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JULIUS CAESAR

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Edited by
ARTHUR HUMPHREYS

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PREFACE

EDITING a Shakespeare play is like climbing a high peak solo, at altitudes where critical winds bite shrewdly. The climber is alone, but his goal would defeat him were he not amply aided by others. This edition has been worked out freshly and independently, yet inevitably, and gratefully, it owes much to precursors, particularly to the New Variorum by H. H. Furness, Jr., the New Cambridge by John Dover Wilson, and the new Arden by T. S. Dorsch, as it does also to the critics whose works the Notes and Commentary acknowledge, particularly Geoffrey Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, volume 5 (1964) and, in the account of the play in performance, John Ripley's *'Julius Caesar' on Stage in England and America, 1599–1973* (Cambridge, 1980).

The help and encouragement afforded by the General Editor, Dr Stanley Wells, and his associates, particularly Mr Gary Taylor, Dr John Jowett, and Miss Christine Avern-Carr, has far surpassed any normal course of their duties. Their guidance has been searching, generous, and wholly constructive. They have scrutinized every detail of what I put before them, and shared with me the investigations which they have in progress. They have, moreover, been virtually research assistants in checking details with which, through long absences in the Near and Far East, I could not myself deal.

For guidance with illustrations, as for friendship and help over the years, I owe much to Dr Levi Fox of the Shakespeare Centre, Stratford-upon-Avon; his assistant, Miss Shirley Watkins, has been very helpful, as also have Dr Lois Potter of the University of Leicester and Professor Edwin Thumboo of the University of Singapore. My colleagues and friends at the University of the Bosphorus, Turkey, arranged my teaching programme there to give me every chance of furthering my work on the play, and my wife's interest and encouragement have throughout heartened me on the long ascent. My gratitude to them all is very deep. Were a dedication in order, it should go to Philip and Joyce Collins of the University of Leicester; since it is not, I wish at least to acknowledge how much their intelligence, vivacity, generosity, and warmth of friendship have meant to my wife and me in personal and academic life.

ARTHUR HUMPHREYS

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INTRODUCTION

The Play's Date and Place in the Shakespeare Canon

IN the autumn of 1599 a Swiss doctor from Basle, Thomas Platter, saw what in all likelihood was *Julius Caesar* played by the Lord Chamberlain's Men at the newly-built Globe Theatre, finished in the late summer of that year and, as Dover Wilson observes in the New Cambridge edition of the play, conspicuous as its bright yellow thatch rose above the dark older roofs of Bankside.[1] In his travel notes Platter recorded (in German):

> On the 21st of September, after dinner, at about two o'clock, I went with my party across the water; in the straw-thatched house we saw the tragedy of the first Emperor Julius Caesar, very pleasingly performed, with approximately fifteen characters; at the end of the play they danced together admirably and exceedingly gracefully, according to their custom, two in each group dressed in men's and two in women's apparel.[2]

The play was one of the new theatre's first productions, perhaps composed for its opening. It was printed in the First Folio, 1623.

Contemporary references confirm 1599 as its date. *Henry V*'s fifth-act prologue, completed by the summer of that year, shows that Shakespeare was then investigating Plutarch's *Lives* (in Sir Thomas North's translation of 1579, or its 1595 reprint). The prologue's lines telling how

> the senators of th'antique Rome
> With the plebeians swarming at their heels,
> Go forth and fetch their conqu'ring Caesar in,

[1] Ernest Schanzer, in 'Thomas Platter's Observations on the Elizabethan Stage' (*N. & Q.*, 201 (1956), 465–7), suggests that what Platter saw might have been some other play, by the rival company the Admiral's Men, at their theatre The Rose (also thatched), but the pretty full dramatic records by Philip Henslowe for the company in 1599 mention no *Caesar* play.

[2] The German text, first printed in *Anglia*, 22 (1899), p. 456, is reprinted in E. K. Chambers's *The Elizabethan Stage* (4 vols., Oxford, 1923), ii. 364–5. The translation here given is by Ernest Schanzer (see note 1, above). Though *Julius Caesar* has about fifty distinguishable roles it can be played by a company of sixteen (Ringler, p. 121), and since actors normally appeared together when the play ended (W. J. Lawrence, *Pre-Restoration Stage Studies* (Cambridge, Mass., and Oxford, 1927), p. 49) Platter could have counted them. Platter's last sentence refers to the usual jig danced after the main play.

draw on Plutarch's observation that 'when Caesar was returned from ... Spain, all the chiefest nobility of the city rode many days' journey from Rome to meet him' (*Antonius*, p. 185).[1] Shakespeare's addition of the plebeians suggests that he was already devising *Julius Caesar*'s opening scene.[2] Moreover, echoes in *Julius Caesar* of works recorded during 1599 in the registers of the Stationers' Company seem clear. Sir John Davies's *Nosce Teipsum*, registered on 14 April, probably suggested Cassius' lines on how the eye sees other things but not itself (1.2.51–8; see the Commentary); the idea was semi-proverbial but it is so elaborated in the play that indebtedness seems likely. Samuel Daniel's *Musophilus*, registered as *Poetical Essays* on 9 January and published the same year, may well lie behind Cassius' prophecy that 'many ages hence' Caesar's assassination will be enacted 'In states unborn and accents yet unknown' (see the Commentary to 3.1.111–16). The anonymous *A Warning for Fair Women*, printed in 1599, includes lines about wounds like accusing mouths from which bloody tongues will speak,[3] and these find parallels in *Julius Caesar* (3.1.259–61, 3.2.218–22); but the simile was not uncommon and its occurrence in both plays may be mere coincidence.

That *Julius Caesar* was not extant before 1599 is suggested by its absence from *Palladis Tamia*, Francis Meres's list of notable works, registered on 7 September 1598 and sufficiently up-to-date to include Everard Guilpin's *Skialethia*, registered on 15 September. Meres names six comedies and six tragedies (four of them, in fact, histories) to prove Shakespeare 'the most excellent in both kinds for the stage', and one would expect so noteworthy a work as *Julius Caesar* to be included had it already appeared. 1599, then, seems the earliest likely date for its completion.

[1] References to Plutarch, except where otherwise attributed, are to T. J. B. Spencer's selection, in modernized spelling, from North's translation: *Shakespeare's Plutarch* (Harmondsworth, 1964).

[2] In *Henry V*, too, Fluellen draws a (comical) 'parallel lives' comparison between the King and Alexander the Great (4.7.12–48); possibly Shakespeare was parodying Plutarch's convention.

[3] *A Warning for Fair Women*, ed. Charles D. Cannon (The Hague, 1975), ll. 1995–8: 'I gave him fifteen wounds, | Which now be fifteen mouths that do accuse me; | In ev'ry wound there is a bloody tongue, | Which will all speak.' In his article '*Musophilus*, *Nosce Teipsum*, and *Julius Caesar*' (*N. & Q.*, forthcoming), Gary Taylor suggests other possible echoes from Daniel and Davies; none seems individually clear enough to carry conviction, yet the concurrence of several loose resemblances suggests – as must surely have been the case – that many traces of his current reading lodged themselves subconsciously in Shakespeare's mind.

Since allusions to it sprang up without delay, 1599 is also the latest likely date.[1] Jonson's *Every Man Out Of His Humour*, registered on 8 April 1600, jests that 'reason long since is fled to animals, you know' (3.4.28–9), a clear take-off of 'O judgement, thou art fled to brutish beasts, | And men have lost their reason' (*Julius Caesar* 3.2.104–5), as also is 'Then reason's fled to animals, I see' of the anonymous *The Wisdom of Doctor Dodypoll*, registered on 7 October 1600 (Malone Society reprint, 1965, line 907). '*Et tu, Brute*' (*Julius Caesar* 3.1.77) occurs, humorously, in *Every Man Out Of His Humour* (5.6.70) and again in Samuel Nicholson's *Acolastus His Afterwit*, 1600 (sig. E3^{r}, line 7) – though there the whole line ('Et tu, Brute, wilt thou stab Caesar too?') is verbatim from *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* (1595), the 'bad quarto' version of 3 *Henry VI* (in the First Folio 3 *Henry VI* the line does not occur). The phrase, the origins of which are discussed below (pp. 24–5), was seemingly a stage tag, but Jonson and Nicholson presumably brought it in because of its impressive effect in *Julius Caesar*.

A notable contemporary allusion, in John Weever's *The Mirror of Martyrs*, consists of the lines in stanza 4:

> The many-headed multitude were drawn
> By Brutus' speech, that Caesar was ambitious.
> When eloquent Mark Antony had shown
> His virtues, who but Brutus then was vicious?

Printed in 1601, *The Mirror*, according to its dedication, had been 'some two years ago ... made fit for the print', but it contains echoes of Edward Fairfax's *Godfrey of Bulloigne* of 1600, so either Weever saw that work in manuscript or he was still writing his poem after 1599; his allusion does not precisely clarify *Julius Caesar*'s date. But that around the turn of the century the play was widely noted is evident, and this at a time, two decades before it was published, when it could be known only from stage performance or (less probably) from access to a manuscript. Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* (acted in 1600) and Drayton's *The Barons' Wars* (revised in 1602 from the *Mortimeriados* of 1596 and printed in 1603) have

[1] The most piquant allusion is Shakespeare's own. In *Hamlet*, written a year or two after *Julius Caesar*, Polonius discloses that he has been a university actor – 'I did enact Julius Caesar; I was killed i'th' Capitol; Brutus killed me' (3.2.100–1). Shakespeare amusedly reminds his audience of his own play.

what seem clear echoes of Antony's eulogy over the dead Brutus: these are pointed out in the Commentary to 5.5.74–6.

Two other allusions call for a word. The first consists of lines by Leonard Digges prefixed to the 1623 Folio, 'To the Memory of the Deceased Author Master W. Shakespeare', lines which among more general praises commend *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar*. Digges avers that he will not believe Shakespeare dead until some other author surpasses the passion of the two lovers,

> Or till I hear a scene more nobly take
> Than when thy half-sword parleying Romans spake.

That the great scene of the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius was in his mind is clear from his later verses, prefixed to the 1640 edition of Shakespeare's poems and probably written for the 1632 Second Folio but held over because they denigrated Ben Jonson, alive until 1637:

> So have I seen, when Caesar would appear,
> And on the stage at half-sword parley were
> Brutus and Cassius: oh, how the audience
> Were ravished, with what wonder they went thence,
> When some new day they would not brook a line
> Of tedious though well-laboured *Catiline*:
> *Sejanus* too was irksome . . .

The fame of this scene is further illustrated in the discussion of the play's stage history (p. 49); it captivated its audiences from the first.

The other most striking early allusion is by Ben Jonson himself. *Timber; or Discoveries upon Men and Matter* (published 1640) contains jottings made between 1623 and his death in 1637.[1] In it he penned his famous praise of Shakespeare ('I loved the man, and do honour his memory (on this side idolatry) as much as any') and then, reflecting on his friend's facility, he mocked – it would seem – a solecism in *Julius Caesar* (3.1.47–8): 'Many times he fell into those things, could not escape laughter: as when he said in the person of *Caesar*, one speaking to him; *Caesar, thou dost me wrong*. He replied: *Caesar did never wrong, but with just cause* and such like: which were ridiculous.' Then Jonson redressed his stricture with

[1] Chambers, ii. 210. For full references for works cited repeatedly in the Commentary and Introduction, see pp. 87–91.

judicious praise: 'But he redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was ever more in him to be praised than to be pardoned.' The same jibe occurs, however, in the Induction (ll. 35–7) to *The Staple of News* (1626): Gossip Expectation says that she can prompt her mates to expect surpassing things of the play *'if I have cause'*. The Prologue replies, *'Cry you mercy*, you never did wrong but with just cause', the italic type giving way to roman to make clear that this is quotation.

Since the existing text contains neither 'Caesar, thou dost me wrong' nor the alleged solecism, what may have happened has been much discussed and is considered below (p. 82). Jonson was known for a good verbal memory and was unlikely so long to relish a mere figment of his imagination. What is teasing is not that Shakespeare may have written a questionable phrase but that as late as 1626, twenty-seven years after *Julius Caesar* first saw the stage, and three years after it first was printed in the 1623 Folio, the audience at *The Staple of News* was apparently expected, unprompted, to rise to the joke.

As for the play's place in Shakespeare's canon, he had already tried one Roman subject in the Senecan *Titus Andronicus* (printed in 1594). Though high notions of Roman role-playing are common to both, this is worlds away from the spirit of *Julius Caesar*, and far closer to the standard Renaissance view that Rome's story was spasmodic and violent than is its successor's portrayal of noble contestants moved, in general, by high public spirit and expressing themselves with distinction.[1] Shakespeare's sense of Roman history had considerably altered under the influence of Plutarch, who in his great sequence of *Parallel Lives* deals less with the turbulence of Rome's history than with the greatness of her great men; the title that North (following Amyot's *Les Vies des Hommes Illustres Grecs et Romains*) gave to his translation was *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (1579). In other plays of the 1590s Shakespeare repeatedly celebrated Caesar's greatness – which indeed was axiomatic – though his references to Brutus (whom Plutarch presents most admiringly) had been censorious, drawn from non-Plutarchan traditions. In *1 Henry VI*, Caesar's soul is the only one in history outshone by the 'far more glorious star' of Henry V (1.1.55–6); in *2 Henry VI*, Suffolk proclaims that 'Great men oft die

[1] Spencer, p. 32.

by vile bezonians: | . . . Brutus' bastard hand | Stabbed Julius Caesar' (4.1.134–7; 'bastard' hints at the story, unmentioned in *Julius Caesar*, that Caesar had in fact fathered him); in 3 *Henry VI* Queen Margaret compares the slaying of her son Prince Edward at Tewkesbury with the foulest precedent she can call to mind, Caesar's murder (5.5.52–5); in *Richard III* young Prince Edward hails Caesar's immortal fame (3.1.84–8); in *2 Henry IV* the rumoured victory of Hotspur is received by his friends as unparalleled 'Since Caesar's fortunes' (1.1.20–3). But that Caesar's greatness might become grandiose Shakespeare recognized too, parodying the famous '*Veni, vidi, vici*' with Armado's bombast in *Love's Labour's Lost* (4.1.68 ff.), and having Falstaff, as he captures Colevile in *2 Henry IV*, echo it as from 'the hook-nosed fellow of Rome' (4.3.40–1), Rosalind in *As You Like It* mock 'Caesar's thrasonical brag' (5.2.29–30), and, later, the Queen in *Cymbeline* likewise scoff at 'his brag' (3.1.22–4).

These two facets of the great man suggest, though only seminally, the dilemma: does Caesar present real greatness or only the pose of greatness? That, taking all in all, Shakespeare held the former view is suggested in the immediately following tragedy, *Hamlet*: there, recalling the prodigies before Caesar's death, Horatio signals the days before 'the mightiest Julius fell' as 'the most high and palmy state of Rome' (1.1.113–14). Brutus and his allies struck down the greatest figure of the Roman world – indeed, it seemed, of all secular history. Yet so persuasive is Plutarch's influence that Brutus, with whatever imperfections on his head, emerges from the play as movingly virtuous, and his confederates, though less admirable, still as men of notable distinction.

Julius Caesar is a crucial play in various ways. As Granville-Barker observed, the problem of the virtuous murderer is peculiarly taxing; 'Brutus best interprets the play's theme: Do evil that good may come, and see what does come!'[1] *Julius Caesar* points towards the dilemmas, the 'purposes mistook, | Fall'n on th'inventors' heads', of *Hamlet*, indeed of *Othello*. It offers the poignant spectacle of a good man creating tragic harm – 'a new path opened out for the development of the tragic art'.[2] It is the first of Shakespeare's tragedies in which moral bewilderments become fundamentally important (though some of the English histories – notably the three

[1] Granville-Barker, ii. 351.

[2] W. Warde Fowler, *Roman Essays and Interpretations* (Oxford, 1920), p. 279.

parts of *Henry VI*, *Richard II*, and the two parts of *Henry IV* – had dealt movingly with these in the context of rule). Moreover, though the English histories had been shaded by the ironies of history, and *Romeo and Juliet* by the ironies of fate, a more complex sense develops in *Julius Caesar* of how consequences defeat intentions. Here 'The two elements which Aristotle thought necessary for the profoundest tragedy, *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*, the ironic turn of events which makes an action have the very opposite effect of that intended, and the realization of this by the agent, are thus seen to be fundamental.'[1] With this deepened awareness of the human predicament the play points towards the profound questionings of the tragedies which follow.

Yet along with the later Roman plays, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*, it belongs to the Hegelian category of tragedy, balancing conflicting goods rather than contrasting good and evil. It has evident interminglings of virtues and vices but not those metaphysical oppositions which, in *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*, suggest so deep a religious – even if an agnostic – dimension. It has even been argued that *Julius Caesar* is less a tragedy in the full sense than, following on the English histories, a dramatized chronicle grounded not in individual afflictions but in the fate of a society.[2] Such a contention, though, goes too far. The play does very much concern itself with individual afflictions, with the mysteries of individual self-direction leading to fatality; so it is indeed tragic. Yet, like its Roman successors, it is so in a special way, as 'a play of overt challenge and debate linked to clear action, whose dilemmas are set out with Roman clarity, Roman simplicity'.[3] Appropriately to a subject disciplined by Roman decorum, its characters, if not always masters of their fates, try at least to be masters of their roles and attitudes. (These themes, and those mentioned in the following sentences, are developed in the sections below on 'Roman Values' and 'Politics and Morality'.) They have codes of resolution to live up to and these preserve them from the fundamental tragic sense of chaos. They move in the secular world of social and political relationships and within that world we lean this way and that alternately in our attitudes to them, assessing,

[1] Schanzer, p. 56.

[2] H. B. Charlton, *Shakespearian Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1948), p. 70.

[3] M. C. Bradbrook, *Shakespeare the Craftsman* (New York and London, 1969), p. 101.

Caesar's death: that lapse of time, and, more evidently, his leaning towards ethical analysis, led him away from the ruthlessness of politics towards the sense of human distinction.

What Plutarch offered (and, via Amyot, North spiritedly translated) was good narrative and biographies vividly set within their times, their subjects shrewdly analysed as to qualities and motives, and seen to be controlled by a shaping destiny – ideal material for drama even though each Life still needed much modelling and selection. Plutarch gave, it has been said,

> whatever seemed appropriate for explanation and interpretation of his hero. The little homely citations of mere gossip, the accounts of venturesome exploits stirring to the reader's imagination, the frequent parentheses, the constant bias towards ethical judgments, have their own integrity as parts of a method of portraiture which has delighted students of human motives, reasonings, and deeds.[1]

He perhaps drew from Greek drama his biographical form, his sense of great persons confidently self-directed yet vulnerable through their failings (even noble failings), and shadowed by the implicit ironies which observers aware of tragic outcomes can perceive.[2] The Lives of Julius Caesar, Marcus Brutus, and Marcus Antonius amply furnished the formidable story of Caesar's fall and its consequences, a story offering drastic reversals of fortune in the killing of the great leader and then in the retribution which Caesar's spirit, working through Mark Antony and the crisis of the Roman state, brought down upon his killers. In addition to these three Lives, Shakespeare would almost certainly scan that of Cicero; if so, he took little if anything from it.[3]

Already, basing his English histories on Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Shakespeare had shown with what creative modification he could select from long, miscellaneous compilations the components of gripping plots. Plutarch's narrative was much better shaped than Holinshed's, yet it too needed condensing. So, from the first three-quarters of the very full Life of Caesar, Shakespeare picked merely a few details and traits. The details include Caesar's forgiveness of Brutus (and others) for siding with Pompey, his opponents'

[1] M. H. Shackford, *Plutarch in Renaissance England* (Wellesley, Mass., 1929), p. 9.

[2] Thomson, p. 247.

[3] Cicero's is a very minor part in the play. The Commentary at 1.2.276 and 2.1.150–2 indicates possible points from Plutarch.

hesitancy until 'he was grown to be of great strength' and seemed to threaten 'destruction of the whole . . . commonwealth' (as Brutus ruminates at 2.1.10–34), his famous victory over the Nervii (3.2.167–70), and the facts of his infirmities (in particular epilepsy, the 'falling sickness') – infirmities which in Plutarch Caesar heroically ignores but which in the play the jaundiced Cassius treats as contemptible (1.2.119–28). The more general traits guiding Shakespeare are numerous – Caesar's powerful oratory, outstanding generalship, ambition, and popularity; the alarm he inspired in fellow-patricians; and Rome's critical condition, requiring 'the absolute state of a monarchy and sovereign lord' (*Caesar*, p. 50).

In the fourth quarter of *Caesar* these themes are renewed and the events are close to those of the play. Plutarch notes that though Romans disliked Caesar's triumph over Pompey's sons (who were fellow-Romans, not foreigners), yet many hoped that his rule would bring peace; also that though he sought only such honours as became a man, yet supporters and opponents alike lauded him as a demigod, the former obsequiously, the latter intending to discredit him. To former foes he was merciful, and he was unmoved by dangers; when advised to have a bodyguard, he replied that it is 'better to die once than always to be afraid of death' (*Caesar*, p. 78; compare 2.2.32–7). Ambition made him seek popularity; with this went a zest for achievement, as if he were his own rival, striving always to outgo himself. Yet thus he provoked his foes – 'the chiefest cause that made him mortally hated was the covetous desire he had to be called king; which first gave . . . his secret enemies honest colour, to bear him ill will' (*Caesar*, pp. 80–1).

The analysis below offers a consecutive discussion of Shakespeare's use and remodelling of Plutarch; the Commentary on the text cites the passages to which he was verbally indebted.

To begin, Shakespeare picks up two hints barely noticeable in Plutarch about the stripping of Caesar's images by the tribunes.[1]

[1] In *Caesar*, the sentence introducing the Lupercalia mentions Caesar's 'shame and reproach, abusing the Tribunes of the People' (p. 82), but this remains unexplained until, after the Lupercalia, we hear of the tribunes' stripping the images, and their consequent loss of their offices (pp. 83–4; similarly *Antonius*, p. 187). The incident is treated very cursorily in both *Lives* (*Brutus* does not mention it) and Shakespeare makes much more of it than Plutarch.

Making this event so prominent he focuses sympathy on Caesar's opponents, towards whom up to the assassination we are predominantly to lean. An impulsive populace, idolizing a leader whose 'growing feathers' threaten tyranny, is chidden by seemingly right-thinking men. Preluded by the tribunes' honest egalitarianism, Cassius and Brutus can develop their plot with (save for a few dubious touches) the right ethical tone.

Shakespeare then interweaves elements from *Caesar* and *Antonius*. Both accounts present Caesar in triumphal robes presiding over the Lupercalia, but *Antonius* treats the race as sport, *Caesar* as a fertility rite. Neither, however, mentions Calpurnia's presence or Caesar's concern for an heir; Shakespeare's additions bring Calpurnia forward and imply Caesar's dynastic hopes. In *Caesar* the soothsayer's warning about the Ides of March is mentioned, later than the Lupercalia, as uttered 'long time afore': in the play, transferred to Caesar's hour of triumph, it has an electrifying effect. (Neither *Brutus* nor *Antonius* records it at all.)

In *Antonius*, as in the play (1.2.261 ff.), Caesar offers his throat for cutting when the populace applauds his third refusal of the crown. In *Caesar* he does so on quite a different occasion, after offending the Senate by disdain; yet it is from *Caesar* that Casca draws his report that he blamed this extravagant gesture on his epilepsy (1.2.267–8). Many large pages in Plutarch separate these two versions, and Shakespeare must have leafed back and forth noting the details which combine in the vivid mosaic of the scene (the phrasing is too close to be merely memorial impression).

Into the Lupercalia and crown-offering he dovetails Cassius' incitements. Plutarch provided the bases for these – Brutus' high repute for republican virtue; his disturbed spirit; and his estrangement from Cassius. Shakespeare accepts the first unqualified but the others he modifies. Plutarch's Brutus is troubled by the conspiracy's risks, Shakespeare's by its ethics. In Plutarch the estrangement results from rivalry for the praetorship; in the play, such self-seeking would be unfitting, and it arises from Brutus' troubled spirit (1.2.36 ff.). A point in Plutarch (*Brutus*, p. 139) which Shakespeare very notably discards is that Cassius would 'jest too broadly'; the play's Cassius is austere, critical, and unconvivial (1.2.71–8).

Cassius' instigations, including the Tiber swimming (1.2.100 ff.), are mostly Shakespeare's inventions though, as mentioned, *Caesar*

gave him Caesar's courageously borne illness in Spain which Cassius distorts into a sign of weakness. Common to Plutarch and play are appeals to Roman liberty, and Cassius' stress on the very name of 'Brutus' (*Brutus*, p. 112; 1.2.142–7). When Caesar re-enters (1.2.177) the play strikingly alters Plutarch, for it aims at Cassius alone (1.2.194–5) Caesar's suspicion of 'pale-visaged and carrion lean people' – which in Plutarch applies to both Cassius and Brutus (*Caesar*, p. 85; similarly *Antonius*, p. 186). More than once in Plutarch Caesar has his doubts about Brutus but these Shakespeare ignores, stressing rather the bonds between the two so that Brutus' moral dilemma and eventual treachery are the more disturbing.

The facts of the crown-offering (1.2.220 ff.) are Plutarchan, but Casca's comic-coarse realism is original. One of the play's notable features is the way it keeps us, at this stage, mainly on the conspirators' side while yet hinting at the ambivalence in their case, through Brutus' rationalizations, Casca's derision, and the bias in Cassius, so evident when he soliloquizes on his machinations (1.2.305–19).

Plutarch relates 'strange and wonderful signs that were said to be seen before Caesar's death' (*Caesar*, p. 86) – celestial fires, ominous birds in the market-place at noon, men in flames, a slave with blazing hand, a sacrificial animal without a heart, the soothsayer's warning, and Calpurnia's dreams. As manifestations 'perhaps worth the noting' these are retailed with a rather casual and incidental air. Shakespeare adds others,[1] and he uses them all for dramatic excitement but also for distinction of character – Cicero is unmoved, Casca agitated, Cassius exultant and defiant, taking the 'dreadful night' as proving Caesar's alleged (yet unproven) violence.

Brutus' enigmatic soliloquy (2.1.10 ff.) has no Plutarchan precedent. In both source and play his trouble distresses him and Portia, but in Plutarch he broods not on ethical dilemmas but on the risks involving 'the noblest, valiantest, and most courageous men of Rome' (*Brutus*, p. 116). The change is significant: Shakespeare is exploring the self-divided nature which had shown itself in Richard II and Henry IV and was to develop in Hamlet and Macbeth – Macbeth himself might well speak the anguished lines

[1] For possible sources see p. 28.