Actor Kevin Spacey receives standing ovation at first public performance as #MeToo persecution continues

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The grotesque character of the #MeToo sexual witch-hunt was on full display this week.

At Oxford University, victimized actor Kevin Spacey was given a standing ovation as he delivered a monologue from Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*.

The performance, his first stage appearance since a recent trial and acquittal, came barely days after a West End cinema refused to host the premiere of the new film *Control* because of Spacey's participation in it.

In July, Spacey was found not guilty on all the sexual assault charges brought by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). He had been accused of assault against four men between 2001 and 2013. He told the court during testimony that there "was a rush to judgment, and before the first question was asked or answered I lost my job, I lost my reputation, I lost everything in a matter of days."

The campaign of personal vilification destroyed his career and bankrupted Spacey. Netflix sacked him from *House of Cards*, then the series' producers sued him for $31 million in damages for the revenue they lost by their own and Netflix's actions. Spacey's scenes in the completed film *All the Money in the World* were scrapped and reshot by director Ridley Scott, with Christopher Plummer in his place.

Spacey's experience was especially punishing, but it exemplified the type of treatment meted out to the victims of the ongoing sexual misconduct smear campaign. Subject to personal demolition based on unproven allegations, the actor became a non-person professionally. His prior accomplishments were erased or dismissed.

The International Academy of Television Arts and Sciences reversed its intention of honouring him with its International Emmy Founders Award. London's Old Vic theatre, where he served triumphantly as artistic director from 2004 to 2015, instantly abandoned him.

There is, as we have insisted throughout the #MeToo campaign, a profoundly anti-democratic character to the claim that accusers "must be believed" at the expense of any scrutiny of often unsubstantiated allegations. When Spacey's case went to court last year, the vilification and smears continued in the testimony, but the jury acquitted him on every charge.

As we pointed out, the verdict of "not guilty" in his case was "at the same time an *indictment* of a neo-McCarthyite system of guilt determined by the media, by gossip and innuendo, often by anonymous informants, which has destroyed countless lives and careers."

Spacey was cleared in law but saddled with massive debts from legal bills. Since then, as with others such as Geoffrey Rush, Spacey's acquittal on all charges has counted for little in Hollywood, which chose instead to smear European filmmaking for allowing people accused under #MeToo to continue to work.

Broad swaths of the self-satisfied European liberal "left" stand equally exposed in their anti-democratic smear campaign since his acquittal.

Spacey has not yet been able to return to mainstream productions since the court case, but contributed the voiceover of an unseen character in the new Welsh thriller *Control*, directed by Gene Fallaize.

Fallaize told *Variety*, "The only people that know everything are the ones that were in that courtroom and they decided he was not guilty."

This counts for nothing, with Spacey's self-righteous attackers still demanding blood. *Control*'s premiere was booked for the Prince Charles Cinema in London, but was summarily cancelled, with cinema manager Greg Lynn emailing, "We have an issue… Last night it came to our attention [!] that your film features Kevin Spacey, in particular his first film since the court case. My staff as well as I are horrified that we are being mentioned in the same breath as his new film for the premiere."

There is the logic of identity politics: "Horrified" to be "mentioned in the same breath" as someone acquitted of all charges and an actor of world renown to boot? As *Control*'s star Lauren Metcalfe pointed out, Spacey "has been proven to be innocent and who are they to say otherwise? Kevin Spacey has done nothing wrong."

The backlash against #MeToo continues to deepen. The *Control* premiere has now been rebooked for a larger

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venue following what Fallaize called “an overwhelming demand for tickets.”

This public response represents a devastating indictment of the “liberal” bourgeois press and the pseudo-left that continue to stir this foul pot. It speaks to the use of identity politics to undermine democratic rights and as a means of suppressing discussion of social inequality and, above all, the class struggle by a hostile social layer concerned only with the scramble for money and privileges by trading on their “race,” gender, sexual orientation or whatever gives them pole position in a supposed hierarchy of “social oppression” that must now be reversed.

To the extent that such campaigns portray themselves as “left-wing” or “progressive”—and that veneer has long since worn off the #MeToo crowd—they only strengthen the right wing, who can exploit hostility to “cancel culture” and cynically portray themselves as defenders of democratic rights.

Spacey’s return to Oxford, where he was Cameron Mackintosh Visiting Professor of Contemporary Theatre in 2008, was at the invitation of neoconservative, anti-immigrant author Douglas Murray, who was delivering a tribute to the arch-Thatcherite philosopher Roger Scruton.

Spacey’s powerful performance of speeches from Shakespeare’s *Timon of Athens* showed that his qualities as a great actor are undiminished. The ovation was deserved.

The passages came from a dialogue between Timon and the philosopher Apemantus. Timon, a wealthy and generous nobleman, has inadvertently given away all his wealth to his friends. When his so-called friends will not bail him out, the increasingly embittered Timon leaves Athens to live in a cave. There he discovers a hoard of gold, which he spends on a military expedition against Athens, which he would like to see destroyed.

Timon and Apemantus exchange bitter insults, with the philosopher accusing Timon of adopting his misanthropy. It was difficult not to hear something personal in Spacey’s performance of the lines about his abandonment by his “friends”:

> But myself—
> Who had the world as my confectionery,
> The mouths, the tongues, the eyes and hearts of men
> At duty, more than I could frame employment,
> That numberless upon me stuck as leaves
> Do on the oak, have with one winter’s brush
> Fell from their boughs and left me open, bare,
> For every storm that blows.

His conclusion is devastating:

> “I am sick of this false world, and will love nought
> But even the mere necessities upon’t.”

While attention should focus on Spacey’s fight to return from the pariah status bestowed on him by a reactionary identity politics, the choice of play also deserves comment.

It is more revealing than Murray intended. Introducing Spacey’s performance, Murray said the play was about what happens “when a society drops a person for no reason.”

That is a disservice to Shakespeare’s brilliance, to *Timon of Athens* and to its significance here. The play, and the performance, are not saying the same things as Murray. Dating from 1604-06, *Timon* shares the bitterness of Shakespeare’s other plays of the period. Like *Measure for Measure*, it shows Shakespeare wrestling with the implications of an emerging new economic and political system and its trappings.

Timon’s reflections offer a powerful reflection on gold, the commercial medium. Spacey could just as well have performed lines from earlier in the same scene, when Timon famously says gold “will make Black white, foul fair, wrong right, Base noble, old young, coward valiant.”

“This yellow slave,” he continues:

> Will knit and break religions, bless th’accursed,
> Make the hoar leprosy adored, place thieves
> And give them title, knee, and approbation
> With senators on the bench.

The passage inspired Marx’s comments on “The Power of Money” in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*: “The extent of the power of money is the extent of my power. Money’s properties are my—the possessor’s—properties and essential powers... Does not my money, therefore, transform all my incapacities into their contrary?”

Marx went on to call money “the common whore, the common procurer of people and nations.”

It is in the socialist struggle by the working class against class oppression that the fight against the #MeToo witch-hunt and the defence of democratic rights must be rooted.

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