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Performing the Public at Shakespeare's Globe

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One of the most striking features of performances at the reconstructed Shakespeare's Globe has been the active role played by spectators there. This essay examines the way in which the theatre and its audiences have constructed a sense of "the public" in the playhouse, analysing its productions of *Julius Caesar* (1999 and 2014), *Coriolanus* (2006) and *Titus Andronicus* (2006 and 2014). All of these productions addressed the playhouse audience as "Rome", casting spectators as the people of the city, and all staged sequences in the yard, extending the fictional world into the space of the audience. All of them, too, pushed at the limits of the audience's fictional roles, asking spectators to step in and out of their identities as "Romans" and allowing space for them to express and negotiate their own attitudes as members of a real public. For all their similarities, the productions also marked some key moments in the Globe's changing uses of its audience. The first *Julius Caesar*, in 1999, was three seasons into Mark Rylance's artistic directorship, the first Shakespearean tragedy staged at the reconstructed theatre, and the only production Rylance directed himself during his time there. The *Coriolanus* and *Titus Andronicus* of 2006 were among the productions to mark Dominic Dromgoole's inaugural season as Artistic Director; *Coriolanus* was his own first production at the Globe. By 2014, when Dromgoole directed *Julius Caesar*, and the 2006 *Titus Andronicus* was revived, the dominant aesthetic of the Dromgoole era was more fully-developed. I examined video recordings and other archival material for all five productions: a brief description of the opening moments of each will give a sense of their various uses of the audience, while the second half of the essay will explore some of the theoretical implications.

Julius Caesar, 1999

Mark Rylance's production of *Julius Caesar* formed part of his 1999 "Roman Season". The opening scene's Feast of Lupercal was aimed, according to the production's Research Bulletin, at creating a "widespread and far-reaching sense of riotous carnival" (Bessell, "*Caesar*", 13). Lively pre-show music had the audience clapping along in all three recordings I consulted, so that when Flavius (Terence Maynard) came onstage to berate the people of Rome for celebrating, he could direct his lines at the Globe audience: "Hence, home, you idle creatures, get you home! / Is this a holiday?" (1.1.1-2). This confrontational opening line was generally reciprocated by members of the audience: "get you home!" with a "No!", while "Is this a holiday?" tended to be answered in the affirmative, often with cheering.¹ Flavius, in his sober Elizabethan costume, started to pick on what seemed to be members of the audience in the yard: "Speak, what trade art thou?" (1.1.5), he said to one, getting the unexpected answer "A librarian!" from a nearby groundling at the 13 June performance. But Flavius's question was, in fact, directed at an actor in the yard in modern dress, who replied, "a carpenter" (1.1.6). Dismissing the Carpenter, Flavius picked another apparent groundling. "You, sir, what trade are you?" (1.1.9). This second man, also in modern dress and holding a can of lager, looked around and shrugged, to audience laughter. He was an actor too, of course, planted in the yard to play the Cobbler, but it might easily have seemed for a moment that he was a genuine audience member; the audience might, then, have understood Flavius and Murellus's diatribe as an attack upon the spectators themselves. While Murellus (Ben Walden) directed the first part of his invective squarely at the Cobbler, he opened out his speech from "O, you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome" onwards (1.1.36-55) to the whole auditorium.

The next scene provided an appealing contrast to the tribunes' disapproval. Antony's entry, half naked, with an animal skin and whip, was greeted with audience applause and cheering

in all the videos I consulted, Casca repeatedly (and not always successfully) calling for “Peace” (1.2.2, 16).² When the Soothsayer called “Caesar!” (1.2.14) from the yard, it could have been mistaken for cheering. The Soothsayer, dressed in a plain white modern costume, was lifted onto the stage by fellow actors, a moment that prompted a round of applause at the 25 June performance – perhaps because of the ease with which this lift was accomplished, but perhaps also because a modern interloper seemed to be invading the historical space of the stage. There was even laughter at his warning, “Beware the ides of March” (1.2.20), as if an audience member had been hauled up onstage and had given away the ending of the play.

As Brutus and Cassius were left alone, the audience’s role changed again. Actors Danny Sapani and Richard Bremmer played their conversation from either side of the stage, neither making much direct contact with spectators other than vague gestures to the auditorium on Cassius’s reference to “all the rout” (1.2.80), or Brutus’s to “the general good” (1.2.87).

Unlike Antony or the tribunes, Brutus and Cassius seemed uninterested in the public represented by the auditorium except in an abstract sense. Bridget Escolme has described this as a shift from “casting the audience as enthusiastic Caesar-worshippers” in the production’s first scene to refiguring them “as thinking, freedom-loving classical patricians” in the second; the transition, she argues, “made for a wryly self-conscious crowd of playgoers, aware of the parts they were being asked to play in the fiction” (413-14). We will consider this self-consciousness in greater detail in a moment.

***Coriolanus*, 2006**

Dromgoole’s 2006 *Coriolanus* also opened with actors in the yard, but negotiated the relationship between the audience and the play’s Roman citizens rather differently. In what would become the first of the Dromgoole era’s many experiments in extending the stage into the yard, designer Mike Britton added two walkways that jutted out into the groundling area in a pincer formation from either side of the stage. The show opened with an announcement

from four theatrically cockney actors welcoming the audience “to Rome” (to applause), and requesting (to laughter) that they turn off their mobile phones “on pain of instant mutilation”. Six citizens then entered the part of the yard enclosed by the walkways, as Citizens 1 and 2 began the dialogue of 1.1 standing upon the stage extensions. The prompt book shows that these characters were assigned names for rehearsal purposes: amusingly, “Titus and Ronicus” (try saying it aloud). Titus (Trevor Fox), who spoke with a strong Geordie accent, addressed the actors scattered through the yard, stirring up a strongly class-coded feeling of resentment at Martius, the “chief enemy to the people” (1.1.7-8); his accent and attitude held connotations of a twentieth-century union leader from the Labour Party’s northern heartlands. Ronicus (Paul Rider), meanwhile, piped up patriotically in Martius’s defence, speaking with the sort of lower-middle-class Home Counties accent one might associate with “Little England” (and perhaps, by association, the Conservative Party). When Robin Soans’s aristocratic Menenius entered, he addressed the citizens from a position on the main stage, creating a strong sense of a patrician in authority space and the citizens in what Robert Weimann might call the “platea”, the in-between space that belongs both to stage and audience. Menenius looked around at the playhouse as he cracked a joke about Titus’s impatience (1.1.123-4), to audience chuckles at the 28 July performance; Titus cut in again with “You’re long about it” (1.1.125), to louder laughter. A conversation about the audience’s attitude towards these figures seemed to be emerging here: the audience’s laughter at Menenius’s line might have signified some sympathy with his disapproval of the rabble-rousing Titus, though it might equally have been simple amusement at the patrician’s tetchiness. But it was hard not to read the louder laughter at Titus’s comeback as a counter-response to the earlier audience reaction, a swing in sympathy back towards the working-class rebel. For his part, Menenius trod a line between accusing the audience of complicity (pointing at the yard, for example, on “you the mutinous members”, 1.1.147), and co-opting

them into his ridiculing of the leading trouble-makers: he got a big laugh when he called Titus the “great toe of this assembly” (1.1.153), though when he went on to explain that the description fitted because Titus was “one o’th’ lowest, basest, poorest, / Of this most wise rebellion” (1.1.155-6), the laughter was more scattered and muted. Perhaps, as the implications of class and regional snobbery became more evident, audience members felt less comfortable being co-opted into Menenius’s patrician perspective. Indeed, the scene seems to be structured in such a way that laughter-inducing punchlines slowly give way to the more bad-tempered discussion of class difference that reaches its climax with the entrance of Martius.

If the production aligned its audience with the proletarian characters in its staging of the first scene, this was not necessarily the case throughout the show. Titus and Ronicus reappeared as several of Shakespeare’s nameless soldiers, citizens and messengers, often in unflattering guises – the Roman soldier who refused to follow Martius into battle in 1.5, for example, was Titus, and when his comrades charged upstage through the gates of Corioles at the end of the scene, he circled back and tiptoed into the yard, to laughter. The same character returned as the Messenger in 1.7, delivering the line “And then I came away” (1.7.13) as a reluctant admission of his cowardice. In some ways, then, this character – an invention of Dromgoole’s production – served to support Martius’s contemptuous assessment of his troops, that “The mouse ne’er shunned the cat as they did budge / From rascals worse than they” (1.7.43-4), and by implication his charge that they were therefore undeserving of political representation. As the production continued, both Titus and Ronicus became more infantilized, comically sheepish at their part in Coriolanus’s banishment, inconsistent in their opinions, and increasingly cowardly. For all its initial sympathy for the plebeian position, then, the production at least made possible the disturbingly patrician reading of the play expressed by the *Daily Mail*’s critic Quentin Letts: “The plebeians (many of whom have northern accents)

are presented in all their gormlessness. Oh what joy to hear Coriolanus treat them roughly” (12 May 2006).

***Titus Andronicus*, 2006 and 2014**

Lucy Bailey’s *Titus Andronicus* opened later the same season, and was successful enough to be revived eight years later in an almost identical production.³ It was a strongly immersive production, making extensive use of two head-height wheeled metal platforms in the yard. In the play’s opening moments, Saturninus and Bassianus addressed the whole playhouse from these platforms, making open-armed gestures to the auditorium as they appealed to their “countrymen” (1.1.3) and “Romans” (1.1.9). The lines of the Captain announcing Titus’s imminent entrance were reassigned to what the prompt book calls “a drunk Roman”, who is named “Bacchus” in the speech headings. Bacchus carried a goblet and wore a grapevine crown, entering the stage from the yard and flinging wine around at spectators. In 2014, but not in 2006, he established himself as a representative of the audience by ad-libbing with groundlings, inquiring how far they had come to get to Rome.

Titus’s victory procession came in through the yard, to great fanfare: the space was filled with a flurry of streamers and the noise of drums. Chained slaves (who turned out to be Tamora’s sons and Aaron) carried a platform, on which Titus stood, holding Tamora by a chain as she glared at the groundlings with hatred in her eyes. Coming to a halt, Titus (Douglas Hodge in 2006, William Houston in 2014) hailed the audience with his opening line as “Rome!” (1.1.70). The sequence was a long and spectacular one, frequently met with applause, according to the 2006 show reports. Actor David Sturzaker recalls a performance in which the procession was loudly cheered by spectators and in which Douglas Hodge’s “Hail, Rome!” was met with an audible “Hail!” and another cheer from the spectators (“Production Notes”); Laura Rees tells of a different performance where “The audience all shouted back,

‘Hail, Titus’ and then Douglas couldn’t get on with the speech because they were all shouting and clapping and stomping” (“Production Notes”).

Titus continued in this vein throughout the scene, casting spectators as “People of Rome” and requesting “your voices and your suffrages” (1.1.217-18) in support of his choice for Rome’s new Emperor. This power was immediately granted by the friendly drunk, now in one of the galleries, who answered in the affirmative on “the people’s” behalf (1.1.220-2). Titus’s reply was changed from “Tribunes, I thank you” (1.1.223) to the more general “Romans, I thank you” in both 2006 and 2014, presumably in order to better implicate the audience in Titus’s decision. At the performance of 4 August 2006, the line got a laugh – the joke, presumably, being that “the people” had not responded at all, but had been spoken for by a single drunkard. Upon Titus’s selection of Saturninus, the cast repeatedly shouted “Long live our Emperor Saturnine!” (1.1.233); the invitation seemed to be for the audience to shout it too, though it is not clear that they actually did in any of the performances recorded for the archive. Groundlings were made complicit in Saturninus’s coronation in a more mundane sense, however, acquiescing as he gestured for them to part while his platform was wheeled towards the stage.

Julius Caesar, 2014

My last case study is Dromgoole’s 2014 production of *Julius Caesar*, produced the same year as Bailey’s revival of *Titus*. This production opened with an interactive pre-show, a device that Dromgoole employed increasingly during the second half of his tenure at the Globe.⁴ In this case, it saw sixteen characters enter the Globe’s piazza before the start of the show to interact with spectators and generate a sense of carnival: according to the prompt book, they included a “Priest”, “Whores”, a “Prisoner”, “Ladies”, “Apprentices”, “Puppeteers” and a “Puritan”. Ostensibly they were representing Roman citizens, celebrating (or in the Puritan’s case, protesting) the Feast of Lupercal. But these characters wore unambiguously Elizabethan

costume, and Dromgoole was clearly suggesting a parallel between the Roman festival and the Elizabethan theatre itself: the Puritan, in his black costume and capotain hat, was not merely anti-Caesar but also “barking complaints about the depravity of drama” (*Evening Standard*, 9 July 2014). As the start of the play neared, the pre-show’s carnivalesque figures invaded the auditorium itself, where jaunty bagpipe music was playing. Actors standing on platforms in the yard encouraged spectators to cheer for Caesar, or to sing “Lupercal, Lupercal, Lupercal!” to the tune more commonly associated with the football chant of “Here we go!”.⁵ The stage manager’s show reports note that audiences were frequently “lively”, “engaged” or “vocal” during this pre-show sequence. For many critics, the pre-show was a crucial part of the production’s success: for Andrej Lukowski, it created “a real sense of the massed people’s crude, febrile power” (*Time Out London*, 3 July 2014); Charles Spencer found himself reminded of “a rock festival” and encouraged by an “exciting sense of a crowd that was really up for it” (*Daily Telegraph*, 8 July 2014). “By the time the play starts,” wrote Sarah Hemming, “the mood is set: this is a volatile city on the brink, the people a potent mass to be whipped up, damped down and cannily handled” (*Financial Times*, 4 July 2014).

As the play itself opened, it became clear that Flavius, played by the same actor as the Puritan (Patrick Driver), was in some sense meant to be the same person. The citizens were in the yard, meaning that his rebuke was addressed at actors and spectators alike: here, in the very act of attending the theatre, spectators had aligned themselves with the Lupercal revellers and against the anti-Caesar conspirators. In the commercial DVD recording, his “Is this a holiday?” (1.1.2) gets a big cheer from the actors in the yard, though it is not clear whether this includes actual spectators. Unlike in 1999, the Carpenter and Cobbler were clearly actors – though they started in the yard, they were in Elizabethan costume. The Cobbler soon got up onto the stage and began working the crowd, getting big laughs and goading them (at least, in the archive video of the 20 June performance) into applause for Caesar. Caesar and his train

then entered through the yard for 1.2, to raucous music and cheering. Unlike in 1999, there was no sense of rule-breaking when characters traversed the yard and stage: such movement was a constant in the production.

Cassius and Brutus were clearly aligned with the Puritans. While Caesar and his followers wore rich reds and golds, the conspirators were in dark colours. Cassius's promise to "modestly discover" Brutus to himself jumped out in this context (1.2.71), as did the references to his thinness and his distaste for plays. Casca's disdain for the people of Rome was clearly directed at the playhouse audience; he screwed up his nose and waved at them contemptuously as he referred to the "rabblement" (1.2.244), and accused the spectators in the yard of producing "stinking breath" (1.2.246) and "bad air" (1.2.250) before finally exiting through them, dismissively shooing them out of his way. This waspish turn raised audience laughter in all three of the recordings I consulted; according to the stage manager's show report, an especially appreciative audience on 29 August gave actor Christopher Logan a round of applause upon his exit. As with many of the examples above, the audience's evident enjoyment of these insults bears thinking about: were they laughing and applauding because they enjoyed being insulted, because they were confident that his disdain was not really about them, or simply in appreciation of the actor's comic portrayal of snobbery?

Space: the yard/stage dynamic

One of the most obvious chronological developments in these productions is the Globe's increasing use of audience space as an extension of its theatrical space. In the case of the 1999 *Julius Caesar*, the worlds of yard and stage were clearly distinct: no stage extensions blurred the boundaries, and comparatively little action was staged in the yard. However, the modern-dress plebeians and Soothsayer frequently shouted from it, and the plebeians always made their entrances from it. This gave each appearance of the plebeians the quality of a stage invasion from another register of performance. Artemidorus, for example, was played

by the same actor (Quill Roberts), with the same cockney accent, and dressed in the same modern jeans and baseball cap, as the Carpenter in 1.1; when he climbed onto the stage from the yard to read his warning to Caesar, it was almost as if the reason he knew about the conspiracy was that he had been standing in the audience, watching the play. This impression was further cemented when the Elizabethan-costumed Portia entered behind him to begin the next scene, and he pointed directly at her on his closing reference to “traitors” (2.3.16), breaking the convention established thus far that characters exiting from one scene were not aware of the presence of the characters entering for the next. When he climbed up onto the stage again to warn Caesar at the beginning of the assassination scene, the reactions from the stage characters – “What, is the fellow mad?” and “Sirrah, give place” (3.1.10) – thus almost became class-coded responses to an intrusion from a working-class audience member who was unaware or unmindful of the usual conventions of theatre spectatorship (in 1999, a common charge in the press against *real* spectators at the Globe).⁶

This dynamic was at its strongest and most potentially disruptive in the murder of Cinna the Poet. Four modern-dress plebeians, including the beer-swigging Cobbler from Act 1 and Roberts’s Artemidorus/Carpenter character, leapt up onto the stage to intimidate Cinna the Poet. Cinna, who was dressed in doublet and hose and carried his verses with him, was an icon of Elizabethan authorship, and in the context of the reconstructed Globe, he seemed to be standing in as a symbol of Shakespeare’s own cultural authority; he spoke with Received Pronunciation, while his attackers had a variety of working-class accents. When these badly-behaved, late twentieth-century proletarian audience members invaded his stage and mocked his “bad verses” (3.3.31) with conspicuous anachronism, at one point even high-fiving each other, spectators seem to have taken a transgressive enjoyment in seeing high culture taken down a peg or two. In the 25 June recording, there is a hearty audience laugh as the plebeians start to beat Cinna, though this switches to shocked silence as the extent of their murderous

rage becomes clear and Cinna is brutally kicked. But when they start to douse him in petrol, laughter erupts again, punctured by chatter – presumably this registers a combination of amusement at the anachronism, and shock (including, perhaps, shock at the reaction of fellow spectators).⁷

The production team was not, in fact, seeking laughter during this sequence. According to the production's Research Bulletin, Rylance had the plebeians emerge from the world of the audience because he was "interested in the idea of the assault on the Poet coming directly from *our* world, from us", and during rehearsal he asked "that the Plebeians be aware that their actions were being observed, and to *challenge* the audience to *do something about it*" (Bessell, "Caesar", 35, 23-4). Actor Liam Hourican, playing the Cobbler, noted in an end-of-season interview that the audience laughter "upset us a lot at the start, and we weren't sure what to do about it" (Bessell, "Interviews", 17-18). Indeed, the 5 September show report records that Roger Gartland, the actor playing Cinna, was "very upset about the audience laughing" during his death scene. Hourican speculated that some audience members may have found the anachronism of the modern dress and the stage invasions hard to take seriously because "[s]uddenly, you're out of the story, and you're out of the world that has been created... [t]he myth is suddenly dispelled" (Bessell, "Interviews", 17). John Peter complained along these lines in his review for the *Sunday Times*, observing that spectators tended "to smirk uneasily, watch how others react, giggle like schoolboys – everything except feel that the 'citizen' is one of them and that they are taking part in the action" (30 May 1999).

There was a less pronounced sense of opposition between yard and stage in the three Dromgoole-era productions, largely because they all added extensions to the stage, allowing for easy access between stage and auditorium, and put action in the yard throughout. The 2006 *Coriolanus* exploited the dynamic between the authoritative *locus* of the stage and the

liminal *platea* of the walkways to great effect; indeed, this dynamic was crucial to Dromgoole's interpretation of the play, in which most of the play's aristocratic class kept themselves at a remove from the people, largely remaining on the stage, while Jonathan Cake's Coriolanus was unafraid to enter the plebeian space and tell them what he really thought. Even the tribunes, played here with upper-class drawls, were conspicuously reluctant to engage with the people they claimed to serve by entering the walkways, doing so only briefly when a symbolic alignment with "the people" was to their political advantage. According to actor Frank McCusker, who played Sicinius, "in this production the tribunes are of the ruling class themselves, and their agenda is as much to do with their own social sphere as with any concerns for the people" ("Production Notes").

Titus Andronicus and the 2014 *Julius Caesar*, meanwhile, can both be read in light of the boom in "immersive" theatre exemplified by companies like Punchdrunk, which was in its infancy in 2006 and fully-fledged by 2014. Bailey and her designer William Dudley created a sensuous physical environment for *Titus* that audiences often found physically overwhelming: a large black canopy was spread across the Globe's open roof, vast swathes of black fabric draped across its stage and entrance passageways, and for much of the performance, the almost oppressively enclosed space was filled with wafting incense, fluttering streamers and rhythmic noise. Scenes in the yard forced groundlings to be constantly on the move and turning around throughout the show. The production became notorious for its unprecedented numbers of fainting spectators.⁸ This was a phenomenon that was generally attributed to the show's ultra-realistic presentation of violence and physical injury (indeed, the appearance of the maimed, bloodied and convulsing Lavinia seems to have been the moment that caused spectators to pass out in the greatest numbers), but the very first show report in 2006 blames the velarium roof and the smoke (20 May).

Dromgoole's immersive pre-show for *Julius Caesar* took the Punchdrunk-style aesthetic even further, making it impossible for audience members to see everything on offer and forcing them to take an active role in choosing which part of the entertainment they wished to engage with. Like *Titus*, the show traversed the yard and stage throughout, and its violence was bloody and realistic; show reports for both record instances of spectators being accidentally pushed or splattered with stage blood.⁹ As in *Coriolanus*, Dromgoole's use of a stage extension (in this case, a large triangular thrust) was central to his interpretation of the characters: in the first half, Brutus dominated the tip of the triangle, often while other characters occupied the main stage. Brutus was therefore at the centre of playhouse, and thus closest to the audience, much more than any other character, but retreated from this privileged and intimate spot during the second half as the character became more distant.

Direct address: soliloquy

Like any show at the Globe, all of these productions addressed their audience directly throughout. The audience is not, of course, always assigned a clear fictional role during such exchanges, nor need they be: when a character speaks in soliloquy in a shared light space like the Globe, it is generally clear that he or she is aware of the audience's presence and addressing them in their capacity as an audience, as nothing more nor less than a body of people to be appealed to for sympathy or persuaded of the validity of an idea. Thus, for example, in both the 1999 and 2014 performances of Brutus's soliloquy beginning "It must be by his death" (2.1.10), the actors playing Brutus attempted to justify their character's thinking to the audience. 1999's Brutus, Danny Sapani, explained this in terms that blurred the boundary between actor and character:

I go through each line and try to express my dilemma, both as a player and as Brutus.

I try to express my/his honesty, and be kind of naked in that. ... I could come to whatever conclusion I want at the end, and whether the audience agrees with that

conclusion or not, at least they've been taken along the journey with me, and they understand why I'm doing what I'm doing. (Bessell, "Interviews", 27)

Sapani's use of the construction "my/his" indicates that this moral debate is taking place simultaneously in the fictional world and in the real one. There is a strong sense in his description of the audience as an active and empowered ethical agent: "Brutus throws out thoughts and ideas that are not yet concluded or even justified in his own mind, and he waits for a response of some kind" (Bessell, "Interviews", 27).

Tom McKay, who played Brutus in 2014, took a similar approach, but made a more deliberate effort to address the audience as a building full of individuals with different attitudes towards his character's dilemma. McKay described the speech as Brutus "formulating the arguments for himself and thereby for the public, the people of Rome, as to why [Caesar's assassination is] justified" ("Performance"). In the performance filmed for the commercial DVD, McKay began the speech with a gesture that seemed to indicate he was answering a silent objection from a member of the audience in the yard, and just before "How that might change his nature, there's the question" (2.1.13), he turned, looked, and then pointed at a spectator in the middle gallery as if that audience member had just raised that very question, and he were simply answering, "yes, good point". He crouched down for the next part of the speech, teaching the spectators in the yard about the dangers of Caesar's power, and then reacted once again as if he were agreeing with the unspoken thought of a specific audience member on "So Caesar may" (2.1.27). As he puzzled over the meaning of the letter sent to him, he asked help from a spectator in the yard: "Am I entreated / To speak and strike?" (2.1.55-6). Seeming to interpret the spectator's response as an answer in the affirmative, McKay continued to address the same individual: "O Rome, I make thee promise" (2.1.56). Spectators were thus cast as active forces, both persuading and restraining Brutus in his musings on Caesar's impending assassination.

This slippage from audience-as-audience to the audience as a personification of Rome was more evident in Sapani's version of the speech. In the version recorded from the 25 June performance, Sapani moves the audience in and out of a fictional role as the people of Rome, making a wide-armed gesture to the audience when he refers to "the general" (2.1.12) and the same gesture on "What, Rome?" (2.1.52), before moving downstage to more unambiguously address the audience for "O Rome, I make thee promise" (2.1.56). Eva Koch-Schulte studied the 1999 production over several performances, and observed that Sapani explored different approaches to this moment over the course of the run: sometimes "he told the theatre audience that he made an oath toward the Romans (who remained a 'third party')", while in other shows he "addressed the spectators as Romans" (10). "The interesting effect of the latter," she concludes, "was that the spectators no longer remained observers but became accessories to the murder of Caesar" (10).

Direct address: public speech

A similar fluidity characterized even the moments in these productions when the audience was unambiguously cast as the people of Rome. During *Julius Caesar*'s famous funeral scene, the audience is invited, as Charles Spencer observed in his review of the 1999 production, to "decide upon the merits" of Brutus and Mark Antony's orations (*Daily Telegraph*, 28 May 1999). In both Globe productions, these speeches were played to the whole auditorium. Luke Thompson, who played Antony in 2014, explained that he saw the audience here as self-evidently standing in for Rome, in that they were "a huge group of people that you need to speak to and convince of something" ("Performance").

But there are problems here. Firstly, if they have been paying attention, the audience will know that Antony's speech is disingenuous and that he is trying to incite political violence. Secondly, by the end of the scene, the audience will – must – part company from their Roman counterparts, who have by that point been whipped up into a violent frenzy. In the 1999

production, for example, the playhouse audience was invited to cheer, shout and applaud to hear Caesar's will; Lois Potter found this an especially effective moment, since "the sense of being manipulated was perfectly appropriate" (512). But the same moment was often in some ways undermined by the audience's evident cynicism about Antony's manipulation of their more easily-led fictional counterparts. As Madeleine North put it in her *Time Out* review, "Antony's rousing, manipulative speech to the masses ... could not incite rebellion in this audience, who spotted a spin-doctored speech from the first heavily-loaded compliment" (2 June 1999). The archive video of the 13 June performance records frequent bursts of ironic audience laughter during Antony's speech, as he feigns reluctance to read the will and disingenuously insists, "Good friends, sweet friends, let me not stir you up / To such a sudden flood of mutiny" (3.2.205-6) and "I am no orator, as Brutus is" (3.2.212). As Robert Butler explained it in the *Independent on Sunday*: "Our minds are constantly double-tracking: we're in the scene and outside it" (30 May 1999). While some critics enjoyed the audience's "ripples of cynical appreciation" (*Sunday Times*, 30 May 1999), others, like Paul Taylor, felt that spectators were too conspicuously at odds with their fictional counterparts, standing by "as phlegmatic as statues" while the actors "urged torchings and insurrection" (*Independent*, 28 May 1999).¹⁰

The 2014 *Julius Caesar* marked a deliberate shift halfway through the scene. Eighteen actor-citizens were in the yard for Brutus's and most of Antony's funeral orations, but then all of them entered the stage when they were invited by Antony to "make a ring about the corpse of Caesar" (3.2.159). For the next few minutes, they gathered around Antony in a tableau reminiscent of da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, with Antony as an ironically Christ-like man of the people. The theatre audience was thus suddenly detached from this fictional onstage public, not part of the picture and free to laugh knowingly at the disingenuousness of Antony's protestations. Though Antony continued to address the whole auditorium as the

people of Rome, the noisy onstage crowd was now separate from the largely silent (and occasionally chuckling) Globe audience. Upon discovering that Caesar had left seventy-five drachmas to “every several man” (3.2.237), the approving response of one of the onstage plebeians – “Most noble Caesar!” (3.2.238) – raised a big audience laugh. The joke was at the plebeian’s expense: his good opinion had been literally bought. As the stage crowd left, chanting “Caesar! Caesar!”, Antony gave a coy shrug, to audience laughter.

A similar tension in the audience’s fictional role was evident in 2006’s *Coriolanus*. For 2.3, Dromgoole transformed the whole auditorium into the marketplace, positioning eight citizens in the yard. The scene opened with Titus and Ronicus addressing their peers from the walkways as before, Titus once again taking the anti-Coriolanus position and Ronicus speaking in his favour.¹¹ When Coriolanus entered the stage in his gown of humility, he reluctantly descended into the yard, where his first interaction was with the comparatively supportive Ronicus and another citizen; Ronicus informed him, with patronizing self-importance, that the price of his support was “to ask it kindly” (2.3.74). Coriolanus shared his reaction to this with the spectators around him, who laughed. There was, once again, an interesting double effect here: the audience were both the citizens whom he disdained *and* privileged confidantes with whom he shared his distaste for the plebeians. His next interaction was with the more sceptical Titus, who put a proprietorial arm around a nearby spectator when he accused Coriolanus of having “not, indeed, loved the common people” (2.3.92-3). Again, this was met with a laugh – a laugh that would not have been possible if the audience had fully accepted their fictional role in the scene. As the scene continued, Coriolanus began to pace the floor of the yard and to address actors and spectators indiscriminately as he demanded their “voices”.

As in 1999, critics were divided over the effectiveness of using real spectators as stand-ins for Roman citizens. Sheridan Morley felt it worked well, noting that the audience could “feel

that we too have a part to play in confirming or denying [Coriolanus's] elevation to Consul" (*Daily Express*, 11 May 2006); Susannah Clapp likewise felt that the production's use of the audience turned "what often seems a one-sided contest" into a "more even-handed" debate (*Observer*, 14 May 2006). Others found themselves alienated by a sense of dislocation. Benedict Nightingale "didn't observe any swell of indignation among the assembled cardigans, anoraks and T-shirts when Jonathan Cake's Coriolanus and his fellow patricians called their wearers curs, rats and beastly plebeians" (*The Times*, 12 May 2006), while Rebecca Tyrrel felt that the self-conscious grins of Coriolanus's groundling addressees undermined their plausibility as "mutinous Roman citizens" (*Sunday Telegraph*, 21 May 2006). For me, this obvious mismatch between spectators and their fictional role was not troubling. The audience's temporary casting as the citizens tasked with assessing Coriolanus's suitability for the consulship was a means of encouraging them to take a view in the play's debates about political leadership. They would step in and out of this fictional role throughout the production, eavesdropping on private discussions about "the people" when "the people" themselves were evidently meant to be absent; at one such moment, I found myself wondering what spectators might have felt when they heard their counterparts dismissed by Volumnia as "Cats that can judge as fitly of his worth / As I can of those mysteries which heaven / Will not have earth to know" (4.2.36-8). By implication, their own ability to do the very thing the production was steering them towards – namely to judge Coriolanus's suitability for power – was being called into question by Volumnia's words, an implication that some may well have found objectionable.

A similar dynamic between participation and judgment played out in Bailey's *Titus*, with the audience constantly being cast and then un-cast as the people of Rome. As we have seen, the opening sequence positioned the audience fairly clearly as Roman citizens. But at certain points in that scene – for example, when Tamora came downstage to confide her plans to

“massacre them all” (1.1.447) – the audience was re-engendered as an extra-dramatic confidante. By Act 2, spectators were steered into a different relationship with the stage, as Aaron co-opted them into his secret plans and the audience watched while his murderous confidence trick played out.

In its 2014 incarnation, Bailey’s production exploited its immersive design aesthetic to its most powerful effect in three interpolated scenes at the start of the second half: the prompt book calls them “Lynch Mob 1, 2 and 3”. In the first of these, according to the prompt book, “Aaron incites the citizens to kill the Andronici”: he paced onto the stage carrying a flaming torch and yelled “Death to the Andronici!” He gestured for applause, which the audience gave. It is conventional to open the second half at the Globe with a round of applause, but here it carried narrative meaning – Aaron was co-opting the audience into his lynch mob just as he had earlier made them complicit in his plans. Aaron was then wheeled around the yard by chanting supporters, who were drumming and carrying torches. Bacchus, the friendly drunk, returned to the stage, upon which Aaron saw him, repeated his cry of “Death to the Andronici!”, and his supporters brutally beat the drunk before leading him off though the yard, still chanting and drumming. Even after they returned later with Bacchus’s bloodied body, the mob managed to entice the audience to join in with their chanting and cheering (co-opting DJ Ötzi’s 2000 hit “Hey Baby (Uhh, Ahh)”, as “Hey, Saturninus!”, with the audience providing the “Uhh! Ahh!”). In both 2014 and its embryonic incarnation in 2006, the sequence appears frequently to have culminated in laughter, cheering and applause.

But though it encouraged its audience to get caught up in the Dionysian frenzy of Aaron’s lynch mob, Bailey’s production also thrust them into the sobering role of making moral judgements. In the aftermath of the final scene’s bloody banquet, Titus’s surviving brother and son, Marcus and Lucius, entered the yard and ascended one of the wheeled platforms, addressing the auditorium as “people and sons of Rome” (5.3.66) from their position in the

midst of the groundlings. In what was in some senses the production's key speech, Marcus held Aaron's baby in his arms – a baby that only moments earlier Lucius had threatened to hang in order to “vex the father's soul” (5.1.52) – and asked the audience to “judge what cause had Titus to revenge” (5.3.124). His question, “Have we done aught amiss?” (5.3.128), was clearly asked of the surrounding spectators, who were urged, “Speak, Romans, speak!” (5.3.134). Of course, it is ultimately left to another fictional character to speak on behalf of “the common voice” (5.3.139) – in this case Aemilius, interestingly played in both productions by the same actor who had spoken for the audience in 1.1 as Bacchus (Chris Emmett in 2006, David Shaw-Parker in 2014). As Aemilius invited the people of Rome to shout, after him, “Lucius, all hail, Rome's royal emperor!” (5.3.140), the production seemed to be provoking its audience into judging Lucius's suitability for power, forcing them to question the extent, once again, to which they consented to the decision that was being made in their name.

This seems to have been a loaded moment in the production, and one in which very different public reactions were performed. When I saw it on 1 July 2006, I remember joining in with a spontaneous round of applause as Aaron was carried out through the yard, refusing to repent his evil deeds. As I have written elsewhere, I read this as “a wild and emphatic two-fingers-up to Lucius and all he represented”, which I took to be “authority's moral ambivalence in the face of war and bloodshed” – I remember wanting to answer “yes!” when Marcus asked if his family had “done aught amiss” (Purcell, *Popular Shakespeare*, 2). David Sturzaker, the actor who played Lucius, recalls a very different reaction at the performance on 20 June 2006, when the crowd started cheering after “Lucius, all hail, Rome's royal emperor!”, and Aaron was booed (“Performance Notes”).

This last example brings me to an important point. Casting the audience as the fictional Roman public in these plays has its limits in a strict narrative sense: there comes a point in

every story when the real theatregoing public will not do what the play demands their fictional counterparts must. They will almost certainly not swallow Antony's rhetoric hook, line and sinker, nor will they riot; they are unlikely to argue with Coriolanus, or to U-turn on their opinions about him just because some patently untrustworthy tribunes told them they ought to. But audiences can and will form judgements when they are invited to do so, and in each of these plays this gives them a temporary affinity with the fictional publics they are asked to stand in for. Sometimes, these judgments may be at odds with those expressed by their fictional counterparts: the manipulable plebeians of *Julius Caesar*, the fickle citizens of *Coriolanus*, the acquiescing public of *Titus Andronicus*. But these moments of fissure and frustration, often accompanied at the Globe by vocal dissent in the form of laughter, applause or even booing, are important ones, I argue, in which a different public – a real one – asserts itself.

It is noticeable that the moments in these productions that most divided critics tended to be those at which dislocations of this sort emerged. As we have seen, some reviewers found themselves alienated by the ironic laughter of their fellow spectators during Antony's funeral oration or the murder of Cinna the Poet in the 1999 *Julius Caesar*, or by the use of amusedly indifferent groundlings as Roman citizens in 2006's *Coriolanus*. It is possible, of course, that some of these moments were simply misconceived, incorrectly anticipating the audience's likely reactions. But reflections on these disjunctions by actors and critics alike tend to reveal something about the dominant expectations surrounding modern interactive and immersive theatre. We seem to privilege theatre that marshals its audience into a consistent mode of engagement with a coherent fictional world, and to be troubled by performances that disrupt this process; a Brechtian might dispute the notion that ironic detachment is necessarily inferior to emotional participation and identification, but this is nevertheless the assumption that is lurking behind much of the discourse surrounding these performances.

Distanced amusement of this sort may be a distinctly modern phenomenon. Both productions of *Julius Caesar*, in yoking the act of attending theatre with the expression of a carnival spirit and a rebellion against Puritan strictures, were perhaps replicating a dynamic of the earliest performances of the text – but if so, these cultural tensions must have been felt by early modern audience members in earnest rather than merely in play. Had the play’s conspirators been as dismissive of the audience in 1599 as they were in 1999 or 2014, I am not certain that that audience would have been able to enjoy their contempt with the nonchalant irony of their modern counterparts. In modern London, public expressions of political sentiment take place in a very different social context than they did in early modern London, and modern performance at the Globe surely cannot recapture the transgressive dangers that theatregoing must have presented for Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences. Modern performances of Shakespeare’s plays are, moreover, also to some extent *about* Shakespeare, who has himself become an important topic of public debate in the centuries since his death. Mark Rylance has suggested that the boisterous audience responses during the early years of the reconstructed Globe were sometimes

actually to do with anger about the cultural position of Shakespeare as a repressive, frightening force that is used in tests, and means that some people get better positions in schools and other people don’t. ... They were another story about society’s relationship to this phenomenon of Shakespeare, which is really banged into us all the time. The greatest thing that England has ever done, and if you don’t like it and don’t love it then you’re kind of subhuman. That’s a pretty frightening thing for people.

(quoted in Purcell, *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 193)

Audience laughter in the reconstructed Globe is thus sometimes just as much about the public expression of an attitude towards this modern cultural institution as it is an engagement with

the themes of the plays themselves; the reactions to the murder of Cinna the Poet and the stage invasions in 1999 were, I think, an example of this.

But however different these productions must have been from their early modern counterparts, they allow for a broader insight into the way in which these plays can function in the shared space of an open-air playhouse. All of these productions indicate the elasticity of the texts to include or exclude direct audience address and to respond to audience interjections; the space, in other words, that they allow for different constructions and expressions of public identities. This essay has repeatedly noted the presence or absence of laughter at particular moments, and the ways in which this form of audience expression can give rise to further counter-responses from both actors and fellow spectators. It is a crucial tool in establishing the temporary collective identity of the “public” in the Globe’s auditorium.

One last example will illustrate this point. In the performance of *Titus Andronicus* filmed for the DVD, Obi Abili’s Aaron provoked an interplay of polarized attitudes amongst spectators. Having just tricked Titus into sacrificing his hand in order to save the lives of his sons, Aaron picked up the severed hand and pretended to scratch his own face with it. The DVD records a variety of responses: some groans, but mostly laughter, and a smattering of applause. Clearly a good number of spectators were enjoying Aaron’s bloodthirsty trick, and Abili responded with a sarcastic laugh. But as he revealed that Titus could expect the return not of his sons but of “their heads” (3.1.201), a number of spectators started to boo. Abili shot back, mimicking the tone of the boos with an admonishing “Ey!”, prompting the audience to laugh again. In that moment, a unified reaction had splintered into dissent, a dissent that started a chain reaction of counter-responses until some measure of equilibrium was restored. It is emblematic, I think, of the way in which “the public” continually forms and re-forms itself in the liminal space of the Globe.

Notes

All promptbooks, show reports, video recordings, reviews and other archival materials for the productions discussed are held in the Shakespeare's Globe Library and Archive, London.

¹ By 1999, the Globe had developed a reputation as a space for audience participation – see, for example, Benedict Nightingale's 1998 article. Woods examined videos of 17 different performances of the 1999 *Julius Caesar*, noticing a similar pattern of audience response in each ("Skilful Spectatorship", 106).

² As Koch-Schulte points out, this line worked best when the audience were genuinely noisy (8).

³ In 2006, Paul Taylor considered it "the best production I've seen at Shakespeare's Globe in the 10 years of its existence" (*Independent*, 31 May 2006).

⁴ See, for example, Dromgoole's 2010 productions of the *Henry IV* plays or his 2015 *Measure for Measure*.

⁵ John Philip Sousa's "The Stars and Stripes Forever".

⁶ See Prescott, "Inheriting the Globe". An interesting side effect of the production's authorized stage invasions seems to have been their tacit permission for actual spectators to attempt their own unauthorized intrusions. Numerous 1999 show reports note "patrons, during the pauses, jumping on stage" (25 June); "lots of people trying to get on stage after the show" (7 July); "2 people climbed on stage in pause" (5 September). Show reports for later seasons do not record the same phenomenon, despite the easier access to the stage provided by the various stage extensions.

⁷ The scene was not always received in this fashion: in the 13 June recording, for example, there is no laughter at all.

⁸ The first show report from 2006 notes “an unprecedented amount of fainters” (20 May), and by 9 June, the stage manager seems to consider it remarkable that no-one fainted at that evening’s performance. Several 2006 show reports note between 10-15 fainters. Of the 51 show reports from 2014, 47 mention spectators fainting. Every performance of *Titus* in June and July 2014 featured at least one fainter, and sometimes more than 20. While spectators faint at most Globe productions, Woods’s analysis has shown that the number of fainters at performances of *Titus* was indeed unusually high (*Globe Audiences*, 234).

⁹ Fully machine-washable, we are repeatedly assured.

¹⁰ Escolme notes that actor Mark Lewis-Jones changed his delivery of the funeral oration over the course of the season, forging an ironic complicity with a knowing audience at the start of the run, but “working to persuade on a much more emotionally engaging level” by the end (414).

¹¹ It would become clearer than ever, later in the scene, that these characters were meant to be community organizers of some sort, marshalling their fellow plebeians and promising the tribunes “five hundred voices” (2.3.211) and “twice five hundred” (2.3.212).

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