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THE ROLE OF THE GLOBE THEATRE IN SHAPING  
SHAKESPEARE'S *TRAGEDY OF JULIUS CAESAR*

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## ON SHAKESPEARE

*What needs my Shakespeare for his honoured bones  
The labour of an age in pilèd stones?  
Or that his hallowed reliques should be hid  
Under a star-ypointing pyramid?  
Dear son of Memory, great heir of Fame,  
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?  
Thou in our wonder and astonishment  
Hast built thyself a livelong monument.  
For whilst, to th' shame of slow-endeavouring art,  
Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart  
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book  
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,  
Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,  
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving,  
And so sepulchred in such pomp dost lie  
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.*

John Milton (OP)

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Florianópolis, 19 October 2012

## ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF THE GLOBE THEATRE IN SHAPING  
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UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA  
2012

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This study assesses the impact of a specific theatre space on Shakespeare's work along two broad lines of inquiry. The sociopolitical environment and the structural features and resources of the Globe theatre are examined in turn, in an effort to ascertain the extent to which they may have shaped the conception and enactment of *Julius Caesar* in 1599. The social, religious, and political concerns of contemporary London are elucidated by the identification of relevant evidence from the play text. Likewise, discussions of the Globe's structure and staging conditions are informed by the analysis of several key scenes from the play. The study relates the attributes of the Globe theatre and the Shakespearean stage in general to the concepts of Holy and Rough Theatre found in Peter Brook's *The Empty Space*, and employs Andrew Gurr's notion of the "Shakespearean Mindset" as well as J. L. Styan's theories concerning the imaginative neutrality of the stage space and the creative collaboration of the audience, to apprehend the connection between the language of *Julius Caesar* and the specific theatre space in which it was first enacted. The metaphorical potential of the stage space and theatre structure as a whole are discussed with reference to discernable metatheatrical moments in the play. The study verifies a complex connection between *Julius Caesar* and the Globe theatre and its surroundings, allowing for an improved understanding of the play's layered contextual significance, as well as informing of staging practices at the Globe that brought Shakespeare's words to life.

19,567 words  
59 pages



## RESUMO

O PAPEL DO TEATRO GLOBE NA FORMAÇÃO DA  
TRAGEDIA SHAKESPEARIANA *JULIUS CAESAR*

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UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA  
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Este trabalho avalia o impacto de um espaço de teatro específico sobre a obra de Shakespeare ao longo de duas amplas linhas de investigação. O ambiente sócio-político e as características estruturais e recursos do teatro Globe são analisados sucessivamente, em um esforço para determinar a medida em que eles podem ter formado a concepção e encenação de *Julius Caesar* em 1599. As questões sociais, religiosas e políticas da Londres contemporânea são elucidadas pela identificação de evidências relevantes no texto. Da mesma forma, as discussões sobre a estrutura do Globe e as condições de encenação são esclarecidas pela análise de várias cenas-chave da peça. O estudo relaciona os atributos do teatro Globe e do teatro Shakespeareano em geral aos conceitos de “Holy and Rough Theatre” de Peter Brook, e utiliza a concepção de Andrew Gurr chamada “Shakespearean Mindset,” assim como as teorias de J. L. Styan relativas à neutralidade imaginativa do espaço do palco e à colaboração criativa do público, para compreender a conexão entre a linguagem de *Julius Caesar* e do espaço teatral em que foi inicialmente encenada. O potencial metafórico do espaço do palco e da estrutura do teatro como um todo é discutido no que tange a momentos metateatrais discerníveis na peça. O estudo verifica uma relação complexa entre *Julius Caesar* e o teatro Globe e os seus arredores, permitindo uma melhor compreensão da significância contextual multifacetada da peça, bem como registro de práticas de encenação no Globe que trouxeram as palavras de Shakespeare à vida.

19,567 palavras  
59 páginas

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The overall problem here investigated concerns the concept of a connection between a dramatic work and the environment in which that work is to be enacted. The impact of a particular theatre space on the dramaturgy of a playwright and on the enactment of a play may be assessed in terms of both the structural characteristics and the sociopolitical environment of that space.<sup>1</sup> The situation of a theatre in space and time coupled with the playwright's professional resources may be seen to contribute to the writing of a play and its subsequent performance.<sup>2</sup> The identification of such a connection between a play and the background of its conception addresses a question about the significance of historical contexts in literature. Particularly in reference to canonical works that are often considered to possess a transcendent relevance, the role of the physical and ideological environment in which they were originally written and staged can be underestimated. Stanley Wells instructs that the Shakespeare canon deserves attention in this regard: “There is a sense in which his plays have become 'modern and familiar' to us, so appropriated into our own cultural expectations that we ignore, or are unaware of, the full range of resonances that they may have caused to sound in the ears of their first hearers” (Foreword viii).

The general context of this study is the period of Renaissance theatre in London between 1576 and 1642. The period has been selected because it is marked by prolific theatrical production that was curtailed as abruptly as it was begun, and that was defined by the career of its most illustrious playwright, William Shakespeare (1564-1616). Theatre historian Franklin J. Hildy explains that the late nineteenth century

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<sup>1</sup> This study uses the term *dramaturgy* with reference to its basic definition as “the theory and practice of dramatic composition” (*Oxford Dictionary of English*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2010), as corroborated by Patrice Pavis: “[d]ramaturgy is usually defined as 'the art of composition of plays’” (124).

<sup>2</sup> As early as 1765 the Shakespearean critic Edward Capell made “the first articulation of the notion that there is a relationship between the way a playwright constructs a play and the physical conditions of theatrical performance that exist during that playwright's career” (Hildy 14).

*Elizabethan Revival*<sup>3</sup> “was based upon the assumption that the Age of Shakespeare was, by any measure, one of the most successful periods theatre has ever experienced. There may be important lessons to be learned from a meticulous examination of the stagecraft that made it work” (22). Two years after securing the first recorded royal patent for playing companies, James Burbage opened a playhouse named the Theatre in the London suburb of Shoreditch in 1576, and thereby began the process of developing and legitimising the increasingly popular pastime of playgoing in Elizabethan London.<sup>4</sup> The outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642 led to the closure of all theatres and brought this period of rich dramatic creativity to a close.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout the period, playing companies faced opposition from city authorities and the contempt of censorious Puritans, as well as the threat of plague epidemics that forced temporary theatre closures. Although the death of Elizabeth I in 1603 marked a political shift in England, the theatrical conventions that emerged in the late sixteenth century outlived her reign and continued to thrive under Jacobean and Carolingian rule until Charles I was forced to relinquish authority over London in 1642.<sup>6</sup> Charles Moseley maintains that the physical qualities of playhouses in the period acted as parts of “a symbolic structure which as a whole had implications and associations that differ sharply from our own ideas about the theatre” (32). Outside the theatre, the selected period of English history is characterised by international conflict and a transitional society of contradictions that was destined for civil war.<sup>7</sup> London's population saw relentless growth across the period and the city

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<sup>3</sup> Theatre movement led by William Poel (1852-1934), who founded the *Elizabethan Stage Society* in 1894. Poel and his followers “produced many of Shakespeare's plays in conditions approximating to those of the Elizabethan theatre,” beginning with *Hamlet* in 1881 (Wells, *Oxford Dictionary of Shakespeare* 140-1).

<sup>4</sup> The term *Elizabethan London* incorporates the capitalised *City* of London governed by the Lord Mayor as well as its suburbs.

<sup>5</sup> “During the Puritan Commonwealth the theatres were closed; it was said that the people had seen enough public tragedy and no longer required any dramatic version” (Ackroyd 172).

<sup>6</sup> For a general term that encompasses the chosen theatrical period, the proposed study henceforth follows Gurr in forsaking the terms 'Renaissance' and 'Elizabethan/Jacobean' in favour of 'Shakespearean': “The seventy years of play-acting in which Shakespeare's career was embedded needs to be seen as a whole, and the best single word for it is Shakespearean” (*The Shakespearean Stage* ix).

<sup>7</sup> The term *civil war* here denotes the English Civil War fought between King Charles I and his parliamentary opponents (1642-9).

was the focus for dramatists, players, and playgoers alike, providing a rich resource of creative inspiration to its people, while also attracting artistic talent from elsewhere, as exemplified by Shakespeare.<sup>8</sup>

The specific theatre space that represents the focus of this study is the Globe theatre in its first incarnation, built in 1599 on London's Bankside in the borough of Southwark (appendix fig. 1). Its selection is corroborated by the circumstances of its construction as "the first London theatre built by actors for actors" (Shapiro 131). The Lord Chamberlain's Men<sup>9</sup> were in need of a new permanent venue after losing the lease for the Theatre in 1597, and literally carried the framing timbers of the old theatre to the new site. Andrew Gurr underlines the importance of the circumstances of the theatre's construction: "The Globe [. . .] thus became the first playhouse to be owned by its players, and, within the limits set by the old frame, the first one built to their own design" ("The Shakespearean Stage" 3298). James Shapiro reiterates the significance of this specific theatre space:

Whether it was the relief of working in a playhouse free of the ghosts of the past, or the sense of potential that the new theatre offered, the Globe clearly had a lot to do with the great surge of energy and creativity at this moment in Shakespeare's career. His surroundings could only have contributed to this vitality. Located outside the jurisdiction of the London authorities, the Bankside had a reputation for freewheeling independence. (121)

From this auspicious beginning, the Globe was to become the setting for the most prolific and lucrative period of Shakespeare's career, and would witness the first performances of his greatest plays.<sup>10</sup>

It follows that the specific context of this investigation is

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<sup>8</sup> London historian Stephen Porter informs that the city and its environs "contained approximately 200,000 inhabitants at the end of the sixteenth century, when the population of England was around four million. London's population had risen from 160,000 over the previous forty years and continued to expand, reaching 260,000 by 1625" (12).

<sup>9</sup> Shakespeare's professional playing company, formed in 1594 under the patronage of the Lord Chamberlain, the official in charge of the royal household.

<sup>10</sup> In the essay "The Shakespearean Stage," Gurr states that "[f]or this theater [. . .] Shakespeare wrote his greatest plays: *Julius Caesar*, *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Pericles*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and most likely *Troilus and Cressida* and *Timon of Athens*" (3298).

defined by the nine years that the Lord Chamberlain's Men spent with the Globe theatre as their principal focus of dramatic production. This period began with the opening of the Globe in the summer of 1599 and ended in 1608, when an outbreak of the plague in London forced the theatres to close until the following year. During this recess, the company fulfilled its long-standing ambition of moving to the Blackfriars theatre hall that Burbage had first acquired in 1596. The accession of James I in 1603 had given the renamed playing group more influence as the King's Men and allowed them to finally play within city limits, evading the restrictions of authorities. Although the Globe in its first run continued to stage Shakespeare's plays until it was destroyed by fire during a performance on 29 June 1613,<sup>11</sup> the move to the indoor Blackfriars theatre meant that “[b]y the time theaters reopened late in 1609, the company had established a new system of playing” (Gurr, “The Shakespearean Stage” 3298-300). Such a shift in focus within the company for whom Shakespeare wrote his plays justifies the selection of the year 1608 as the furthest reach for a study of the relationship between a playwright and a particular theatre space. This view is supported by Moseley's explanation that the Blackfriars theatre “was an enclosed oblong auditorium, with artificial lighting, and the opportunities this offered certainly affected the composition of Shakespeare's later plays” (26).

With the literary scope of the study thus defined as the dramatic production of Shakespeare's playing company at the Globe theatre between 1599 and 1608, this introductory chapter will present the hypotheses that are to be addressed and explain the selection of the corpus as well as the procedures that will be employed to fulfil the stated objectives. Besides providing a scholarly background to the specific focus of the study, this chapter also introduces the major critical controversies and theoretical concepts that require consideration when investigating the possible effects of Shakespeare's environment on his work. The pitfalls that this line of inquiry aims to circumvent through a

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<sup>11</sup> Several contemporary records attest to this event, including the 1615 reprint of John Stow's *Survey of London*, which establishes that “upon St. Peter's day last, the play-house or theatre called the Globe, upon the Bankside near London, by negligent discharging of a peal of ordinance, close to the south side thereof, the thatch took fire [. . .] and in a very short space the whole building was quite consumed, and no man hurt: the house being filled with people to behold the play, viz. of *Henry VIII*” (Salgado 35). St. Peter's day is celebrated on 29 June.



contextual study of the selected play are best expressed by Wells:

It is easy for modern readers, influenced by rationalist thought, to underestimate the extent to which Shakespeare was a creature of his own time, and so to read his plays with inadequate appreciation of the extent to which they reflect, and were shaped by, the intellectual climate of the age to which they belong. (Foreword vii-viii)

This study endeavours to contribute to the *Pós-Graduação em Inglês* programme at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina in terms of providing a perspective on Shakespearean study that foregrounds the significance of contextual factors in the writing of the plays. While thirteen master's theses and six doctoral dissertations focusing on Shakespearean research have been defended thus far, none of them are primarily concerned with the role of a particular theatre and historical moment in the creative processes of the playwright. The investigation offers a reading of Shakespeare that is characterised by an understanding of the city of London—and more specifically the Globe theatre—as a motivating force behind the most remarkable period in the career of the celebrated English dramatist.

The principal objective of this investigation is to verify the existence of a connection between Shakespeare's dramaturgy and the Globe theatre that is thought to operate on two distinct levels. More specifically, the study aims to highlight the significance of Shakespeare's ideological and physical environments in shaping the selected play.<sup>12</sup> The contexts of Shakespeare's career at the Globe will be studied and evaluated in terms of their impact on the playwright, the actors, and the audience. The study aims to identify indicatives within the selected play text of the political and social environment in which Shakespeare wrote. Within this broader context, the study then assesses the structural, architectural attributes of the Globe theatre and evaluates their impact on Shakespeare's dramaturgy, again by identifying relevant

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<sup>12</sup> *Shaping* is to be understood in this context as a composite term that conflates two definitions of the verb *shape*: "make something fit the form of something else" and "determine the nature of" (*Oxford Dictionary of English*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2010). As such, the effects that the physical form of the Globe had on Shakespeare's dramaturgy are to be examined alongside the ways in which the theatre's sociopolitical environment determined the dramatic content of the selected play.

textual evidence. The objectives of this investigation are closely linked to the following broad hypothesis and its specific components:

Broad Hypothesis:

It is possible to identify an inextricable connection between a specific theatre space and the works that are written to be enacted in that space.

Specific Hypotheses:

1) It is possible to find evidence in the selected play that the situation of the Globe theatre in space and time helped to shape Shakespeare's play text.

2) It is possible to find evidence in the selected play that the structural characteristics and resources of the Globe theatre helped to shape Shakespeare's play text.

In selecting a play as the corpus of this study, the delicate question of a chronology of Shakespeare's work must first be addressed. Although there is a partial consensus on the subject, certain controversies should be approached with care when considering the range of plays that may have been written with a view to a first enactment at the Globe within the period identified as the specific context of the investigation. An effective starting point for the selection process is the group of sixteen plays that are identified by Gurr as having been written for the Globe theatre (see footnote 10). The study then follows Bernard Beckerman in identifying fifteen plays—from *Julius Caesar* to *Coriolanus*—that are believed to have been produced between 1599 and 1608, the stated remit of this study.<sup>13</sup> In the context of Shakespeare's theatrical career, the company's move to the Globe theatre dovetailed with the playwright's relative abandonment of the history play<sup>14</sup> and progression towards the works that Harold Bloom defines as the “High Comedies” and “Great Tragedies” (119, 381).

In his essay entitled “Shakespeare: Theatrical and Historical

<sup>13</sup> Compared with Gurr's list of plays, Beckerman omits *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*. He tentatively includes *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (*Shakespeare at the Globe: 1599-1609* x).

<sup>14</sup> Chambers dates *Henry V* to 1599 (*William Shakespeare* 1: 250), but Beckerman excludes it from his list of Globe plays. Shakespeare's only history play after this point was *All is True / Henry VIII* which can be dated to 1613 thanks to Sir Henry Wotton's reference to it as a new play that year: “The King's Players had a new play, called *All is true* (sic), representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry VIII [. . .]” (Salgado 34-5).

Contexts,” Martin Coyle points out that “[c]omedy can seem the most elusive of the genres to contextualise simply because it deals with the most elusive of subjects: love” (27). Conversely, the tragic genre is interwoven with political, moral, and philosophical concerns. Indeed, Aristotle stresses in his *Poetics* that “[t]ragedy is not an imitation of persons, but of actions and of life,” and that “the plot is the source and (as it were) the soul of tragedy; character is second” (11-2). The definition of tragedy offered by Aristotle underlines the commitment of the tragic form to an imitation of life and its actions, as opposed to the representation of elusive emotions such as love. Moseley highlights the importance of the rediscovery of Aristotle's *Poetics* a century before Shakespeare and its “profound effect on dramatic and poetic criticism” during the Renaissance (50). The contextual significance of tragedy as outlined by Aristotle is neatly summarised in Moseley's evaluation of the classic work:

[Tragedy] is moral in the motivation of the plot, moral in the examination of the problem of the justice of events, and moral in the effects on the audience. The form becomes a means of interpreting our human predicament, not merely of contemplating the instability of fortune. (83)

The genre of tragedy is thus chosen because of the relative unsuitability of the histories and comedies in the context of this study, as well as a conviction that it provides a rewarding area of research in terms of attempts to contextualise Shakespeare's work. The seven tragedies that fall within the specified period of the study are *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*. In dating the plays more precisely, this study mainly considers the chronologies offered by Chambers (1930), Blakemore Evans (1974), and Bloom (1998). The history plays that had dominated Shakespeare's early career dealt extensively with issues of politics, monarchical power, and morality, while the early tragedies contemplated fate and revenge, but the move to the Globe represented an elevation of the Shakespearean tragic form, as Arthur Humphreys explains in his introduction to the play: “[. . .] a more complex sense develops in *Julius Caesar* of how consequences defeat intentions [. . .] With this deepened awareness of the human predicament the play points towards the

profound questionings of the tragedies which follow” (7). This is a sentiment corroborated by David Daniell in his introduction to the Arden Shakespeare edition of the play: “Everything in *Julius Caesar* points forward to Shakespeare's six further mature tragedies” (6).

The consensus that *Julius Caesar* was first performed at the Globe theatre is based largely on an eyewitness report from the Swiss traveller Thomas Platter, who visited England in 1599 and recorded travelling across the river to see the play “very well acted” in a thatched house on 21 September (qtd. in Salgado 18). Shapiro suggests that Shakespeare “had probably begun writing *Julius Caesar* around March” and that the play “would certainly be among the earliest of the offerings at the Globe, if not the first” (132). This study settles on the critical consensus that *Julius Caesar* was the first of Shakespeare's plays to be written specifically for this theatre space, although not necessarily the first to be performed there, as it is thought that *Henry V* was written in 1598—while the company was at the Curtain theatre—but also staged at the Globe in the summer of 1599 (Wilson 99-100).

The position of the play in the Shakespeare canon as marking a progression to a higher form of tragedy that conflates the public and the private in its consideration of morality and fate, together with its probable status as the first new play to be enacted at the Globe, renders *Julius Caesar* a suitable choice for examination in the context of this study. The play was not published before it appeared in the First Folio of 1623 and the extant text is considered to be “unusually clean,” with fewer suspected alterations from Shakespeare's manuscript than in the case of most other tragedies (Humphreys 73). Sir Thomas North's English translation of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* is the “indisputable main source of *Julius Caesar*” (Spevack 7) and as such, divergences between Plutarch's account and the play can point to factors other than Shakespeare's source text shaping his work.

An introductory review of literature relevant to the study is here divided into four principal sections that outline some of the most significant sources on the contexts of Shakespeare's career and Shakespearean theatre, on theories of the theatre and stage space, on the circumstances of the Globe's construction and contemporary theatrical conventions, and on the significance of *Julius Caesar* in an Elizabethan context. The point of departure in an effort to establish a scholarly background to the selected period is the work of Sir Edmund Chambers,

particularly the comprehensive four-volume study entitled *The Elizabethan Stage* (1923), as well as the subsequent *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems* (1930). The latter two-volume publication is considered for its focus on Shakespeare within the general context; specifically chapters II, III, and the chronological table of Shakespeare's plays presented in chapter VIII. Entitled "The Stage in 1592," Chapter II draws on the earlier exhaustive investigations of *The Elizabethan Stage* and aims to provide a background for discussion of Shakespeare's theatrical career in London:

[a]ny intelligible study [. . .] of the life and work of the playwright Shakespeare must have its own prelude in a retrospect of the state of theatrical affairs, as they stood at the opening of the last Elizabethan decade, when that playwright made his first appearance. (1: 27-8)

Chambers identifies the year 1583 as a turning point for professional playing companies in London, outlining the protracted struggle between the Queen's Privy Council and the City authorities which culminated that year with the formation of the Queen's Men theatre company. The fates of playwrights, actors, and their companies had been subject to local governance since a royal proclamation of 1559, but the oppressive conduct of authorities in London prompted a recentralisation of such powers as part of a political battle. The author surmises that "[t]he establishment of a company with the status and dignity of royal servants may reasonably be regarded as a counter-move on the side of the government" (1: 31).

Chapter III advises that Shakespeare's dramatic career in London can be traced to 1592—and possibly 1591—thanks to Robert Greene's notorious letter published in *Greene's Groat's-worth of Wit*.<sup>15</sup> Greene died on 3 September 1592, allowing Chambers to conclude that "Greene's letter in itself is sufficient to show that by September 1592 Shakespeare was both a player and a maker of plays" (1: 59). The chapter provides a detailed discussion of Shakespeare's career and the

<sup>15</sup> The letter was written from Greene's "squalid death-bed" and calls for his fellow writers to beware of the professional companies and especially Shakespeare: "Yea trust them not: for there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you" (1: 58).

surrounding critical debate. Of particular note is Chambers' attack on the topical theorists that relate Shakespeare's work to the historical contexts of contemporary England: "I do not myself believe that, apart from some passages of obvious satire in comic scenes, there is much of the topical in Shakespeare, whose mind normally moved upon quite another plane of relation to life" (1: 67). This assertion is at odds with the present investigation and with perspectives of most modern critics, who emphasise the importance of Shakespeare's environment in shaping the play texts, as noted by Catherine Belsey: "[i]nterpreting the text has come to be seen as historically and culturally relative" (35). Shapiro also foregrounds the relationship between the playwright and his cultural moment, insisting that "[f]rom the start of his career as dramatist and poet Shakespeare was compulsively drawn to epochal moments" (172).

If Chambers' outlook now appears outdated, his reiteration of the significant role played by censorship is nonetheless important to acknowledge: "[f]or topics of political controversy, in particular, there was no room in the Elizabethan theatre, although the position was somewhat altered under the laxer and less popular administration of James" (1: 67). Certainly this study aims to evaluate the plays from a critical standpoint that foregrounds contextual factors, yet it will do well to heed Chambers' warning presented within the discussion that forms the background to his chronological table of plays in Chapter VIII:

Shakespeare does not seem to have been greatly given to 'topical' allusions, and the hunt for them becomes dangerous, especially if it is inspired by a desire to link the plays with contemporary literary controversies in which he may have taken but little interest, or with incidents [. . .] revealed to us by the ransacking of political archives, but of doubtful familiarity to the Elizabethan populace or its playwrights. (1: 246)

Within his chronology, Chambers ascribes *Julius Caesar* to the theatrical season of 1599-1600, a decision that—unlike his disavowal of topical references in the plays—has found critical consensus among his followers.

Much of the work that Chambers dedicated his life to has been revised and given a more accessible outlet by Gurr's ever-dependable

*The Shakespearean Stage: 1574-1642*, first published in 1970. The fourth edition (2009)<sup>16</sup> represents an updated version of an indispensable source for an examination of the environment within which Shakespeare wrote his plays. The book is divided into six chapters that cover the contextual background, the playing companies, the players, the playhouses, the theatrical conventions, and the audiences of Shakespearean theatre in turn. The first of these chapters is considered here for its introductory value to those hoping to procure an understanding of the period. Gurr begins by presenting features of Shakespeare's drama that are liable to disappear as part of the cultural and intellectual developments separating the modern reader from an Elizabethan reality, and his discussion of original staging practices helps to create an image of the theatre that is very different from today's.

The subsections “The London focus,” “Life in London,” and “Social divisions” combine to explain the commercial nature of the London theatre industry, its social importance, and its widespread appeal during the period. Shakespeare is then inserted into this discussion, with Gurr noting his business acumen and prosperity. In the final subsection of his introductory chapter—“The City and the Court”—the author examines the intricate relations between the playing companies, the city authorities, and the Court. In opposition to Chambers' challenge to “topical theorists,” Gurr states here that “[t]he examples of satire that drew the censor's attention are only the peaks of a mountain of contemporary allusions. In a city lacking newspapers and dependent on gossip amongst the crowds for their news, they were a very marketable commodity” (33).

Peter Brook's *The Empty Space* (1968) is a meditation on the theatre based on years of personal experience and experimentation as a director. It is a largely subjective consideration of global theatrical practices throughout history that culminates in the author's prescription of a model for the future. The book serves as an appropriate introduction to theories of the theatre, particularly as Brook's concept of the empty space as the fundamental element of theatre has helped to inspire performance analysis that focuses on the imaginative qualities of the Shakespearean stage. *The Empty Space* comprises chapters that analyse the theatre in terms of four interrelated “meanings”—the categories that

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<sup>16</sup> Henceforth *Stage*.

Brook identifies are “a Deadly Theatre, a Holy Theatre, a Rough Theatre, and an Immediate Theatre” (9). The first of these describes a commercial theatre of repetition and imitation that is dedicated to financial gain and debases the art form, while the last represents the author's call for a collective focus on the immediacy of theatricality, a conclusion that is shaped by personal experience and the consolidation of the Holy and the Rough. While the Holy Theatre endeavours to conjure the invisible and subconscious, its obverse is found in the Rough or popular theatre.

The Shakespearean theatre effectively integrated an empty stage space that was conducive to a Holy Theatre of metaphysics with dramatic content that held mass appeal and constituted an empirical, Rough Theatre. Brook emphasises the role of the structural features and conventions of Shakespearean theatre in allowing the dramatist to obscure the boundaries between Holy and Rough Theatre. The Globe, with its various levels and expansive thrust stage, is exemplary of the Elizabethan playhouse that Brook identifies as “the greatest of rough theatres,” but also as “a stage that was a perfect philosopher's machine,” mirroring the Holy (68, 86). From Brook's perspective, the failures of the Holy Theatre are best illustrated by the successes of the Rough, and vice versa. Where the theatre of the invisible is elitist and exclusive, popular theatre often lacks intellectual complexity. It is these two conceptions of the theatre that are of greatest use to the stated line of enquiry, as Shakespeare's dramaturgy can be seen to represent a coalescence of their most appealing features:

We can try to capture the invisible but we must not lose touch with common-sense – if our language is too special we will lose part of the spectator's belief. The model, as always, is Shakespeare. His aim continually is holy, metaphysical, yet he never makes the mistake of staying too long on the highest plane. (61-2)

The study will associate Brook's conceptions of the theatre with the work of his contemporary J. L. Styan, whose book *Shakespeare's Stagecraft* (1967) is an enduringly valuable treatise on Shakespearean stage practice that has hitherto been reprinted a dozen times. Styan's later offering *The Shakespeare Revolution* (1977) charts the shifts in



performance criticism during the twentieth century that have focused attention on the stage space and its potential. His essay entitled “Stage Space and the Shakespeare Experience,” published in a volume of performance criticism in honour of Bernard Beckerman,<sup>17</sup> is selected here as a concise point of introduction to Styan's salient “principle of imaginative neutrality” concerning the Shakespearean theatre stage (197). The collaboration and at times collusion of the audience with the actors that is elicited by the empty stage is neatly expressed by Styan:

The less the audience concentrates on where the actor *is*, the more it will accept what he is standing *for*: the neutrality of the platform's space implies the strongest commitment by author, actor, and audience to the particular relationships of the play. (196)

After expounding on the Shakespearean theatre conventions of verbally indicating time and place in the absence of elaborate scenery, Styan asserts that “[b]y keeping the stage free from the clutter of place and time, we are again the sharers who enable the actors to act” (197), and it is this notion that leads him to identify the imaginative neutrality of the stage space as a motivating factor behind Shakespeare's stagecraft, echoing Brook's sentiments in *The Empty Space*. Styan's essay cites examples from the plays to apply his principle that the Shakespearean stage is an imaginative space that at varying times and to varying degrees allows the actor to relate to his audience or be separated from it, to deceive or to be deceived. Thus the following five categories of spatial relationships are identified: “the space that joins”, “the space that divides”, the space that “simultaneously joins and divides the audience”, the “deceptive division of space”, and finally the space that “speaks to us like a character” (197-8).

Chambers again serves as an introductory source of information on the playhouses of the period, specifically the Globe. Alongside an extensive treatise on the playing companies (chapters XII to XV), the detailed examination of the available evidence related to playhouses (chapters XVI to XVIII) forms the second volume of his magnum opus

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<sup>17</sup> Beckerman's own *Shakespeare at the Globe: 1599-1609* (1962) is also consulted for its identification of fifteen “Shakespearean Globe Plays” that were first performed before the playing company moved to the Blackfriars theatre by 1609 (see footnote 13).

*The Elizabethan Stage* (1923). The facts that Chambers presents in Chapter XVI form the basis of the many subsequent investigations into the exact locality of the first Globe theatre, and there is also a thorough enquiry into the financial workings of the playhouse, its ownership having been initially divided “in two equal moieties, the one to Cuthbert and Richard Burbadge and the other to William Shakespeare, Augustine Phillips, Thomas Pope, John Heminges, and William Kempe” (2: 417). With the exception of Cuthbert Burbadge, these are all names listed as “Principall Actors in all these Playes” within the introductory pages to the First Folio of 1623 (appendix fig. 2). Chambers informs of the inferences that can be drawn from the extant contract to build the Fortune theatre in 1600. Phillip Henslowe and Edward Alleyn of the Lord Admiral's Men—Shakespeare's principal competitors—commissioned Peter Street, who had overseen the building of the Globe, to erect a similar theatre for them on the northern fringes of the City (appendix fig. 1). The contract specified that the Globe should be used as a model, allowing Chambers to surmise that the Globe must have been constructed in a similar time-frame to the twenty-eight weeks that were agreed for completion of the Fortune. He asserts that the Globe “was doubtless ready for the occupation of the Chamberlain's men by the beginning of the autumn season of 1599” (2: 415), a perception that is supported by Shapiro:

[. . .] when Street contracted with Henslowe the following January to build the Fortune, he promised to finish the job by 25 July; there's a strong chance that they agreed on this date based on Street's recent experience at the Globe. (132)

Shapiro's book entitled *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* is selected for its detailed focus on a single year that the author calls “perhaps *the* decisive one in Shakespeare's development as a writer” (xxi). Shapiro's stated aim to “convey a sense of how deeply Shakespeare's work emerged from an engagement with his times” is contiguous with that of this study (xxii). Of particular interest here is “The Globe Rises,” the sixth chapter in the book's chronological journey through the year 1599 in London. The author is concerned with the wider context of the city and its theatre industry as well as the professional circumstances of Shakespeare and his company, and in this

chapter the focus is on the construction of the Globe Theatre during the first half of the year. More significantly, the pressures on the Lord Chamberlain's Men during an exacting period of transition are examined. Shapiro goes some way here to explaining the motivation behind the remarkable shift he identifies in Shakespeare's writing career during 1599, a year that saw the playwright reach "a new and extraordinary level" (xv). As the author reiterates, this localised development in Shakespeare's dramaturgy constitutes the central issue investigated in the book: "how, at age thirty-five, Shakespeare went from being an exceptionally talented writer to one of the greatest who ever lived" (xxii). Given that this development which intrigues Shapiro coincided with the construction of the Globe theatre, the possible causes he identifies in "The Globe Rises" are of importance to this investigation.

The chapter also informs of the adverse weather conditions in London that blighted the construction process at the Bankside site, with freezing spring temperatures postponing the laying of foundations followed by flooding in late May that caused further difficulties. Shapiro then cites several other problems faced by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, such as the hard-fought legal battle concerning the Theatre, the aforementioned North London playhouse that the company had abandoned two years before and now dismantled upon deciding on a new location. Another impending threat was posed by the number of rival companies that now competed for an audience, and the diminished protection afforded by a decreed duopoly that was "more honoured in the breach than the observance" (127). These various problems and the protracted construction of the Globe Theatre—eventually completed in July 1599—caused a situation of great financial and professional strain on both Shakespeare and his company, leading Shapiro to contend as follows:

There was a greater pressure than ever [. . .] to distinguish the Chamberlain's Men from their rivals. No other company could match their experience—so it's not surprising that Shakespeare committed himself to writing plays that showcased his company's depths. (127)

For a concise background to the Shakespearean theatre landscape, the architectural and spatial characteristics of its playhouses,

and the expectations of its audiences, the study selects Moseley's incisive chapter "Actors on the Scaffold," published in *Shakespeare's History Plays: The Making of a King* (1988). The chapter aims to provide an overview of theatrical conditions and conventions during Shakespeare's career, acknowledging the impossibility of recapturing the contemporary mindset but advising that "the best we can do is to ensure that our historical imagination is based on as little supposition as we can manage" (25). Moseley divides this part of the book into eleven sub-categories to examine the various facets of the playhouse that shaped Shakespeare's plays. He begins by summarising the essential features that were shared by broadly similar theatres across London, namely the external structure, the expansive stage, the tiring-house façade, and the heavens.<sup>18</sup> The potential for these features to be seen as parts of a whole theatre that can 'act' metaphorically is highlighted in the following section, "The Theatre as Metaphor," where Moseley instructs that "the stage can be a world between the canopy/Heaven and the cellarage/Hell, the men on it representing life in the eye of eternity" (33).

The discussion then progresses to the resources that the playing companies could draw on to create settings and illusions, and to contemporary theatrical conventions. Moseley also provides a succinct account of the various playing companies and performances in London at the end of the sixteenth century, limiting his focus to the Elizabethan era since the book *Shakespeare's History Plays* concerns itself with plays that are thought to have been written before 1600. The commercial nature of the Elizabethan theatre is emphasised, and Moseley restates the common conviction that a multitude of contextual factors "have a real bearing on the freedom of manoeuvre a dramatist has in composition" (50). The associative nature of the companies, the growing status of individual actors, the constant threats posed by plague and city regulations, and the diversity of audiences are among such factors mentioned in "Actors on the Scaffold."

For a more detailed study of the theatrical environment that Shakespeare worked within, this investigation again turns to Gurr. First published in 1987, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* represents a

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<sup>18</sup> 'Tiring-house' was the name given to a section of the playhouse behind the stage that functioned as a dressing room; the 'heavens' was the popular name for a canopy that extended high above the stage from the tiring-house façade.

thorough look at the broad range of conditions that constituted the contemporary environment and may have affected the writing of the plays. The third edition (2004) offers new evidence and revisions, and reflects the author's "clearest view of the complex process and experience of early modern playgoing and its many differences from the modern experience [. . .]" (xi). The book is divided into chapters that consider the available evidence about Shakespearean theatre audiences in terms of four major categories. Gurr examines in turn the physical circumstances of performances, the social and then the mental composition of the audiences, and finally the historical changes across the period.

The first of the categories outlined above is represented by the chapter entitled "Physical conditions," which provides an informative overview of the structural characteristics of the playhouses, aspects of the performing conditions, and audience behaviour. Gurr begins by distinguishing the two distinct types of commercial playhouse that emerged in London towards the end of the sixteenth century:

The 'public' playhouses or open ampitheatres [. . .] were versions of the animal-baiting houses and galleried inn-yards. The 'private' playhouses or halls were built in large rooms on the model of the banqueting halls in the royal palaces and great houses where plays were provided for banqueting guests. (14)

The ampitheatre and hall playhouses are then discussed in turn, in terms of their structural characteristics and development within the period. In regard to the former category—pertaining to the Globe—the author focuses mainly on the development of seated upper galleries, which may have allowed social classes to be more effectively separated and thereby affected the dynamics of playing:

"[t]he possible change in the admission system for the later playhouses may indicate a shift in priorities to favour the gallery audience [. . .] The yard's standers were always the lowest level of society, as Hamlet illustrated when he coined the term 'groundlings' for them. (21)

The two further subdivisions of Gurr's "Physical conditions"

chapter are concerned with performing conditions and audience behaviour respectively, covering issues such as the timing of performances, weather conditions, the availability of food and drink, and the various distractions that the diverse, unregulated, and often raucous crowds were known to engender. Of particular note are the author's continued associations of such topics with playhouse developments across the period, contemplating the impact the various issues may have had on playing, depending on the specific theatre space:

At the amphi theatres the vastly greater crowds, the packed mass of 'understanders' and the open-air acoustics could generate a higher intensity of audience reaction and hubbub than the halls with their padded benches and seated clientele. (54)

A considered proposition for the application of contextual studies to the plays is offered by Coyle in his aforementioned essay published as part of the *Literature in Context* (2001) collection. Despite being principally in favour of a contextual focus, he criticises E. M. W. Tillyard's classic *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1943) for suggesting “too neat a relationship between the plays and their context,” recalling Chambers' aforementioned warning about the pitfalls on the hunt for topical allusions in Shakespeare. Coyle stresses that the diversity of society during the period must be taken into account before reaching conclusions as sweeping as those postulated by Tillyard (16). Another important aspect to draw from the essay is Coyle's attention to visual documents and historical materials for use as evidence when imagining the contextual framework that underpinned Shakespeare's career. The well-known sketches attributed to Johannes de Witt and Henry Peacham are cited as “key documents for constructing a sense of the spatial and cultural differences between the Elizabethan stage and our own modern theatres” (18).

Katharine Maus' introduction to *Julius Caesar* printed in *The Norton Shakespeare* (1997) is a compelling contextual study of the play. Maus focuses on the inescapable parallels that can be drawn between the thematic concerns of the play and the contexts of not only the question of succession to Elizabeth I,<sup>19</sup> but also of a decisive point in

<sup>19</sup> “Queen Elizabeth I had proven a remarkably durable queen [...] but at sixty-six, she was a

Shakespeare's career, asking: “[w]hat better choice to inaugurate the new Globe than a story in which world dominion seems to be at stake?” (1525). The essay provides a succinct examination of the play's topical significance after Maus outlines some of the events of Roman history that Shakespeare manipulated. She states that the themes of the story are both personal and political, and that certain questions were raised by its staging in Elizabethan London. The monarchical power struggles of early modern Europe, together with the civil anxiety that pervaded England during the twilight years of Elizabeth's reign, lead the author to conclude that:

In a state in which censorship made direct commentary on contemporary political affairs virtually impossible, the story of Caesar's death and its calamitous aftermath provided an opportunity to reflect, at a suitably prudent distance, upon what might happen when accepted methods of allocating and transferring sovereign power disintegrated. (1526)

In considering the significance of such contemporary social concerns, the years that followed the historical moment should be considered as well as those that preceded it. Indeed, Coyle advises that “it has become a commonplace of modern criticism that the tensions and violence we see acted out in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama were a premonition of the Civil War” (19). This is a perspective that corroborates the interpretation of *Julius Caesar* offered by Maus. Shapiro also provides an extensive insight into the contextual significance of the play in *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*. The eighth chapter—entitled “Is this a Holiday?”—addresses some of the key issues of Shakespeare's sociopolitical environment that allowed the play to resonate with Elizabethan audiences, and as such it represents a valuable source for this study.

The connection between the theatre space and the corpus will be evaluated on two broad levels that form the principal chapters of this study, with textual evidence from the selected play used to inform the discussion throughout. The historical contexts constitute the first of

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very old woman by Renaissance standards, and her reign was clearly soon to come to an end. Since, however, she had never begotten children or named an heir, it was unclear who would succeed her or how the new monarch would be selected” (Maus 1526).

those levels, specifically the situation of the theatre in space and time and the professional circumstances of Shakespeare and his acting company during residency at the Globe. Attempts will be made to verify the theory that sociopolitical concerns are inextricably connected with literature by identifying contextual signifiers within the corpus. Visual records such as maps and sketches will be considered alongside other historical documents of the period in order to develop an understanding of the environment in which the plays were first inserted, following the principle that “contextual material can help us grasp the dynamic relationship between the open nature of Shakespeare's theatre and the surrounding political and social debates” (Coyle 22-3). An aspect of the contextual environment that will be closely examined is Gurr's notion of the “Shakespearean Mindset,” defined as “the patterns of thinking and expectation that Tudor culture imposed on Shakespeare's audiences” (“The Shakespearean Stage” 3281). This level of the investigation aims to verify Tiffany Stern's affirmation that “Shakespeare's surroundings, Shakespeare's London, clearly affected what the playwright wrote, as well as what the audience saw and the associations they might draw from it” (11).

The second aspect of the role of the Globe in shaping Shakespeare's work that will be considered is the significance of the theatre's structural characteristics, which will be evaluated in terms of the concept of the scenic economy of the stage space enhancing the imaginative processes of actors and audiences alike, as postulated by Styan's principle of “imaginative neutrality.” This theory will be closely allied to Brook's conception of a Rough theatre, while his notion of a Holy theatre and his perception of Shakespeare's playhouse as “a perfect philosopher's machine” (86) will be considered in relation to the emblematic resources of the theatre. In the chapter “Text, Playhouse and London,” Stern affirms that “[t]he Globe was a living metaphor, and the performances written for it, unsurprisingly, are often 'metatheatrical' – they draw frequent attention to their own theatrical natures and their consequent unreality” (14). This notion of metatheatricity will be used to support the claim that other structural elements of the theatre as well as the bare stage can contribute to the imaginative processes that develop between playwrights, actors, and their audience. These concepts will be tested against the corpus, by attempting to identify textual evidence that suggests a specific space was considered in the



dramaturgical process.

Ultimately the two broad lines of enquiry, which focus on the playhouse and its environment respectively, will be consolidated to form a conceptual framework that is intended to show how the specific theatre space at the Globe helped to shape Shakespeare's work. The study provides evidence from the selected play that supports Stern's conclusion regarding the significance of place in Shakespeare's work:

[. . .] Shakespeare's London, its buildings, its court, its playhouses, becomes a feature of Shakespeare's texts and of the mentality of Shakespeare's audience. The plays of Shakespeare are thus a product of Shakespeare's environment both specifically and more generally; to have a sense of the early modern London stage is not just to understand the plays *in situ* – in the place for which they were written – but also to understand the way place imposed itself on the writing as well as the performance of Shakespeare. (33)

The following chapter, entitled “The Sociopolitical Environment,” examines precisely this imposition of place in a more general sense on *Julius Caesar*, drawing on various moments from the play to illustrate how its language, enactment, and audience response may have been shaped by some of the social, religious, and political issues of contemporary London.

## CHAPTER TWO

“DWELL I BUT IN THE SUBURBS  
OF YOUR GOOD PLEASURE?”:

### THE SOCIOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

*Shakespeare led a life of Allegory:  
his works are the comments on it.*

KEATS

The opening scene of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* features a rapid, rousing exchange between two Roman tribunes and a crowd of plebeians, with the bustling, urban location signalled only a few lines into the play. The initial declamation from Flavius that is addressed to the 'commoners' assembled onstage—and by implication across the expansive yard of the playhouse—immediately evinces social division, and if these words are indeed to be imagined as the first spoken mimetically within the confines of the newly inaugurated Globe theatre in 1599, they may be seen to act metatheatrically by implicating the audience:<sup>20</sup>

Hence! home, you idle creatures, get you home!  
Is this a holiday? What, know you not,  
Being mechanical, you ought not walk  
Upon a laboring day without the sign  
Of your profession? Speak, what trade art thou?

(1.1.1-5)<sup>21</sup>

The borough of Southwark which included the Bankside location of the Globe was accessible to city-dwellers via London Bridge, or indeed by means of a short wherry ride across the river (appendix fig. 3). Those that made the journey to the “liberties”<sup>22</sup> for entertainment represented a wide social spectrum, but among them would certainly have been a sizeable number of working class “commoners” that resembled the

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<sup>20</sup> Metatheatre is defined as “any moment of self-consciousness by which a play draws attention to its own fictional status as a theatrical pretence” (Baldick 151).

<sup>21</sup> All quotations of Shakespeare's works are taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (1974).

<sup>22</sup> Areas that were free from the jurisdiction of City authorities.

“idle creatures” onstage. Platter's diary entry records that he and his party travelled across the Thames to see the play at about two o'clock, and Gurr explains that “[t]he ampitheatres needed optimum daylight for their plays, so they established a pattern of performances starting at 2 or 3 p.m., depending on how close to midsummer it was” (*Playgoing* 38).

Irrespective of social status, many playgoers were probably forsaking their vocation in order to attend the afternoon performances, lending added resonance to Flavius' opening lines that reprove the “idle creatures” for appearing “Upon a laboring day” (1.1.1,4). Indeed, the holiday mood that is established as the origin of Flavius' ire was probably reinforced by such absconders, whose self-awareness is indicated by Gurr:

Playgoing in London was viewed even by the playgoers as an idle occupation. The largest numbers who went to the Globe were apprentices and artisans taking time off work, often surreptitiously, and law students from the Inns of Court doing the same. (“The Shakespearean Stage” 3284)

The city's trainee lawyers and cobblers were thus sharing in an afternoon's entertainment that catered for all. The assorted individuals that merged to form the playhouse audience would also be seen as a single entity from the outside, by the theatre's many detractors. For City authorities and religious extremists, the business of playing was to be damned alongside the other wicked and nefarious activities that gained a foothold in the liberties. For many in the audience the admonition of the “commoners” by a city official for indulging in the festive atmosphere will have been a familiar occurrence. Stern has pointed out that playgoers themselves also saw the theatre as contiguous with more disreputable activities, citing a contemporary poem by Samuel Rowlands that illustrates the choices available:

Speake Gentleman, what shall we do to day?  
 Drink some brave health upon the Dutch carouse?  
 Or shall we to the Globe and see a Play?  
 Or visit Shoreditch, for a bawdie house?

(qtd. in Stern 20)

There is also a possible indication in *Julius Caesar* of how Shakespeare himself saw his new surroundings, but while his personal views remain elusive there is little doubt that common preconceptions of the liberties are alluded to as Portia pleads with Brutus to share his concerns with her. She likens the role of a wife emotionally estranged from her husband to that of a prostitute in the liberties, a reference that is likely to have elicited a lively reaction amongst the “groundlings.”<sup>23</sup>

tell me, Brutus,  
 Is it excepted I should know no secrets  
 That appertain to you? Am I yourself  
 But, as it were, in sort or limitation.  
 To keep with you at meals, comfort your bed,  
 And talk to you sometimes? Dwell I but in the suburbs  
 Of your good pleasure? If it be no more,  
 Portia is Brutus' harlot, not his wife. (2.1.280-7)

Besides the distractions of heavy drinking and prostitution, London playhouses also contended with animal-baiting houses for the attention of “idle creatures.” Such houses were similar in size and structure to the Globe, and had occupied the south bank of the Thames with great success for many years prior to the advent of permanent playhouses. Stern explains the close competition between two apparently discordant types of entertainment, identifying the bear-baiting houses as “the nearest rivals to the playhouses, for both charged the same entrance fee, both put on shows that lasted for about two hours, both started at the same time and held roughly equivalent audiences” (18). To illustrate the diverse and savage attractions offered there, Gurr cites an undated extant advertisement for the “Beargarden on the bankside” that mentions a horse, an ape, several dogs, the whipping of a blind bear, and which calls for “all comers [. . .] to wearie a bull dead at the stake” (qtd. in *Stage* 19). Wenzel Hollar's 1647 engraving of London entitled “Long View” shows the proximity of the bear-baiting ring to the Globe—although their labels are erroneously reversed—and underscores the enduring popularity of the baiting house in Shakespeare's London (appendix fig. 4). Gurr points out that the impresario Philip Henslowe had “replaced the old Bear Garden in 1614

<sup>23</sup> Hamlet's term for the rabble of the playhouse courtyard (see above, 17).

with the Hope, intending it to function in a multipurpose way as both playhouse and baiting house,” but it is as the latter that it would ultimately appear in Hollar's work (*Playgoing* 37).

From a twenty-first century perspective that deplores the mistreatment of animals and regards Shakespeare's plays as “high art,” it is perhaps alarming that an attraction such as bear-baiting could be a competitor to the Globe and appeal to the same public. Yet it is precisely this “distance” between the origins of playgoing and the modern mentality which Brook problematises in *The Empty Space*. He explains in his contemplation of a Rough Theatre that a key element of the Elizabethan theatre was its ability to harness the more vulgar passions of the people and thereby hold a mass appeal:

Of course, it is most of all dirt that gives the roughness its edge; filth and vulgarity are natural, obscenity is joyous: with these the spectacle takes on its socially liberating role, for by nature the popular theatre is anti-authoritarian, anti-traditional, anti-pomp, anti-presence. This is the theatre of noise, and the theatre of noise is the theatre of applause. (68)

Stern goes as far as to suggest that professional rivalries with the baiting houses “may even be behind some of the visual cruelty of Shakespearean and other drama of the time” (19), but a social interest in brutality and an appetite for sanguineous scenes onstage are also attributable more generally to a “bellicose society” that was accustomed to conflict, steeped in medieval traditions and “a personal culture of violence in the form of duels, feuds and displays of courage, the same socio-cultural imperative affecting both the international and the domestic sphere” (Black 5). What is clear is that such distractions as bear-baiting were a significant facet of the space in which *Julius Caesar* was first enacted. The metaphor Shakespeare employs to describe the perilous situation of the Second Triumvirate<sup>24</sup> at the beginning of act 4 recalls the advertisement for bear-baiting quoted above with its imagery of enemies encircling Antony and Octavius at the stake:

ANTONY. And let us presently go sit in council,  
How covert matters may be best disclos'd

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<sup>24</sup> The coalition formed by Antony, Lepidus, and Octavian in 43 BC.

And open perils surest answered.  
 OCTAVIUS. Let us do so; for we are at the stake,  
 And bay'd about with many enemies,  
 And some that smile have in their hearts, I fear,  
 Millions of mischiefs. (4.1.45-51)

The Globe and its neighbouring bear-baiting house shared not only audiences but also stern opposition. As intimated above, playgoing was targeted by religious groups along with the other diversions of Bankside that were deemed licentious and wicked. Gurr states that “Puritan attacks on the stage were aimed fairly precisely at all the purveyors of entertainments [. . .]. They saw no difference between bear-baiting, fencing matches, plays and prostitution” (*Stage* 45). This Puritan opposition to playing finds its roots in the Protestant Reformation that began during the reign of King Henry VIII (r. 1509-47). The tumultuous struggles between Catholics and Protestant reformers that pervaded sixteenth-century England included widespread iconoclasm following the dissolution of the monasteries,<sup>25</sup> and it is a commonplace that the development of the English language accelerated with the resultant shift of religious emphasis to the power of the word. The linguistic prowess of Shakespeare and his contemporaries is often partially attributed to this institutional suppression of the image, but for the business that would provide them with a lucrative career it stirred much antagonism. The fledgling Church of England sought to repress any remnants of Catholic ceremony and idolatry throughout the latter half of the sixteenth century, and that process was at odds with the concurrent proliferation of acting companies and playhouses, particularly in London. Indeed, the rise in popularity of the theatre towards the end of the sixteenth century may be attributable to the social void formed in the wake of the Reformation: “In retrospect, it seems natural enough for the stage to fill a need once met by Catholic ritual” (Shapiro 171). Shakespeare’s word play in the opening line of *Julius Caesar* can be seen to address this issue as the mention of “idle creatures” recalls idolatry.

The ostensibly shameless attempts of the players to imitate life

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<sup>25</sup> “The abolition of monasteries in England by Henry VIII under two Acts (1536, 1539) in order [. . .] to establish royal supremacy in ecclesiastical affairs” (*Oxford Dictionary of English*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2010).

and “deceive” the public for personal gain was viewed in part with mistrust, and Puritans took censorious aim at this growing trend. In his all-encompassing essay on “The Shakespearean Stage,” Gurr points to “[. . .] a strong Puritan suspicion about shows of any kind, which looked too much like the Catholic ceremonial that the new Church of England had renounced” (3284). It is likely that those who flocked to see *Julius Caesar* performed at the Globe, having perhaps passed Puritan preachers en route, will have discerned the connotations of religious division as Flavius instructs Murellus to “Disrobe the images, / If you do find them deck'd with ceremonies” (1.1.65). It is worth noting what Shapiro calls the use of “theologically loaded terms” here as “Plutarch writes that the statues were decked with 'trophies' and 'scarves'” and the word “ceremonies” does not appear (176). Another notable example is the anachronism of a “pulpit” that is repeatedly referred to in act 3, as the fallout of Caesar's assassination unravels in the Roman Forum and Brutus tells Cassius: “I will myself into the pulpit first, / And show the reason of our Caesar's death” (3.1.236-7). The holiday setting of the opening scene is confirmed with the line “You know it is the feast of Lupercal”<sup>26</sup> (1.1.67), and its contemporary significance is rooted in the decision to scrap public holidays and the commemoration of Catholic saints as part of an overhaul of the calendar by Henry VIII in 1536, which initiated the systematic repression of ceremony mentioned above.

Humphreys points to another of the numerous Elizabethan anachronisms that have been transposed onto the Roman scene in *Julius Caesar*, as Casca relates the story of Caesar's refusal of the crown to Brutus and Cassius, noting the fervent behaviour of the crowd who “threw up their / sweaty night-caps” (1.2.245-6). An Act of Parliament from 1571 required all men to wear knitted woollen caps on Sundays and the few holidays that remained; the image Casca describes thus reinforces the holiday mood established onstage (Humphreys 115). There are further reasons that lead Shapiro to state: “Is this a holiday?” was a question that touched a deep cultural nerve” (170). The religious divide that was the cause of much international tension and conflict at the end of the sixteenth century had resulted in a situation where Protestant England observed a different calendar to Catholic Europe

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<sup>26</sup> The Lupercalia, “an ancient festival of purification and fertility, held annually on 15 February” (*Oxford Dictionary of English*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2010).

after the latter resolved to amend an error in the Roman calendar.<sup>27</sup> Shapiro proposes that Brutus' line "Is not tomorrow, boy, the first of March?" which is commonly emended—as by Blakemore Evans—to "Is not tomorrow, boy, the [ides] of March?" (2.1.40) is in fact a possible allusion to this calendrical rupture, suggesting that Elizabethans "would have smiled knowingly at Brutus' confusion in being off by a couple of weeks" (170). Daniell also identifies this discrepancy, commenting that Brutus' question "would have been familiar to all Elizabethans: he needs to know what calendar he is working under" (21). It serves as an example "that both on stage and in the mental theatre of the age, the world of ancient Rome [. . .] was a mirror held up to modern London" (Bate and Thornton 120).

The holiday Shakespeare chose for the opening scene of *Julius Caesar* is the feast of Lupercal celebrated in mid-February, and is demonstrative of his narrative compression of Plutarch as Caesar's triumphant return to Rome in fact occurred some months earlier. In sixteenth-century Protestant Europe, with saints' days largely bygone, celebrations were increasingly associated with the upsurge in nationalism and monarchical power that characterised the aftermath of the Reformation. Indeed, Shapiro states that Accession Day, then celebrated annually in England on 17 November to commemorate the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign in 1558, "was probably the first political holiday in modern Europe" (187). Particularly as Elizabeth had enjoyed her own glorious procession through London in imitation of the Romans in 1588,<sup>28</sup> the invention of Caesar appropriating the Lupercal festival for the political purpose of his triumphant return to Rome would have resonated with an Elizabethan public that "must have been struck by how Shakespeare's retelling of this classical story seemed to speak so clearly to their moment" (Shapiro 179, 191).

Another significant departure from Plutarch is found in Murellus' impassioned plea for the "commoners" to respect the memory of Pompey. The speech is part of the brief but riveting first scene that employs only minor characters and yet draws the audience into a sense of involvement with the action of the play. Shakespeare uses verbal

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<sup>27</sup> The Gregorian calendar was introduced in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII, modifying the existing Julian calendar that had been introduced in 46 BC under the authority of Julius Caesar. Tellingly, Elizabethans continued to live in "Caesar's time."

<sup>28</sup> Commemorating the defeat of the Spanish Armada.



exposition, allowing Murellus to construct an elaborate image of historical events and thereby extending the scene's metatheatrical dimension that was established with the initial declamation. Shapiro notes the similarities between imagined Rome and contemporary London that audience members were likely to identify “in a passage whose topography, with its walls, towers, windows, chimney tops, crammed streets and great river, would have been familiar to Londoners” (174), and some may indeed have related the contents of the speech to Elizabeth's “triumph” of 1588:

Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft  
 Have you climb'd up to walls and battlements,  
 To tow'rs and windows, yea, to chimney-tops,  
 Your infants in your arms, and there have sate  
 The livelong day, with patient expectation,  
 To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome;  
 And when you saw his chariot but appear,  
 Have you not made an universal shout,  
 That Tiber trembled underneath her banks  
 To hear the replication of your sounds  
 Made in her concave shores? (1.1.37-47)

Another possibility—advanced by John Dover Wilson—which would hardly have required Shakespeare's audience to search its collective memory, is that the speech recalls the departure of the Earl of Essex for Ireland in the spring of 1599. According to contemporary descriptions, this is an event that caused “tumultuous excitement” (Humphreys 100).

Robert Devereux (1565-1601), 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Essex and close friend to Shakespeare's former patron the Earl of Southampton, is an important political figure to consider in any examination of the environment in which Shakespeare staged his plays at the end of the sixteenth century. A precocious soldier who found favour with the Queen and was widely touted as her successor, Essex capitalised on his involvement in the defeat of the Spanish Armada and the subsequent conquest of Cadiz in 1596 to gain promotion to the post of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland during the Nine Years' War.<sup>29</sup> The military

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<sup>29</sup> Military conflict in Ireland between the English Crown and Irish rebels intermittently supported by Spanish forces, 1594-1603.

expedition to Ireland that he oversaw in 1599 ended in failure and an increasingly tempestuous relationship with the Queen culminated in his infamous confrontation with Elizabeth “before she was fully dressed” at Nonsuch Palace on 28 September that year (Wilson 98). From this transgression there would be no return for Essex, who along with Southampton was eventually executed for high treason in February 1601.

A fascinating instance of intertextuality between *Henry V* and *Julius Caesar*—both commonly dated to 1599—is demonstrative of the resonance that any allusion to the enigmatic Essex might have had for contemporary audiences. At the time Shakespeare wrote *Henry V* for the 1598-99 season at the Curtain, Essex enjoyed the apotheosis of his reputation and prepared for a dangerous venture in Ireland that, if effective, would conceivably secure his succession to the English throne. Wilson suggests that the direct reference to this campaign in the chorus to act 5 of *Henry V* “may have been added in the early summer of 1599 when Shakespeare’s company began playing at the new-built Globe, and when, as is generally supposed, *Henry V* was given as one of its earliest pieces” (100). If this was the case, the dialogue between the two plays identifiable in this passage is all the more remarkable, as it points to Shakespeare weaving an intricate allegorical tapestry that relates the foremost concerns of Elizabethan politics to two famous historical triumphs depicted in his plays that summer. Through the figure of the Chorus, he invites the audience to associate the homecoming of King Henry V not only to the eagerly awaited return of Essex—“the General of our gracious Empress”—to London, but also to Caesar’s triumph that was staged as part of his first new offering at the Globe:

But now behold,  
 In the quick forge and working-house of thought,  
 How London doth pour out her citizens.  
 The Mayor and all his brethren, in best sort,  
 Like to the senators of th’antique Rome  
 With the plebeians swarming at their heels,  
 Go forth and fetch their conqu’ring Caesar in –  
 As, by a lower but high-loving likelihood,  
 Were now the General of our gracious Empress –  
 As in good time he may – from Ireland coming,  
 Bringing rebellion broachèd on his sword,

How many would the peaceful city quit  
To welcome him! (5.0.22-34)

Platter's aforementioned diary entry for 21 September shows that in all likelihood *Julius Caesar* was performed at the Globe before Essex's ignominious return from Ireland. However, Shakespeare is thought to have been well acquainted with Essex through his relationship with Southampton, and some news of the failed offensive in Ireland must have reached London during the summer. Daniell states that “[i]n those [summer] months of 1599 the Government was seriously alarmed about Essex” in terms of his rebellious nature and the rumours of conspiracy that pervaded the kingdom (23). It is perhaps tenuous to propose that in *Julius Caesar* Shakespeare consciously anticipates the catastrophic turn of events that would befall Essex and lead to his execution in 1601, but Wilson is right to conclude that “he could have furnished no more prescient or more ominous prelude to the events of the next sixteen months than this play of dark conspiracy and of noble idealism brought to nought” (100).

The use of pathetic fallacy<sup>30</sup> and portentous imagery in act 1 scene 3 is perhaps the best example of the play's foreboding qualities, which may be related to contemporary political concerns. The scene sees a terrified Casca enter to the sound of “thunder and lightning,” and as he encounters Cicero he describes the frightful conditions and various prodigies he has seen that night. After a lengthy exposition, he appeals to Cicero:

When these prodigies  
Do so conjointly meet, let not men say,  
“These are their reasons, they are natural”;  
For I believe they are portentous things  
Unto the climate that they point upon. (1.3.28-32)

For Humphreys, this passage exemplifies how “the play persistently implies that [. . .] political subversion really does derange the whole natural order” (121), a motif that may be related to the collective execration of conspiracy in Elizabethan society. Yet it is Cassius who informs Casca of the “true cause” of the apparitions, explaining “Why all these things change from their ordinance / Their natures, and

<sup>30</sup> Poetic device that attributes human characteristics to natural phenomena (Baldick 187).

performed faculties, / To monstrous quality” (1.3.66-8). The emphasis is on the frightening and unnatural conditions, a departure from the established order caused by Caesar's tyranny. The instance when Cassius likens Caesar to the “dreadful night” also ensures that audience members at the Globe are not transported all too far from the London context in their imagination, with the symbolic reference to the “lion in the Capitol”:

Now could I, Casca, name to thee a man  
Most like this dreadful night,  
That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars  
As doth the lion in the Capitol—  
A man no mightier than thyself, or me,  
In personal action, yet prodigious grown,  
And fearful, as these strange eruptions are. (1.3.72-8)

Humphreys supposes that the image of a lion—earlier alluded to by Casca: “Against the Captiol I met a lion” (1.3.120)—could be related to “the lions of the royal menagerie in the Tower,” and informs of the proverbial meaning of “to have seen the lions” as having seen the sights of London (123). This is all the more compelling in the context of the Elizabethan belief that the Tower of London was built by Caesar himself; visible from London Bridge, the Tower—with its lions—was a monument to the classical past known to all playgoers, and certainly the building in London that was most analogous to the Roman Captiol.

The attribution of chaos in the natural world to Caesar's abuse of power is arguably a convenient interpretation of events for Cassius in act 1 scene 3, especially given Cicero's earlier comment that “men may construe things after their fashion, / Clean from the purpose of the things themselves” (1.3.34-5). Yet the “fearful night” that is so elaborately imagined in Shakespeare's language may also be associated with Brutus and his simultaneous conspiratorial dilemma (Daniell 3). Indeed, Cassius himself likens the tempestuous conditions to the plan at hand:

for now, this fearful night,  
There is no stir or walking in the streets;  
And the complexion of the element  
[In] favor's like the work we have in hand,  
Most bloody, fiery, and most terrible. (1.3.126-30)

As such, the scene reinforces the central theme of political ambiguity that courses through the play. Shakespeare can be seen to directly appeal to strong feelings about conspiracy recurrently in the play, as for example when Brutus ruminates alone on stage about his proposed course of action in act 2 scene 1:

O Conspiracy,  
 Sham'st thou to show thy dang'rous brow by night,  
 When evils are most free? O then, by day  
 Where wilt thou find a cavern dark enough  
 To mask thy monstrous visage? Seek none, Conspiracy!  
 Hide it in smiles and affability; (2.1.77-82)

Contemporary fears about the threat of political conspiracies and particularly regicide would be dramatically realised only a few years after the opening of the Globe with the uproar of the Gunpowder Plot, an event that in itself underlines the legitimacy of Elizabethan concerns in preceding years.<sup>31</sup> Yet in fact a number of attempts were also made on Elizabeth's life around the time the Lord Chamberlain's Men assumed residency at the playhouse. Such attempts were invariably related to the delicate question of succession to the throne, and it is assassination and the administration of power that form the central themes of *Julius Caesar*. The public that comprised Shakespeare's audience is thought to have been largely monarchical in sentiment, and as the Queen reached the twilight of her reign without an heir or named successor, concerns about future political instability were spreading. It stands to reason, then, that Caesar would be the tragic hero of Shakespeare's stage, with Brutus and Cassius consigned to hell for their insurrection of catastrophic consequences.<sup>32</sup>

However, Daniell explains how the rediscovery of Plutarch including North's English translation of *Lives* in 1579 “brought to the attention of the educated in Europe Plutarch's surprising sympathy for republican Rome” (34). The concept of a tyrant in power was also not merely a relic of another age. Elizabeth and her government rigourously suppressed all talk of succession to her throne, and also cultivated a

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<sup>31</sup> The Gunpowder plot of 5 November 1605 was a failed attempt by a group of Catholic extremists to assassinate King James I and blow up the Houses of Parliament.

<sup>32</sup> Dante famously places Brutus and Cassius in the lowest circle of hell (Daniell 32).

deified image of the Queen that demanded veneration. On the contemporary proliferation of veiled references to political tyranny and abuses of power, Daniell asserts: “The tyrant in view is not hard to find. Even elementary knowledge of Queen Elizabeth's policies in the years up to her death allows parrallels between herself and a tyrannical Caesar” (25). Indeed, several anecdotes emanating from her Court during this period paint a picture of an ageing Queen that considered herself “constant as the northern star, / Of whose true-fix'd and resting quality / There is no fellow in the firmament” (3.1.60-2).<sup>33</sup> All those involved in the business of playing—particularly playwrights—will have been aware of the potential for tyranny at the Court, as they were subjected to stringent censorship. It soon becomes clear that Shakespeare transposed the familiar ambiguities of the most famous historical event of the Western world onto his own political environment in Elizabethan London and vice versa. He does not offer a resolution to ancient questions that ask who are the heroes and villains of the piece; instead, he intensifies the confusion: “As *Hamlet* at its heart expresses doubt, so *Julius Caesar* expresses ambivalence” (Daniell 2).

Shakespeare's choice of a Roman setting can be attributed to various possible factors besides the availability of a convenient source in Plutarch. If *Julius Caesar* was indeed the first new play Shakespeare staged at the Globe, its captivating opening scene—which introduces the famous story of Caesar's assassination replete with religious and political allusions to the present—would certainly have gone a long way to ensnaring a vital new public for the Chamberlain's Men. For having eschewed the prohibitions of the City authorities, it was not just the competition of the bawdy houses and bear-baiting ring that was left for the company to contend with. Playing had become a fiercely competitive business itself by the end of the sixteenth century, and with the prerequisite of a new permanent playhouse finally in place, the onus was now on Shakespeare to enable his company to thrive at its new location. Daniell astutely points out that a new play based on well-trodden ground was the ideal way for the Chamberlain's Men to boost their profile after three years at the Curtain, “knowing that people would come to the playhouse not to find out what happened, but to see what

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<sup>33</sup> Shapiro gives the example of a portrait artist who “made the mistake of accurately rendering the Queen as an old lady,” which ultimately led to an order for the destruction of “all portraits of the Queen which were to her 'great offence’” (178).

William Shakespeare did with the story” (10). With *Julius Caesar* thought to be the twenty-first play of a prolific career, Shakespeare's name was already of sufficient repute to draw an audience across the Thames for that reason alone.

The subject matter also allowed Shakespeare to tackle contemporary religious, political, and moral concerns indirectly, thus evading censorship. Elizabeth herself had devised the post of Master of the Revels in 1578 to regulate the playing companies, and Gurr informs of the remit associated with the title: “He was expected to cut out any references to religion or affairs of state, and he tried to prevent other offenses by banning the depiction of any living person on stage” (“The Shakespearean Stage” 3284). Shakespeare was no doubt concerned for his professional welfare and keen to maintain a favourable relationship with the Court, where his company also played intermittently. The implicit dialogue between ancient Rome and contemporary London also enabled Shakespeare to entertain his audience with metatheatrical language and imagery, moments that cause the hearer to awake from the illusion of Rome and appreciate palpable parallels with life outside the theatre. A good example of this is Murellus' exhortation for all before him to “Pray to the gods to intermit the plague” (1.1.54). Perhaps more than any other topical issue, that of the plague was sure to affect Londoners one and all. Although its most serious visitation in Shakespeare's lifetime was still to come in 1603, its threat nonetheless cast a morbid shadow over the city and indeed the Globe, since playing was customarily suspended during fatal outbreaks. Its traces can also be detected in act 2 scene 1 when Portia warns her husband about the dangers of exposing himself to the “raw cold morning” in a passage which recalls Elizabethan beliefs that the plague was a “vile contagion” spread through the air:

What, is Brutus sick?  
 And will he steal out of his wholesome bed  
 To dare the vile contagion of the night,  
 And tempt the rheumy and unpurged air  
 To add unto his sickness? (2.1.263-7)

The skill of the playwright in verbally creating elaborate illusions that transport the audience to a Roman setting is expounded upon in the following chapter, but another instance of metatheatricality where

that illusion is momentarily broken can be found at the end of act 5 scene 1, as a destructive flurry of combat and death onstage is preceded by Brutus' words:

O that a man might know  
The end of this day's business ere it come!  
But it sufficeth that the day will end,  
And then the end is known. (5.1.122-5)

It is likely that most in the audience were aware of the tragic ending that awaited, given the availability of Plutarch and the keen Elizabethan interest in Roman history that Shakespeare profited from. Nonetheless, the intensity of the final act catastrophe that sees Cassius and Brutus slain was arguably unprecedented. The intervention of these lines calls attention to the inescapability of Brutus' fate and has the potential to provide anything from a sober moment of reflection to an instance of comic relief, depending on the delivery and its reception.

The most significant moment of metatheatre and textual self-awareness in *Julius Caesar* comes at the very peak of its dramatic structure, the murder of Caesar in act 3 scene 1. In the chaotic aftermath of the assassination, with Caesar's corpse for all to see, Cassius and Brutus consider the eternal reverberations of their actions:

CASSIUS.                               How many ages hence  
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over  
In states unborn and accents yet unknown!  
BRUTUS. How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport,  
That now on Pompey's basis lies along  
No worthier than the dust! (3.1.111-6)

These lines represent a moment where Shakespeare suspends his audience between reality and illusion, between ancient Rome and Elizabethan London, between the Roman Capitol and the Globe theatre. In this crucial scene of the play, he ensures that the connection between the two realms is at its strongest with the tantalising notion of a realised prediction. The words here allow the “groundlings” to fully apprehend the significance of a fluid relationship between history and their own cultural moment: “We experience a kind of vertigo, in which we cannot distinguish the real and the illusory, and yet are conscious of both in



their highest potence” (M. W. MacCallum, qtd. in Humphreys 165). The following chapter forms a discussion of the Globe's structural features and theatrical resources, which contributed to the successful implementation of the various moments of metatheatre and topical relevance discussed above, recalling Brook's comment that the Elizabethan playhouse “not only allowed the playwright to roam the world, it also allowed him free passage from the world of action to the world of inner impressions” (87).

## CHAPTER THREE

### “THE NOBLE BRUTUS IS ASCENDED”:

#### THE STRUCTURE AND RESOURCES OF THE GLOBE

A sense of a playwright's professional disenchantment may be gleaned from the following passage in *Henry V*:

But pardon, gentles all,  
The flat unraisèd spirits that hath dared  
On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth  
So great an object. Can this cock-pit hold  
The vast fields of France? Or may we cram  
Within this wooden O the very casques  
That did affright the air at Agincourt?

(Prologue 8-14)

These apologetic lines offered to the audience to introduce the play can be seen to indicate Shakespeare's frustration during the three years that the Lord Chamberlain's Men spent at the Curtain theatre—between 1596 and 1599—while they attempted to secure a new permanent home. Built in 1577, a year after its close neighbour, the Theatre, the Curtain was an ageing venue that perhaps inhibited Shakespeare at this time: “[. . .] the prologue seems designed to undermine the Curtain theatre, the suggestion being that the Globe's better-appointed 'O' will be an improvement” (Stern 15).<sup>34</sup> Certainly by 1613 the Curtain was not held in high estimation, as in that year “a member of the Florentine embassy in London rated it 'an infamous place, in which no good citizen or gentleman would show his face'” (Gurr, “Shakespeare's Playhouses” 368). A diary entry from the Dutch tourist Johannes De Witt on his visit to London in 1596 suggests that the Curtain, situated in the northern suburb of Shoreditch, may—in relative terms at least—have proved an “unworthy scaffold” by that year, and points to the Bankside being the new focus of London playing:

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<sup>34</sup> As indicated previously, this study follows Stern and various Shakespeare chronologies in dating *Henry V* to the 1598-99 season, and concurs that the lines quoted here “are probably references to the Curtain, not the Globe as is so often thought” (Stern 15).

There are four ampitheatres in London of notable beauty, which from their diverse signs bear diverse names. In each of them a different play is daily exhibited to the populace. The two more magnificent of these are situated to the southward beyond the Thames [. . .]. (qtd. in Gurr, *Stage* 162)

Given that *Henry V* was to be followed hard upon by *Julius Caesar* and *As You Like It*, and arguably preliminary drafts for *Hamlet*, it is clear that Shakespeare in 1599 required a playhouse to match his ambitions and potential. “So great an object” as a battle would be staged again in *Julius Caesar*—the battle of Philippi in act 5—and presumably the company was just as concerned with the size of audience it could “cram within this wooden O” as with stage props. As intimated in the previous chapter, a move to the southern liberties afforded the Chamberlain’s Men increased freedoms, with Stern remarking that “the company for which Shakespeare wrote could feel less restrained in their choice of play topic than when they were north of the London wall” (14). It was a significant move by an already illustrious playwright and his men, heralded by the grandiose name of the new theatre, the Globe. This appellation, together with the flag flown from the roof that depicted Hercules bearing the world on his shoulders, implied from the very outset that something all-encompassing was at hand. *Julius Caesar* immediately lived up to that expectation with its compelling topical insights into the classical past as well as its metatheatrical content: “The Theatre’ became the ‘the Globe’, the stage became the world” (Stern 14).

This chapter examines the structural characteristics of the Globe and the resources available to Shakespeare, relating such factors to textual indications of their significance in *Julius Caesar*. All such associations drawn to the play text are necessarily qualified by this important warning from Gurr: “Any attempt to examine the conditions and the traditions of Shakespearean staging is inhibited by the distance between the event as fixed in print and the flexible actualities of the local conditions of performance” (*Stage* 209). There can be no certainty that the lines printed in the First Folio were indeed spoken on any given day at the Globe, although it is largely assumed. While the emphasis is on the specific theatre space that first saw the play performed, the scarcity of evidence related to the Globe itself means that a more general examination of London playhouses and their staging practices is called

for. The scope of this investigation does not allow for a detailed comparison across various London theatres and moments within the period to ascertain exactly which features were idiosyncratic to the Globe in 1599. A more realistic approach at this juncture is to consider the Globe as the prime example of the Shakespearean stage—in particular the amphitheatre playhouses between 1599 and 1608—and thereby identify the factors that may have shaped the composition and enactment of *Julius Caesar*. In doing so, the study begins with Styan's principle of the four “basic and irreducible ingredients of the Elizabethan theatre which the playwright took into account,” at least in terms of structural features:

1. A tight, enclosing auditorium.
2. A projecting platform almost as deep as it was wide.
3. Two upstage entrances on to the platform.
4. At least one balcony. (*Stagecraft* 12)

The present study has already registered in the introduction some of the problems that were encountered during the Globe's construction, as well as the significance of its ownership structure which enabled Shakespeare and his fellow sharers to build a playhouse more or less to their own specifications. Many inferences about its structure and basic features are derived from a famous drawing of the interior of the Swan theatre, discovered in 1888. It is a copy by Arend van Buchell of a sketch sent to him by De Witt in 1596, and it is the only extant visual record of an amphitheatre playhouse of that time (appendix fig. 5). Gurr has written at length about its dubious authenticity, noting that “[c]onceivably De Witt's drawing shows features from more than the one playhouse” (*Stage* 166). However, the most significant features that De Witt includes reflect Styan's principle: the expansive, square platform that is clearly raised from the ground, the tiring-house façade with two pairs of doors and a balcony above, and two large pillars that support the canopy or “heavens,” as well as three gallery levels that surround the stage. Already from this modest sketch, the three-dimensional nature of Shakespearean staging is identifiable. From other evidence such as the archaeological discoveries at the site of the Rose in 1989, or the building contract between Henslowe and Street for the Fortune, further details have been discovered. Gurr informs that there

was a large trapdoor built in to the platform “in most playhouses” and that the “underside of the 'heavens' was painted with sun, moon and stars, and probably the signs of the zodiac,” details that point to the metaphorical potential of the structure as a whole (*Stage* 151).

In order to apprehend the dramaturgical impact that the various characteristics of the playhouse may have had, this chapter will examine three relevant scenes from *Julius Caesar* in turn, i.e. act 1 scene 3, act 2 scene 1, and act 4 scene 3. But a consideration of some of the less material conditions that constituted the playhouse environment is necessary in advance. Gurr has for many years been at pains to point out the crucial differences between the Elizabethan audience and the modern spectator, the former conditioned to hear the language, the latter to see the spectacle. He states that “[a] good playhouse audience will listen to the poetry and be properly rewarded in the mind” (*Playgoing* 3). While most modern theatres—and of course cinemas—situate the viewer directly in front of the action for the prime vantage point, the Globe was exemplary of playhouse design that emphasised hearing over seeing, and accommodated as many people as possible as close as possible to the platform.<sup>35</sup> Significantly, this included the areas beside and even behind the stage, allowing for a three-dimensional experience that was truly shared by all in attendance. Gurr comments on the importance of this facet of Shakespeare's theatre:

Today we have almost totally lost the feeling of experiencing a play as a member of a crowd. Crowds packed together develop a strength of collective emotion that energises everyone and conditions their reception of the theatre event. (*Stage* 210)

Meanwhile, in his influential treatise on the flexibility of the Shakespearean stage, Styan highlights the intimacy that the playhouse retained despite crowds of several thousands as a key factor in its success.<sup>36</sup>

Above all, the shape into which the spectators were mustered

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<sup>35</sup> These people were wittily referred to as “understanders,” punning on their position beneath the raised stage.

<sup>36</sup> Styan informs that “conservative estimates for the Globe provide for over 2,000 spectators” (*Stagecraft* 16), while Gurr has claimed that “[w]ith some squeezing, the theater could hold over three thousand people” (“The Shakespearean Stage” 3287).

and their physical relationship with the players determined the emotional range of the play, the intimacy or remoteness of the playing and the immediacy or alienation of the response. (*Stagecraft* 14)

The active role of the crowd, encouraged by their proximity, was necessary not least because of the scenic economy of the stage. The lack of elaborate scenery and stage resources such as props and mechanisms meant that the audience shared not only the experience, but also the responsibility to make the performance a success, as the entreaty from the prologue of *Henry V* indicates: “Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts” (1.0.23). Gurr underscores the significant role played by the audience: “Staging then had an essential economy, and at least half the vigour of the event came from the audience sharing it” (*Stage* 211). There was of course always the possibility of a negative reaction, and in the same way that audience involvement is seen to have been conducive to richer performances, criticism may be imagined to have been more direct and potent than in the theatre today. Another possible moment of metatheatricity in *Julius Caesar*, as Casca tries to reassure Brutus and Cassius of the veracity of his account of Caesar's refusal, may be indicative of a discerning playhouse audience that was all too ready to voice its opinions:

If the tag-rag people did not  
clap him and hiss him, according as he pleas'd and dis-  
pleas'd them, as they use to do the players in the  
theatre, I am no true man. (1.3.257-61)

The key to understanding the extent to which Shakespeare wrote specifically for his audience at the Globe is Gurr's concept of the “Shakespearean Mindset,” outlined in his essay “The Shakespearean Stage.” It is an idea that encompasses the various sociopolitical expectations and preoccupations discussed in the previous chapter of this study, but also the conventions of playing that conditioned performances. The salient aspect of the Shakespearean Mindset is that those who paid to attend plays “committed themselves willingly to suspend their disbelief in what they were to see” to a greater extent than in the modern day. Gurr argues that while this required great skill from

the playwright and collaboration from the audience, it also allowed for “extratheatrical tricks” (3282). On a summer's afternoon, a play like *Julius Caesar* with its frequent shifts in time and place demanded considerable suspension of disbelief, but the readiness of the playgoers to accept illusions enabled Shakespeare to broaden the scope of his work and transpose the action from day to night, from Rome to Sardis, or even between the realms of imaginary and real, as discussed in the previous chapter. It is an actor-audience relationship that Styan has called “creative collaboration” (*Stagecraft* 17).

Styan's “principle of imaginative neutrality” is employed at this point to explain how the structure of the Globe—more precisely, its lack of theatrical resources—combined with the collaboration of the audience to afford Shakespeare the greatest possible freedom in composition. Styan perceives the Shakespearean stage as a neutral space that has to be engaged by playwright, actor, and audience alike, commenting that “there are rarely any constant reminders of Shakespeare's time and place, and this stage is primarily and properly the target area for imaginative thought and emotion” (“Stage Space and the Shakespeare Experience” 196). Instead of “constant reminders” in the form of decorations, props, and scene changes, Shakespeare's language is almost without exception the indicator of time and place in *Julius Caesar*. As mentioned in the introduction to this study, Styan insists that the absence of such “clutter” as visible indications of time and place is a key factor in promoting the sense of audience involvement that was integral to the success of the Shakespearean theatre. It also allowed for the rapid movement between scenes that was required, as one of the most considerable exigencies affecting Shakespeare was the need—in the case of *Julius Caesar*—to condense the historical events of several years into the “two hours' traffic” of his stage. Gurr cites a letter from the Lord Chamberlain to the Lord Mayor in 1594 that implies a time limit to which Shakespeare had to adhere in staging his plays, as the company's patron informs “that where heretofore they began not their Plaies til towards Fower a clock, they will now begin at two and have done betwene fower and five” (qtd. in *Stage* 219).

Act 1 scene 3 of *Julius Caesar* is discussed in the previous chapter of this study in terms of the contextual significance of its “fearful night” and its prodigies. To the sound of “thunder and lightning,” the entrance of Casca and Cicero marks the play's first shift

to a night-time setting, which is immediately indicated by Cicero: “Good even, Casca” (1.3.1). Gurr informs that in playhouses of the period, “[t]hunder came from what Jonson called the ‘roul’d bullet’ trundled down a sheet of metal, or a ‘tempestuous drum’” (*Stage* 228). In any case, it was a fairly uncomplicated method of drawing the audience at an afternoon performance into a dark, frightening illusion; the onus remained predominantly on Shakespeare’s language—and its delivery—to not only reiterate the night setting but also convey the ferocity and abnormality of the conditions in the following lines from Casca:

Are not you mov’d, when all the sway of earth  
Shakes like a thing unfirm? O Cicero,  
I have seen tempests when the scolding winds  
Have riv’d the knotty oaks, and I have seen  
Th’ambitious ocean swell, and rage, and foam,  
To be exalted with the threat’ning clouds;  
But never till to-night, never till now,  
Did I go through a tempest dropping fire. (1.3.3-10)

There follows another lengthy exposition from Casca, exemplary of numerous moments in the play when events are verbally portrayed, rather than shown on stage. Already by this point, an enraptured audience has been reminded of Pompey’s triumph, heard Cassius’ embellished story of swimming the Tiber with Caesar, and been informed by Casca of Caesar’s refusal of the crown. All of these events are fashioned with the use of language alone, although the latter is brought to attention a little earlier by noises off that signal its occurrence in close proximity to the action onstage.<sup>37</sup> The end of the scene provides a further example of the verbalisation of events to hurry the action along, as Cassius instructs Cinna to plant the conspiratorial letter at Brutus’ house, while the words “take this paper” demonstrate how the language can implicitly direct onstage actions and the use of props (1.3.142).

The transition between acts 1 and 2 serves as an apposite example of Shakespeare’s dexterity in transposing scenes and advancing the passage of time, without recourse to the visual “clutter” that Styán mentions. Gurr informs that scene and act breaks were an innovation

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<sup>37</sup> “Noises off” are sounds made offstage to be heard by the audience.



brought about by the move to indoor playhouses, in the case of Shakespeare's company—by then named the King's Men—to the Blackfriars theatre hall in 1608: “All the early public-theatre plays ran continuously, without intervals, the incidental entertainment being confined to before and after the performance” (*Stage* 217). The appearance of *Julius Caesar* in the First Folio of 1623 in five acts is thus attributable to a later convention of dramaturgy that did not impress upon Shakespeare at the time of writing. What is now known as act 1 ends with Cassius signalling the time and informing of the group's intention to wake and prevail upon Brutus that night: “Let us go, / For it is after midnight, and ere day / We will awake him and be sure of him” (1.3.162-4). Shortly afterwards, Brutus enters alone on stage with the words “I cannot by the progress of the stars / Give guess how near to day” (2.1.2-3). He asks Lucius for a taper in his study, which consolidates the illusion of darkness. The audience at this point is complicit with the conspirators, fully aware of their impending arrival and the purpose of the letter that Lucius will shortly hand to Brutus. It is an imbalance that undermines the soliloquy—which sees Brutus vacillate between notions of loyalty and honour—with a sense of inevitability.

With the emphasis on the darkness that precedes a morning of great tumult, Shakespeare perhaps apologetically offers a justification for Brutus reading the contents of the letter aloud onstage when an outdoor setting has already been established: “The exhalations whizzing in the air / Give so much light that I may read by them” (2.1.44-5). As discussed in the previous chapter of this study, the date is signalled in act 2 scene 1 with an allusion to the curiosity of discordant calendars, and ultimately the audience is informed by Lucius that “March is wasted fifteen days” (2.1.59). The soothsayer's earlier interjections of “Beware the ides of March” (1.2.18,23) ensure that not only those acquainted with Plutarch's *Lives* were alerted to the portentous significance of this date. The implication is of course that Brutus resolved only on the very same morning to participate in Caesar's murder, and this reflects Shakespeare's narrative compression of time. Particularly in the run up to act 3 scene 1, where Caesar's assassination represents the dramatic peak of the play, the language stresses rapid temporal progress, as Humphrey mentions: “The play stresses the inexorable drive of time towards the climax” (139).

Amidst otherwise pulsating action that courses throughout the

play, act 2 scene 1 serves as a form of respite that Styan calls “remarkable for its gentle prelude and its sensitive close” (*Stagecraft* 209). As well as Brutus' assuaging conversations with Lucius and Portia, there is an amusing interval involving Decius, Casca, and Cinna as Brutus and Cassius whisper privately onstage. In just eleven lines, the conspirators try to ascertain their locality, reiterate the date by implication, and illustrate that dawn is encroaching. Humphrey comments that the “brief intermission relieves the tension, creates the local atmosphere, marks the significant progress of the hours, and fixes attention on the Capitol” (135). It is also conceivable that the passage elicited metatheatrical stage business, momentarily conveying the audience again from Rome to London:

DECIUS. Here lies the east; doth not the day break here?  
 CASCA. No.  
 CINNA. O, pardon, sir, it doth; and yon grey lines  
 That fret the clouds are messengers of day.  
 CASCA. You shall confess that you are both deceiv'd.  
 Here, as I point my sword, the sun arises,  
 Which is a great way growing on the south,  
 Weighing the youthful season of the year.  
 Some two months hence, up higher toward the north  
 He first presents his fire, and the high east  
 Stands, as the Capitol, directly here. (2.1.101-11)

Drawing on the earlier association of the Roman Capitol with the Tower of London, it is possible to infer an allusion to London from these lines, as the Tower indeed stood in a “high east” direction from the Globe (appendix fig. 1). A cursory wave of Casca's sword in that direction would allow Shakespeare's words to resonate more directly in the ears of the “groundlings,” and perhaps provoke a reaction that contributes to the relief of tension.

Even within this comparatively measured scene, the “drive of time” that Humphrey calls attention to continues to be clearly evident, as Shakespeare underwrites the events of the first two acts with palpable temporal pressure that is verbally indicated. This dramatic stratagem—which serves to intensify the climactic scene of Caesar's death in act 3 scene 1—perhaps explains the anachronistic inclusion of clocks on several occasions in the play. The morning of the assassination in act 2

scene 1 includes one such occurrence, as a stage direction—“clock strikes”—prompts the following exchange:

BRUTUS. Peace, count the clock.  
 CASSIUS. The clock hath stricken three.  
 TREBONIUS. 'Tis time to part. (2.1.192)

This dramatisation of time is quickly followed by the establishment of a location and deadline for the meeting with Caesar:

DECIUS. I will bring him to the Capitol.  
 CASSIUS. Nay, we will all of us be there to fetch him.  
 BRUTUS. By the eight hour; is that the uttermost?  
 CINNA. Be that the uttermost, and fail not then. (2.1.212-4)

In a play that has already progressed one month by this point, an imagined interval of a few hours is enticingly brief, especially with Casca's subesquent announcement: “The morning comes upon's” (2.1.221). Indeed, just over 200 lines later at the Captiol, Caesar asks Brutus “What is't a'clock?” and the response is “Caesar, 'tis strucken eight” (2.2.114). It is worth noting that Daniell advances another possible reason for the anachronism of the clock in this instance, emphasising Caesar's well-known “concern for timekeeping,” and proposing that “just as Brutus is taking the lead to kill Caesar, Shakespeare makes the setting itself [. . .] demonstrate the triumph of Caesar's time down the ages” (21-2). While this is a valid interpretation, other anachronisms such as the “chimney-tops” of Murellus' speech (1.1.39) or the book with pages that Brutus begins to read—“Let me see, let me see; is not the leaf turn'd down / Where I left reading? Here it is, I think” (4.3.273-4)—suggest that the use of a clock may be more simply attributable to the need for the efficient dramatisation of time. The various anachronisms are also indicative of the underlying theme of transposition between the historical and the contemporary, “not because Shakespeare was ignorant of ancient history, but because the Rome of the play is also London” (Bate and Thornton 122).

The third part of *Julius Caesar* that is of particular interest to this study in terms of inferring staging conditions from the extant text comes after the quarrel and subsequent reconciliation between Brutus

and Cassius in act 4 scene 3. The time and locality of the play have been radically shifted in the aftermath of Caesar's death and the famous orations from Brutus and Antony in act 3. Lucilius informs of Cassius and his men: "They mean this night in Sardis to be quartered," and this signals not only a departure from Rome, but also Shakespeare's compression of over two and a half years of history into a negligible interval.<sup>38</sup> The events presented in *Julius Caesar* could conceivably have formed a two-part play in the mould of Shakespeare's histories, the first part ending on the catastrophe of Caesar's death, and the second with the demise of Brutus and Cassius. As it was, Shakespeare was here faced with the unenviable task of restoring dramatic tension to a play that had just witnessed one of the most intense moments that an audience was likely to see across London's playhouses, an assassination acted out with over a dozen characters onstage and which touched a cultural nerve.

The imaginative neutrality of the stage is fully invoked as Brutus discerns the Ghost of Caesar in his tent near Sardis. Given the stage direction that prompts the entrance of the Ghost, it may be assumed that it was a physical presence onstage. Nonetheless, it is still Brutus' language and its enactment that consolidate the fearsome sight which confronts him, recalling Styan's observation that "the neutrality of the platform's space implies the strongest commitment by author, actor, and audience to the particular relationships of the play" ("Stage Space and the Shakespeare Experience" 196). The effect of the illusion of Caesar's Ghost is particularly dependent on the ability of the actor to match Shakespeare's words with concordant emotion, and on the willingness of the audience to accept that the character before them is a supernatural entity:

How ill this taper burns! Ha! who comes here?  
 I think it is the weakness of mine eyes  
 That shapes this monstrous apparition.  
 It comes upon me. Art thou any thing?  
 Art thou some god, some angel, or some devil,  
 That mak'st my blood cold, and my hair to stare?  
 Speak to me what thou art. (4.3.275-81)

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<sup>38</sup> Caesar was assassinated on 15 March 44 BC; the two battles of Philippi (which Shakespeare also compresses into one event in act 5) followed in 42 BC (*Oxford Dictionary of English*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2010).

One structural feature of the Globe that may have facilitated Shakespeare's dramaturgy at this point is the inbuilt trapdoor in the platform, for if this was employed for the entrance of the Ghost, its symbolic quality of "cellarage as hell" would have allowed for an immediate relation of the "monstrous apparition" to the underworld.<sup>39</sup> The subsequent brief exchange references "Philippi" three times over five lines before the disappearance of the Ghost. With a similar effect to the foreboding repetition of "the Ides of March," the audience is left in no doubt as to the locality of the impending dramatic climax. The tension is augmented a mere thirty lines later as, with the Ghost's warning of "thou shalt see me at Phillipi" (4.3.283) still reverberating in the auditorium, Octavius informs of the play's final major transposition of place: "They mean to warn us at Philippi here" (5.1.5). Again the momentum builds inexorably towards the climax.

A moment in *Julius Caesar* that has been the focus of some critical debate concerning staging occurs in act 3 scene 2, known as the Forum scene. It is notable for the public orations given by Brutus and Antony, and includes textual indications of character positioning that are open to interpretation. As mentioned in the previous chapter with reference to the use of theological terms in the play, Brutus speaks of a pulpit from which he will address the plebeians and appeal for their acceptance, before informing Antony: "And you shall speak / In the same pulpit whereto I am going, / After my speech is ended" (3.1.249-51). When the time comes for Brutus to speak, at the beginning of act 3 scene 2, the "third plebeian" interjects with the words "The noble Brutus is ascended; silence!" (3.2.11). The opening stage direction for the scene in the First Folio reads "Enter Brutus and goes into the Pulpit, and Cassius, with the Plebeians" (appendix fig. 6), but many modern editors of the play have interpolated a stage direction—commonly "Brutus goes up into the pulpit"—at 3.2.8, to coincide more logically with the third plebeian's remark. The upward motion is the principal matter of contention. It is possible that Brutus and Antony both delivered the speeches from the gallery level of the tiring-house, on the balcony. This idea is supported by the words "Brutus is ascended" (3.2.11) and also

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<sup>39</sup> Gurr discusses the playhouse conventions associated with the trapdoor which would be exercised in the staging of *Hamlet* at the Globe shortly after 1599, explaining that it provided "a hell [. . .] for the ghost of Hamlet's father to descend into before he speaks from his purgatorial grave under the ostensible earth of the stage floor" (*Stage* 223).

“Descend” directed at Antony following the conclusion of his speech (3.2.162). The incidental lines of the plebeians are thought to allow time for Brutus and Antony to assume their positions. C. Walter Hodges provided a sketch of this possible staging, depicting Antony aloft on the balcony (appendix fig. 7).

There are, however, two significant problems with the interpretation that the Forum speeches were given from gallery level. The balcony was only accessible via the tiring-house itself and Humphreys points out that there are no further stage directions to mark the necessary entrances and exits of the speakers, while Daniell comments that the actors' “command of a stage audience would be poorer” from gallery level. Both appear to broadly concur that intimacy with the other actors and the audience was a priority, and that the “pulpit” was most likely a temporary prop upstage on the platform (Humphreys 174, Daniell 253). This is an interpretation that is corroborated to some degree by the mention of a chair as Antony is urged to speak:

1. PLEB. Stay ho, and let us hear Mark Antony.
3. PLEB. Let him go up into the public chair,  
We'll hear him. Noble Antony, go up. (3.2.63-4)

These words allow for the interpretation that the scene is an example of the use of stage props at the Globe, with a chair or rostrum perhaps brought into view at the end of the previous scene. Gurr informs that a “dais or scaffold was certainly carried on for the relevant scene by stage hands” during the contemporary play *The Dumb Knight*, and that “the wealthier and longer-lived companies”—such as the Chamberlain's Men with its commodious Globe—“could accumulate a good many such standard properties” (*Stage* 237).

The present chapter has discussed the structure of the Globe, the expectations of its audiences, and the theatrical resources thought to have been at the playing company's disposal. In light of key scenes and moments from *Julius Caesar*, the significance of these factors as part of Shakespeare's working conditions has been foregrounded. The findings will now be evaluated in the conclusion in conjunction with those of the previous chapter on the Globe's ideological environment.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSION

This study has endeavoured to demonstrate the importance of place in the writing and subsequent enactment of *Julius Caesar* in 1599. Across the two central chapters, it has considered the ways in which the play may have been shaped by the Globe theatre and its surroundings along two separate lines of enquiry, namely the sociopolitical environment of contemporary London and the structural features and resources of the theatre. The discussion of the ideological environment in which Shakespeare wrote has addressed the social, religious, and political concerns of Elizabethan society. Although rooted in Plutarch's *Lives*, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* can be seen to have emerged from an intricate web of contextual factors, appealing to a mass audience as part of a thriving theatre industry that was still expanding and developing apace. Shakespeare and his company were under great pressure to deliver a successful play following three years of transition at the Curtain and having invested heavily in the new playhouse. A move to the Bankside liberties enabled the Lord Chamberlain's Men to avoid the restrictions imposed by City authorities, but provided stiff competition from the various other forms of entertainment on offer south of London Bridge, and from Henslowe's Admiral's Men at the nearby Rose theatre.

The Chamberlain's Men were also affected by the constant threat of fatal plague outbreaks that could force the closure of the theatres, and by the continued Puritan opposition to playing. *Julius Caesar* offers textual signifiers of these issues, as well as of the more general religious concerns of the period, such as the calendar controversy and the abolition of public holidays. The themes emphasised in the play have been shown to be attributable to a widespread fascination with Roman history, to a society embroiled in international and domestic conflicts, and to a growing concern about political instability and the authority of those in power. While mindful of the risk of favouring hindsight over historical fact, the present study has considered some of the events that followed *Julius Caesar*—the death of the Earl of Essex, the Gunpowder Plot—in an effort to ascertain contemporary anxieties reflected in the play. Shakespeare's description

of omens, prodigies, and portents of political subversion can be related to the underlying questions that the play asks about morality and the administration of power. A deep-seated Elizabethan affinity for ancient Rome that perhaps had its roots in imperial ambitions allowed for moments of metatheatre in *Julius Caesar*, which intermittently shifted audience consciousness between the classical past and contemporary London. The political tension and censorship that affected the business of playing meant that historical settings from which to reflect on current affairs were all the more called for.

The third chapter has examined the Globe theatre as the prime example of the Shakespearean stage and its associated conventions, again using textual evidence from *Julius Caesar* to verify a connection between the play and the theatre space in which it is thought to have been first enacted. The study has foregrounded the fact that the Globe was the first London playhouse to be built to specifications set by professional players who were also its owners, before identifying the basic structural features that Shakespeare could consider in composition. Styan's theoretical principle of "imaginative neutrality" has helped to show that the expansive stage and scenic economy of the Globe combined with its intimately housed audience to bring Shakespeare's language to life through truly three-dimensional staging. By looking at three significant scenes from the play, further textual signification or implication of the theatre space in question has been identified. Gurr's "Shakespearean Mindset" and Styan's "creative collaboration" are important concepts that have been used to study some of the less material conditions that may have shaped the play, emphasising metatheatrical moments that are enabled by the location or symbolic structure of the playhouse. The chapter has also addressed Shakespeare's use of anachronisms in a Roman setting, as well as a notable moment of controversy regarding the inference of staging from the play text. The rapid dramatic progress of time and the transpositions of scenes that characterise *Julius Caesar* in terms of dramatic intensity have also been associated with the requirements and conditions of the theatre space.

The present study proposed in its introduction that Shakespeare's dramaturgy and the enactment of *Julius Caesar* at the Globe may be seen as a coalescence of Brook's notions of the Holy and the Rough Theatre. The two separate lines of inquiry have demonstrated the contrasting strengths of Shakespeare's stage that Brook touches on. The



three-dimensional staging of plays in a large auditorium—where a collaborative audience was amassed as a crowd in close proximity to the platform—enlivened Shakespeare's language, and the scenic economy of the stage allowed for radical dramatic movements in time and space, recalling Brook's assertion that “the absence of scenery in the Elizabethan theatre was one of its greatest freedoms” (86). These merits together with the anachronistic and topical moments throughout *Julius Caesar* exemplify Brook's Rough (or popular) Theatre:

The popular theatre, freed of unity of style, actually speaks a very sophisticated language: a popular audience usually has no difficulty in accepting inconsistencies of accent and dress, or in darting between mime and dialogue, realism and suggestion. (67)

Moreover, the unresolved political ambiguities that course throughout *Julius Caesar*, alongside its thinly veiled allusions to contemporary London, are indicative of a popular theatre that feeds off the anti-authoritarian energy of the crowd, or what Brook calls “the energy of anger, sometimes the energy of hate” (70). As noted in the introduction to the present study, the amphitheatre playhouses that the Globe typified would later be supplanted by hall playhouses and the increasing fragmentation of audiences, as admission prices began to vary and playhouses differentiated between social classes to a greater extent; some of the vital qualities of the Rough Theatre would be lost in this transition.

Meanwhile, Shakespeare's elaborate language that exploits the metaphorical potential of the Globe is contiguous with the ideals of the Holy Theatre. The willingness of the audience to suspend disbelief, and the innate Elizabethan emphasis on hearing over seeing, both contributed when allied with Shakespeare's language to the effective representation of the invisible onstage. As textual evidence from *Julius Caesar* has shown, the Globe—the greatest of Rough theatres—is therefore also the embodiment of Holy Theatre as defined by Brook: “A holy theatre not only presents the invisible but also offers conditions that make its perception possible” (56). The Globe was demonstrably a theatre for all London, one that competed with bear-baiting and debauchery but also appealed to the élite, a place for up to three

thousand people to reflect on contemporary issues through the lens of a tragedy set in the classical past. The associations that this study draws between the play text of *Julius Caesar* and the environment in which it was conceived and staged help to consolidate Brook's conception of the Shakespearean stage:

It is through the unreconciled opposition of Rough and Holy, through an atonal screech of absolutely unsympathetic keys that we get the disturbing and the unforgettable impressions of his plays. It is because the contradictions are so strong that they burn on us so deeply. (86)

In conclusion, a return to the initial problem is requisite. Wells' warning that Shakespeare's plays may have become modern and familiar to the detriment of our understanding of their origins has been reiterated increasingly in recent years. Shapiro aptly illustrates the positioning of Shakespeare as a special case, which has perhaps led to a delay in critical development:

The commonplace that dramatists are best understood in relation to their time would go unquestioned if the writer in question were Euripides, Ibsen, or Beckett. But only recently has the tide begun to turn against a view of Shakespeare as a poet who transcends his age [. . .]. (xvi)

Writing in 2004, Stern commented that the growing trend in criticism of “reaching towards a 'Shakespeare' defined by multiple contexts rather than authorial intention [had] only lately been theoretically situated” (5). This study has followed Stern in attempting to show that the structure and sociopolitical environment of the Globe helped to shape the writing and enactment of *Julius Caesar*, and as such it is committed to the same critical movement that she sees as focusing “not on 'Shakespeare' the individual author but on the collaborative, multilayered, material, historical world that fashioned the Shakespeare canon” (5-6). It is an aim arrestingly propagated by David Scott Kastan in *Shakespeare After Theory* (1999):

The effort to read Shakespeare historically seeks to restore his works to the specific imaginative and material

circumstances in which they were written and engaged. It would rescue the works from a history-annihilating focus that, in the name of their greatness, isolates the plays from the actual conditions of their production and reception, thus mystifying their achievement even as it is proclaimed. (17)

By associating moments in the extant text of *Julius Caesar* with the sociopolitical environment of Elizabethan London and with the performing conditions at the Globe in turn, this study has sought to reconnect the play with the environment of its conception. It is summarily a play shaped by a contextual background of utmost complexity and not simply by Plutarch's *Lives* and Shakespeare's skill in adaptation, although both of these are of course integral components.

Many critics have struggled to reconcile two famous lines about Shakespeare from Ben Jonson: "Soul of the age!" and "He was not of an age, but for all time!"<sup>40</sup> This study concurs with Kastan's opinion that if Shakespeare does indeed live on, transcending cultural boundaries and constructing new meaning, it is precisely because "he is so intensely of his own time and place" (16). A reading of Shakespeare along the lines of the analysis of *Julius Caesar* offered here can allow for associations to be drawn with the present day only because of the extent to which Shakespeare was attuned to the sociopolitical issues that surrounded him: "In his historical specificity, then, we discover ourselves as historical beings. As Jonson saw, he is the 'Soule of the Age' both before and as the condition of being 'for all time.'" (Kastan 16). More specifically, it is hoped that the findings of this study can contribute to performance analysis in terms of exploring the conditions that enliven Shakespeare's language to the greatest possible extent. It is by no means an attempt to recover any form of so-called essential Shakespeare—a futile cause—yet in the same way that historical readings of the plays can construct new meanings in the present, an understanding of the factors that contributed to the most successful period in theatre history can allow those involved in performance to find "a way forwards, back to Shakespeare" (Brook 86).

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<sup>40</sup> From the poem "To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author Mr. William Shakespeare," in the First Folio (1623).

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## APPENDIX

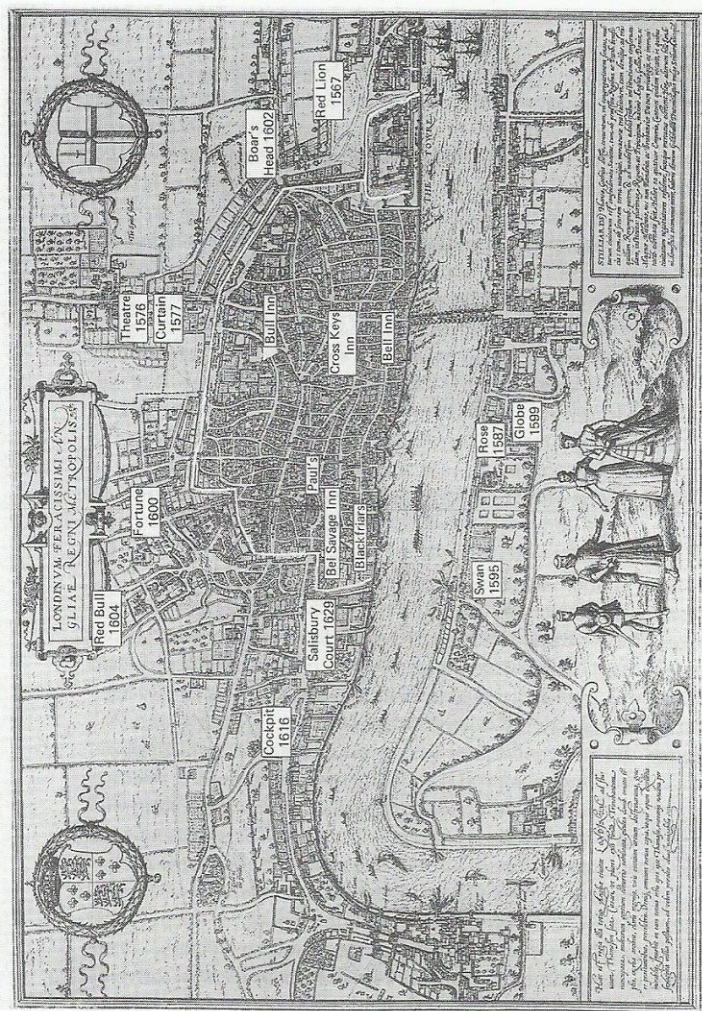


Fig. 1: Panorama of London in 1572 by Braun and Hogenberg, with the location of each playhouse built between 1567 and 1629 added. The City walls are clearly marked with a thick white line ending at the Tower of London to the east (marked “The Towre”). Taken from Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage* (2009), 144.

The Workes of William Shakespeare,  
 containing all his Comedies, Histories, and  
 Tragedies: Truely set forth, according to their first  
 ORIGINALL.

The Names of the Principall Actors  
 in all these Playes.



<i>William Shakespeare.</i>	<i>Samuel Gilburne.</i>
<i>Richard Burbadge.</i>	<i>Robert Armin.</i>
<i>John Hemmings.</i>	<i>William Ostler.</i>
<i>Augustine Phillips</i>	<i>Nathan Field.</i>
<i>William Kempt.</i>	<i>John Underwood.</i>
<i>Thomas Poope.</i>	<i>Nicholas Tooley.</i>
<i>George Bryan.</i>	<i>William Ecclestone.</i>
<i>Henry Condell.</i>	<i>Joseph Taylor.</i>
<i>William Slye.</i>	<i>Robert Bensfield.</i>
<i>Richard Cowly.</i>	<i>Robert Goughe.</i>
<i>John Lorraine.</i>	<i>Richard Robinson.</i>
<i>Samuell Croffe.</i>	<i>John Shancke.</i>
<i>Alexander Cooke.</i>	<i>John Rice.</i>

Fig. 2: List of "The Names of the Principal Actors in all these Plays" from the First Folio (1623). Reproduced from a facsimile copy.

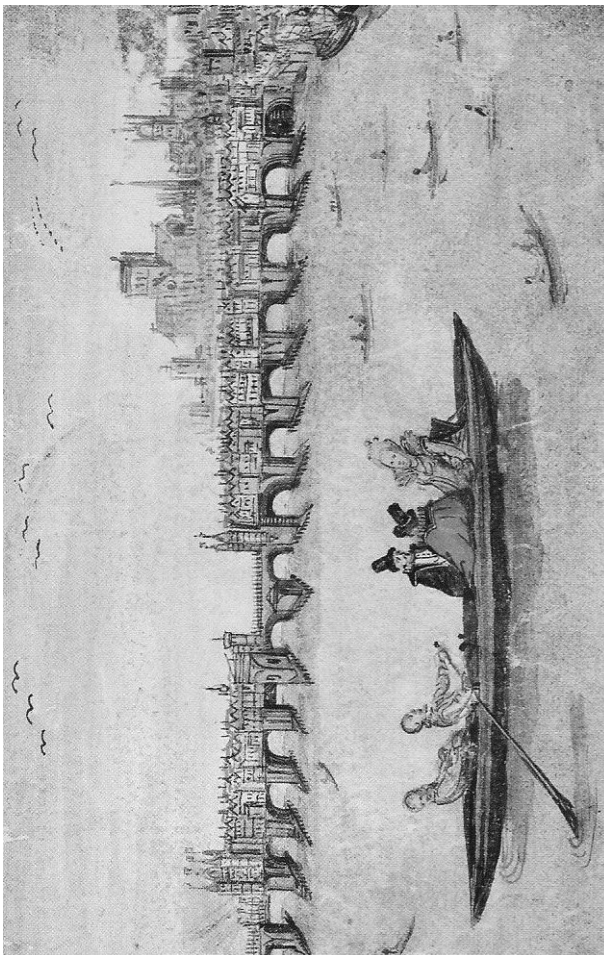


Fig. 3: *Going to Bankside* by Michael van Meer (1619), depicting a boat journey across the Thames to the Bankside, with London Bridge in the background. From Bate and Thornton, *Shakespeare: Staging the World* (2012), 20.



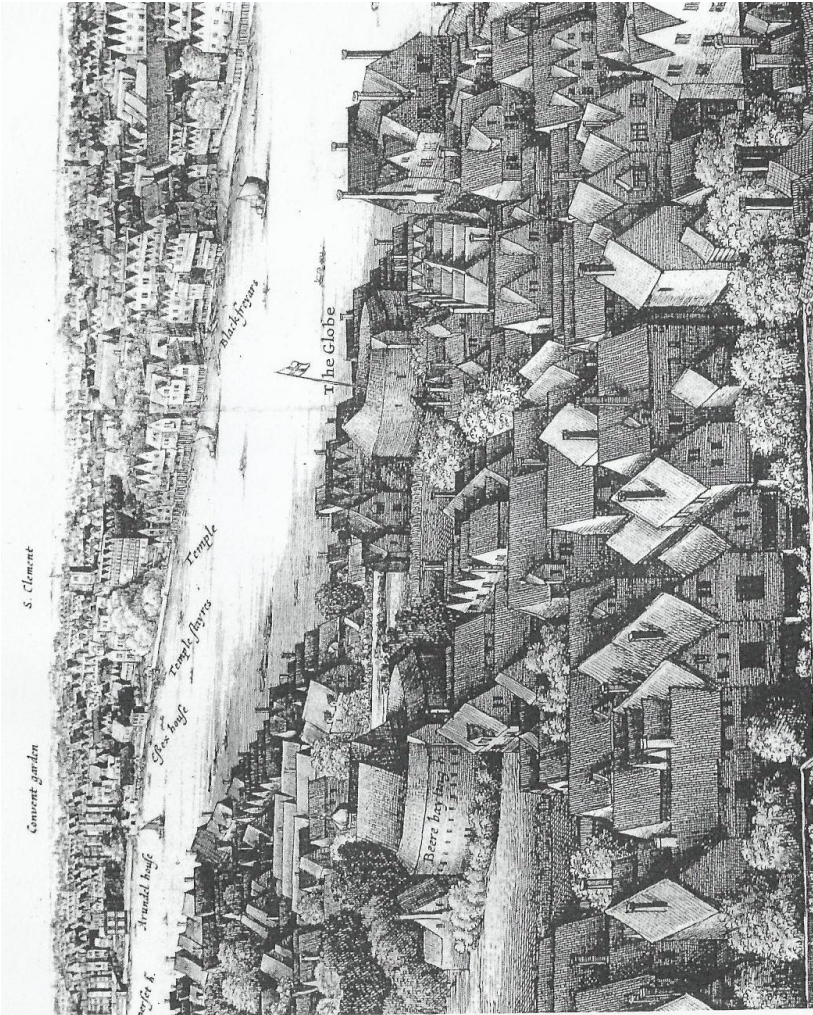


Fig. 4: Section of Wenzel Hollar's *Long View of London* (1647) showing the Globe and the bear-baiting ring with their names reversed. From Foakes, *Illustrations of the English Stage* (1985), 36.

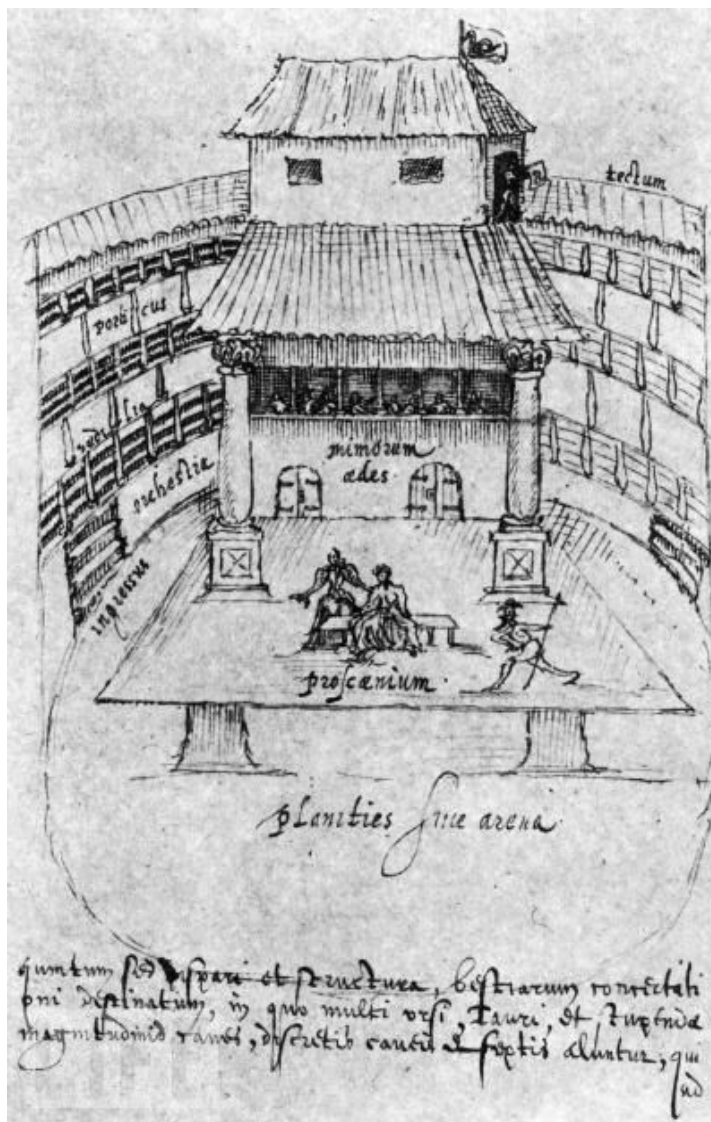


Fig. 5: Van Buchell's copy of the drawing of the Swan theatre by Johannes De Witt (1596). From Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage* (2009), 163.

Thou shalt not becke, till I haue borne this course  
 Into the Market place: There shall I try  
 In my Oration, how the People take  
 The cruell vsing of these bloody men,  
 According to the which, thou shalt disparte  
 To yong *Octavius*, of the state of things,  
 I send me your hand.

*Brutus*

*Enter Brutus and goes into the Pulpit, and Cassius,  
 with the Plebeians.*

*Ple.* We will be satisfied: let vs be satisfied,  
*Brus.* Then follow me, and giue me Audience friends.  
*Cassius* go you into the other streete,  
 And part the Numbers:  
 Those that will heare me speake, let 'em stay heere:  
 Those that will follow *Cassius*, go with him,  
 And publike Reasons shall be rendred  
 Of *Caesars* death.

1. *Ple.* I will heare *Brutus* speake.  
 2. I will heare *Cassius*, and compare their Reasons,  
 When generally we heare them rendred.  
 3. The Noble *Brutus* is ascended: Silence.  
*Brus.* Be patient till the last.

Romans, Country-men, and Louers, heare mee for my  
 cause, and be silent, that you may heare Beleuee me for  
 mine Honor, and haue respect to mine Honor, that you  
 may beleuee. Censure me in your Willedom, and awake  
 your Senses, that you may the better Iudge. If there bee  
 any in this Assembly, my deere Friend of *Caesar*, to him  
 I say, that *Brutus* loue to *Caesar*, was no lesse then his. If  
 then, that Friend demand, why *Brutus* role against *Caesar*,  
 this is my answer: Not that I lou'd *Caesar* lesse, but  
 that I lou'd Rome more. Had you rather *Caesar* were li-  
 uing, and dye all Slaves; then that *Caesar* were dead, to

Shall be Crown'd in *Brutus*.  
 We'll bring him to his Houe  
 With Showes and Clamors.

*Brus.* My Country-men.  
 2. Peace, silence, *Brus* speake.  
*Brus.* Good Countrymen, let me depart alone,  
 And (for my sake) stay heere with *Antony*:  
 Do grace to *Caesars* Corps, and grace his Speech  
 Tending to *Caesars* Glories, which *Mark Antony*  
 (By our permission) is allow'd to make.

I do intreat you, not a man depart,  
 Save I alone, till *Antony* haue spoke.  
 1. Stay ho, and let vs heare *Mark Antony*.  
 3. Let him go vp into the publike Chaire,  
 We'll heare him: Noble *Antony* go vp.

*Ans.* For *Brutus* sake, I am beholding to you.  
 4. What does he say of *Brutus*?  
 3. He sayes, for *Brutus* sake  
 He findes himselfe beholding to vs all.

4. 'T were best he speake no worde of *Brutus* heere?  
 3. This *Caesar* was a Tyrant.  
 3. Nay that's certayne:  
 We are blest that Rome is rid of him.

3. Peace, let vs heare what *Antony* can say.  
*Ans.* You gentle Romans.  
*All.* Peace ho, let vs heare him.  
*Ans.* Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your eares

I come to bury *Caesar*, not to praise him:  
 The euill that men do, liues after them,  
 The good is oft interred with their bones,  
 So let it be with *Caesar*. The Noble *Brutus*,  
 Hath told you *Caesar* was Ambitious  
 If it were so, it was a greuous Fault,  
 And greuously hath *Caesar* answer'd it.

Fig. 6: Excerpt from act 3 scene 1 of *Julius Caesar*, from the First Folio (1623). Includes the stage direction "Enter Brutus and goes into the Pulpit, and Cassius, with the Plebeians," followed by the words "The Noble Brutus is ascended." Reproduced from a facsimile copy.



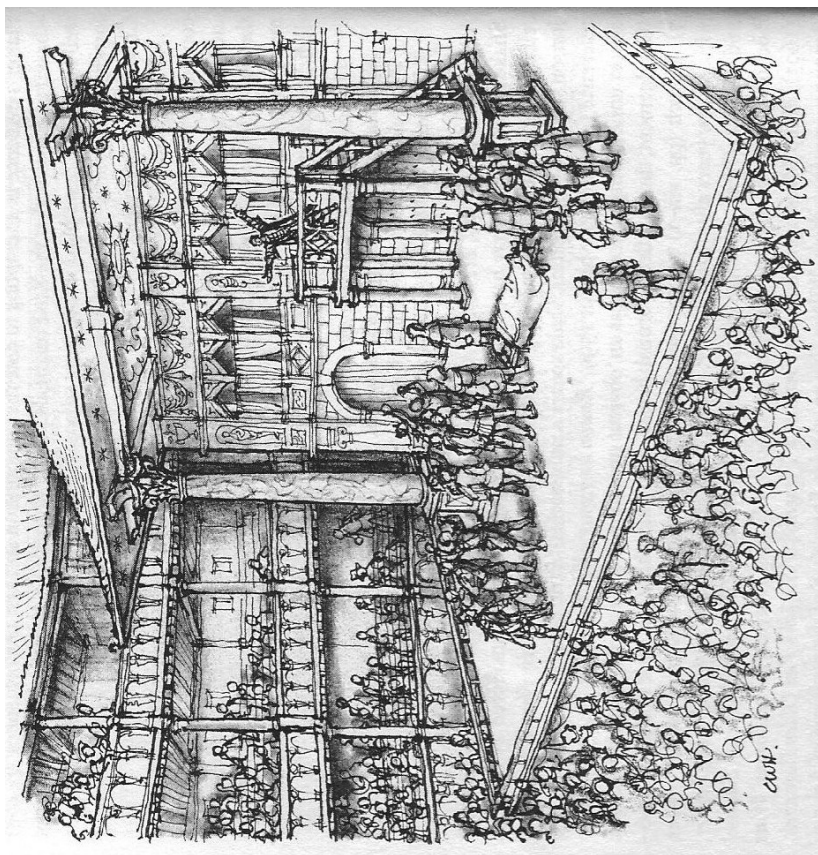


Fig. 7: Drawing by C. Walter Hodges of a possible Elizabethan staging of Antony's funeral oration in act 3 scene 2 of *Julius Caesar*. Taken from Spevack, 6.