

Ralph Berry

Julius Caesar: A Roman Tragedy

"Toute ma vie, je me suis fait une certaine idée de la France", wrote de Gaulle in the introduction to his memoirs. A certain idea of Rome dominates *Julius Caesar*, ordering and explaining the play. Without this idea of Rome, the accounts of *Julius Caesar* will be lacking in vital tissue. The approach via character ("But Cassius is a realist"¹) was evidently exhausted long ago. To see the political issues in contemporary terms — Caesar a dictator, Brutus an ineffective liberal — is appealing, but ultimately unconvincing. Politics are rooted in the specifics of community, and much of *Julius Caesar* is untranslatable. Nor can the obvious political categories be taken for granted; Beer-bohm Tree used to present Caesar as a liberal Shavian reformer, not as a tyrant.² Anthropology, then? The aftermath of the assassination connects the play to a powerful ritual, the priestly slaying of a victim. Yet this is a localized, as much as universal action. And Shakespeare does not invoke what might seem the most inviting of myths, that of Prometheus the Tyrant-challenger.³ Slaying the Tyrant will not do as a statement of the archetypal action of *Julius Caesar*. Nor will the Killing of Father. Shakespeare makes no use of the tradition that Brutus was Caesar's son - if anything, he preserves the suggestion of a son role for Anthony (III, i, 22).⁴ The obvious myths do not fit the play. We come back to Rome, as the social determinant of the action.

The omnipresence of Rome needs no demonstration, but the statistics are worth registering. Taking together "Rome," "Roman", "Romans," we find in Act I nineteen references: sixteen in Act II; twenty-three in Act III; four in Act IV; and eleven in Act V. These figures conform to one's sense of the play's rhythm, that after a strong, assertive opening the climax is reached in Act III, and a slackening of tension in the fourth Act leads up to the Roman apotheosis. The idea of Rome fades as the action removes itself from Rome, and returns with the Roman suicides and valedictories. Moreover, the idea of Rome has absolute command. This is not one of Shakespeare's dual

location schemes, and there are no Egyptians or Volscians to challenge the Roman idea. The battlefield of Philippi is simply a cockpit where Romans settle their differences, not a focus of values external to Rome. The audience is never allowed to forget that *Julius Caesar* is a Roman play.

While the physical presence of Rome makes itself continually felt (throughout the first three Acts), the meaning of "Roman" is the play's chief subject. Naturally, the term is analysed in the main through the leading actors. But not entirely: the crowd is the raw energy of Rome, a vessel for the primitive violence in the city which also expresses itself through the Roman leaders. The crowd is, if you like, a kind of collective subconscious, a physical realization of a layer in the Roman mind. "...The state of mind / Like to a little kingdom, suffers then / The nature of an insurrection": the revolt of III, ii and iii is the insurrection in Brutus' mind. As Coghill observes of the lynching of Cinna, "It is an epiphany of Rome in forty lines."⁵ It is: and that violence directs us back to examine the upper layers of the Roman mind, to explain the explosion of Act III and the outcome of Act V. In this search we shall need to move between the Rome of history and the Rome of Shakespeare, recognizing the authenticity basic to Shakespeare's design: "...part of his intention was a serious effort at representing the Roman scene as genuinely as he could."⁶

"This Roman morality", says Grimal, "has a very distinct aim—the subordination of the individual to the City."⁷ Only in the Roman plays does such a concept inform Shakespearean drama. Of course Shakespeare always creates a society with its own value-system, but this system, outside the Roman plays, is not focused to an ideology of place. The framework of that civic morality — *virtus, pietas, fides*— can be taken for granted here. What concerns us is the mechanism through which Rome grips the individual. The City rules: and its moral instrument is patriarchy.

That Shakespeare had grasped this, appears in the opening lines of *Titus Andronicus*:

Saturninus Noble patricians, patrons of my right,
 Defend the justice of my cause with arms;
 And, countrymen, my loving followers,
 Plead my successive title with your swords.
 I am his first-born son, that was the last
 That wore the imperial diadem of Rome.
 Then let my father's honours live in me,
 Nor wrong mine age with this indignity. (I,i,1-8)

Bassianus, the younger brother, pleads for "desert in pure election", but Titus decides in favour of "our Emperor's eldest son, / Lord Saturninus" (228-9). It is a clear announcement of the idea governing the

dramatic development. The play becomes then an extended analysis of the system's distortions, stemming from a rigid and unfeeling code of patriarchy. *Titus Andronicus* clears the way for the vastly subtler analysis of patriarchy in *Julius Caesar*. The point about fathers in *Titus Andronicus* is that they have children, over whom they exercise total authority. The point about the *dramatis personae* in *Julius Caesar* is that they have fathers, but no children. Caesar speaks of the "sterile curse" of Calpurnia; no one else has or speaks of children. (Antony has a nephew, IV, i, 5.)⁸ Caesar is at least, one might say, aware of a problem. No one else is. And all the energies of the patriarchal system, since children are (dramatically) excluded, are directed in upon the self as a reflection of ancestry.

The shift from patriarchy (basically, as it affects father) in *Titus Andronicus*, to patriarchy as it affects children in *Julius Caesar*, is profound and all-pervasive. I read it as in essence a development of thought which owes its origins to the interior logic of the canon: the society of *Julius Caesar* succeeds the society of *Titus Andronicus*. Now in the chronology of history the order is reversed; and Trevor Nunn, who directed the four Roman tragedies as a tetralogy (RSC, 1972), chose to end with *Titus Andronicus*. He argued that *Titus Andronicus* is a study in the decadence of Rome. One sees the point. I prefer, however, to accept the canonical order as the imprint of thought, and thus of the historical imagination in Shakespeare. In other words, I view the society of *Titus Andronicus* not as decadent, but as primitive; the true decadence emerges in *Julius Caesar*.

Of what, then, does this decadence consist? It shows itself through the intense sense of ancestry that the Romans display. It verges on ancestor worship. "I am the son of Marcus Cato, ho!" cries young Cato (V, iv, 4, 6). "Think you I am no stronger than my sex, / Being so father'd and so husbanded?" asks Portia (II, i, 296-7). "But woe the while, our fathers' minds are dead" says Cassius (I, iii, 82). *Father* in *Julius Caesar* is not an immediate progenitor, a person one actually knows. Father is subsumed into *patres*, City fathers, elders; he is an ancestor, a standard of conduct, an ideal. "I, as Aeneas, our great ancestor..." says Cassius (I, ii, 112). "My ancestors did from the streets of Rome / The Tarquin drive, when he was called a king" says Brutus (II, i, 43-4). The highest praise that Caius Ligarius can bestow on Brutus, "Soul of Rome! Brave son, deriv'd from honorable loins!" fuses ancestry with the life of the City (II, i, 321-2). Even over several generations, the patriarchal grip is fastened upon the minds of Romans.

This obsessive awareness of ancestry crystallizes into the importance attached to statuary. In a superficial enough sense, the statue is

the characteristic expressive form of Rome. It is hard, marble, an unrelenting assertion of self that one has to accept or overturn. In a deeper sense, the statue expresses the continuing spiritual life of the family and the City. There existed

the custom, indeed the right, by which noble families set up a recess of the central hall of their houses, at first, wax-masks and, later, busts of their ancestors who had deserved well of their family or of the state.⁹

Thus a statue (or image, or mask) had a significance for a Roman totally missing from, say, that of a Victorian statesman for his public. *Julius Caesar* catches if it does not expound this significance. Flavius and Marullus know that to have the Caesarian images disrobed is a vital symbolic challenge, just as Caesar knows that it must be met by having them "put to silence". The grotesque comparison between Caesar and the Colossus is chosen to inflame Brutus further. Cassius instructs Cinna to set up one of the anonymous letters to Brutus "Upon old Brutus' statue." Calpurnia's dream, as related by Caesar, realizes him as a statue running blood. Caesar dies at the foot of Pompey's statue, not a shallow irony of personality but an antithesis of stage expression: the statue and the man, the marble and the flesh. The statue as a metaphor for identity, that is the play's proposal; and the Roman crowd, in its own way, assents. "Give him a statue with his ancestors" (III. ii, 50), is their tribute to Brutus (coupled with the naively ironic "Let him be Caesar").

Statue is a public rendering of name. Patriarchy must code itself into a system of names, and the Romans are excessively conscious of nomenclature. They refer often to their names as a kind of externalized self. This trick of third-person reference, which everyone notices, can be easily misjudged. Commentators detect it most readily in Caesar himself, and are apt to see the trait as evidence of Caesar's "arrogance".¹⁰ How can this be so, if others exhibit the same trait? "Cassius from bondage will deliver bondage..." (I, iii, 90), "You speak to Casca, and to such a man..." (I, iii.116), "When Marcus Brutus grows so covertous..." (IV, iii, 79). They all do it. Caesar is, in this, one who focuses and magnifies traits in the Roman mind. I cannot, therefore, follow John Velz's reading that "The dominance of Caesarism is also suggested by the fact that numerous other characters...adopt Caesar's characteristic trick of speech."¹¹ An element of imitation can fairly be accepted here. But to regard the whole characteristic as a bad speech habit which the Romans picked up from listening to Caesar, is surely to miss an ingrained Roman mode of thought and expression. The name acts as a model of self, imparting a standard of conduct to which Romans are to adhere.

So far, our alignment runs: Rome; patriarchy; statue; name. The alignment holds into what is clearly the key concept, role. It has received some critical attention since Anne Righter's seminal *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*. Van Laan analyses the action of *Julius Caesar* in terms of ironically discrepant role-playing; for him, each of the actors takes on a role he cannot fulfill. *Julius Caesar* is a play of ironic o'erparting.¹² Similarly, Velz concentrates on the way in which characters adopt roles which other characters have played. "Role-playing is, then, crucial to the plot of *Julius Caesar*... The republicans see themselves in roles from the heroic past, while the monarchists look to a prototype who appears onstage and who belongs fully to the Rome of the present."¹³ I should place a different emphasis on the matter. The Romans are playing the roles, not of others, but of themselves. Identity, and not imitation, is the objective towards which Roman behaviour is directed.

The name is the role. The patronymic encodes the date of ancestry and behaviour which a Roman should embody.¹⁴ Let Cassius focus the argument:

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'.
 (I, ii, 142-7)

Only, I think in *Romeo and Juliet* (III, iii) is there elsewhere in the canon such a sense of name as containing vital essence, of name as an objective reality in itself. Cassius' speech here contains the main idea of what Rome is (a Republic), and what, therefore, a Roman should be. But the psychological objective of all Romans is to discover themselves through the affirmation of name and *Roman*. "Was that done like Cassius?" asks Brutus (IV, iii, 77). "Then like a Roman bear the truth I tell" Messala enjoins Brutus (IV, iii, 187). "He will be found like Brutus, like himself" Lucilius assures Antony (V, iv, 25). To find oneself is ideologically simple, whatever the stresses involved. One refers problems to the role to solve.

Role as motive is the explanation of the provocative "It must be by his death", which vaults over all argument to assert a prior conclusion. Schanzer remarks that

It would seem that Shakespeare wishes us to feel that the decision had nothing to do with reason and logic, that he has somehow fallen victim to Cassius' rhetoric without being able to accept his arguments or share his motives. What we are watching in this soliloquy is Brutus' attempt to defend his decision before the court of his conscience.¹⁵

It is the decision, and not the defence, that concerns us here. The decision is a hardening of primary structures of mind and being, an acquiescence in the most basic imperatives of name and role. The entire movement of the opening conducts Brutus to the realization that he has no choice. After the acquiescence in role, the role governs all decisions.

The role, of course, slips often; and this fact is one of the main roads into the interior play. We can get at it in several ways. *Julius Caesar*, for all its emphasis on hard men with hard values, shows continually another side. "The whole is suffused with a soft emotionalism." "No other play of Shakespeare concentrates more on 'emotion', 'heart', 'love'."¹⁶ These Romans constantly assert an identity that leaves unassuaged large areas of their minds. The heroic figure of the Roman imagination stands often beyond the fumbings of the play's personages, and one can find in this "echoes of absurdity".¹⁷ Without labouring the available ironies, we ought to take in the ways in which the Romans assume, let slip, and reimpose their versions of themselves. It is all focused on the most representative Roman figure: Julius Caesar.

The apparently simple opening words of Caesar throw an immediate challenge to the interpreter of motives:

Caesar: Calpurnia! ...
Stand you directly in Antonius' way,
When he doth run his course. Antonius!...
Forget not, in your speed, Antonius,
To touch Calpurnia; for our elders say,
The barren, touched in this holy chase,
Shake off their sterile curse.
(I, ii, 1-9)

A bystander might react variously:

1) Caesar wants a child, a family. 2) He wants to please his wife. 3) He wants to found a dynasty. 4) As a good politician, he participates in a long-established custom, much beloved of the people. Other motives are easily discoverable, but these suffice. The human and political tensions, so evident elsewhere, are at once presented. And now Antony says something rather interesting: "I shall remember./When Casear says "do this", it is performed." One can read this as part of the atmosphere of an "oriental court".¹⁸ To me, Antony is *reminding* Caesar of his role. Caesar cannot be rebuked: but it is possible for the Roman establishment, through Antony, to say in effect "Rest assured, Caesar, that your lightest word is a solemn command: we know our function too."¹⁹ Later, "I rather tell thee what is to be fear'd./Than what I fear; for always I am Caesar" (I, ii, 211-2). The role slips, and is (rather apologetically) self-adjusted. Caesar is sensitive to Antony's

earlier "Fear him not, Caesar", since Romans do not fear. The same struggle occurs in II, ii, when Caesar finds it vitally important to assert his role. The phrasing is suggestive in

And tell them that I will not come today.
 Cannot, is false, and that I dare not, fals'er;
 I will not come today.
 (II, ii, 62-4)

It is as though Caesar makes a subliminal slip, which he openly corrects.

Decius acts in full cooperation with Caesar. He appears less a flatterer than a kind of courtly *chef de protocole*, deeply concerned about his own role and the Senate's reception of Caesar's absence. "Most mighty Caesar, let me know some cause, / Lest I be laugh'd at when I tell them so" (69-70). Equally, we can see him as a member of Buckingham's tribe, versed in public relations and solicitous of his client's image in the world. Decius' response is "This will never do, Caesar" and it is irresistible. The Roman establishment is its own most effective reminder of conduct.

In Caesar can be observed the quintessence of Roman-ness. Roman behaviour is directed always towards answering the question: what would Caesar (or Brutus, Cassius, etc.) do in my position? Caesar, answering for all, says: Caesar would behave Caesarianly. And he does so. Only the role slips, and he has to adjust it, rather self-consciously. In this he receives the sympathetic cooperation of other Romans. The role of Caesar is undoubtedly approved socially, notwithstanding that the role collides with the Republican tradition. It is clear that Caesar, in asserting the precedent of the *dictator* (Sulla, for example), and receiving the sycophantic support of the Senate, does in fact embody a Roman tradition. The opposed traditions combine through the hard mask of public manners, and Caesar displays this too in

Good friends, go in, and taste some wine with me,
 And we, like friends, will straightway go together.
 (II, ii, 127-8)

Caesar cannot have failed to gauge the underlying hostilities. His "like friends" is most suggestive: it imparts that Romans, even when politically opposed, possess a model of public behaviour that enables them to compose their differences.²⁰ In this as in everything else, Caesar plays out a publicly sanctioned role.

We can now read the assassination, the moment that expresses most intensely everything that is Roman in *Julius Caesar*. Once Caesar has decided to don his robe (a public garment²¹) and go to the Capitol, he

enters upon a final phase in the dramatic programming, in which all steps are inevitable and irreversible. "The ides of March are come": Caesar cannot ignore the Soothsayer, has to state his own sense of challenge and survival. Since Caesar addresses the Soothsayer, Artemidorus has his cue to join in and bid Caesar "Read this schedule." Decius (Presumably sensing the danger) immediately presses Trebonius' suit, which incites Artemidorus to the fatal "O Caesar, read mine first, for mine's a suit/That touches Caesar nearer." Caesar has no choice now. His role requires him to respond "What touches us ourself shall be last serv'd." The illusion of individual freedom yields to the exigencies of the programming. There follows the Popilian interlude, of which it need only be observed that the possibility of intervention and failure comes from outside: the conspirators keep their nerve. They encourage each other with Roman code-words - "Casca, be sudden", "Cassius, be constant". (Compare the quarrelling and unsupportive conspirators in *Henry IV*.) With the conspirators, as with Caesar, roles are enforced from the beginning of III, i. Just as the importunities of Artemidorus make Caesar Caesar, so the Popilian threat and the presence of each other conduce to ultra-Roman behaviour.

This is a public occasion: and the Romans, with their natural bent for display, rise to the utmost of their public selves. There is a communal pattern of intensification and exaggeration. It is already governed by the movements of a ritual. Metellus overplays the suppliant, and this in turn elicits Caesar's overstatements of his own role.

I must prevent thee, Cimber.
 These couchings and these lowly courtesies
 Might fire the blood of ordinary men,
 And turn preordinance and first decree
 Into the law of children.
 (III, i, 35-9)

"Preordinance and first decree", usually glossed on the lines of "what has been ordained and decreed from the first" (Dorsch, p. 64), has surely a hint of challenge to primogeniture, and thus to patriarchy. Metellus is now joined by Brutus and by Cassius, each kneeling; so Caesar is ringed with suppliants. Caesar has passed beyond the functional grandeur of "Are we ready? What is now amiss/That Caesar and his Senate must redress?" (III, i, 31-2) and now embarks on the magniloquence of the "northern star" speech, which indeed makes the impression of a tyrant far gone in megalomania. But one can as well argue that it is stimulated by the posturing of Metellus and the others, and this in turn arises out of the induction "Are we all ready?", itself a cue to the conspirators. In the mutuality of behaviour and response,

which stimulus comes first? As I read the scene, history is reduced to choreography. Each actor is cast for a role in which he is compelled to play out an epic drama of Roman history, a myth of the City: the *dictator*-King is slain by the keepers of the Republican tradition. And yet, such is the rivalry within the Roman tradition, the word that triggers off the ultimate response is a word the conspirators have already chosen for their own ("Cassius, be constant"): Caesar's final speech is a paean upon the theme of "constant", a word thrice struck, and the speech concludes upon the intolerable challenge of

Let me a little show it even in this -
That I was constant Cimber should be banish'd,
And constant do remain to keep him so.
(70-2)²²

It is the same insight Shakespeare preserved for the opening of *King Lear* ("By Jupiter, / This shall not be revok'd"): there are times when the Prince must hold his ground, regardless of the consequences. So with those who confront him. And so the convulsive movements of the ritual take charge over the words and actions of the Romans. At the moment of the slaying, there are no individuals, only roles.

The ritual idea surfaces for inspection in "Stoop, Romans, stoop / And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood..." (105-6). This is open, and we can be looked at variously. Brents Stirling has shown how formal allusions to ritual and ceremony order *Julius Caesar*, and how the assassination is a "conversion of bloodshed to ritual".²³ Psychologically, Brutus' injunction makes good sense as high-minded self-exculpation, a desire to avoid the personal guilt of killing; the conspirators de-personalize the event by relating it to a ritual. And indeed, Brutus is anxious to merge the assassination into Roman usage, "Caesar shall / Have all true rites and lawful ceremonies" (III, i, 241-2). After all, an execution was to the Romans an act of consecration to the gods; the term *sacer esto* was the Roman death sentence. I would stress that the "ritual" manifestation is a revelation of what the inner forces are: a drive towards the realization of self as an actor in a ritual. When Brutus urges the conspirators to "bear it as our Roman actors do" (II, i, 226) he touches a deep vein of civic conduct and identity. The actors of the future whom Cassius invokes ("How many ages hence / Shall this our lofty scene be acted over") match the actors of the present. For "actor", like other terms in this play, is not really a universal counter. It denotes a model of behaviour that is profoundly Roman. Actors, like statues, exist to remind the Romans of themselves.

The roles which sustain the conspirators through the crisis lose much of their vitality and meaning in Acts IV and V. Brutus and

Cassius become weary automata, playing out their parts with a diminishing expectation of success. Their roles fail to master the situations of quarrel and civil conflict: and because they are felt to be inadequate, they are asserted the more vehemently. The "enforced ceremony" (IV, ii, 21) marks the cooling of Cassius' regard for Brutus. Brutus has to remind Cassius of the past, "Remember March, the ides of March remember" (IV, ii, 18). And the "Roman actor" ideal is the unacknowledged premise of conduct for Brutus in the quarrel scene. The replay of Portia's death I read not as a textual problem of alternative versions, but as a straightforward statement of exaggeration.²⁴ Brutus needs to play out before his subordinates the role of Stoic Roman, a transaction solemnized by

Brutus Now, as you are a Roman, tell me true.
Messala Then like a Roman bear the truth I tell.
 (186-7)

The role takes the strain of the personal anguish, expressed in the private encounter with Cassius. I do not think there are real difficulties here: Brutus takes the role to the point of caricature. So, for that matter does his wife.

There is in fact only one function which the Roman role can govern successfully in the later stages: it is the mastering of defeat. The enterprise of the conspirators is evidently doomed; Caesar's ghost is the spirit, "hot from hell", that has joined the *manes* to be appeased. Even ancestry, then, turns against the conspirators. What is left is purely resolution. Cassius is "resolv'd/To meet all perils very *constantly*" (V, i, 90-1). Since the ultimate degradation is to be "led in triumph/Through the streets of Rome" (V, i, 108-9), Brutus strikes a pose of third-person heroics that is quite as mannered as Caesar's latest words:

Think not, thou noble Roman,
 That ever Brutus will go bound to Rome:
 He bears too great a mind.
 (V, i, 110-2)

If Caesar had said that, the commentators would still be reproving him for measureless arrogance, for exhibiting all the linguistic stigmata of a tyrant. As will be clear by now, I think such a judgment misconceived. That is simply the way the Romans are.

The suicides are the only true Roman acts left to the conspirators; and in committing them, they receive the approval and tributes of their fellow Romans. That approval is extended to Strato, as loyal servant and instrument of Brutus' suicide; his services are rewarded with

employment under Octavius. There remain the valedictories of Antony and Octavius. Of them, let us register the minor but not unimportant irony that Brutus, in this play of names, is not mentioned by name. He receives what posthumous rehabilitation is possible, by being accorded the tribute of "this was the noblest Roman of them all". Antony's voice is choric, and thus the community's. In death as in life Brutus is permitted to manifest the characteristics of the tribe. Rome will always find its formulas for survival of the State. It is the correct reduction of a play founded on the subordination of the individual part to the whole.

I propose, then, that the roots of the tragic actions in *Julius Caesar* lie in communal identity; and that the actors, in asserting their individuality, do so by responding to impulses that emanate from the collective mind. The ambivalence of "act", so exhaustively explored in the canon, is here defined in terms of Roman society. What the Romans imitate is their ancestry; what they aspire to be is the reflection of the dead. Always their names stand to them as a gauge of conduct, a living tribunal over which their ancestors preside. Hence the play becomes, in a very Roman way, a sacrifice to one's ancestors. It is perhaps the most pessimistic, the most unillusioned of all Shakespearean tragedies, this vision of a society that knows no other way of defining its present, no other exit from its past. In the end even the individuality of the name disappears, lost in the collective formation. Like *Hamlet*, this play poses the question, "Who's there?" (I, iii, 41). Unlike *Hamlet*, it supplies an answer: "A Roman."

NOTES

Citations are to *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, Third Edition, ed. David Bevington (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1980)

1. T. S. Dorsch, in his *New Arden* edition of *Julius Caesar* (London: Methuen, 1955), p. xlix.
2. The point is not made by John Ripley, in his coverage of the 1898 production in *'Julius Caesar' on Stage in England and America 1599-1973* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). It is however elaborated in the programmes to Tree's latter productions of *Julius Caesar*, available in the Tree archive at the University of Bristol Theatre Collection.
3. For a provocative review of the possibilities of that myth, see the chapter on Prometheus in Jan Kott's *The Eating of the Gods: An Interpretation of Greek Tragedy* (New York: Random House, 1974), pp. 3-42.
4. It may be worth noting that Shakespeare suppresses Plutarch's detail that Casca called upon his brother for help in the assassination. The revolt of the brothers is an unwanted dimension.
5. Nevil Coghill, *Shakespeare's Professional Skills* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 62.
6. T. J. B. Spencer, "Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Romans", *Shakespeare Survey* 10 (1957), 28.
7. Pierre Grimal, *The Civilization of Rome* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1963), p. 100.

8. Cinna's joke about being a bachelor (III, iii, 17) is not in Plutarch. I infer that this is another brush-stroke in Shakespeare's picture of an establishment that has lost interest in having children.
9. R. H. Barrow, *The Romans* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1949), p. 20.
10. Dorsh, p. xxxv: Maynard Mack, *Julius Caesar*, reprinted in *Modern Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. Alvin B. Kernan (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1970), pp. 292, 295.
11. John W. Velz, "If I were Brutus now...": Role-Playing in *Julius Caesar*. *Shakespeare Studies* 4 (1968), p. 153.
12. Thomas Van Laan, *Role-Playing in Shakespeare* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), pp. 141-52.
13. Velz, p. 153.
14. Shakespeare clearly takes the Roman *cognomen* as the approximate equivalent of the English surname.
15. Ernest Schanzer, *The Problem Plays of Shakespeare* (New York: Schocken, 1965), pp. 54-5.
16. G. Wilson Knight, *The Imperial Theme* (London: Methuen, 1953), pp. 44, 61. Quoted by Schanzer, p. 45.
17. Nicholas Brooke, *Shakespeare's Early Tragedies* (London: Methuen, 1968), p. 159.
18. Schanzer, op. cit., p. 25.
19. Cf. the decorously Roman way in which Octavius and his followers determine the appropriate reaction to the news of Antony's death.
Agrippa Caesar is touch'd.
Maecenas When such a spacious mirror's set before him,
He needs mus: see himself.
Antony and Cleopatra, V, i, 33-5.
20. Richard David preserves an apt vignette from the RSC programme for *Julius Caesar* (1972), Cicero's account of a visit by Caesar. "Nerve-racking - but it passed off tolerably. He was in a very good humour. The talk at table was all of literature, and serious subjects were avoided. - Just a quiet man-to-man talk. Still, he wasn't the sort of guest to whom you'd say 'look me up when you're passing this way again,'" *Shakespeare in the Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 151.
21. Maurice Charney, *Shakespeare's Roman Plays: The Function of Imagery in the Drama* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 221, note 1.
22. "Constancy", equally, is a Roman code-word. Note
(i) *Brutus* "With untir'd spirits and formal constancy" (II, i, 227).
(ii) *Portia* "I have made strong proof of my constancy" (II, i, 299).
(iii) *Portia* "O constancy, be strong upon my side" (II, iv, 6).
23. Brents Stirling, *Unity in Shakespearean Tragedy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), p. 42.
24. Shaw missed the point here. He viewed the playing of the full text as a blunder: "...Brutus's reception of Messala's news, following his own revelation of it to Cassius, is turned into a satire on Roman fortitude..." G. B. Shaw, *Our Theatres in the Nineties* (London: Constable, 1932), III, p. 303. Why not accept "satire" as Shakespeare's approximate intention? The "alternative version" approach brings enough difficulties. Granville-Barker justified his preference rather oddly: "By this text Brutus first hears the news from Messala, and he exhibits a correct stoicism..." *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), II, p. 411. It is "correct" if Portia's death is news to Brutus, and an "incidental lie" (p. 412) if it is not? I should have thought it equally a lie, in either case. Perhaps the real point at issue is changing attitudes towards stoicism (in its general sense). In fact, the text makes excellent sense in the theatre on its own terms. See the illuminating comments on the RSC version of 1972 in David, op. cit., pp. 19-20, 154.