

# S&B



## Shakespeare Bulletin

The Journal of Early Modern Drama in Performance

Volume 37

Number 4

Winter 2019



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*Shakespeare Bulletin*, a peer-reviewed journal of performance criticism and scholarship, provides commentary on Shakespeare and Renaissance drama through feature articles, theatre and film reviews, and book reviews. Begun in 1982 as the organ of the New York Shakespeare Society, which became the Columbia University Seminar, the journal formerly appeared bimonthly; since 1990 it has been appearing as a quarterly. In 1992, it incorporated *Shakespeare on Film Newsletter*, which began publication in 1976. *Shakespeare Bulletin's* theatre coverage serves as a record of production in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and throughout the world. Articles appearing in *Shakespeare Bulletin* are indexed in *The World Shakespeare Bibliography* and the *MLA Bibliography*. This journal is a member of the Council of Editors of Learned Journals.

*Shakespeare Bulletin* (ISSN 0748-2558) is published quarterly in Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter by Johns Hopkins University Press, 2715 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218-4363. Periodicals postage paid at Baltimore, Maryland 21233-9651, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Shakespeare Bulletin*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Journals Division, 2715 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218-4363.

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# Shakespeare Bulletin

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## Performing Restoration Shakespeare Today: Staging Davenant's *Macbeth*

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This article examines what the emerging field of rehearsal studies can offer scholars of Shakespeare in performance. It draws on research undertaken alongside the staging of Sir William Davenant's adaptation of *Macbeth* (1664) at the Folger Theatre in Washington, DC in August 2018—part of the research project “Performing Restoration Shakespeare”—to examine how rehearsal studies might be brought into useful dialogue with Shakespeare performance historiography. In this article we use our experience in that research project to outline a methodology for examining early modern plays through contemporary performance practice. As such, it represents a new application of the methodology of rehearsal studies, which until now has primarily been used to examine the processes and politics of contemporary theater practice. This article will contribute to the growing body of literature exploring practice-as-research in the field of Shakespeare performance studies, arguing for the value of observation and critical analysis of twenty-first-century staging methods of early modern drama by theater historians. In so doing, it outlines a model for collaboration between theater scholars and professional practitioners that engages with and learns from the knowledge generated through the embodied process of rehearsal.

“Performing Restoration Shakespeare” is a collaborative research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in the United Kingdom and led by Queen's University Belfast, where the-

**“A Mourning Rome, a Dangerous Rome”:  
Theatricality and Anti-Theatricality in Two *Julius  
Caesar* Films**

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**I**n 2012, the Royal Shakespeare Company produced two versions of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*: Gregory Doran's film version of his stage production of Shakespeare's tragedy and Tim Crouch's *I, Cinna (the Poet)*.<sup>1</sup> Doran's film was recorded by Illuminations Media and broadcast by BBC Channel Four on 24 June 2012. Crouch's film was co-produced by RSC, CISCO, Ravensbourne, and Janet, streamed to UK schools on 2 July 2012. In both productions, actor Jude Owusu played Cinna the Poet. Both broadcasts were made to coincide with other Shakespeare events during the London Olympiad. *Caesar* was recorded at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre stage and *Cinna* inside a studio simulating the setting at The Swan Theatre. They were both marketed as faithful to the stage productions, neither as substitutes nor as feature films.<sup>2</sup> However, the creators took advantage of film language to reveal outdoor spaces recording on location in *Caesar*, and with film inserts, in *Cinna*. Following conventions of backstage films and pre-war British TV plays respectively, the two films follow concepts that Martin Puchner defines as theatricality and anti-theatricality.

Only three scenes of *Caesar* were recorded on stage.<sup>3</sup> In the opening scene, Caesar (Jeffrey Kissoon) disregards the Soothsayer's warning and leaves the crowded stage. In the next sequence, Brutus (Patterson Joseph), followed by Cassius (Cyril Nri), enters a corridor suggested to be the theater backstage. The actual corridor is located within the abandoned shopping mall Oriental City (Colindale, London). Other settings at the mall show exits and windows to the outside world, where the characters never venture. More offstage-stage transitions follow. After the offstage

assassination of Caesar, the conspirators wash their hands in the tyrant's blood and return in procession to the stage. Toward the film's end, having found Brutus's dead body in the mall's emergency escapes, Octavius (Ivanno Jeremiah) begins his eulogy to his enemy. A change of angle smoothly relocates him concluding his "happy day" speech (5.5.81) on the RST's empty stage, where Brutus's corpse is exhibited, with only two or three men—the upstaged Antony (Ray Fearon) included—mourning for him.

In *Cinna*, contact with outside reality is relayed primarily through newsreel inserts that show outside events: images of the then-recent student protests (2010) and the August riots (2011) in England. We interpret the events of Shakespeare's play through a contemporary lens as Cinna comments on what he sees on the news or on TV and prompts viewers to write poems. After commissioning "The Death of Cinna" (2012: 43), he leaves the room only to return as a ghost with gashes on his head after meeting his killers. In life, Cinna proclaimed his belief in the world-changing power of words and regretted his own impotence as a man and as a poet. In death, his contact with historical reality turns him into an articulate speaker. Though *Caesar*, allegedly set in a non-defined African country, does not explicitly allude to the August riots or to the protests, its location—a once-popular London mall—anchors Shakespeare's tragedy in a context shared by *Cinna*. Likewise, both films explore the boundaries between theatrical worlds and offstage reality. Inside the hall of Caesar's assassination, Antony begs forgiveness from Caesar's corpse as the frame narrows. The *mise-en-scène* combines theatrical décor and signs of material reality. The frame reveals Antony at the mall's escalator; light cuts through the mall's windows, suggesting an outside that Antony acknowledges, for his gaze turns towards this offstage world anticipating "a mourning Rome, a dangerous Rome" (3.1.288).

A little earlier than the time of recording, London itself was a similarly "mourning" and "dangerous" city, as the government coalition failed to fulfil the liberal democrat promises to lower education fees and cuts in the NHS produced public discontent amidst preparations for the Olympic Games. On 6 August 2011, after the killing of mixed-raced citizen Mark Duggan by the police, what began as a peaceful protest in Tottenham Court ended in a two-day series of nationwide riots. Despite the economic and political contingencies, as well as the social grievances, that explained the riots, the conservative press and politicians set in circulation a narrative demonizing the rioters, who were catalogued as "feral-underclass" by justice secretary Kenneth Clarke (Mullholland). This is the

offstage world implied in the films, one inhabited by a dangerous mob of underclass citizens. Yet the films pointedly choose to show them as a mob or not to show the citizens at all. Only traces of their presence and mediated images are shown. The more characters approach the real, the more theatrical layers blur boundaries between illusion and material reality. When Cinna ventures into the outside, a strong white light fills the screen. As occurs to the cave dweller in Plato's cave narrative in *Republic* (c. 375 BC), oppressive light signifies the difficulty to acknowledge that outside objects are more real than those in indoor spaces. Instead of seeing the streets, we see only Owusu, playing Cinna, and his killers in a series of exchange shots against a white illuminated backdrop. Such latency of the anti-theatrical offstage pervades both films.

In Doran's and Crouch's films, theatricality and anti-theatricality constitute disputing ideological, political, and social worldviews. Theatricality celebrates a particular form of theater as public performance, whereas anti-theatricality exposes the unreliability and the disciplinary features of theatricality, as Puchner has suggested. Spaces ruled by theatrical dynamics and mediated spectacle over-determine subjects, whereas anti-theatricality treads upon less deterministic, material, and heterogeneous offstage spaces. These two configurations conform dialectics between theatrical illusion and contingent reality. Drawing from drama theory and Shakespearean textual criticism, I will analyze theatricality and anti-theatricality in the two films. My approach will be inter-textual, since I will take into account the films' paratexts as well as other artistic works developed in the wake of the riots which took place in England in 2010 and 2011. This backdrop provides political valences of anti-theatricalism and theatricalism in both works. The results show that anti-theatrical and theatrical valences produce both politically progressive and regressive shifts. Boundaries between theatrical illusion and discernment of reality are ill-defined. The locations and the aforementioned ill-defined boundaries are sites of nuanced social and political debate, that allows us to read *Julius Caesar* through the lens of the riots and protests that preceded the Olympiad.

### Theatricality and Anti-Theatricality

Dealing with the stylistic reforms of twentieth-century drama, Puchner distinguishes the concepts of "theatricality" and "anti-theatricality" as logics developing beyond star-centered and business-oriented nineteenth-century performance practices. Against the avant-garde's celebration of

theatricalism, modernist dramatists distrusted the public aspects of theater associated with populism and the theatrical practices of fascist European governments (Puchner 1-2; 11-12). Theatricalism was thought to turn audiences into passive and uncritical masses (Puchner 12). The anti-theatricalist programme, on the other hand, rejected the actor's charisma and principles of theatrical mimesis and representation (Puchner 6-18). Puchner argues that the immediate precedent to the anti-theatricalist movement was nineteenth-century closet drama, whose format evaded the spatiotemporal constraints of performance in favour of the literary aspects of drama (18). However, anti-theatricalist drama, in its modernist expressions, risked incurring dogmatism as dramatists heavily prescribed interpretive choices to both performers and audiences (Puchner 19).

For Puchner, a key question with regard to anti-theatricalism is against which tradition anti-theatricalism moves (7). In the current context, Baz Kershaw's distinction between "disciplinary" and "radical" theaters will refine my analytical tools. For Kershaw, "the greatest radical turbulence can be found in performance when modernist and postmodernist versions of the world collide" (7). His dismissal of postmodern mainstream theater—his analysis focuses mainly on the post-Thatcher reorganization of the English theatrical landscape—parallels modernist anti-theatricalist prejudices against theatricalism, as explained by Puchner. For Kershaw, the early twenty-first-century theater has been commodified, subsumed by market policies, excluding—or co-opting—forms of radicalism. The buildings are, as the story goes, designed for the shaping of ruling ideologies, confirming hierarchical principles, and enforcing mechanisms of social exclusion (Kershaw 31). Excluded from the production process, audiences become consumers within social systems of normative indoctrination and, arguably, uncritically surrender to the pleasure effects marketed by top shows like West End musicals (Kershaw 32). Offering a less clear-cut view, Andrew J. Hartley favors close observation of "political valences" in specific productions rather than looking for political "macro-statements" which, though strong, may be non-substantial (30-35). According to Hartley, radicalism in the West End and Broadway shows is based upon their embedding in larger political discussions (31). Such are the cases, as I will show, of Doran's and Crouch's films.

My interest lies in the recognition of these valences in these state-subsidized productions and the ways that theater and film scholars examine aspects that reveal their radical potency. Kershaw points at excess and richness as potentially radical even in mainstream performance (64-67). For Michael Ingham, the exposure of offstage subverts "the very

dimensions of theatricality" that keep the "offstage space...ontologically separate" (130). Likewise, as Kershaw says, contexts create areas of exchange between radical and dominant cultural discourses, by virtue of which political potencies result (86; 94). Based on this premise, I follow guidelines of site-specific theater scholars whose works argue that specific spaces transform the play-texts' political interpretive choices in accordance with the geographical, historical, ideological, and political features of the site.<sup>4</sup> Reflexive mechanisms, as Kershaw points out, expose processes of cultural control and reveal traces of non-hegemonic discourse (68). Following Alan Ackerman and Puchner, recognizing the subversion intended by the theatrical, acknowledging the horror fantasies generated by anti-theatricalism, and observing the specific limits of representation for specific works (12-13) all reveal the transformative features in a play. The offstage "dangerous Rome" leaves traces in the frontiers of the real and the theatrical, appearing mediated. Elinor Fuchs explains that offstage reality manifests as inassimilable trauma, a "Real holding power by virtue of refusal to make an appearance, a deep backstage" (344-5). Therefore, even when characters leave the stage, what they encounter is one layer after another of theatrical illusion, suggesting that the illusions and delusions of theater are ultimately inescapable.

### Paratexts

The paratexts of the *Caesar* DVD relay much of the film's theatrical value. For a start, the organization of chapters into acts and scenes, in line with previous RSC-based DVDs, recalls authorized editions of the play. The documentary "*Julius Caesar: Behind the Scenes*," included in the *Julius Caesar* DVD, explores the production's theatricality, despite its exposure of specific locations. Not all the urban settings are arranged realistically. For instance, as Matilda Wainwright explains, the location for the market scenes suggests an African public meeting place furnished with colors, materials, and textures curated to convey the "African" (Doran, *Julius Caesar*). However, this "African" world also includes features of Roman architecture. The shops at the hall where the assassination was recorded are covered with units simulating tiers of stucco-plastered stones, giving the location an institutional feel. This "Roman-ish" hall is juxtaposed with the mall's undeniably modern escalator, creating a threshold between a historical past and the consumerism-driven modernity. The sanctity and solemnity of Roman public buildings creates the aura of a temple which, according to Zygmunt Bauman, has often been granted



to modern shopping centers, contemporary safe sites of pilgrimage where consumers build up community values and belonging (99). The later scenes depict the ruined vistas of the mall's atrium after this "temple" has been devastated by soldiers, looters, and rioters.

The actors' skills, training, and efficiency are, likewise, presented as theatrical rubric. In interviews, celebrities including Patterson Joseph (Brutus), Ray Fearon (Antony), and Adjoa Andoh (Portia) explain their creative processes (Doran, *Julius Caesar*). Andoh's participation reinforces the production's intertextual connections with Nelson Mandela's Shakespearean Robben Island positive narrative, as she had recently starred in *Invictus* (dir. Clint Eastwood, 2009) as Brenda Mazibuko, Mandela's personal assistant. Joseph discusses the freedom and sublimity achieved when speaking Shakespeare's language on screen (Doran, *Julius Caesar*). On the surface, these comments are no different from many actors' accounts of onscreen Shakespearean experiences. However, Andoh's commentary emphasizes theater as the ultimate goal, for, though she does not specify which ones, as she says, many aspects of the recording were later translated to the stage production (Doran, *Julius Caesar*).<sup>5</sup> As Puchner says, resistance to theater also produces theater (18). Rather than a reproduction of the stage production, the film functioned as a rehearsal.

An additional theatrical landmark of Doran's film alluded to in the "Behind the Scenes" material is the quality of the verse speaking. Despite the necessary elocution adjustments to the medium, the actors maintain the naturalistic blank verse delivery characteristic of the RSC. The psychological nuances of Andoh's delivery are visible through the cameras, distinctive of her theatrical training rather than television realism. Similarly, Doran's collective and research-based rehearsal methodology, faithful to the RSC's spirit of ensemble, is presented as theatrical signature.<sup>6</sup> The problematic relocation of Shakespeare's text to a non-defined African country prompted mixed reactions which have been discussed at length by critics, reviewers, and actors. However, the homogenization of the all-black cast's African accents highlights the problematic nature of a choice intended to be artistically refreshing. Patterson Joseph explains that, though the actors found the African accents liberating, some of them—regarded as too heavy—were discarded (53-54) and an Eastern African accent was chosen because of its closeness to the Elizabethan verse (Doran, *Julius Caesar*). Though the visuals of the production represent an African palimpsest, the choice of accents missed a similar opportunity to turn Shakespearean delivery into a true polyphonic experience. In other words, a potential polyphony of African voices was domesticated for mainstream audiences.

Other paratexts capitalize on theatricality at the risk of homogenizing the Roman crowds. Literary criticism on *Julius Caesar* often presents mixed interpretations of the plebeians' responses to Brutus and Antony's speeches. Brent Stirling's work draws from Renaissance propagandistic literature, tackles the unfavorable representation of the Elizabethan populace and radical dissenters in fiction, and, on these grounds, defines the populace's behavior in *Caesar* as self-interested and capable only of irrelevant violence (28). Over the years, this view has been contested and reconsidered in various ways. Jerald W. Spotswood argues that Shakespeare's description of the plebeians by trade—rather than as individuals—overshadows the roles of the commons in the play (73). In contrast, Nicholas Visser says that the plebeians, though conservative, are "a political force in [their] own right, possessing full political agency" (30). For Christine Hutchings, the tribunes' authoritarian behavior would have been regarded in Shakespeare's time as indecent and contrary to good rule (214). Christopher Holmes shows that the plebeians' rioting intends to preserve their disruptive festive traditions, not to fulfil any emancipatory agenda (31). Patrick Gray and Maurice Samely draw on Henri Lefebvre's "The Right to the City," suggesting that the crowd's behavior is a consequence of dispossession and alienation.

The teachers' packs of *Caesar* and *Cinna* follow the RSC's "Stand Up for Shakespeare" manifesto, which encourages teachers to have the students deliver Shakespeare on their feet, to learn about Shakespeare early on, and to see productions live (RSC 2012 1; RSC 2012a 1). While these exercises empower students through performance, the packs' discussion of the plebeians emphasizes that their reactions mostly depend on Antony's persuasive skills, a basis in theatrical principles distrusted by anti-theatricalism. Though research has proved that crowds would not be as easily convinced as many critics think, the packs' emphasis on Antony's performative skills undermines the crowd members' subjectivities (Visser 22). The wording deploys questions which seem to conceal foregone answers in this respect. The *Caesar* pack describes "the way that the people of Rome become a mob, *under the sway of charismatic leaders*, firing each other up and perhaps behaving in ways that they wouldn't as individuals," something it suggests is an important feature of the play (2012a 2; emphasis mine). The wording takes for granted that it is the leaders' charisma, rather than the material context of the play, that convinces the crowd. A subsequent exercise proposes that the students act en masse, "feeding off the energy and actions of those around" and after running together from one corner to the other, return to the center and assume an exaggerated pose (2012a 2). While amusing to picture, this

caricaturizing reinforces the plebeians' homogeneity. Another section of the packet suggests a reading which further complicates a straightforward understanding of the plebeian's actions after hearing Antony's speech: "After [Mark Antony] has finished, [the plebeians] are determined to burn down the houses of all conspirators" (13). The "after" implies subsequence, not consequence, however, the next question: "How does *he* [i.e. Antony] do this?" implies the latter (13; emphasis mine). The packs seemingly confirm Richard Wilson's interpretation of the people's centrality as cliché on the grounds that a presence of a "would-be monarch" figure blocks any actual power transferences between leaders and citizens (158). The wordings in the *Cinna* pack are more explicitly anti-populist, stating that "the people of Rome act in impulsive, violent ways" (2). Thus, the plebs are granted no capacity to reflect. I am not implying that the pack discourages other readings, nor that they did not take place in classroom discussions. However, educationally speaking, this specific wording was risky given the political backdrop during a time in which conservative media reports, as Muhammed Abbas says, constructed single narratives on the motivations driving the August rioters. As Tom Slater describes, conservatives discredited the London riots, writing them off as bad behavior and bad parenting, rather than a very real consequence of poverty, a depiction that was only exacerbated by existing stigmatization and punitive measures (9-12). The rioters faced harsher criminal sentences than the usual for similar looting and theft crimes (Bell, Batman, and Machin 480; Trott). Even families whose sons and daughters had taken part in the riots were threatened with eviction and subsidization cuts (Leah McLaren; Slater 2). Presumably, these immediate consequences were present in classroom discussions despite their conspicuous absence from the teaching packets. One wonders whether the text of *Caesar* was used to interrogate such single-minded narratives.

Further paratextual elements of the two productions expose illusory mechanisms, showing the cameras, reels, and all the Illuminations equipment in both *Caesar* and *Cinna*. This runs counter to the productions' theatricality. In fact, the "Behind the Scenes" material of *Caesar* begins by presenting the exterior of the shopping mall setting, showing the facilities, corridors, food court, escalator, and technical resources. Despite Doran's apparent disinterest in local specificity, viewers may have been familiar with the closed-down mall. This recognition was much less likely in the paratextual elements of *Cinna*, although the trailer also presented much of the filmic process, such as the theatrical rehearsal. In Crouch's film, the rehearsal room and film studio function as inter-dialoguing spaces,

producing an effect contrary to the creators' intents, as it underlines filmic qualities. This reflexivity constructs the *theatrum mundi* metaphor on TV. In *Caesar*, the shot capturing Brutus and Cassius's aside before the assassination only a few inches from the lens strengthens the idea that the characters are seen in a public eye. Such an idea, whether intended or not, returns in *Cinna*, for the poet—and the whole world along with him—views the assassination of Caesar on TV.

### *Julius Caesar*

For Oliver Arnold, Shakespeare enhances drama in *Julius Caesar* by setting the assassination in the theatre itself (142). Theatricality works similarly as disciplinary logic in key scenes of Doran's *Caesar*. The opening scene celebrates Caesar's victory and the people's rejoicing at it; however, Wilson believes that the movements forward in the play involve steps backward, as sovereignty is eventually restored (130-31). And this sovereignty is decidedly not put into the hands of the people. In the film, the festive ambience of the play does not obscure the traces of a disciplinary state. The sets consist of a stepped platform on the thrust and an upstage rostra. The vertical and horizontal lines depicted in Figure 1 show the careful planning needed for the public scenes in the theater. Judging from the associations between the production's visuals and post-independence African signs, the iterations of Caesar's victorious representation implicate an aforementioned revolutionary utopianism. Caesar's ubiquity similarly corresponds to Michel Foucault's explanation of the Western transition from a punishment-based society—embodied in the film by Flavius and Murellus's violent treatment of the plebeians—to a disciplinary system where subjection is based on the control of consciences (9-16). At the same time as tribunes remove the symbols of Caesar's sovereignty and tear apart the orange and green flag in public view, the film captures the overlapping entrance of a new group of plebeians. The people of Rome are possessed by an interiorized love for Caesar, which is echoed throughout the scene.

Wilson describes how Shakespeare's play-text is filled with echoes (129). Such echoes and repetitions are apparent in the recurring cries of Caesar's name throughout the film. Spoken in an African accent, the cry of "*Sizaaah*" prolongs itself indefinitely over time and space. For example, the Cobbler (Ricky Fearon), who sells "*Sizaaah*" souvenirs, is possessed by the sensuous word as he addresses the tribunes. When Caesar arrives, the dancers sing "Oh Caesar's here, C-Caesar Caesar's here / Oh Cae-

sar's here C-oh!" The hypnotic effect of the sibilant consonant sounds of "*Sizaaah*" impacts the senses of both the performers and the TV viewers. Stage visual imagery accompanies the over-determining sounds. Behind the rostra, Caesar's statue shows its back to both audience and plebs: as Wilson describes, the "performance is supervised by a personal power hiding in full view" (143). In this way, Caesar's power both hides and exposes itself, as the representation of his face intrudes to every corner onstage and off. The permeability of such recognizable iconography is strengthened by the distortion of repetition (Wilson 136). Photographers invite people to take pictures with Caesar's portrait. Celebrants carry a broomstick with a crown on top, a stand-in for the future King Caesar. An aerial shot shows the celebrants carrying fans displaying images of Caesar's face. Others carry or even wrap themselves in Caesar's distinctive orange and green flags. All together, the fusion of totalitarian symbols and commodities in the opening is framed in ways similar to the systems that, in different ways, Puchner and Kershaw believe are theatrical forms that require subversion.

Over the course of the play, the iterative representation of *Sizaaah* mutates to infiltrate the apparent safety of the backstage spaces of dissidence. Amy Russell's analysis of private and public spaces in the Roman Republic's architecture shows that the distinction between "private" and "public" was fragile and that the boundaries between the spaces were "ill-defined" to serve the public patrons' hegemonic interests (95). In Doran's film, Caesar's dominant persona—embodied in the larger-than-life Kissoon—similarly blurs the boundaries between the private and the public. As Puchner says, anti-theatricalism involves a retreat from the public sphere (16), but even when Brutus and Cassius retreat backstage to avoid the crowds, Caesar's face printed on the walls invades the senators' privacy. The surveillance of the film's backstage areas recalls Foucault's description of disciplinary mechanisms as "visible" and "un-verifiable" (201). When Cassius (Cyril Nri), Brutus (Patterson Joseph), and Caska (Joseph Mydell) enter the restroom, they look conspicuously to both sides to verify that no one is spying on them, even as a long shot depicts the three senators in conversation, already implying that an external gaze invigilates them. Obstructions to theatrical acts of mimesis, as Wilson describes (138), generate their own revolt in Shakespeare's play. Even in the backstage of backstage, the restroom, an invisible disciplinary gaze—one metonymically represented by Caesar's statue, constantly staring into the backstage—intrudes to every intimate space. When Brutus leaves the room, Cassius, who washes his hands and then looks

at his reflection in the mirror, implicitly acknowledges this invigilating eye, recalling the way that, for Foucault, a "seeing machine" becomes "a transparent building in which the exercise of power may be supervised by society as a whole" (207). Cassius then turns and stares at the viewers, addressing them directly. While this gesture is not unusual in recorded theater, within this regime Cassius, faces an audience of TV controllers. The iteration of Caesar's representation equates *Illuminations*' iteration of surveillance. As I have written elsewhere, "The theatrical metaphor [in the *Illuminations*' Shakespeare] situates human beings in surveillance regimes where they perform according to certain exhortations" (2019). Interestingly, the iterations of surveillance in *Illuminations* develops less and less explicitly each time. Doran's *Macbeth* is constantly followed by a cameraman, who is treated like another character in the play. Doran's *Hamlet* inhabits a theatrical world controlled by CCTV cameras.<sup>7</sup> In Rupert Goold's *Macbeth*, Banquo's shrewd speech against the new king is recorded by an interphone.<sup>8</sup> In their respective films, both *Hamlet* and *Banquo* tear the recording devices from the walls. If surveillance works as a framing device, the limits between frame and framed narrative—self-consciously acknowledged by both characters—get thinner. In a similar way, Cassius's confession to the viewers discloses his plan to the world beyond the film as this surveillance moves the plot out of the theatrical frame into the viewer's homes.

Offstage, Caesar's performative power remains, as his downfall is preceded by a stylized covering of his face with the purple mantle. The conspirators prepare themselves for the ceremonial showing of Caesar's blood, but they do not hide their laughter when Antony proposes to "Produce [Caesar's] body to the market-place" (3.1.228). If we accept that the backstage scenes are exposed to the public eye, the surveillance captures the senators' cynicism. The framing often suggests a surveillance scopic regime. Even as the production moves away from over-theatricality, Caesar's face returns as meta-cinematic projection in a light bulb when the Ghost beckons Brutus to meet at Philippi. Though the icon of Caesar's face is first seen on stage, its iconic ubiquity is unaffected by any public/private dichotomy.

The backstage scenes depict danger more explicitly than the ones produced by saturation of *Sizaaah* images and sounds onstage. Backstage, we know that neither Caesar nor Antony, nor Octavius will be democratic rulers. Backstage, Antony "cut[s] off some charge in legacies" to the plebeians (4.1.9). Inserts show the executions commanded by Octavius and Antony. Several wrapped heads, whose eyes, perhaps, like Cassius, read

too much, are shot offstage. Similarly, Caesar shows his truly coercive true colors backstage. In life, as Adrian Goldsworthy says, Caesar was unwise in his public recommendation for people not to revere the likes of Cato, for “as an ideal of stern virtue and unflinching constancy Cato was much easier to revere than he had been as a living, active politician” (95). Nri’s Cassius is depicted as a potential political martyr and gains a sympathy often denied to him in performance: The head, a symbol of martyrdom and dissent, is present in various scenes. Backstage, Caesar taunts Cassius in front of others, rather than aside as the scene is often performed. The image of Cassius’s head in close-up and then again in profile, against a wall decorated with the representation of the Capitoline She-Wolf, metonymically anticipates the execution of dissenting minds who, like Cassius, may “[read] much” (1.2.200). Other heads dissent or, at least, show only ambiguity for Caesar’s regime. Antony first laughs at Caesar’s claim of his preference for “men that are fat” (1.2.191), but his face later goes out of focus as a tracking shot reveals the faces of Caesar’s followers. Some, like Cicero (Ricky Fearon), are similarly out of focus, others hide their face with dark glasses, and others’ gazes remain obscure. Only Portia’s troubled visage suggests that Cassius is not the only one who sees “Quite through the deeds of [Caesar]” (1.2.202).

Despite Caesar’s backstage outbursts, whispers of rebellion undermine the seemingly ubiquitous cry of “*Sizaaah*.” If an unpleasant depiction of Caesar’s voice and body create an excess of disciplinary theater, an underlying stream of dissident talk magnifies the power of poetic discourse to counteract tyranny. Capitalizing on the play’s popularity as a text, in “Behind the Scenes,” Doran emphasizes the importance of a passage underlined by Mandela in the Robben Island Bible:

Cowards die many times before their deaths;  
The valiant never taste of death but once.  
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard  
It seems to me most strange that men should fear;  
Seeing that death, a necessary end,  
Will come when it will come. (2.2.32-37)

Poignantly, Colette Gordon says that “there is little to connect Mandela’s appropriation of Caesar’s stoic defiance to a vision of African history as an endless cycle of despotism” (208). Doran’s production, however, actively makes such a connection as Kissoon’s Caesar delivers these lines. Steve Lawes’s camerawork also translates the significance of Mandela’s underlined passage to other scenes in which close-ups, reaction shots,

and tracking shots intensify rousing calls for action. Cassius’s catalogue of Caesar’s weaknesses (1.2.97-131) begins mid shot, and then the lens zooms in to Nri’s face, cropped while he unleashes his quiet rage against the dictator. Relayed in a close-up, Cassius’s head literally covers the print of Caesar’s on the wall, visually suggesting his emulation. Cassius’s tone later moves from suave persuasive language into a straightforward provocation of Brutus, who sits down. A low angle reveals Cassius’s angry face, again cropped, looking down on his friend both physically and symbolically as he describes the “dishonourable graves” (1.2.137) that have been left for them. Brutus by briefly turning his gaze up to Cassius. When he looks down again, Cassius launches a second call for action:

Men at some time are masters of their fates.  
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars  
But in ourselves, that we are underlings. (1.2.138-140)

These are worlds that Mandela himself penned when drafting the manifesto for the Youth League of the African National Congress in 1944 (Desai 16; Shakespeare News 2013). Lawes records Brutus’s reaction to these lines, which cause Brutus’s second upward glance, this time slower, more controlled and decisive. This exchange parallels the one between the sportsman Françoise Pienaar (Matt Damon) and the ghost of Mandela (Morgan Freeman) in *Invictus* at Robben Island’s quarry. Mandela’s specter returns the rugby player’s gaze, and while Pienaar takes the low angle his gaze is a questioning one. Mandela takes a mid-high angle and looks up to Freeman’s voiceover of William E. Henley’s last lines of the poem after which the film is named: “I am the master of my fate / I am the captain of my soul.” Doran’s final shots recall Eastwood’s just as Henley’s lines echo Shakespeare’s. These echoes are distorted, for, while Eastwood’s pristine characters meet each other’s eye in open daylight, Doran’s chiaroscuros reveal a darker side of Brutus’s psyche. Joseph’s Brutus comes across as genuinely noble and honest, though his self-conscious performance makes it difficult to differentiate the idealist from the dogmatist. The actor defends Brutus’s decision not to kill Antony in sympathetic terms:

When we talk of nobility, justice and honour as weaknesses, it exposes our negatively skewed morality. It isn’t just that these qualities are objectively good; they are essential for empathy. And empathy, that most undervalued of human qualities, is what should motivate anyone seeking political office and influence. (70)

In an interview included in the DVD, though, Joseph suggests that Brutus does not set his republicanism apart from his pride as descendant of the first Brutus. Apart from frequent chiaroscuros indicating Brutus's duplicity, other camera moves similarly suggest Brutus's dominant—and at times, dogmatic—charisma. When he first meets the conspirators, his speech (2.1.131-190) is recorded with left-to-right and right-to-left tracking shots, throughout which Joseph's nuanced and pithy performance remains the focal point. Indeed, Joseph's goal was to ensure that, as he says in the interview, "Shakespeare is sublime when it's just spoken" on TV. Progressively, though, his lofty soliloquies are contrasted with the width of the lens. His "There is a tide in the affairs of men" speech features him in profile shots which delineate the verticality of Joseph's body (4.3.216-222). Just as the republicans are "at the height...ready to decline," so here is the power of text (4.3.215). Joseph's figure is off-center to the left of the frame, revealing the gritty realities of a military camp led by a group of under-supplied cynical soldiers. In this scene, the literary nature of drama is juxtaposed by such a hyper realistic depiction.

More significantly, the suggestion of a larger outside reality affects the masses who seem much less dangerous onstage than off. Looking into the plebeians in the forum scenes, there is no apparent internal dissention as they accept Brutus and Antony's propositions in unison. For Terrence Hawkes, a post-Marxist view of the play emphasizes that Shakespeare makes too much of rhetoric as means of consolidating patrician hegemony, and this indeed seems to be the case in the forum scenes (207). The editing shows the progressive surrender of the plebs to Antony's roars, as the Fourth Plebeian in mid-shot says: "Twere best he speak no harm of Brutus here" (3.2.69). A few shots later, the same character speaks the lines of Third Plebeian: "There's not a nobler man in Rome than Antony" (3.2.117). However, the offstage scenes show traces of a less homogenous outside force. Drawing from Carl Schmitt, Wilson associates the non-mimetic aspects in *Caesar* to "political intruders," which function as a return of the repressed (142). The non-mimetic offstage are clearly meant to recall 2011 London. Even though Oriental City was not specifically affected by the August riots, the setting is clearly a stand in for the many other malls—e.g. Debenhams (Clapham Junction) and Wood Green (Tottenham)—which were targeted. British geographer and Marxist social theorist David Harvey describes the "predatory practices" inherent in the privatization of public spaces, which he says create micro-states, effectively expropriating the marginalized and underprivileged "in the name of civic improvement" (15-16). Oriental City was privatized in such

a way, as it was redeveloped at the expense of traders who, despite their backing by the Commission for Racial Equality and the Chinese government, failed in their attempts to stop it. Eventually, the mall was closed as part of the larger redevelopment operation of the Mayor's London Plan (2011), which involved the building of 10,000 new homes. Oriental City re-opened in 2017 as Bang Bang Food Hall after redevelopment, a newly gentrified area aimed towards wealthy young families in the new residential complexes of Beaufort Park and Colindale Gardens. Even four years later, in 2015, Colindale's Tenant Eviction Services' websites showed that there were still a large number of evictions taking place. If, as Wilson says, Shakespeare equates theater with state violence (169), here the structural violence of *Caesar* spreads beyond the stage. Doran's stage implies the predatory practices inherent in its offstage counterpart. Indeed, such practices occurred in the exact area of its setting. As cuts to legal aid and other austerity measures were introduced, prices increased for citizens who could not pay. Just as in Caesar's time, social divisions and civil strife work solely for the leaders' advantage (Hawkes 201). For Harvey, the riots took place in a context in which corrupt politicians cheated, bankers stole public money, and prices increased (156). The location suggests that the people's fury has less to do with Antony's rhetoric than with a contemporary anger, hinting that this dispossessed mob exists offstage just as much as it does in the play.

### I, *Cinna (the Poet)*

Crouch's film predominantly takes place indoors at Cinna's refuge from the offstage public. He presents the outside as a site of deceit, violence, and media-based political control where the people "want to make Caesar king. Or they think that's what they want. Or they've been told that's what they want. Or they've been paid to think that's what they want" (18-19). Because of Cinna's status as poet he warns against mingling with others. He comments cynically on Caesar's and Antony's actions on screen and is particularly indignant is his reaction to the conspirators' dipping their hands into Caesar's body (35). Cinna's onstage viewing of the events of *Caesar* suggests that the worlds of the two films are connected by their audio-visual audiences. In Crouch's film, this connection is specifically brought to the forefront; Cinna's position as a spectator himself actively makes him a part of the audience. Additionally, Cinna vocally resents Antony's deal with the conspirators: "You can see the men shake hands and shake heads. They are discussing the future of us all. These bloodied

men" (36). The viewers might have associated this hand-shaking with the televised hand-shaking between conservative and liberal democrats that preceded the cancellation of the Education Maintenance Allowance, as the footage of the demonstrations shows banners reading "Education is dead" and "Apathy is dead."

Cinna is convinced that "[there's nothing] that cannot be done or undone with words," a conviction which aligns Cinna's poetic indoctrination of the intimate screen audience with the principals of anti-theatricality (41). Cinna's programmatic endeavor could not be expressed more clearly: "We must pick up our pens and take over. Write a revolution. That's what poetry is for!" (22). However, Cinna's pen-clinching passion has no teeth. Part of the explanation for this is Cinna's obvious alienation from the crowds that he intends to lead to a revolution. Footage shows that the crowd is neither feeble nor passive, but combative; Cinna claims that he wants to write about a revolution that they are already making. Cinna misinterprets the crowds' alienation even though the reasons for their protests are clearly visible on their banners. As he mimics Antony's theatrical gestures during his speech, he assumes that it is the consul's poetic force that draws the plebs in. Watching the forum scene, he describes the camerawork that enhances Antony's speech. As he repeats Antony's words, Cinna recognizes them as a kind of true poetry that he is not able to write.

Under these circumstances, Crouch implies that Cinna pays the price for his disengagement from the world ("Trailer"). For this, Cinna's speeches must be read against the grain as his use of words shows that he is not truly convinced of the capacity of language to incite revolution. His fetishizing of the beauty of words abstracts them from their content. He echoes Cassius as he instructs the students to write "JULIUS CAESAR" and "BRUTUS" together, but instead simply suggests that the students "Get them out of our system!" (17). Grandiose as these words are, and even though the students have varied emotional responses, their so-called "system" is supervised by state-subsidized educational institutions and sponsors of the broadcast. Cinna comes across as irreverent, but not dangerous. Although he defines himself as a poet, he does not take advantage of poetic materials around him. Even when he finds them, he dismisses them as "words of substance [which] paint the picture but [that] have no great power in themselves. They are the citizens of the republic. They are you and me" (26). This is a strange position for a poet who rejoices at the sound of the word "REPUBLIC" (21), to think of the words of everyday citizens, such as "teabag," "kettle," "chicken," "corpse," "blood," "dagger,"

"butcher," "leader," as insignificant (26). It sounds strange when words of such capacity to blend ordinariness and dramatic force emerge amidst revolutionary discourse. Cinna regards himself as a "bracket," defined as "[a part] of the sentence that can be removed" (15). This is just one example of Cinna's inconsistency, as he invites, "Let's write together you and me. We'll write until we know what to write" (17). This seems a long way off from his earlier summons for the students to write "a revolution." Cinna's actions as the play progresses reveal his willful ignorance. After a long rant about the government's indoctrination, he recoils in fright at the word "crown," claiming that "Sometimes it's better not to think too much. Leave it to politicians. It's got nothing to do with poems, has it? Has it?" (19). Physically distancing himself from the crowd, he "[closes his] curtains" to the world of the theater (18). His so-called "writing revolution" now requires only that he and the students "write [themselves] safe" (18).

Crouch seems to apply Elinor Fuchs's theory of anti-theatricalism in his production. Based on Plato's allegory of the cave, Fuchs connects anti-theatricalist plays with the narrative of the cave-dweller whose contact with the outside world leads to a regression after the traumatic experience of the light of outside truth (338). In a clear suggestion of this concept, the film suspends the poet in this abyss of light. There, Cinna transforms, both physically and poetically, as the dramatic forms he experiments with now blend anaphora and the recognition of concrete materiality: "And here are the streets. And here I am. And here is the chaos. And here I am. And here is the mob. And here I am. A small man on the high tide of history" (43). Perhaps discouragingly, the outside world is presented more vaguely than Cinna's private space and the non-definition of this white light zone immerses the viewer in even more delusion.

Kate McLuskie regards Crouch's play as abstract and pontificating, and while this may be true, Crouch's anti-theatricality contains its own critique. Cinna's views on the plebeians discourage belief in democratic change, however footage and specific allusions to the outside world prove that citizens do want that change, whether or not they know how to express it. After the riots, in fact, Harvey describes how the rioters, though familiar with the practices of capitalism, could not see that Thatcherism had released "feral capitalism," a system designed to obscure its own control mechanisms (157). Narratives condemning rioters and protesters are intended to obscure the identity of the real rioters. The film encourages a re-examination of *Julius Caesar* as an inquiry into the subjectivity of contemporary plebeians. Philemon Holland's 1606 translation of Suetonius describes a social map composed of "Minstrels," "stage players,"



“olde Legionarie soldiers,” “Cittie Dames,” people “from forraine Nations (...) above all other the Jewes” mourning for Caesar (78). Though Shakespeare’s play-text capitalizes on the different parties’ desires to have the plebeians on their sides, the play itself does not reveal much of the citizens’ individualities (Peltonen). Alan Sinfield’s proposed rewrite of Shakespeare’s play would allow the plebeians a “serious stake in the system,” cutting patricians’ scenes, creating more opportunity for the people—including ordinary soldiers—to be protagonists (19–20).

Recent Shakespearean narratives have done exactly this. HBO’s *Rome* displays a large list of non-aristocratic characters fulfilling immediate survival needs. As Caesar’s servant Posca (Nicholas Woodeson) says, “The Roman people are not crying out for clean elections. They’re crying out for clean water, for food, for stability and peace” (“Triumph”). Doran’s recent staging of *Imperium* depicts a riotous city whose inhabitants—often homeless—struggle to survive while corrupt politicians deplete the state’s resources. These narratives decentralize the political struggles of the play from the exercises in persuasion of the forum scenes and instead display a complex network of pacts, negotiations, and betrayals that stress the plebeians’ importance in the story. Though versioned, *Cinna* closely follows Shakespeare’s text but, as in the two previously mentioned productions, links Shakespeare to the very real nightmare in the lives of a contemporary “feral underclass.” These abject and abstract sections of the population, which Owen Jones refers to as the “chavs,” are a demonized class of citizens, despised by conservatives and liberals alike. This class was reported to have exploded during the protests and the riots (Zizek; Bauman). Like the Roman citizens, they reclaimed the streets as a response to dispossession. Such a reclaiming is echoed in a film insert during *Cinna* which depicts “a collage of riots and unrest—burning buildings, car upturned, injured protesters. The images speed up and climax in words appearing on the screen: Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead” (33). Images of the London riots circulating on YouTube and social media imply a social spectrum much larger than the one represented on Doran’s stage or in *Cinna*’s judgement—and by extension, one even more complex than the one depicted by the media during the decade preceding the riots. Jones’s polemical work denounces the fact that hatred for the working classes has become “socially acceptable” (2). These imaginary illiterate, racist, disorientated, blade-carrying, violent, lazy barbaric, uninspired, stigmatized monsters exist in the offstage reality of both films. Their latency constitutes the nightmare for the rulers of this world, just as it does in Shakespeare’s. Likewise, these people embody *Cinna*’s nightmare, for even during the killing, Owusu doubles as his own murderer.

The implication of this feral mob contains its own critique. The offstage world implied in the films is larger than the nightmare Crouch and Doran construct. Ingham believes that embedded stage plays challenge the assumption that theater is strictly centripetal and film strictly centrifugal, as it provides a medium for the frontal and centered qualities of theatrical models to fuse with the lateral and vertical maneuverability of filmic language (131). This effect is visible in both films’ backstage-to-offstage transitions and suggests a clear connection to contemporary riots. When *Cinna*’s Ghost returns, he asks: “Was I innocent because I wouldn’t get involved? Or was I guilty because I wouldn’t get involved?” (45). And, because the old-school teacher-poet simply cannot help giving the answers to the questions he asks:

Here’s how you write a poem.

First, you must live. Then you must question. Then you must be free. (46)

Ironically, *Cinna*’s metatheatrical suspension offstage allows him to achieve his poetic quest, for his ultimate act, his own death, receives the highest poetic dimensions in the film. Yet, the cost of the ultimate poetic act is *Cinna*’s own life. The poet’s contact with life causes a transformation in his language after death. His ghost’s testimony of the events acquires a straightforward, matter-of-fact style as reports the deaths of innocent people, which he links to contemporary rioting:

A woman is here, caught in the crossfire of bricks and stones from the riots that followed Caesar’s death. And old man is here whose heart stopped out of terror. A young man is here, killed falling from a burning building. (47)

Shakespeare’s language is subsumed into *Cinna*’s report as the playwright’s phrases function as news headlines linking political events to Shakespeare’s literary authority. Such a realistic style approximates that of the riot plays performed at the time. Gillian Slovo’s eminently anti-theatrical play *The Riots* prescribes the actors’ delivery to be spoken “in matter-of-fact tones. No heat, no melodrama, just telling us how it is” (7). Alecky Blythe’s *Little Revolution* depicts the Hackney’s reconstruction after the violence, a narrative which exposes the many fractures inside London communities as a consequence of poverty and gentrification (8). Though less polyphonic, Crouch’s collaborative approach in *Cinna* follows the example of his contemporaries in times of social crisis and fracture. Unfortunately, very few of the poems written by the viewers are available for public access.<sup>9</sup> Responding to *Cinna*’s task, Brian Edminston wrote: “Butchered like a chicken / By heartless men / Following the rightness

of the mob / Following the wrongness of the inauspicious day." This oxymoron captures the essence of a narrative which disapproved of the violence of the riots, but showed sympathy for the enraged underclass. A poem displayed on Cinna's wall reads: "When I wake up / Up I am going / To wonder what / All this was / About" ("Trailer"). While this "waking up" presumably alludes to Cinna's dreaming, it also echoes a widespread political awakening during the aftermath of the riots. Politicians, sociologists, artists, and intellectuals reacted publicly to the condemnation of the "feral youth." Some artists condemned the rioters (see Nick Scott's "Stop Smashing Up London You Stupid Bastards!"), others disagreed with the violence but spoke highly of the sense of community in some sectors. Such was the case of Emmeline Pidgen's riot relief poster, "Communities Can Be Stronger Than Criminals." Ian Stevenson's poster, "Start Art Not Riots," attempted to address the general disregard for the needs of the public. Art student Elizabeth Eisen's painting, "Rise of the Planet of the Chavs," denounced the "racist, classist and downright ignorant" general demonization of the rioters.<sup>10</sup> Sarah Butler's novel *Before the Fire* (2015) depicts a climate of consumerism, gentrification, competition, and social divide through a lens of ambivalence, a society where the less-favored get angry only when their own apathy is exposed. These narratives contest the "chav" caricatures. In a milder approach, Doran's *Caesar* presents the Cobbler as a theatrically "irreverent" tradesman. However, despite their heroic resistance to the rioters, many tradesmen were left without "holiday" after the riots, as their businesses were destroyed, sometimes irreversibly. The traces of assault at the mall contrast this offstage reality with the Cobbler's performance of apathy. Crouch's film shows crowds of angry citizens and a hungry poet forced to eat rotten food. This character stands for the outside dispossessed only in name, representing those who are never entirely revealed but whose latent presence is constantly felt.

### Conclusion

Theatricality and anti-theatricality are sites of ideological dispute which anchor the previously discussed productions in a riotous context where the celebration of social progress—the Olympiad—went hand in hand with regressive policies producing dispossession and social unrest. Theatrical spaces function as areas where various mechanisms of control rule or block the people's wills. Such disciplinary mechanisms are so pervasive that they often penetrate private spheres through repetition and distortion. Nonetheless, the offstage alternatives to these abstract

theaters are sites of social struggle, progress, protest, and active political engagement, as well as violence and turmoil. Anti-theatrical spaces create sites of dissidence where dreams of freedom and social transformation are uttered in whispers softer than stage roars. Shakespeare's text as literary work both sets fills a listener's ears with utopian narratives of liberation and at the same time configures individualistic and dogmatic rhetoric. The two films force the viewer to distinguish political valences intermingled in a series of progressive and regressive moves articulated through performance and mechanisms of symbolic control. Rather than reducing their messages to political macro-statements, the films invite a nuanced recognition of such movements. These do not only affect the political struggles in Shakespeare's play but represent zones that exist between theatrical illusion and material reality. Such "inter-zones" are composed of synechdochic traces of the "Real real." The outside's latency turns the voices, bodies, and subjects whose absence itself constitutes the imaginative potential for excess in the films into a nightmare, as suggestions of the outside recall cultural discourses of rioting and protest. Doran intended for his production to set Shakespeare's play in an unspecified African country. Crouch's work blends images of contemporary London with Cinna's denunciations of dictatorship in his own ancient country. As films, these productions build upon complex mechanisms of illusion and a mediated perception of an offstage whose buildings, streets, stores, and symbols become fragments of indigenous nightmares.

### Notes

1. Crouch wrote the play-text and directed the stage production and the film.
2. See "*Julius Caesar: Behind the Scenes*" (DVD) and the "Feature Trailer" of *Cinna*.
3. Scenes 1.1 and part of 1.2; 3.2 and the last lines of 5.5. All quotes from Shakespeare's text come from Shakespeare, William. *Julius Caesar*. Edited by David Daniell, Arden Shakespeare, 1998.
4. See Mike Pearson, *Site-Specific Performance*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; Anna Birch and Joanne Tompkins (eds), *Performing Site-Specific Theatre (Politics, Place, Practice)*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
5. The rehearsal process for the stage production and the filming run in parallel. Due to this schedule, Doran and Wyver decided to shoot the "public scenes" on stage and the "private scenes" on location (see A. J. Carroll 32-33; Wyver 2016; "Making-Off").
6. Andrew J. Carroll explains this methodology which consisted of organizing reading scenes in groups which are re-cast when they move forward to a next scene. When doubts arise on character's objectives, meanings of lines, or other



uncertainties in the text, discussion takes place. Having concluded the scene's analysis, the group re-reads it, paraphrasing Shakespeare's words in order to ensure an understanding of imagery and metaphors (23).

7. See Sébastien Lefait, "The Same Strict and Most Observant Watch' (1.1.71): Gregory Doran's *Hamlet* as Surveillance Adaptation," *Borrowers and Lenders*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2013–2014; Víctor Huertas Martín, "Theatrical Reflexivity in Gregory Doran's *Hamlet*," *Epos, Revista de Filología*, vol. 32, 2016, pp. 243–262.

8. See Víctor Huertas Martín, "Rupert Goold's *Macbeth* (2010): Surveillance Society and Society of Control." *Sederi*, vol. 27, 2017, pp. 81–103.

9. The website where the poems were published is now non-accessible.

10. See Martin Newman, "Colour Mixed with Confusion: How Artists Responded to the 2011 England Riots." *Huffpost*, 28 March 2012.

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## PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

### *Gary: A Sequel to Titus Andronicus*

Presented at **Booth Theatre**, New York. April 21-June 16, 2019. Written by Taylor Mac. Directed by George C. Wolfe. Scenic design by Santo Loquasto. Costume design by Jules Fisher and Peggy Eisenhauer. With Nathan Lane (Gary), Kristine Nielsen (Janice), and Julie White (Carol).

ALICIA ANDRZEJEWSKI, *The College of William & Mary*

Where do we find hope when chaos abounds, and how does theater inform this question—if at all? At the start of Taylor Mac's *Gary*, a woman emerged from behind the curtain "speechifying" while attempting to plug up neck wounds that sprayed blood onto audience members. "Buckle up," she told the audience, to feast "on the gore till you are ill." This opening address was filled with questions about what *Gary*—or any play—can accomplish when "bloody sequels" and spectacles of vengeance choke our past and present. Does the theater impact our ability to grapple with "all that's passed"—or all that will? What cuts through the gore? Over the course of ninety-five minutes, *Gary* made it clear that Mac's answer to this question is hope—a particular hope found in fooling, baubles, and play.

George C. Wolfe's production is set directly after *Titus Andronicus* concludes, and Mac resurrects and names two of Shakespeare's nameless characters: the Clown, Gary (Nathan Lane), and the Nurse, Carol (Julie White), while adding a third character, Janice (Kristine Nielsen), who cared for Lavinia and the Andronicus household behind the scenes. After Carol's opening monologue ended and she exited the stage, the curtain rose to reveal a pile of dead bodies. When Gary entered, he briefly summarized *Titus Andronicus* for the audience: the war has ended, and he is now charged with cleaning up the bodies left in the wake of a horrific coup. *Gary's* narrative revolves predominantly around Gary's aspirations to become a court Fool as opposed to a Clown or cleaner—a Fool who will stage an "artistic coup" to inspire the Roman people to end all massacre, one in which all the "takeovers, tantrums, endless campaigns, pillaged elections, apocalyptic weather-spewing-forth-shark-attack-family-feuds" and massacres are presented to such a "ridiculous degree you can't see anything but its ridiculousness." But first, Gary must