

## **Frailty, Thy Name is Wo(Man): Crowd Dynamics and the Psychology of Persuasion in *Julius Caesar***

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### **ABSTRACT**

Shakespeare, in all his complexity, was a psychoanalyst par excellence. Many of his characters are victims - neither by choice, nor by chance- but by 'being persuaded' to bring to fruition the buried desires in their unconscious. Good men do incalculable harm from the best possible motive, as seen in many Shakespearean plays. This leads to the important question of who is to be blamed for the tragic flaw; the ones who are being persuaded or the ones who persuade. In this context, by an analysis of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, I would like to argue that frailty, irrespective of being a man or woman, is inherent in its different manifestations in all human beings. There are excellent 'manipulators of frailty' who makes others lend their ears in order to get things done according to their whims, be it Caesar, Brutus, Mark Antony, Casca, Cassius or the tribunes. The role of the hulking inefficiency of the mob which sways easily in their judgments is superbly portrayed by Shakespeare. We cannot, but agree with Gustave Le Bon's theory of crowd dynamics which conceptualizes how crowd participation extinguishes the normal psychological capacities and reduces men to the lowest common denominator.

### **KEYWORDS**

Denomination; manipulators; psychological.

### **Introduction**

Shakespeare, in all his complexity, was a psychoanalyst par excellence. He probes deep into the human psyche and brings out those pertinent factors which make people commit sins of commission and omission. There seems to be an implicit rule ever since Freud's earliest papers: if one wants to establish oneself as an important psychoanalytic scholar, one simply has to write a piece on the interpretation of Shakespeare. Many of his characters are victims- neither by choice, nor by chance- but by 'being persuaded' to bring to fruition the buried desires in their unconscious. Good men do incalculable harm from the best possible motive, as seen in many Shakespearean plays.

*Julius Caesar* is one of Shakespeare's most majestic works and greatest histories in which he deals excitingly with the themes of power and conscience. Shakespeare has in this play shown the same penetration into political character and the springs of public events as into those of every-day life, says William Hazlitt. As seen in many of his dramas, the play revolves around the difference between man and man, between action and reaction and between reason and treason. Set in the tumultuous days of ancient Rome, this play is renowned for its memorable characters and political intrigue, and has been captivating audiences and readers since it was first presented more than 400 years ago. It is long reputed for standing out as an

excellent example of the art of manipulation and persuasion. Brutus's emergence into Roman virtue- the mythos of the republic which drives him into action- itself is staged as a social process: the conception and formation of the conspiracy, the assassination and the shift of power to the triumvirate afterwards. Cassius persuades Brutus into conspiracy through rhetoric, while Mark Antony sways the crowd to action through his oratory. Knowledge is power, but knowledge of the art of persuasion is power and control.

The central issue of the play revolves around the threat to the opportunity for political service through the usurpation of power by Caesar. This is a politically mature Rome with a sophisticated culture and a proud history. We see a self-conscious Rome, a society aware of its past as a living organism. The play opens with a celebration of Caesar's latest victory, but he has triumphed over Romans, not foreigners. Flavius and Marullus immediately introduce us to a world of political conflict. Their dialogue reveals that Caesar is hated and feared, but the common people are 'unreflecting', those who formerly cheered Pompey now celebrate Caesar's triumph over Pompey's sons.

The story is put in motion as Cassius stays behind when his close friend Brutus says he is not in the right spirit to celebrate this victory. In order to elicit what is going on in Brutus' mind, Cassius gently persuades him to speak out what bothers him now. He accuses Brutus for keeping distance and for not being his usual loving self. Brutus assures him that his behaviour has nothing to do with his feelings for his friends, but with an internal battle. Cassius sets the ball rolling by making hay while the sun shines. While they hear the sound of trumpets and shouting, Brutus says he fears Caesar has been made king. Cassius makes the most of this comment, probing deep into what makes Brutus 'fear' instead

of 'cheer' Caesar being crowned. He then launches into his reasoning on how Caesar has unjustly become a powerful figure.

Cassius focuses on two specific strategies to weaken Brutus' devotion to Caesar and to prompt Brutus' sense of civic responsibility. He uses 'contradictions' and 'juxtapositions'- beginning with stories of Caesar's physical weakness and describes how he saved Caesar when he nearly drowned. He then questions how Caesar has any more right to greatness and Brutus or Cassius. Further 'invoking history', a skill practiced by persuaders, Cassius recalls another Brutus who helped to establish the republic of Rome. He also resorts to extreme flattery in order to persuade Brutus to enter into action against Caesar.

I have heard

Where many of the best respect in Rome,  
Except immortal Caesar, speaking of  
Brutus

And groaning underneath this age's yoke,  
Have wished that noble Brutus had his  
eyes. ( 1.2.60-64)

Cassius says that he is ready to be a mirror which reflects Brutus so as to help him to understand his greatness. He invokes the nobility and honour which Brutus possesses in plenty. 'Why is Caesar treated so highly, while they are considered underlings', he asks? He constantly juxtaposes Caesar and Brutus, comparing them and coming to the conclusion that there is nothing extraordinary in the name Caesar than in the name Brutus.

Brutus and Caesar—what should be in that  
"Caesar"?

Why should that name be sounded more  
than yours?

Write them together, yours is as fair a  
name.

Sound them, it doth become the mouth as  
well.

Weigh them, it is as heavy. Conjure with  
'em,

“Brutus” will start a spirit as soon as “Caesar”. (1.2.144-146)

Cassius has a clear notion of why Brutus should take the leadership of such a bargain. He persuades Brutus ‘to undergo with him an ‘enterprise of honourable dangerous consequence’ because having Brutus in their coat will surely bring respect and mass assent to their action. The ‘permutations and combinations’ of persuasion reaches its gamut when Brutus receives feigned letters beseeching him to shed his slumber and to ‘speak, strike and redress’. This exhortation instigates the spirit of action in Brutus. Cassius thus succeeds in persuading a man loyal to Caesar, a man who oscillated between ‘to be or not to be’ to rebel against Caesar. Once persuaded, Brutus does not turn back; he becomes instead, the acknowledged leader in the republican cause.

Brutus also resorts to self-persuasion via self-validation to justify his cause. Brutus begins with a conclusion: “It must be by his death.” (2.1.10) and works backward to adduce reasons. The first one is impeccable: “I know no personal cause to spurn at him, / But for the general,” echoing an earlier affirmation of his willingness to risk death for the “general good.” As Brutus struggles to explain how Caesar threatens “the general”, his ‘latent’ desire to be crowned remains hidden.(Kahn 91) He turns to a common proof, the pertinent reason to stab Caesar,

But 'tis a common proof  
That lowliness is young ambition's  
ladder,  
Where to the climber upward turns  
his face.  
But when he once attains the  
upmost round,  
He then unto the ladder turns his  
back,  
Looks in the clouds, scorning the  
base degrees

By which he did ascend. So Caesar  
may. (2.1.20-27)

Brutus avowedly grounds his purpose, not on anything Caesar has done, nor on what he is, but simply on what he may become when crowned. Is it a valid reason? External persuasion when coupled with self-persuasion leads men to take extreme decisions as seen in Brutus. He "knows no personal cause to spurn at him"; nor has he "known when his affections sway'd more than his reason"; / but "he would be crown'd: how that might change his nature, / there's the question"; and,

Since the quarrel  
Will bear no colour for the thing he  
is,  
Fashion it thus; that what he is,  
augmented,  
Would run to these and these  
extremities;  
And therefore think him as a  
serpent's egg  
Which, hatch'd, would, as his kind,  
grow mischievous,  
And kill him in the shell. [2.1.28-34]

The ambitious Caesar climbs up the ladder of advancement, which is composed of ‘lowliness’, his inferiors, the ‘base degrees’ of men whom he is at first, willing to look in the face, but on whom he turns his back when he has gotten to the top. Implicitly, Brutus figures as one of those “base degrees” by which Caesar attains the “topmost round”. It is this vision of being trampled on by Caesar that enables Brutus to get to the end of his soliloquy to “fashion it thus” even though he has to admit that “the quarrel / will bear no colour for the thing he is” (28-30), to make the leap beyond logic and proof to kill Caesar.

Persuasion is everywhere, playing an essential role in politics, religion, psychotherapy, education, and day-to-day social interactions. The most common target of persuasion, as seen in psychological literature is a person's

attitudes. Attitudes refer to general evaluations people have regarding other people, places, objects, and issues. Attitudes are studied as the primary object of influence because of their presumed guiding influence on choice and action. That is, all things being equal, people will decide to buy the product they like the most, attend the university they evaluate most favourably, and vote for the candidate they approve of most strongly. Persuasive attempts are likely to be effective to the extent that the function, or reason for holding, the position outlined in the appeal matches the function underlying recipients' attitudes. Psychological readings reveal that for people who are generally sensitive to the social consequences of their behaviour (i.e. high self-monitors), appeals that emphasized the social adjustive functions of voting (e.g. enhancing one's attractiveness to others) elicited more favourable evaluations and greater attitude change than appeals that emphasized its value-expressive functions. For people who rely on inner dispositions (i.e. low self-monitors), appeals with value-expressive arguments yielded more favourable evaluations and were more persuasive.

In this context, a close reading of how Cassius makes his attempt successful can be linked to the attitude of Brutus. Cassius knew that Brutus is the noblest Roman. He resorts to the methodology of ethical persuasion which increases options and freedom of choice, but does not really want it to happen. Cassius wants his antidote to be executed. Many of the urgings which Cassius used were appeals with value-expressive arguments because he was aware of the fact that Brutus relied on his inner dispositions and hence he could be persuaded only by highlighting Roman virtues, nobility, honour and related appeals. This tactics brings out the expected reward and though Cassius strikes a 'low high-key note' in his speech,

the forged letters which exhorts Brutus to awake and strike hits the target.

One of the most essential dimensions of meta-cognitive thought consists of the degree of confidence people place in their thoughts, ranging from extreme certainty to extreme doubt in their validity. Thus, two people might have the same thought in response to a persuasive message, but one person might have considerably greater confidence in that thought than the other person. Confidence in a thought is important because the greater the confidence, the greater its impact on judgment. This idea is referred to as the self-validation hypothesis which is the notion that generating thoughts is not sufficient for them to have an impact on judgments—one must also have confidence in them. According to this hypothesis, not only can variables affect the number and valence of thoughts, they can also affect thought confidence.

The confidence which Brutus has in executing his cause is mainly because he is the noblest Roman who wants to see Rome as Rome. This "Rome" is specifically the republic, created out of the uprising against the Tarquins led by Brutus' ancestor and namesake Lucius Junius Brutus. It is the mythos of the republic that impels Brutus to lead the conspiracy against Caesar and that which compels the conspirator's belief in their cause. Thus Brutus heads a plot to assassinate the man who, besides being clothed with the sanctions of law as the highest representative of the state, has been his personal friend and benefactor. He does all this, not on any ground of fact, but on an assumed probability that the crown will prove a sacrament of evil and transform him into quite another man. We see this argument as a strange piece of casuistry indeed. Brutus was to commit the gravest of crimes, purely from his extreme confidence in a misplaced virtue.

It is not mere rhetoric which plays here. Cassius is an excellent manipulator of

attitudes. The pleas to Brutus to free Rome from the tyranny of Caesar are manufactured by Cassius. Cassius admits in his soliloquy that if he held Brutus' place in Caesar's affection, he could never be persuaded to join the conspiracy. Brutus is drawn into the conspiracy because his reputation as a man of integrity will serve to provide political credibility to the conspirators. This reveals that values still count but that they are also subject to manipulation by ambitious men.

It is ironical that though there is an association of the public realm with Roman 'firmness' and the private realm with 'the melting spirits of women', there is a constant confirmation and subversion of the masculine identity throughout the play. Cassius saw persuasion as a seduction in which he was the active partner and Brutus the feminized one who lacked the firmness to resist. ("For who so firm that cannot be seduc'd?" 1.2.309) Brutus, of course isn't as firm as he appears to his co-conspirators. It is this reluctance to murder Caesar that gives rise to the famous scene between Brutus and Portia on the eve of the assassination. Almost all characters in the play including the crowd, irrespective of being men or women, are frail and act as manipulators of frailty. Hence, it would be better to appellate frailty as wo(man) than as woman.

If Cassius resorts to individual persuasion, the strategy of mass persuasion is adopted by Brutus and Antony after Caesar is assassinated. In Act III, after Brutus and the other conspirators assassinate Caesar, Brutus prepares to speak to the crowd, Antony approaches and asks permission to address them. Against the wise advice of Cassius who is adept in analysing attitudes, Brutus gives his permission with a clause that Antony must not blame the conspirators and that Brutus must be allowed to speak first. As Brutus speaks to the Romans, he

places his faith in the logical reasons he provides for Caesar's death:

Believe me for mine honour, and have respect to mine honour, / that you may believe. Censure me in your wisdom, / and awake your senses, that you may the better judge. (3.2.14-20)

In the speech delivered by Brutus in Act III, ii, 12-35, we see Brutus using his ability to ensure credibility for an action. The public response to Caesar's death is chaos and fear, and Brutus wants to restore the peace. The gathered crowd is quite distressed, and Brutus asks them to hear him out. He reminds them that he is reputable and tells them he will explain what has happened, they can be the judges. His claim is the frequently quoted "Not that I loved Caesar, but that I loved Rome more." (3.2.23). By using the strategy of antithesis, Brutus tries to contrast ideas in a balanced way, such that while one idea heightens to importance, the other idea diminishes to oblivion.

Brutus asks the crowd a question that seems to have only one logical answer: would they rather have Caesar alive and all be his slaves or dead and remain free? Linguist Antonio Reyes believes that questions imply connections with the audience, since they are formulated in the here and now of discourse.

They lower the formality of the speech event, establishing a fake distance where the politician seeks confirmation from the audience. Therefore these questions constitute confirmatory questions, used often as solidarity devices. (Reyes 192)

Brutus offers the people nothing in between- the modus operandi of powerful leaders who could get things done.

Brutus believes that the people will accept his vision that they would be slaves under Caesar, and would advocate his efforts to break off the shackles of Caesar's reign. Brutus feels confident in his decision to speak not only of Caesar's flaws, but of his

admirable qualities. Caesar was a loving friend, a fortunate and valiant man; but he was ambitious and so he had to be killed, says Brutus. Again he asks the crowd rhetorical questions, knowing what the answers will be. So certain both that Caesar had to be killed and that the people will understand this, Brutus pauses to let them respond. He wins the crowd to his side temporarily; they are for the time being convinced that it was good that Caesar was 'put to silence' by their 'hero of the moment' Brutus.

Antony gives his speech directly after Brutus has spoken to the crowd and convinced them that Caesar needed to be killed. (3.2. 74-108). In order to rout the audience to his feet, Antony arrives with Caesar's bloody body before Brutus was even done speaking. The body itself is a sign of the brutality of the murder and helps Antony as he makes his case against the conspirators- a perfect illustration of how media tries to sensationalise an event and emphasises the veracity of its version among the masses by stimulating both the visual and the auditory senses.

Antony explains to the crowd that he is there only to be a part of Caesar's funeral. This explanation implies that Antony is only there to do his duty, not to advocate for or against what has happened. He agrees with Brutus' comment that ambition is a great fault, and he remarks on how noble Brutus and his cohorts are. They were even good enough to allow him to speak to the crowd. Antony then starts to speak about Caesar, starting on a personal note. Antony explains that he and Caesar were friends and that Caesar always showed himself to be 'faithful and just'. These two adjectives are suggestive, remarks the critic Pamela Loos. A "faithful" person is loyal; such a person would not turn on others, as Brutus suggested Caesar would do if he had the crown. A "just" person, as Antony describes Caesar, would never turn citizens into slaves, as Brutus

had led the crowd to believe Caesar would do (Loos, 28).

We see the loosely knit threads of passive persuasion running throughout Antony's speech, which appears innocent on the surface, but has thick shades of contradictions beneath. Antony's word choices directly contrast with Brutus' description of Caesar and indirectly call into question the honesty and the 'ambition' of the conspirators. Antony contrasts his experience with Brutus' judgement through his words, "But Brutus says he was ambitious,/ And Brutus is an honourable man." Antony shows his shrewdness in manipulating public opinion by the handpicked repetition of such short, pithy words loaded with undercurrents throughout his speech.

Initially this description suggests that Antony is polite and respects Brutus and the fellow conspirators, just as a good Roman would. With repetition, however, it emphasises Antony's view that Brutus and his cohorts have gone against the facts. Antony then repeats that his goal is not to "disprove what Brutus spoke", but to "speak what I do know." Antony is claiming that though he does not set out to speak against the conspirators, he will nonetheless tell the citizens the truth. (Loos,28)

This particular tactics of making a speech by intentionally corrupting the signifiers and the signified - telling something without telling- is an excellent tool of manipulation seen to be practised by many politicians and leaders to sway the populace to their lines of thought.

In the course of his speech, Antony continues to highlight Caesar's virtues. He emphasises how Caesar's victory brought much money to Rome and how Caesar showed great compassion to the poor, because he knew that such claims would appeal to the common folk. Caesar's will is cited as an example. Such arguments would

surely guarantee Caesar a throne in the people's hearts. This move by Antony has a parallel in the way how election manifestoes are full of promises to appease the poor so as to change their estimation about the 'shepherd in search of greener pastures.' Antony also reminds the crowd that he repeatedly offered the crown to Caesar, but that each time Caesar turned it down. This very action speaks louder than words about how 'ambitious' Caesar was, says Antony.

Appeal to shame is the next mode used by Antony, wherein he tries to make the people feel ashamed of themselves for their unstable nature. He points out the people's fickleness towards Caesar. They were once his greatest supporters, now they are reluctant to voice out the correct decree for Caesar's murder. Antony concludes his tribute to Caesar with a touch of drama. He says he is so choked up that he must stop speaking. Unlike Brutus, who only told the crowd how much he and Caesar loved each other, Antony has shown how much love he and Caesar had for each other. Antony then pauses, and his silence speak volumes in that 'highly charged moment'. The strategy which Antony resorts to in order to manipulate the frail nature of the crowd starts to work; the crowd starts to turn against Brutus within that short span of time, just as Antony wishes. The underestimation of the power of the masses by Brutus and his team costs them dearly.

Why so? How could people change their opinion so quickly? Can't they wait, think for a while and take a judicious decision. Will they react in the same way if they were alone? Was it because they were part of a group that they acted so foolishly? What makes them act on the spur of the moment? These are questions which have perplexed psychologists throughout centuries. Many opinions and theories have been put forth which try to explain why such an action-reaction is part of us.

In the crowd the emotional tone is heightened by the concentration of attention, the suggestions of leaders, the use of verbal and other symbols, the excited gestures of the crowd members, and other circumstances of the occasion. The crowd is easily led on the basis of these emotional characteristics. While in a crowd, almost all critical faculties are in abeyance. One feels confident to such an extent that individuals start accepting as true the most improbable of statements. Crowd behaviour is heavily influenced by the loss of responsibility of the individual and the universality of behaviour, both of which increase with the size of the crowd. The bigger a crowd, the less responsible people feel they need to be.

Gustave Le Bon, a French social psychologist born in 1841, is considered to be the founder of crowd psychology, which explains why people do the things they do in groups. Le Bon's 1895 book, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, attributed crowd behaviour to the 'collective racial unconscious' of the mob overtaking individuals' sense of self and personality and personal responsibility. According to Le Bon, relieved of individual responsibility, individuals will behave in a more primal fashion. He asserts, 'by the mere fact that he forms part of an organized crowd, a man descends several rungs on the ladder of civilization.' A modern comparison might be the teenager who argues that his own actions of destroying public property during a strike weren't so bad because everybody else was doing it, too.

In his book, Le Bon also formulated the contagion theory, which argues that crowds cause people to act in a certain way. The theory suggests that crowds exert a sort of hypnotic influence on their members. The hypnotic influence combined with the anonymity of belonging to a large group of people, even just for that moment, results in irrational, emotionally charged behaviour. Or, as the name

implies, the frenzy of the crowd is somehow contagious, like a disease, and the contagion feeds upon itself, growing with time. In the end, the crowd has assumed a life of its own, stirring up emotions and driving people toward irrational, even violent action.

Shakespeare delineates beautifully the fickleness of the Roman plebeians that gather after the assassination of Julius Caesar. They are influenced by the words of both Brutus and Mark Antony. When the citizens first hear the reasons that Brutus propounds for the slaying of Caesar, that he loves Rome more than he does Caesar, and that he and the others slayed Caesar to save Rome from tyranny and keep them free, they cheer Brutus and tell him to live, rather than sacrifice his life at their demand. In fact, some want to erect a statue of him, while others suggest that he become a Caesar--"let him be Caesar"; moreover, one citizen even says, Caesar's better parts Shall be crown'd in Brutus. (2.2.53-54)

Here is an example of Brutus' appeals to the non-existent wisdom of the crowd and asks them to make a judgment. There is no reasoning among a crowd. He tells the crowd that he loved Caesar and honoured his great valour; but he loves Rome even more, and he slew Caesar because he was ambitious and would have made slaves of them all. Using rhetorical questions he asks if any of his listeners is "so vile that will not love his country" and pauses for reply.

The crowd shows that it has not understood Brutus. A member of the crowd is heard saying: "Let him be Caesar." Brutus's speech was meant to show the crowd that Caesar was evil but someone says he should be Caesar. Brutus spoke far above the level of ordinary men hence he was misunderstood. Plebeians need somebody who comes down to their level and take them up as well.

However, when this same crowd listens to Mark Antony's oration, they are easily moved by his rhetoric. It might be because Antony appealed more to the emotions of the crowd, than to their reason. Consequently, they begin to doubt Brutus and the others deed in slaying Caesar. Antony could speak to the 'heart of the crowd' and succeeds in raising suspicion regarding the motives of the conspirators by saying such things as

You all did love him once, not without cause;

What cause withhold you then to mourn for him? (3.2.110-11)

With his words, Mark Antony spurs the Roman crowd to riot and they run to set fires, tear down benches, break windows, and create civil unrest. He motivates the crowd to riot and to go after the conspirators. They do, and another civil war is on. The crowd turns into a mob and takes control of the city. Antony manipulates the crowd's fickle nature, and its actions change the course of the play. Clearly, emotional appeals sway the crowd more than rational ones. An ensuing civil war begins as a result of the persuasive arguments of Mark Antony who in the first act proves that he knows how "to work the crowd" to his advantage. This crowd, then, in effect, initiates the demise of Brutus and Cassius and the triumph of Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus, the second triumvirate.

The crowd is featured from the first scene of the play, when commoners are celebrating Caesar's return from a victory over another Roman general, Pompey, in a civil war. This opening scene is used for exposition. From the beginning of the Play we see that the Roman mob, first supported and praised Pompey who power over the throne (at that time) but as soon as Caesar defeats him, they all are busy in the preparations to welcome and joy in Caesar's triumph, which clearly gives the signs of their mob-mentality. They were not sincere in their decisions, and always



supported the one who had power. Contempt for plebeians appears throughout Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Common men are portrayed as unstable, subject to the conflicting views and pressures which are directed towards them.

The crowd's love for Caesar is established, as well as the fact that some do not like Caesar being favoured by the Roman people. Casca, for instance, reveals his attitude while simultaneously giving full rein to his assumed persona as detached cynic. Having described Caesar's rejection of the crown, he goes on to provide a colourful description of the plebeians of the 'rabblement' as he calls them. The main reason for the antagonism which Caesar attracted was the covetous desire he had to be called king, which first gave the people just cause and next his enemies, honest colour to bear him ill will. (Spencer, 30)

Caesar, like all politicians, knew that under the right circumstances it is possible to influence the crowd. He was an excellent manipulator of this frailty of the crowd. He identifies their weakness and it is through emotions and charisma that he prompts them toward actions and violence. With the right words and the right emotions manipulated, the crowd can easily become a Mob and be willing to do whatever a charismatic leader wishes them to do. Caesar knew that even though they may appear to be easily manipulated, those who are able to control them effectively controls Rome.

It was Caesar's masterful manipulation of the people in the first place that led to the conspirators' assassination of Caesar. Events in the play narrate that Caesar was desirous of the title of king, but determined to test public reaction before revealing his ambition. Caesar, on his return to Rome, rebuked those who called him king as soon as he discerned that the cast majority were offended by the title. Again, at the Feast of

Lupercal, Antony presented Caesar with a 'Diadeame wreathed about with laurell' which brought forth a cry of approval and rejoicing, but not very great and done only by a few, appointed for the purpose. When Caesar rejected the crown, then 'all people together made an outcry of joy'. (Spencer, 30) This was just a rehearsed scheme to make another test of popular feeling. Shakespeare could succeed in heightening the whole scene, by providing a vivid portrait of Casca, who dramatizes the incident while playing the part of the cynically detached observer.

Casca illustrates Caesar's control of the crowd by means of a comparison with the actor's manipulation of the audience. If the rag-tag people did not clap him and hiss him, according as he pleas'd and displeas'd them, as they use to do the players in the theatre, I am no true man'. (I.ii.255-8). Caesar manipulated the crowd so thoroughly that they wouldn't even care if Caesar had stabbed their mothers. Casca gives full scope to his own theatrical performance by imitating the devastating indictment of their gullibility. 'Three of four wenches, where I stood cried, "Alas, good soul" and forgave him with all their hearts; but there's no heed to be taken of them; if Caesar had stabb'd their mothers, they would have done no less. (1.2.268-70)The crowd in *Julius Caesar* appears content and footloose, constituting a potential force available to those most able to manipulate them. The plebeians then, are outsiders, observers of the political processes who become insiders only during political crises. They have been absorbed into the body politic while being simultaneously neutralized. (Thomas, 20)

Persuasion is and continues to be a necessary evil. The persuaders in the play knew that that all actions are to be turned towards changing attitudes and manipulating emotions. Crowds were persuaded so as to influence them and to be an influence over them. The crowd unknowingly played second fiddle to the

notion that they could be swayed in any direction in the presence of a powerful leader or orator. They demanded that they need to be sensationalised, not sensitised. They constantly reiterated the idea -'who rules the Roman Mob rules Rome'- so as to make it a universal catch phrase.

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