeare found inspiration from the real world to inform the plays ("make believe") and how the plays defined and reinforced desirable cultural and political understandings or expectations of that world ("make belief"). Richard Schechner describes these two aspects of mimesis: "Make believe" in performance "maintain[s] a clearly marked boundary between the world of the performance and everyday reality," with the spectator knowing that the actor's reality is not the character's reality. "Make belief" is where performances "intentionally blur that boundary" in order to create or reinforce an ideology of how the world works, or how it should work.[18] Schechner describes the distinction thus: "In make believe performances, the spectators more or less know that what they are witnessing is not really real; that the social and personal worlds of the characters are not the worlds of the performers. Or, to put it in a few words, Juliet's world is not the same as the world of the actress (or actor) who plays her. In make belief performances, there is an intentional blurring of the boundary between what is fictionalized, constructed, made to order and what might be actually real."[19]

The Museum presented a special interplay of historical record, historical artifact, and dramatic performance as a symbiosis using both "make believe" and "make belief." It associated the historical accounts of how real people behaved for real effect with dramatic excerpts from Shakespeare's drama, and presented both alongside preserved artifacts from the time and place described in the plays. The convergence of performance with historical objects created a many-layered receptive effect for its subject that would have been difficult to achieve in a more conventional museum display.[20]

To make the case that Shakespeare's drama helped define the historical record and the dominating narrative woven by those in power, the exhibition created a performance by Geoffrey Streatfield of the "St Crispin's Day" speech from *Henry V* (1599) in conjunction with a display of the King's funerary "achievements" (shield, helmet, and saddle) from the funeral procession of 1422. Streatfield, wearing a t-shirt, not clothing or costume from Henry's time, his upper body projected on the wall above the historical artifacts, delivered the famous speech as if he were playing to visitors in the gallery as his "band of brothers." Simply, Streatfield was playing Henry V ("make believe"), and through the performance of that speech, the visitor was led to ponder and let resonate the thematic issues of honor, violence, sacrifice, camaraderie, mortality, kinship, legacy, sadness, war, loyalty and beauty ("make belief").

The visitor's association of performance and artifact in *Shakespeare: Staging the World* was complicated by the exhibition's constant reminder that Shakespeare was a product of his time while also helping to define it. As curator Dora Thornton reminds us, Shakespeare knew about these artifacts, referring to them as Henry's "bruised helmet" and "bended sword." She makes clear that Shakespeare's audience would have been able to see these very objects on display high above Henry V's tomb in Westminster Abbey where they were perched on a chestnut beam from 1422 to 1972.[21] In this 2012 exhibition, the curators made the viewers aware that these aspects taken together offer a new convergence and new meaning: the artifacts from Henry's reign, the familiarity of Shakespeare's audience with these artifacts, the words from Shakespeare's play, and the performance by RSC actor Geoffrey Streatfield come together to inform not only reception of a fragment of the play and a conjured image of a King, but also the political benefit that the Tudors would have enjoyed from Shakespeare's retelling of the King's success at Agincourt in 1415. The convergence ultimately resulted in the creation of a new story in the visitor's time. It is a story that combined the historical King Henry V and Shakespeare's knowledge of him, together with Shakespeare's play about Henry V, which was performed at a time when his audience would have also not only known about the

King and his victory at Agincourt, but would also have been able to see the very same artifacts on display.

Peter Kirwan aptly describes the multifaceted impact in this particular gallery: "The words exist divorced from their theatrical context, and serve to universalize the language in a way that enables appropriation, in this case affixing the words to the objects and thus positioning medieval artifact and Renaissance verse in a symbiotic and nostalgic relationship, each performing to the other in ways that evoke the *idea* of Henry V, neither entirely theatrical nor merely historical name."[22] In this way, the curators privileged the experience of the visitor as the arbiter of the moment's meanings, when historical artifact, Shakespeare's characterization of the King, and the passage of time collided as both "make believe" and "make belief":

> This story shall the good man teach his son,
> And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by
> From this day to the ending of the world
> But we in it shall be rememberèd,
> We few, we happy few, we band of brothers. (4.3.56-60)

After Streatfield finished the speech, he stayed in character and remained silent. Dora Thornton asserts in a videotaped presentation while standing next to King Henry V's wooden effigy in Westminster Abbey that this silence allowed the audience a moment of "inspiration" and of "making history":

> What is particularly lovely about the performance in the exhibition is the way that you hear his words and you see him and you really feel inspired by what he's saying and you know that you are making history with him. But then he fades out into silence and you just see his face above the funerary achievements from Westminster Abbey. And I find that moving. Almost more moving than the words because the feeling of the presence of the man who, who said these things and did things with the objects that were supposed to take you very close, inspire a great feeling of reverence and affection for the man.[23]

As was made clear by the "St. Crispin's Day" performance and funerary achievements, the exhibition used material artifact, Shakespeare drama, and performance of that drama to reinforce the notion that we find stories in artifacts and use artifacts to

inform stories. Shakespeare's Henry says, "But we in it shall be remembered . . . ," and the audience is at the moment remembering both Henrys: the historical King of England and the character in Shakespeare's play. As Peter Kirwan stated, the presentation of narrative, performance, and object invited the visitor to find the *idea* of the man and the moment.

Equally effective is the video performance of actor Jonjo O'Neill who contorted his body to take on the character of Shakespeare's Richard III.[24] The video, fragmented on three stacked television-sized screens, showed the head-to-toe transformation from healthy actor to the twisted character of King Richard. The screens were positioned just around a corner from where the visitor could also see an unflattering portrait of Richard (c. 1523), with a "savagely broken" sword of state in hand representing his broken kingship.[25] Shakespeare's depiction of Richard as a despot would have served to elevate the Tudors as saviors of England after the Civil War and justify Henry VII's new dynasty in 1485.[26] The play and the "make believe" performance were used didactically to influence the belief of the audience and confirm the dastardly nature of Richard's character in contrast to the nobleness of the then-ruling Tudor line. The museum exhibition, by showing an actor's transformation into character, showed how motivations of those offstage can become manifest onstage. Shakespeare's Richard III creates and reinforces the popular belief, as it did in Shakespeare's day, that the Tudors were in the right and King Richard III was corrupt.

The British Museum produced ancillary performances for the exhibition. It offered outdoor screenings of the BBC's *The Hollow Crown* series (*Richard II* through *Henry V*) on the East Lawn of the Museum; it invited performance artists to create artistic responses to the presentation of artifacts and perform short works in the exhibition space for special audiences two times in November; it produced a new podcast "Shakespeare's Unsettled World," by Museum Director Neil MacGregor; and it created special marketing videos that both promoted the exhibition and reinforced the idea that Shakespeare drew inspiration and content from world events and that the world came to learn Shakespeare's drama.

In one of these videos, Shakespeare's characters make their way through the streets at night on their way to the British

Museum, as if called together for some special convergence. A disoriented Othello carries the dead body of Desdemona north through Picadilly Circus; Falstaff finishes a pint before reluctantly picking up his helmet and leaving the pub; a dazed Lady Macbeth and a determined Richard III make their way through rain-soaked and brick-lined alleyways of what one may imagine to be Jack the Ripper's East London; and, most strikingly, Henry V leads his English army clanking across the Millennium Bridge into the City and towards Bloomsbury. The enthusiastic voice-over resounds with a patchwork adaptation of Ben Jonson's "To the Memory of My Beloved, The Author Mr. William Shakespeare, and What He hath Left Us" from the preface to the First Folio:

> Sweet swan of Avon, what a sight it were
> To see thee in our waters yet appear!
> Soul of the age, the applause delight,
> The wonder of our stage, my Shakespeare rise!
> Thou art a monument without a tomb,
> And art alive still while thy book doth live.
> Triumph my Britain! Though has one to show
> To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.
> He was not of an age, but for all time.[27]

The short video ends with a wide shot of the characters slowly walking across the front plaza toward the main steps of the British Museum, as if, perhaps, they are willingly taking their places for the exhibition, like actors arriving at a theater before the visitor arrives to see them there. This short moment in an online video produced as a marketing tool for the exhibition, brilliantly demonstrates the convergence of "make belief" and "make believe." Shakespeare, as the exhibition constantly reminded the visitor, borrowed from the real world to create the action and character of his drama ("make believe"), and he also created how his audience might come to regard aspects of the real world recognizable within these plays ("make belief"). The characters in the video arrive at the front stairs of the British Museum, from the real world of the present, to be on display as mirrors of both Shakespeare's imagination and that of the exhibition's visitors. They are both fictional ("make believe") and makers of meaning ("make belief").

Shakespeare not only created history and defined elements of the State, but as royal servant he had access to the Court and

would have experienced events there that could have been adapted for the action of his plays. For example, the exhibition made the claim that Shakespeare was likely influenced by the diplomatic visit of the Moroccan ambassador Abd el-Ouahed ben Messaoud ben Mohammed Anoun (portrait c. 1600), representative of the King of Barbary, who allied with Queen Elizabeth against Spain. Shakespeare wrote *Othello* a few years later.[28] In this way, the exhibition made clear that Shakespeare's plays contain elements influenced by cultural and political events in his time in the "make believe" mimetic world on stage.

One of the most pervasive elements of the exhibition was that the audio recordings of the individual performances were not isolated to the spaces where the videos were projected in correlation with specific artifacts on display. The duration of the visitor's experience was accompanied by the blended voices of the actors' performances echoing throughout the exhibition. These performances continued audibly during the visitor's engagement with unrelated historical artifacts. The exhibition tangled performance and history together with thought-provoking implications, as each type of presentation at once informed and contaminated the other.

The Political

The exhibition made clear that the theatre was informed by the activity of the State and that government learned how to use the spectacle of theatrical performance in the display of State power. Two examples involve royal pageantry and capital punishment during Shakespeare's lifetime. To illustrate the Government's use of "new theatrical means" of creating and demonstrating power, the exhibit presented Hoefnagle's pen-and-ink drawing of Queen Elizabeth's progress at Nonsuch Palace (1568). It depicts Queen Elizabeth as imperial votress and vestal virgin in the pageantry of a royal entrance—an event claiming territory and control. The second and much more violent example of the theatricality of State power is the show of public execution. The exhibition used the silver ocular reliquary of Blessed Father Edward Oldcorne's eye to connect the museum visitor to historical event in a visceral way. In 1606 Oldcorne was executed for presumed affiliation with those involved in the Gunpowder Plot. After he was dead,

but before his handlers were finished with the spectacle of his punishment, his head was boiled to preserve it somewhat so that it would last longer when impaled on a spike and put on public display. At some point during the process, one of his eyes fell out and was secreted away by a loyal follower. Eventually, it was placed in a silver reliquary. The curators included it as part of the 2012 exhibition, where the show of Oldcorne's execution, and of King James's authority, continued. The preserved gray eye, flattened through time and dehydration, was aimed at the visitor, iris and pupil still discernable, as a physical artifact of the State's performance of power. The spectacle that was Oldcorne's death and the exhibit's gruesome presentation of his desiccated eye, connect the historical event to the present. The visitor could appreciate the magnitude of royal power made palpable by this relic of performance.[29]

While artifact alone has the power to inform, to persuade, to connect the observer in the present with an object of the past, mimetic performance presents opportunities to connect the hearer-observer with specific moments and at levels potentially deeper and more visceral. Documentary evidence, material artifact, and portraiture seek to conjure a past in the mind's eye of the observer, but performance can create moments of a past-infused present. The created gaze greeting the viewer of portraiture invites a particular relationship with the work of art and its subject. The eye of the actor in soliloquy, or the eye of the traitor in reliquary, meeting the gaze of the patron in performance, whether live or of past power, creates yet a different kind and moment of relationship, one in which the viewer is a present-participant in the event of transmission as it plays out in the present-participant's time.

Where documentary evidence helps to place Shakespeare within his context, and provides the observer with perspective upon it, live performance, or that reconstructed through immediate object, demand that the exhibition's visitor examine his or her own context, along with that context's relationship to Shakespeare, his world, and the worlds that have passed in between.

The last caption and the final display of the British Museum's exhibition, under which visitors walked as they made their way

down a short set of stairs and into the gift shop, was a 1997 quote from Ahmed Kathrada, former political prisoner on Robben Island, who shared the use of the "Robben Island Bible"—the secreted copy of Shakespeare's Complete Works on display in the exhibition—during his captivity in South Africa. Kathrada recalled, "Somehow Shakespeare always had something to say to us."[30]

The presentational strategies of the exhibits considered here demonstrate the opportunities not only of their respective media, but of the differing ways Shakespeare can still speak, or be made to speak, to the exhibit-goer, through a curatorial consistency of medium and message, of object and subject, of making believe and making belief, in the present.

Notes

1. *Searching for Shakespeare*, exhibition, National Portrait Gallery, London, March 2-May 29, 2006, and Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Massachusetts, June 23-September 17, 2006.

2. *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, exhibition, British Museum, London, July 19-November 25, 2012. In keeping with the at-once historical and contemporary nature of the exhibit, the British Museum described it as covering the four hundred years from 1612-2012.

3. British Museum, *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, press release, 2012, http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/news_and_press/press_releases/2012/shakespeare_staging_the_world.aspx.

4. Fortunately, the British Museum exhibition did not engage the authorship question either.

5. S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

6. Tarnya Cooper, *Searching for Shakespeare* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 5.

7. Ibid.

8. It was a strange omission to exclude the Cobbe portrait made public in 2009 but which was known to scholars during the preparation of this exhibition. It looks very similar to the portrait of an unknown gentleman, "possibly Thomas Overbury" (1581-1613), known now as the Janssen Portrait. It would have been interesting to compare as part of the same exhibit (portrait in Cooper, page 68).

9. British Museum, *Shakespeare: Staging the World* (press release).

10. Alan Farlie, Exhibition Designer, RFK Architects, Ltd., "A Wooden O" (blog), British Museum, S*hakespeare: Staging the World*, August 22, 2012, http://blog.britishmuseum/category/exhibitions/Shakespeare-staging-the-world/.

11. For more on "make believe" and "make belief" see Richard Schechner's *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002), especially page 35.

12. William Shakespeare, *As You Like It* in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus (New

York: WW Norton & Company, 1997), 2.7.139. Shakespeare citations are to this edition.

13. At 140 feet across, the round Reading Room is only 40 feet larger than the footprint of the new Globe. Taking the temporary exhibition walls into consideration, which enclosed the exhibit, the diameter may have been even closer to the diameter of the new Globe.

14. Neil MacGregor, *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, audio guide, British Museum. July 19-November 25, 2012.

15. Neil MacGregor, "Director's Forward" in *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, by Jonathan Bate and Dora Thornton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 9.

16. Jonathon Bate and Dora Thornton, *Shakespeare: Staging the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 10.

17. MacGregor, "Director's Forward," 8-9.

18. Schechner, *Performance Studies*, 35.

19. Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies Textbook*, 2nd Draft, July 1995, http://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/schechner.

20. Or in conventional theatrical performance. The Royal Shakespeare Company created controversy by using a real skull in the 2008 production of *Hamlet* starring David Tennant. André Tchaikowsky, a Polish pianist, bequeathed his skull to the RSC in hopes that it would be used by the Company in a production of *Hamlet*. Knowing that the skull would distract its audience, the RSC tried to keep the story secret. When the truth came out, the RSC decided to stop using it because that real object pushed the boundaries between the real and the presented, the "make belief" and the "make believe," if you will, when the (fictional) Yorick's skull was simultaneously the (real) skull of André Tchaikowsky. See "David Tennant's Hamlet Featured a Real Skull All Along, Admits RSC," *The Telegraph*, November 25, 2009, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/celebritynews/6645908/David-Tennants-Hamlet-featured-real-human-skull-all-along-admits-RSC.html.

21. Dora Thornton, "Hero and Villain: Henry V and Richard III," video, British Museum, *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, July 19-November 25, 2012. http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/exhibitions/shakespeare_staging_the_world/videos/hero_and_villain.aspx

22. Peter Kirwan, *"Shakespeare Staging the World* @ the British Museum." (blog), British Museum, *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, September 22, 2012, <blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/bardathon/2012/22/shakespeare-staging-the-world-the-british-museum/>

23. Thornton, "Hero and Villain," British Museum video.

24. Jonjo O'Neill, "Since I am to prove a villain," video, British Museum, *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, July 19-November 25, 2012, http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/exhibitions/shakespeare_staging_the_world/videos/richard_iii.aspx.

25. Thornton, "Hero and Villain," British Museum video.

26. Bate and Thornton. *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, 104.

27. "Sweet Swan of Avon," video, British Museum, *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, July 19-November 25, 2012, <http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/exhibitions/shakespeare_staging_the_world.aspx >

28. Bate and Thornton, *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, 37.

29. Shakespeare's *King Lear*, with its blinding of the allegedly traitorous Gloucester, was performed at Court on the day after Christmas 1606, some eight months after Oldcorne's execution.

30. Ahmed Kathrada, interview by Anthony Sampson, 2/7/1997, for *Mandela: The Authorized Biography* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), 230; quoted in British Museum, *Shakespeare: Staging the World*, exhibition, London, July 19-November 25, 2012.