

A STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE'S DEPARTURES FROM
PLUTARCH IN THE CHARACTERIZATIONS OF
CAESAR AND BRUTUS IN
JULIUS CAESAR

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PREFACE

It seems to me that the classics and works with classical background have a special "literary appeal" which is almost irresistible. I was, therefore, greatly fascinated by Dr. Berkeley's most scholarly and thorough discussion of classical allusions in the works of Shakespeare in his seminar from which I received inspiration for the subject of this paper.

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to Drs. David S. Berkeley and William R. Wray for their patient and understanding direction of this thesis and for the valuable suggestions they gave me. I am grateful to the staff and faculty of the English Department for their encouragement, and to the library for obtaining Volume II of Paul Turner's edition of North's Plutarch's Lives for me. I am also indebted to my husband, who despite his heavy academic work, has shouldered the added burden of taking care of our four little girls in Taiwan, and thereby has made this work possible.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The attention of Shakespearean scholars has not been drawn to careful investigation of the dramatist's departures from Plutarch in the characterizations of the dramatis personae of Julius Caesar. MacCallum¹ seems to have done more than other writers in noting the similarities and contrasts between the play and the source, but his aim is not to assess Shakespeare's departures from Plutarch. His primary concern is to evaluate the principal characters in the play. He has not given, in my opinion, an adequate account of Shakespeare's departures from Plutarch in the delineations of the characters of Caesar and Brutus; neither has he shown that there are two tragic heroes in the drama. MacCallum² believes that Caesar is the man designated by God to unite Rome under a monarchy and that Brutus, who with good intentions joins the conspiracy to assassinate Caesar, brings destruction to Rome.

Generally speaking, according to their views as to how Shakespeare's Caesar and Brutus differ from Plutarch's, critics may be classified into two groups:

¹M. W. MacCallum, Shakespeare's Roman Plays and Their Background (London, 1910).

²Ibid., pp. 212-17.

1. Those who consider the dramatist's Caesar and Brutus nobler than the biographers.

2. Those who regard Shakespeare's two leading characters as less noble than their counterparts in the source.

The following critics think that Shakespeare has ennobled Plutarch's Caesar:

MacCallum³ says, "Shakespeare ignores all that might give an unfavorable impression of Caesar's past, and presents him very much as the incarnate principle of empire, with the splendours but also with the disabilities that must attend the individual man who feels himself the vehicle for such an inspiration." Whitaker⁴ points out that in order to magnify Caesar's achievements, Shakespeare presents him as weaker of body than in the source, and therefore stronger of will. Muir⁵ states, "He [Shakespeare] emphasizes Caesar's physical weaknesses and his pride, but at the same time he makes him more noble than he is in Plutarch's life."

With regard to Brutus, MacCallum⁶ avers, "Shakespeare screens from view whatever in the career of Brutus that might prejudice his claims to affection and respect." Draper⁷ explains that Shakespeare's Brutus is a nobler character than his prototype in Plutarch, for the

³ MacCallum, p. 233.

⁴ Virgil K. Whitaker, Shakespeare's Use of Learning (San Marino, Calif., 1953), p. 233.

⁵ Kenneth Muir, "The Roman Plays," Shakespeare's Comedies and Tragedies (London, 1957), p. 189.

⁶ MacCallum, p. 233.

⁷ John W. Draper, The Humors and Shakespeare's Characters (Durham, N. C., 1945), p. 25.

former is entirely sanguine,⁸ whereas the latter is partly choleric⁹ and partly sanguine.

The following critics hold the view that Shakespeare has reduced the stature of Caesar:

Wilson¹⁰ writes, "Shakespeare adds to the infirmities in Plutarch a deafness in one ear; and makes 'the falling sickness', which Plutarch does mention, seize him at the most awkward and humiliating moment-- when being offered a crown. Worse still, he substitutes for the pluck, resolution, and endurance often praised by Plutarch, a 'feeble temper'; and derives the three examples of this from passages in North which show the exact opposite." In fine, Wilson thinks that the contemptible side of Caesar is solely of Shakespeare's own making.¹¹ Draper¹² maintains that in the play, "Julius Caesar becomes an empty boaster, made ridiculous to the Elizabethans by physical infirmity, deafness and ill health, all added by Shakespeare; and furthermore, the dramatist transfers from elsewhere in Plutarch the famous attack of epilepsy."

⁸ According to Dariot, the sanguine type is "honest, iust, true, benevolent, liberall, faithful, milde, godly, shamefast, magnanimous, religious . . ." See Draper, p. 23, n. 28.

⁹ The choleric are easily provoked, given to treachery, vehement in action, envious, proud and wrathful. See Ruth Leila Anderson, "Elements, Humors, and Temper: Some Characteristics of the Soul," Elizabethan Psychology and Shakespeare's Plays (New York, 1966), p. 37.

¹⁰ John Dover Wilson, ed., Shakespeare's Julius Caesar (London, 1956), pp. xxvii-xxviii.

¹¹ Ibid., p. xxix.

¹² John W. Draper, "The Realism of Shakespeare's Roman Plays," Studies in Philology, XXX (1933), 226.

As for Brutus, Dorsch¹³ comments, "In Julius Caesar the virtue and nobility of Plutarch's Brutus are brought out, but beside them are set a number of faults for which there is little or no warrant in Plutarch. Shakespeare's Brutus is, with all his estimable qualities, pompous, opinionated and self-righteous." Likewise, G. R. Smith¹⁴ contends that "Shakespeare heightens Brutus' willfulness and undermines his moralistic pronouncements with bad logic and implied dishonesty."

Students of Shakespeare all know that the dramatist drew his material from Plutarch. But for a few details Shakespeare was probably indebted to Appian, Golding's Ovid, Suetonius, Dio, and Michel le Noir's translation (1515) of Boccaccio's Life of Caesar.¹⁵ Two plays that have recently been put forward as possible sources of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar are the anonymous Caesar's Revenge, and Kyd's translation of the French Senecan tragedy of Garnier, Cornelia.¹⁶

The present paper will not attempt to assign sources for each departure from Plutarch. It will, however, investigate thoroughly Shakespeare's departures from Plutarch in the characterizations of Caesar and Brutus. I propose to demonstrate that by means of his departures from the source Shakespeare brings about two tragic heroes of Aristotelian proportions, the one being a noble yet ambitious and

¹³T. S. Dorsch, ed., Shakespeare's Julius Caesar (London, 1958), p. xxxix.

¹⁴Gordon Ross Smith, "The Character of Brutus: An Answer to Mr. Rao," Shakespeare Quarterly, XII (1961), 476.

¹⁵Harry Morgan Ayres, "Shakespeare's Julius Caesar in the Light of Some Other Versions," Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, XXV (1910), 188, n. 2.

¹⁶Muir, pp. 192, 194.

boastful figure, the other a virtuous but morally blind political idealist, so that it is not illogical for Brutus to make the erroneous judgment that by killing Caesar, he can safeguard the welfare of his fellowmen. I shall carefully compare the two leading characters in the play with their prototypes in the source, noting the corresponding Shakespearean departures, scene by scene, and situation by situation. I shall indicate, in the last chapter, that Shakespeare has a definite aim in departing from Plutarch, as he does in these two characterizations, his purpose being to follow the Aristotelian specifications of the tragic hero.

CHAPTER II

I. i

The scene opens on a street in Rome. The tribunes, Marullus and Flavius, attempt to drive away from the streets the commoners that are making holiday to see Caesar and rejoice at his triumph over the sons of Pompey.

Flav. . . . Let no images
Be hung with Caesar's trophies. I'll about
And drive away the vulgar from the streets.
So do you too, where you perceive them thick.
These growing feathers pluck'd from Caesar's wing
Will make him fly an ordinary pitch,
Who else would soar above the view of men
And keep us all in servile fearfulness.¹⁷

For dramatic purposes Shakespeare dates scattered incidents at the Lupercalian Festival. According to Plutarch, there is a gap¹⁸ between Caesar's triumph and the Lupercalia. Besides, the disrobing of Caesar's images by the tribunes does not occur until the time of his projected coronation. Conflict is being threatened in this scene: we see opposition developing against Caesar. It is noteworthy that there is no reference to Caesar as a tyrant. Flavius is merely attempting to

¹⁷Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, ed. George Lyman Kittredge, revised by Irving Ribner (Waltham, Mass., 1966), I, i, 68-75. All further quotations from this play will be from this edition; and act, scene, and line numbers will be given parenthetically in the text.

¹⁸Shakespeare contracts the time-scheme given by Plutarch in the following manner: Caesar's victory over the sons of Pompey took place in October, 45 B.C. The feast of Lupercal occurred in February, 44.

prevent Caesar from being so powerful that he might be in a position to enslave the Romans. In Plutarch, however, we find the word "tyranne" associated with Caesar: ". . . Cassius hated the tyranne."¹⁹ Caesar's greatness is reflected in this scene by such expressions as "trophies," "growing feathers," and "soar above the view of men."

I. ii

At the Lupercalian games, Caesar asks Antony to strike Calphurnia in the race. It was believed that barren women would lose the curse of sterility if they were struck by the leather thongs carried by the runners ("Caesar," p. 40).

Caes. Forget not in your speed, Antonius
To touch Calphurnia; for our elders say
The barren, touched in this holy chase,
Shake off their sterile curse. (I. ii. 6-9)

This incident has no basis in Plutarch. Shakespeare introduces it probably to show that "Caesar is desirous of having an heir, and, inferentially, of founding a dynasty."²⁰ It will be seen that the dramatist emphasizes Caesar's ambition as a principal factor in Caesar's assassination, and as one of the main causes for Brutus' fear that Caesar might eventually become a tyrant.

When Cassius complains that Brutus has not shown him love as he used to (I. ii. 33-34), Shakespeare makes Brutus' private worries the reason for his coolness (I. ii. 39-41). Plutarch, however, mentions an

¹⁹ Plutarch, Selected Lives from the Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans, tr. (Greek to French) James Amyot, tr. (French to English) Thomas North, ed. Paul Turner, II, (Carbondale, Illinois, 1963), 166. Subsequent references to Plutarch will be to this edition and will be noted parenthetically in the text as to life and pages.

²⁰ MacCallum, p. 198.

estrangement between Brutus and Cassius which arose from Caesar's granting to Brutus the first praetorship, for which Cassius was the more deserving claimant ("Brutus," p. 166). This episode has been omitted by Shakespeare, for it reflects Caesar's injustice and Brutus' ingratitude and peevishness.

On hearing the flourish and shout from the forum, Brutus says: "What means this shouting? I do fear the people / Choose Caesar for their king" (I. ii. 79). The practical Cassius, who has deep insight, exploits Brutus' concern for the public good: "Ay, do you fear it? / Then must I think you would not have it so" (I. ii. 80). Shakespeare presents his noble Brutus as being primarily interested in the welfare of his countrymen; he does not mention Brutus' possible personal aspirations. Plutarch's Brutus, on the other hand, might not be entirely free from selfishness, as the following passage seems to suggest:

And surely, in my opinion, I am persuaded that Brutus might indeed have come to have been the chiefest man of Rome, if he could have contented himself for a time to have been next unto Caesar, and to have suffered his glory and authority which he had gotten by his great victories, to consume with time. ("Brutus," p. 166)

The following words of Shakespeare's Brutus show his subordination of personal motives to the good of the state as he sees it:

If it be aught toward the general good,
Set honour in one eye and death i' th' other,
And I will look on both indifferently;
For let the gods so speed me as I love
The name of honour more than I fear death.
(I. ii. 85-89)

It will be seen that throughout the play, Brutus' motives are pure, though he blunders through lack of perception.

Departing from the source, Shakespeare exaggerates Caesar's physical disabilities by having Cassius describe how Caesar, whose

strength failed him in the Tiber, implored Cassius to help him (I. ii. iii), and how Caesar, when he had fever in Spain, cried out like a sick girl, "Give me some drink, Titinius" (I. ii. 127-128). In Plutarch, Caesar, though of a weak constitution, is noted for his unusual endurance:

For, concerning the constitution of his body, he was lean, white, and soft skinned, and often subject to headache, and otherwhile to the falling sickness: (the which took him the first time, as it is reported, in Corduba, a city of Spain) but yet therefore yielded not to the disease of his body, to make it a cloak to cherish him withal, but contrarily, took the pains of war, as a medicine to cure his sick body fighting always with his disease, travelling continually, living soberly, and commonly lying abroad in the field. For the most nights he slept in his coach or litter, and thereby bestowed his rest, to make him always able to do something: and in the daytime, he would travel up and down the country to see towns, castles, and strong places. ("Caesar," pp. 11-12)

Then again, Plutarch's Caesar is an exceptionally good swimmer, as the following episode indicates:

. . . in the battle by sea, that was fought by the tower of Phar: where meaning to help his men that fought by sea, he leapt from the pier into a boat. Then the Egyptians made towards him with their oars, on every side: but he leaping into the sea, with great hazard saved himself by swimming. It is said, that then holding divers books in his hand, he did never let them go, but kept them always upon his head above water, and swam with the other hand, notwithstanding that they shot marvellously at him, and was driven sometimes to duck into the water: howbeit the boat was drowned presently. ("Caesar," p. 33)

The Caesar in the play achieves unsurpassed greatness despite his physical infirmities. By giving him these handicaps, Shakespeare succeeds in emphasizing Caesar's will and inciting our admiration for the Roman leader because of his spiritual triumph over his physical weaknesses.

After the games, on seeing Cassius and Brutus, Caesar expresses his opinion of Cassius to Antony, but the latter disagrees.

Caes. Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look.
He thinks too much. Such men are dangerous.

Ant. Fear him not, Caesar; he's not dangerous.
He is a noble Roman, and well given.
(I. ii. 194-197)

In Plutarch, Caesar's suspicions concern not only Cassius but also Brutus:

For, intelligence being brought him one day, that Antonius and Dolabella did conspire against him: he answered, That these fat long-haired men made him not afraid, but the lean and whitely-faced fellows, meaning that, by Brutus and Cassius. ("Brutus," p. 166)

Consistent in delineating Brutus as an upright character, Shakespeare omits information that affects our high esteem of him. I agree with Berkeley²¹ that the motive of Shakespeare's Antony in telling Caesar not to fear Cassius is not clear. However, in letting Antony say, "Fear him not, Caesar; he's not dangerous," the dramatist has certainly softened the following episode which seems to cast a shadow on Antony's integrity: Aware of the fact that the people were opposed to Caesar being crowned king, Brutus and Cassius attempted to get their friends to join the conspiracy against Caesar, but they could not make up their minds as to whether or not they should take Antonius into their confidence:

This was a good encouragement for Brutus and Cassius to conspire his death, who fell into a consort with their trustiest friends, to execute their enterprise: but yet stood doubtful whether they should make Antonius privy to it or not. All the rest liked of it, saving Trebonius only. He told them, that when they rode to meet Caesar at his return out of Spain, Antonius and he always keeping company, and lying together by the way, he felt his mind

²¹ David S. Berkeley, Key to A Guide to Shakespearean Tragedy (Stillwater, Okla., 1961), p. 11.

afar off:²² but Antonius finding his meaning, would hearken no more unto it, and yet notwithstanding never made Caesar acquainted with this talk, but had faithfully kept it to himself. ("Antonius," p. 112)

Shakespeare elevates Antony, Caesar's favorite, to present a nobler Caesar. In the same way he elevates Cassius, Brutus' brother-in-law ("Brutus," 165) and closest associate in the play, to enhance Brutus' nobility of character. Illustrations will be given later.

Having been advised by Antony not to fear Cassius, Caesar replies:

I rather tell thee what is to be fear'd
Than what I fear; for always I am Caesar.
Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf,
And tell me truly what thou think'st of him. (I. ii. 211-214)

"... for always I am Caesar" is conspicuously boastful. Caesar's bragging is not only found in the source, but it is combined with insolence as may be seen in the following later episode in Plutarch:

But sitting still in his majesty, disdainng to rise up unto them when they came in, as if they had been private men, answered them: that his honours had more need to be cut off than enlarged. This did not only offend the Senate, but the common people also, to see that he should so lightly esteem of the magistrates of the commonwealth ("Caesar," p. 39)

As to Caesar's deafness in one ear, according to Kittredge,²³

"There is no ancient authority for Caesar's deafness. Coming as it does immediately after Caesar's claim to divinity, it underscores with irony that he is merely a man after all, suffering from the most human of infirmities."

The emphasis on Caesar's physical weakness reaches a climax when he succumbs to one of his epileptic seizures at the time when Antony

²²North, p. xiv, n. 112 'He felt his mind afar off', he sounded him delicately.

²³Kittredge, p. 12, n. 213.

offers him a crown the third time (I. ii. 235-247). In Plutarch, Antony offers twice to Caesar a diadem wreathed about with laurel ("Caesar," p. 40). There is no mention of Caesar swooning as the people shout for joy upon his refusal of the diadem. Plutarch's Caesar had an attack of his falling sickness on an earlier occasion ("Caesar," p. 39).

Palmer²⁴ accounts very satisfactorily for this Shakespearean departure of attributing exaggerated physical infirmities to Caesar:

Caesar's greatness is assumed throughout the play. It fills the mind of the dramatist and is communicated to his audience in phrases that fall from his pen whenever Caesar is mentioned, even by his enemies. This Caesar has got the start of the majestic world. He bestrides it like a colossus. His fall is heralded by a 'strange impatience of the heavens' and by portentous things which shake the minds of the stoutest of the Romans. Cassius, meeting Casca in the storm, names to him a man 'most like this dreadful night, prodigious grown and fearful'. Caesar is about to die and 'all the sway of earth shakes like a thing infirm'.

The essential greatness of Caesar being thus assumed, Shakespeare is free to exhibit in him human weaknesses apparently inconsistent with it. There are many advantages in this method of presentation. It gives reality to Caesar, the man; it suggests that Caesar's spirit is mightier than his person, a suggestion which is essential to the unity of the play; it enables the dramatist to present him in flesh and blood without reducing in stature the men who murder him; finally, it permits the audience to sympathize with Brutus just sufficiently to give poignancy to the disaster which overtakes him.

Flavius and Marullus, for pulling scarfs off Caesar's images are forbidden²⁵ to take part in public affairs (I. ii. 281-283). Their counterparts in the source seem to suffer worse punishment, for they are sent to prison ("Caesar," p. 40). Moreover, Shakespeare has

²⁴ John Palmer, Political Characters of Shakespeare (London, 1961), pp. 35-36.

²⁵ Kittredge, p. 14, n. 283.

omitted the information, given in the source, that the people who applauded the two tribunes are called fools and beasts by Caesar ("Caesar," p. 40). Thus by this omission the dramatist purges his Caesar from the arbitrariness and vulgarity of his prototype in Plutarch.

In his soliloquy Cassius exposes his personal motives for animosity towards Caesar, as well as his readiness to use forged letters for enticing Brutus into the conspiracy:

Caesar doth bear me hard; but he loves Brutus.
 If I were Brutus now and he were Cassius,
 He should not humour me. I will this night,
 In several hands, in at his windows throw,
 As if they came from several citizens,
 Writings, all tending to the great opinion
 That Rome holds of his name; wherein obscurely
 Caesar's ambition shall be glanced at.
 And after this let Caesar seat him sure,
 For we will shake him, or worse days endure.
 (I. ii. 310-319)

Shakespeare very simply dismisses Caesar's partiality in his treatment of Cassius and Brutus by having Cassius say, "Caesar doth bear me hard; but he loves Brutus." Plutarch narrates how Caesar awarded Brutus the first praetorship although Cassius, the rival claimant, deserved it, and how Caesar took away Cassius' lions ("Brutus," p. 166).

In Julius Caesar Shakespeare, whose object is to present both Caesar and Brutus as tragic heroes, has suppressed incidents in their past careers that might lower their stature. He has for instance excluded Caesar's licentious behavior toward women, reportedly begetting Brutus by Servilia ("Brutus," p. 164), and another illegitimate son, Caesarion, by Cleopatra ("Caesar," p. 33). If the dramatist had mentioned that Brutus was Caesar's bastard on whom he bestowed great favors, then Brutus would impress the audience as an ungrateful

parricide, necessarily of base nature, for "the Elizabethan theory of hereditary virtue associated loyalty and truth with the well born; but conversely, it associated the corresponding vices with bastards and with the lower classes."²⁶

The words "If I were Brutus now and he were Cassius / He should not humour me" are added by Shakespeare to show Brutus' lack of insight. Departing from the source, Shakespeare makes Cassius forge letters urging Brutus to rise against Caesar. In Plutarch the letters are from Brutus' compatriots:

But for Brutus, his friends and countrymen, both by divers procurements, and sundry rumours of the city, and by many bills also, did openly call and procure him to do that he did ("Brutus," p. 167)

This Shakespearean departure serves the double purpose of suppressing Caesar's unpopularity and suggesting Brutus' mistake.

I. iii

In the drama a stormy night precedes Caesar's assassination, whereas the source suggests a bright moonlight night:

Then going to bed the same night as his manner was, and lying with his wife Calpurnia, all the windows and doors of his chamber flying open, the noise awoke him, and made him afraid when he saw such light.²⁷

As in his other serious works, Shakespeare introduces one of his characteristic storms to heighten the tragic atmosphere.

²⁶John W. Draper, "Bastardy in Shakespeare's Plays," Shakespeare Jahrbuch, LXXIV (1938), 130.

²⁷North, p. ix, n. 42 'When he saw such light': North omits the words in Amyot which explains that the light comes from the moon.

The above passage states that Caesar is afraid. It is noteworthy that the play does not mention Caesar's fear. On the contrary, Shakespeare has Caesar boast of his fearlessness very often.

Shakespeare's Casca and Cassius talk objectively of the necessity of having Brutus lead the conspiracy:

Casca. O, he sits high in all the people's hearts;
And that which would appear offence in us,
His countenance, like richest alchemy,
Will change to virtue and to worthiness.

Cass. Him and his worth and our great need of him
You have right well conceited. (I. iii. 157-162)

The source material ("Brutus," p. 167) is enriched and made more effective by the dramatist in letting Casca praise Brutus' virtues and the high esteem he enjoys.

CHAPTER III

II. i

In his orchard, before dawn on the ides of March, Brutus is debating his course of action. He wakes his young servant, Lucius, envying the deep, untroubled sleep of the boy (II. i. 1-5). Lucius is an addition, together with his master's relations with him.

Brutus' soliloquy, as he rids himself of his hesitations and scruples, is an excellent example of Shakespeare's dramatic skill. I shall reproduce the soliloquy, and present a survey of past incidents in the source for comparison:

It must be by his death; and for my part,
I know no personal cause to spurn at him,
But for the general. He would be crown'd.
How that might change his nature, there's the question.
It is the bright day that brings forth the adder,
And that craves wary walking. Crown him--that!
And then I grant we put a sting in him
That at his will he may do danger with.
Th' abuse of greatness is, when it disjoins
Remorse from power. And to speak truth of Caesar,
I have not known when his affections sway'd
More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto 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.
Then lest he may, prevent. 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. (II. i. 10-34)

A thorough study of the source reveals that Caesar was high-handed when he was struggling for power, i.e., before he defeated Pompey the Great. For instance, he was suspected of being involved in the Catilinian conspiracy to overthrow the commonwealth ("Caesar," pp. 5-6); he arranged marriages of convenience in order to achieve power ("Caesar," p. 9); he encouraged the atrocities of his soldiers ("Caesar," p. 34). He was at his best behavior after the civil wars, so much so that Plutarch said of him:

And now for himself, after he had ended his civil wars, he did so honourably behave himself, that there was no fault to be found in him: and therefore methinks, deserved this, that they should build him a temple of clemency, to thank him for his courtesy he had used unto them in his victory. For he pardoned many of them that had borne arms against him, and furthermore, did prefer some of them to honour an office in the commonwealth: as amongst others, Cassius and Brutus, both the which were made Praetors. And where Pompey's images had been thrown down, he caused them to be set up again: whereupon Cicero said then, that Caesar setting up Pompey's images again he made his own to stand the surer. ("Caesar," p. 37)

But he was still human, he was ambitious. To cut a long story short, after the victory he gained over Pompey's sons in Spain, he was planning to wage war against the Parthians ("Caesar," p. 39) when he was assassinated. Plutarch says of his ambition:

Caesar being born to attempt all great enterprises, and having an ambitious desire besides to covet great honours: the prosperous good success he had of his former conquests bred no desire in him quietly to enjoy the fruits of his labours, but rather gave him hope of things to come, still kindling more and more in him, thoughts of greater enterprises, and desire of new glory, as if that which he had present, were stale and nothing worth. This humour of his was no other but an emulation with himself as with another man, and a certain contention to overcome the things he prepared to attempt. ("Caesar," p. 38)

This growing ambition of Caesar naturally made him unpopular. In Plutarch it is said:

But the chiefest cause that made him mortally hated, was the covetous desire he had to be called king: which first gave the people just cause, and next his secret enemies, honest colour to bear him ill-will. ("Caesar," p. 39)

With the above review of past incidents from the source before us, we are now in a position to conclude that Brutus' soliloquy is a masterstroke presenting in a nutshell the two conflicting personalities of Caesar--the magnanimous and the ambitious. Shakespeare achieves this dramatic soliloquy by means of compression and displacement of situations, and by omission of Caesar's unscrupulous and malicious behavior in the past. The dramatist, in having Brutus state, "And to speak truth of Caesar, / I have not known when his affections sway'd / More than his reason" (II. i. 19-21), has departed from Plutarch who mentions Caesar's partiality toward Brutus at the expense of Cassius ("Brutus," p. 166). The decision of Shakespeare's Brutus to destroy Caesar as a serpent's egg proves that his motives are entirely pure, whereas those of his counterpart in the source might not have been entirely unselfish.

The arrival of Cassius and five other conspirators, all muffled up, at Brutus' house, is a departure from the source which only mentions that the men met to discuss whom to include in their plot ("Brutus," p. 168). The departure gives Brutus an opportunity to utter a soliloquy expressing his disgust at the underhanded manner of his associates (II. i. 77-85). Brutus with his lofty ideals find it difficult to reconcile his "honorable" enterprise with darkness.

At the meeting Cassius' proposal that the party swear their resolution (II. i. 113) is rejected by Brutus, who insists that they should rely on the strength of their motives and not on an oath (I. i. 114-140). In Plutarch the conspirators refrain from swearing through

mutual understanding ("Brutus," p. 169). It is evident that the departure is meant to show Brutus' lack of insight and impractical reasoning. Dowden's comment is relevant here:

It is characteristic of Brutus that he will allow no oath to be taken by the conspirators. He who has been all his life cultivating reliance on the will apart from external props, cannot now fall back for support upon the objective bond of a vow or pledge. Their enterprise looks more clear and beautiful in the light of its own courage and justice than when associated with a vulgar formula of words.²⁸

Cassius proposes to include Cicero as an additional conspirator (II. i. 141-142), for, as Metellus adds, "His silver hairs / Will purchase us a good opinion" (II. i. 145). Brutus, however, rejects the proposal on the grounds that "he will never follow anything / That other men begin" (II. i. 150-151). But the source gives Cicero's lack of courage as the reason for his exclusion from the plot ("Brutus," p. 168). Smith believes that Shakespeare's Brutus likes to dominate others by his will.²⁹ I am inclined toward MacCallum's opinion: "If he interferes, as often enough he does, to bow others to his will, it is not because he is self-conceited, but because he is convinced that a particular course is right; and where right is concerned, a man must come forward to enforce it."³⁰ The dramatist's departure thus shows his Brutus as a man of strong will, bent on doing what he thinks is right.

In both the play and the source, Brutus would not agree to the proposal of the others that Antony be killed along with Caesar.

²⁸ Edward Dowden, Shakespeare--His Mind and Art (London, 1962), p. 295.

²⁹ Gordon Ross Smith, "Brutus, Virtue, and Will," Shakespeare Quarterly, X (1959), 368.

³⁰ MacCallum, p. 236.

However, the two Brutuses give different reasons for sparing Antony's life. In the drama, Brutus wants to avoid shedding more blood than necessary; he thinks that Antony would be helpless after Caesar's death:

Our course will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius,
To cut the head off and then hack the limbs,
Like wrath in death and envy afterwards;
For Antony is but a limb of Caesar.

. . . .
And for Mark Antony, think not of him;
For he can do no more than Caesar's arm
When Caesar's head is off. (II. i. 162-165, 181-183)

In Plutarch, Brutus uses different arguments for sparing Antony:

First, for that he said it was not honest; secondly, because he told them there was hope of change in him. For he did not mistrust, but that Antonius being a noble-minded and courageous man (when he should know that Caesar was dead) would willingly help his country to recover her liberty, having them an example unto him, to follow their courage and virtue. ("Brutus," p. 172)

The departure has an ironical significance: Shakespeare's Brutus wishes to refrain from shedding unnecessary blood; yet in sparing Antony's life he unintentionally brings about bloodshed on a large scale because of the civil war that follows Caesar's assassination.

Portia entreats Brutus to tell her his reason for rising before dawn (II. i. 234), for his restlessness (II. i. 252), and for receiving men who hide their faces even in the dark (II. i. 275-277). She protests that if she does not enjoy his confidence, she is Brutus' harlot, not his wife (II. i. 280-287). To the last remark, Brutus replies:

You are my true and honourable wife,
As dear to me as are the ruddy drops
That visit my sad heart. (II. i. 288-290)

Portia then reminds her husband that she is Cato's daughter and Brutus' wife; then to prove her fortitude and trustworthiness, she shows him a self-inflicted wound in her thigh (II. i. 296-302). Portia has now

won over Brutus completely:

Bru. O ye gods,
 Render me worthy of this noble wife!
 Hark, hark! One knocks. Portia, go in awhile,
 And by-and-by thy bosom shall partake
 The secrets of my heart
 All my engagements I will construe to thee,
 All the charactery of my sad brows. (II. i. 303-307)

Shakespeare has manipulated and condensed source material in the form of more effective colloquy. The departure consists of Shakespeare's Brutus assuring his wife that she is as dear to him as the blood that flows to his sad heart, and promising to tell her his secret, whereas Plutarch's Brutus merely "did comfort her the best he could" ("Brutus," p. 170). Furthermore, he mentions his "sad heart," an expression which indicates his reluctance to spill Caesar's blood, and yet he will do so for the welfare of his fellowmen. Shakespeare's Brutus repeatedly points out his unwillingness to kill Caesar and wishes that there were other means by which he could safeguard public safety. This is more than what his counterpart in the source does. Another significant conclusion from this departure is that Shakespeare's Brutus achieves even greater unity with his wife than Plutarch's Brutus. Dowden finds that "No relation of man and woman in the plays of Shakespeare is altogether so noble as that of Portia and Brutus."³¹

Brutus asks Metellus to send Ligarius to him so that he may mould him to their purpose:

Bru. Now, good Metellus, go along by him.
 He loves me well, and I have given him reasons.
 Send him but hither, and I'll fashion him.
 (II. i. 218-220)

³¹Dowden, p. 296.

These words, added by Shakespeare, show, not Brutus' vanity, but his confidence that Ligarius loves him for his righteousness and would do what he asks. Hickey³² aptly comments:

Out of Brutus' singleness of heart there springs that assertive self-belief which is not vanity, but an identification of himself with his cause, the cause which he believes must prosper for its absolute rightness' sake. His is, as it were, the personification of a great principle, though he is also a man framed to love and be loved, and counting the love that is given him as a good thing.

Though sick, Ligarius comes readily. He addresses Brutus as "Soul of Rome! / Brave son deriv'd from honourable loins!" (II. i. 321-322).

Expressing his confidence in Brutus, and with great respect, the sick man says:

Set on your foot,
And with a heart new-fir'd I follow you,
To do I know not what; but it sufficeth
That Brutus leads me on. (II. i. 331-333)

The source has the following:

Ligarius rising up in his bed, and taking him by the right hand, said unto him: Brutus, said he, if thou hast any great enterprise in hand worthy of they self, I am whole.
(*"Brutus,"* p. 168)

It is plain that Shakespeare's treatment of the source material uplifts Brutus by having Ligarius come to him, praise him, and express his confidence that whatever Brutus plans must be right. Ligarius' counterpart in the source is ready to follow Brutus with qualification: "if" is attached to his willingness to do what Brutus wants. The difference in intensity of Ligarius' enthusiasm reflects the degree of Brutus' prestige.

³² Emily Hickey, "The Play of Julius Caesar," Catholic World, CVI (1917), 223.

II. ii

On the ides of March when Calphurnia, alarmed at the many portents, persuades Caesar not to go out, and he ignores her entreaties, she pleads:

When beggars die there are no comets seen;
The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes.
(II. ii. 30-31)

The above words are supplied by the dramatist to emphasize Caesar's greatness.

In reply to his wife's warning Caesar said:

Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear,
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come. (II. ii. 32-37)

This famous speech is the result of Shakespeare's modifying and shifting forward of an earlier utterance of Plutarch's Caesar:

It is better to die once, than always to be afraid of death. ("Caesar," p. 37)

The departure is striking. Shakespeare's Caesar boasts that he does not fear death. Plutarch's Caesar, on the other hand, says that it is better to die once for all than live to be in fear of death all the time--he admits that he is afraid to die.

The following lines added by Shakespeare embody most of the predominant traits of his Caesar:

Caes. Caesar should be a beast without a heart.
If he should stay at home to-day for fear.
No, Caesar shall not. Danger knows full well
That Caesar is more dangerous than he.
We are two lions litter'd in one day,
And I the elder and more terrible,
And Caesar shall go forth. (II. ii. 42-47)

The fact that Caesar speaks about himself in the third person, and

claims that he is more dangerous than danger itself goes to prove his pride and boastfulness. His determination to go out despite adverse portents shows his courage, which, however, is coupled with the fatal element, ambition. Caesar probably entertains hopes of being crowned at the Senate meeting, since after the Lupercalian games, Casca informs Cassius:

Indeed, they say the senators to-morrow
 Mean to establish Caesar as a king,
 And he shall wear his crown by sea and land
 In every place save here in Italy. (I. iii. 85-88)

Apparently Caesar's ambition, pride, and boastfulness are the main characteristics in his tragic flaw. These factors probably justify Brutus' fears that Caesar might become dangerous to the state if he were crowned king. Caesar's worst faults in the play are just these. Shakespeare's Caesar, unlike his counterpart in the source, does not have a malicious and unscrupulous past.

When Calphurnia asks Decius to tell the senators that Caesar is sick (II. ii. 64), Caesar protests at once:

Shall Caesar send a lie?
 Have I in conquest stretch'd mine arm so far
 To be afraid to tell greybeards the truth?
 Decius, go tell them Caesar will not come. (II. ii. 65-68)

These words, introduced by Shakespeare, show Caesar's aversion to lies and probably suggest his pomposity. He does not even condescend to give "greybeards" an explanation.

The following dream of Calphurnia, altered from the source, anticipates a later scene in which the conspirators bathe their hands in Caesar's blood, making Calphurnia's dream come true:

Caes. Calphurnia here, my wife, stays me at home.
 She dreamt to-night she saw my statue,
 Which, like a fountain with an hundred spouts,

Did run pure blood; and many lusty Romans
 Came smiling and did bathe their hands in it.
 (II. ii. 75-79)

In Plutarch it is merely given that Calphurnia dreamed that Caesar was slain, and that she had him in her arms ("Caesar," p. 42).

The immediate effect of Decius' flattering interpretation of the dream and of his statement that "the Senate have concluded / To give this day a crown to mighty Caesar" (II. ii. 93-96) reflects Caesar's susceptibility to flattery, and above all his fatal ambition to be crowned king.

Shakespeare dismisses Antony's scandalous conduct by having Caesar call him night-reveller (II. ii. 117). In the source Antony's is a most disgraceful character:

. . . the noblemen (as Cicero saith) did not only mislike him, but also hate him for his naughty life: for they did abhor his banquetts and drunken feasts he made at unseasonable times, and his extreme wasteful expenses upon vain light huswives, and then in the day-time he would sleep or walk out his drunkenness, thinking to wear away the fume of the abundance of wine which he had taken over night. In his house they did nothing but feast, dance, and mask: and himself passed away the time in hearing of foolish plays, or in marrying these players, tumblers, jesters, and such sort of people And furthermore, lions were harnessed in traces to draw his carts: and besides also, in honest men's houses in the cities where he came, he would have common harlots, courtesans, and these tumbling gillots lodge. ("Antonius," pp. 109-110)

In the play the ennobling of Caesar and Brutus is paralleled by a similar strengthening of their chief partisans, Antony and Cassius respectively. Otherwise, the audience might be prejudiced by the unbecoming behaviors of their closest associates.

The conspirators' coming to Caesar's house to escort him to the capitol and their being entertained by Caesar (II. ii. 127-128) have no basis in the source. These incidents add tragic irony to Caesar's

death by the hands of those he has just treated as friends and regaled with wine.

II. iii

Shakespeare's Artemidorus, unlike his counterpart in the source, reads his letter warning Caesar against the conspirators, the letter being signed "Thy lover, Artemidorus." In Plutarch the Artemidorus incident is mentioned ("Caesar," pp. 42-42), but not the wording of the letter. It is interesting to note Holland's remarks about the use of the word "love" in the play:

All through Julius Caesar the characters announce their love. Cassius, even as he is luring Brutus into the conspiracy, smiling to himself over his cleverness, tells Brutus he is "your friend that loves you." Antony, at the moment when he is taking the first steps in his revenge on the conspirators, says to them "friends am I with you all, and love you all." Most terribly, Brutus tells the crowd of citizens, "I slew my best lover for the good of Rome." And on and on - the citizens "loved" Pompey, but now love Caesar; Caesar loves the citizens, loves Brutus, loves Antony; Antony loves Caesar; Cassius loves Brutus; Brutus loves Cassius, and so on. The tragedy is full of people who talk a great deal of love, but do very little loving. All this talk of love coupled with the failure to make it gives the play a cold, stuffy, almost air-conditioned, chilliness.³³

It must be pointed out here that Mr. Holland's criticism should be accepted with some qualification. For instance, no one can fail to see that Brutus and Portia are true lovers, and what is more, as indicated by Schanzer,³⁴ Brutus' "best lover" is the "res publica." Anyway, as far as Artemidorus and probably others are concerned, the word "lover" may be interpreted merely as "friend." By having Artemidorus say,

³³Norman N. Holland, "Julius Caesar," The Shakespearean Imagination (New York, 1964), pp. 134-135.

³⁴Ernest Schanzer, "The Tragedy of Shakespeare's Brutus," English Literary History, XXII (1955), 12.

My heart laments that virtue cannot live
 Out of the teeth of emulation (II. iii. 12-13),

the dramatist not only gives the impression that Caesar is virtuous and popular, but also prepares us for Antony's eulogy over Brutus' body:

All the conspirators save only he
 Did that they did in envy of great Ceasar;
 He, only in a general honest thought
 And common good to all, made one of them. (V. v. 68-72)

II. iv

We see Portia restless as the result of her knowledge of the conspiracy and her anxiety over Brutus' safety. She sends Lucius to the Capitol on the pretext that Brutus has some request that Caesar will not grant and that Lucius is to report what Brutus has to say:

Por. I must go in. Ay me, how weak a thing
 The heart of woman is! O Brutus,
 The heavens speed thee in thine enterprise!
 Sure the boy heard me. - Brutus hath a suit
 That Caesar will not grant. - O, I grow faint. -
 Run, Lucius, and commend me to my lord;
 Say I am merry. Come to me again
 And bring me word what he doth say to thee.
 (II. iv. 39-46)

As indicated before, Lucius is Shakespeare's addition. But Plutarch gives us a vivid account of the complete collapse of Portia, with Brutus hearing about it just after the critical moment when the conspirators fear that Popillius Lena has discovered their plot ("Brutus," p. 171).

The encouraging message to Brutus, which has no source in Plutarch, is added to bring about Portia's forgetfulness of herself. It is consistent with Brutus' modest prayer that he might be worthy of such a noble wife.

CHAPTER IV

III. i

Caesar recognizes the soothsayer who has warned him to "beware the ides of March" (I. ii. 23), and says to him, "The ides of March are come" (III. i. 1). The reply is blunt and ominous, "Ay, Caesar, but not gone" (II. i. 2). Caesar ignores Artemidorus' urgent plea to read his petition on the grounds that personal considerations must give way to Trebonius' suit which Decius has handed him, saying:

What touches us ourself shall be last serv'd. (I. ii. 8)

In the source Caesar attempts several times to read the letter but does not get a chance to do so:

Caesar took it of him, but could never read it, though he many times attempted it, for the number of people that did salute him: but holding it still in his hand, keeping it to himself, went on withal into the Senate-house.

("Caesar," p. 43)

The Shakespearean departure thus enormously increases Caesar's moral stature, showing his high-minded lack of concern for his own safety and his conscientious sense of duty.

Both Caesar in the play and his counterpart in the source turn down the petitions of the conspirators for the recall of Metellus Cimber's brother from banishment. Whereas Plutarch merely narrates that Caesar is offended with them ("Caesar," p. 43), Shakespeare departs from the source by introducing meaningful colloquies into his work. To Metellus, Caesar says:

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. Be not fond
 To think that Caesar bears such rebel blood
 That will be thaw'd from the true quality
 With that which melteth fools - I mean, sweet words,
 Low-crooked curtsies, and base spaniel fawning.
 (III. i. 35-43)

The blood symbols show Caesar in the height of pride just before his fall. He spurns Metellus like a cur (III. i. 46) who "might fire the blood of ordinary men" (III. i. 37). His is not rebel blood that can be thawed by flattery or persuasion (III. i. 39-43). Brutus adds his plea to that of Metellus:

I kiss thy hand, but not in flattery, Caesar,
 Desiring thee that Publius Cimber may
 Have an immediate freedom of repeal. (III. i. 52-54)

Presumably, Brutus is taking a last farewell of Caesar. The reply consisting of only two words, "What, Brutus?" shows that Caesar has not expected the noble and virtuous Brutus to make such a request.

To Cassius, who asks pardon for the banished Publius Cimber, Caesar remarks:

But I am constant as the Northern Star,
 Of whose true-fix'd and resting quality
 There is no fellow in the firmament. (III. i. 60-62)

To Cinna, Caesar exclaims:

Hence! Wilt thou lift up Olympus? (III. i. 73)

Undoubtedly, Caesar speaks like a braggart. However, as the leader of his country, Caesar has to preserve law and order; he cannot, therefore, pass a sentence and revoke it at will. Publius Cimber has been exiled lawfully; the senators have no right to ask Caesar to recall him. Again, it is true that Caesar's attitude toward Metellus is overbearing, but then the man has contemptibly kneeled down to make an

impossible request. In comparing himself to the Northern Star and Olympus, Caesar is merely emphasizing that he is immovable. At this point one cannot help but recall Brutus' remarks about Caesar, "And to speak truth of Caesar, / I have not known when his affections sway'd / More than his reason" (II. i. 19-21). Perhaps Shakespeare is using the direct self-explanation technique here to make Caesar reveal his own character. There seems to be some truth in Schücking's comment:

No doubt the information which Caesar gives of himself is meant by Shakespeare to correspond exactly with his real character. It would not surprise us if we heard it uttered by another person about Caesar.³⁵

But Kittredge's comment on Caesar's attitude is noteworthy too: "The royal airs which Caesar gives himself in this scene, though not in accordance with his historical character, have dramatic propriety. Their purpose is to justify the act of the conspirators, which, if our sympathies are not on their side, will appear to be a cowardly assassination."³⁶

In both the play and the source Casca strikes the first blow at Caesar, and Brutus the last. However, Caesar's last words "Et tu, Brute? - Then fall Caesar!" (III. i. 77) are not found in Plutarch. They have their parallel in Suetonius:³⁷

And in this wise he was stabbed with 23 wounds, uttering not a word, but merely a groan at the first stroke, though some have written that when Marcus Brutus rushed at him, he said in Greek, "You too, my child?"

³⁵Levin L. Schücking, Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays (New York, 1948), p. 51.

³⁶Kittredge, pp. 44-45, n. 32.

³⁷Gaius Tranquillus Suetonius, "Julius Caesar," Lives of the Caesars, tr. J. C. Rolfe, reprinted in Julius Caesar in Shakespeare, Shaw, and the Ancients, ed. G. B. Harrison (New York, 1960), p. 170.

As we have seen in the play, apart from his pride, apparent boastfulness, and his ambition to be crowned king, Caesar has displayed the noble traits of a just leader, conscientious in the discharge of his duties; he has not shown signs of tyranny. As far as Shakespeare's Caesar is concerned, the peripeteia and the anagnorisis are simultaneous. He has come to the Capitol in glory, escorted by the senators, who have given him hopes of a coronation. He has certainly not expected to be attacked. No wonder that on seeing the noble and virtuous but misguided Brutus strike him, he says, "And you, Brutus? - Then fall Caesar!" Brutus' reluctance to kill Caesar is explicit or implied all through the play. It is evident in Brutus' comment on Caesar's statement before he left his house:

Caes. Good friends, go in and taste some wine with me,
And we (like friends) will straightway go together.

Bru. (aside) That every like is not the same, O Caesar,
The heart of Brutus earns to think upon.
(II. iii. 127-130)

Whatever the motives of the other conspirators may be, that of Shakespeare's Brutus is consistently pure all through the play. To him Caesar's assassination is a ritual, a sacrifice for the general good. The following proposal by the dramatist's Brutus is not found in the source:

Bru. Stoop, Romans, stoop,
And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood
Up to the elbows and besmear our swords.
(III. i. 105-107)

This ritual bathing of the conspirators' arms in the blood of Caesar, as suggested by Brutus, is symbolic of the Roman freedom that has been safeguarded by a blood purge.

Employing compression, Shakespeare has Antony's servant come to

Brutus and Cassius almost immediately after the assassination.

Serv. Thus, Brutus, did my master bid me kneel;
Thus did Mark Antony bid me fall down;
And being prostrate, thus he bade me say:
Brutus is noble, wise, valiant, and honest;
Caesar was mighty, bold, royal, and loving.

.
If Brutus will vouchsafe that Antony
May safely come to him and be resolv'd
How Caesar hath deserv'd to lie in death,
Mark Antony shall not love Caesar dead
So well as Brutus living

(III. i. 123-137)

According to Plutarch, after the assassination Brutus made a public speech at the Capitol, justifying his deed. The following morning Antonius and others proposed granting amnesty to Brutus and his party, and on the third day the senate appointed the leading conspirators as governors of provinces. At Antony's suggestion Caesar was given an honorable burial, his will was read openly, and a funeral oration was made by Antony ("Brutus," pp. 173-174).

A dramatic departure from Plutarch has Antony praise the dead Caesar and ask the conspirators to kill him too:

Ant. O mighty Caesar! dost thou lie so low?
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
Shrunk to this little measure? Fare thee well.

.
If I myself, there is no hour so fit
As Caesar's death hour; nor no instrument
Of half that worth as those your swords, made rich
With the most noble blood of all this world.

(iii. i. 148-156)

Shakespeare's Antony appears truly grief-stricken by Caesar's death. His lamentable words recall the unsurpassed achievements of the "most noble blood of all this world."

The replies given by Brutus and Cassius throw light on the characters of the respective speakers:

Bru. Our hearts you see not. They are pitiful;
 And pity to the general wrong of Rome
 (As fire drives out fire, so pity pity)
 Hath done this deed on Caesar. For your part,
 To you our swords have leaden points, Mark Antony.
 (III. i. 169-173)

Cass. Your voice shall be as strong as any man's
 In the disposing of new dignities. (III. i. 177-178)

The above lines, not found in the source, show Brutus' sense of justice and Cassius' practicality combined with hopes for gain. Shakespeare has discarded much of the dark side of Cassius' character in order not to undermine the essential nobility of Brutus by the undesirable traits in his associates. Plutarch says of Cassius:

And as for Cassius, a hot, choleric, and cruel man, that would oftentimes be carried away from justice for gain: it was certainly thought that he made war, and put himself into sundry dangers, more to have absolute power and authority, than to defend the liberty of his country.
 ("Brutus," p. 180)

In the play Brutus proposes a public funeral for Caesar: ". . . Caesar shall / Have all true rites and lawful ceremonies" (III. i. 240-241); whereas in the source it is Antony who makes the proposal:

Then Antonius thinking good his testament should be read openly, and also that his body should be honourably buried, and not in hugger-mugger, lest the people might thereby take occasion to be worse offended if they did otherwise. . . .
 ("Brutus," pp. 173-174)

This Shakespearean departure shows Brutus' lack of insight. Whitaker³⁸ aptly observes:

Shakespeare attributes to Brutus himself the very arguments for granting the request which Plutarch makes Antony advance. Coming from Antony they were crafty; coming from Brutus they are fatuous.

The following demand of Shakespeare's Brutus is not in the source:

³⁸ Whitaker, p. 235.

Bru. You shall not in your funeral speech blame us,
 But speak all good you can devise of Caesar
 (III. i. 245-246)

Obviously, it is impossible for Antony to praise Caesar without dispraising the conspirators; hence the dramatist's Brutus is illogical in his reasoning.

Antony's soliloquy after the departure of the assassins is an addition by Shakespeare:

Ant. O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth.
 That I am meek and gentle with these butchers!
 Thou art the ruins of the noblest man
 That ever lived in the tide of times.
 (III. i. 254-257)

The sorrowful Antony, while lamenting over his dead friend, reminds the audience of Caesar's greatness. Berkeley³⁹ notes, "His [Antony's] grief is stirred not by remembrance of favors past but by the nobility of Caesar."

In his soliloquy Antony also predicts that civil strife will follow and that the spirit of Caesar will reign supreme:

A curse shall light upon the limbs of men;
 Domestic fury and fierce civil strife
 Shall cumber all the parts of Italy;
 Blood and destruction shall be so in use
 And dreadful objects so familiar
 That mothers shall but smile when they behold
 Their infants quartered with the hands of war,
 All pity chok'd with custom of fell deeds;
 And Caesar's spirit, ranging for revenge,
 With Ate by his side come hot from hell,
 Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice
 Cry "Havoc!" and let slip the dogs of war,
 That this foul deed shall smell above the earth
 With carrion men, groaning for burial.
 (III. i. 262-275)

The above prediction also foreshadows the ironical consequences of Brutus' "noble sacrifice of Caesar for the general good."

³⁹ Berkeley, p. 14.

Shakespeare departs from his source and creates dramatic effect by having a servant announce the arrival of Octavius Caesar. In Plutarch, Octavius is at Apollonia in Illyria at the time ("Brutus," p. 175). That Antony does not intend to keep his promise not to turn the mob against the conspirators is clear:

Ant. Thou shalt not back till I have borne this corpse
 Into the market place. There shall I try
 In my oration how the people take
 The cruel issue of these bloody men;
 According to the which thou shalt discourse
 To young Octavius of the state of things.
 (III. i. 291-296)

Apparently, Shakespeare had Appian in mind when he wrote these lines, for Appian says that Antony notes the effect of Caesar's dead body on the people before he spoke:

When Piso brought Caesar's body into the forum a countless multitude ran together with arms to guard it, and with acclamations and magnificent pageantry placed it on the rostra. Wailing and lamentation were renewed for a long time, the armed men clashed their shields, and gradually they began to repent themselves of the amnesty. Antony, seeing how things were going, did not abandon his purpose, but, having been chosen to deliver the funeral oration . . . resumed his artful design, and spoke as follows⁴⁰

This Shakespearean departure from Plutarch reminds us of the practical Cassius' warning to Brutus about Antony: "We shall find of him / A shrewd contriver" (II. i. 156-161) which Brutus rejected.

III. ii

The scene deals with a contrast between the oration of Brutus and that of Antony. The former appeals to the mob's reason, and the latter

⁴⁰ Appian, "The Civil Wars, Book II," Roman History, tr. Horace White, reprinted in Julius Caesar in Shakespeare, Shaw and the Ancients, ed. G. B. Harrison (New York, 1960), pp. 187-188.

arouses its emotions. Brutus proves himself impossible as a practical politician, whereas Antony shows the characteristics of a successful demagogue. In Plutarch, Brutus made two speeches to which the people listened with great respect ("Brutus," p. 173). In the drama Brutus delivers only one speech, the style for which Shakespeare gets a hint from Plutarch's earlier description of his brief, formal manner of expression:

. . . they do note in some of his epistles, that he counterfeited that brief compendious manner of speech of the Lacedaemonians. As when the war was begun, he wrote unto the Pargamenians in this sort; I understand you have given Dolabella money: if you have done it willingly, you confess you have offended me: if against your wills, show it then by giving me willingly ("Brutus," p. 163)

The wording of Brutus' speech is partly influenced by Appian as the following extract indicates:

. . . If Caesar was doing no more against your liberty then are we perjured. But if he restored to you neither the magistracies of the city nor those of the provinces . . . what sort of freedom was this, in which not a ray of hope could be any longer discerned?⁴¹

Commenting on Brutus' oration, Palmer⁴² notes that the cry "Let him be Caesar" is as prompt and devastating as Cassius' promise to Antony in the disposal of new dignities, and that Brutus is blind and deaf to these exposures. After finishing his oration, and having instructed the populace to listen to Antony, who, he stresses, has his permission to speak (III. ii. 55-81), Brutus, going away, leaves Antony to speak as he pleases.

Plutarch simply mentions that the purpose of Brutus' speech is to

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 186.

⁴² Palmer, p. 24.

justify the assassination ("Brutus," p. 173). Departing from the source, Shakespeare so devises the speech of Brutus as to stress the contrast between the two rival orations, Brutus' and Antony's, and the corresponding results. According to Palmer:⁴³

His (Brutus') speech consists of a series of terse, antithetical sentences, conveying precisely the idea he has in mind It requires from those who listen a close, consecutive attention. Brutus might be addressing an academy of science, a congress of philosophers, an audience of literary exquisites, capable of appreciating an exposition in which every sentence contributes to the formal symmetry of the rhetorical design.

Through Antony's speech, Shakespeare praises Caesar for being a faithful friend (III. ii. 85), for his love of the Romans (III. ii. 240-241), for his military prowess (III. ii. 88), and for his compassionate nature (III. ii. 91).

The salient points in Antony's speech are found in Plutarch ("Antonius," p. 113). However, Shakespeare refrains from mentioning Antony's hopes of "making himself the chiefest man if he might overcome Brutus" ("Antonius," p. 113). The dramatist uplifts Antony in order not to devaluate his praises of Caesar.

By means of the orations Shakespeare has effectively indicated that Brutus' great error, for which there is but slight suggestion in Plutarch, is that he appeals to the reason of the mob, whereas Antony moves the irrational plebeians by emotional appeal.

Omitting the civil war between Antony and Octavius (North, pp. 114-115), Shakespeare puts the alliance of the triumvirs immediately after Caesar's murder:

⁴³Ibid., pp. 22-23.

Serv. Sir, Octavius is already come to Rome.

Ant. Where is he?

Serv. He and Lepidus are at Caesar's house.

Ant. And thither will I straight to visit him.
He comes upon a wish. Fortune is merry,
And in this mood will give us anything.
(III. ii. 261-266)

Through the above compression and alteration, Shakespeare hastens Brutus and his party to their doom.

III. iii

The Cinna the poet episode is treated by Shakespeare as a comic relief whereas Plutarch narrates his horrible death in an appropriately serious manner (North, pp. 174-175). The source mentions the burning of the conspirators' houses by the mob only incidentally (North, p. 175). But the dramatist ends the scene with the cry:

3. Pleb. . . . Come, brands, ho! firebrands! To Brutus',
to Cassius! Burn all! Some to Decius' house and
some to Casca's; some to Ligarius! Away, go!
(III. iii. 33-35)

The same mob has recently applauded Brutus as a public hero:

All. Live, Brutus! live, live!

1. Pleb. Bring him with triumph home unto his house.

2. Pleb. Give him a statue with his ancestors.

3. Pleb. Let him be Caesar. (III. iii. 46-49)

This Shakespearean departure in showing the fickleness and irrationality of the crowd again emphasizes Brutus' error in appealing to its reason.

CHAPTER V

IV. i

A lengthy interval elapses between the end of Act III and the beginning of Act IV, the intervening time being occupied with the rivalry and intrigues of Antony and Octavius. Shakespeare passes over the incidents during this period and opens Act IV with the proscriptions:

Ant. These many, then, shall die; their names are prick'd.

Oct. Your brother too must die. Consent you, Lepidus?

Lep. I do consent -

Oct. Prick him down, Antony.

Lep. Upon condition Publius shall not live,
Who is your sister's son, Mark Antony.

Ant. He shall not live. Look, with a spot I damn him.
But, Lepidus, go you to Caesar's house.
Fetch the will hither, and we shall determine
How to cut off some charge in legacies.

(IV. i. 1-9)

According to Plutarch, Antony had no nephew Publius; but his uncle Lucius Caesar proscribed by the triumvirs, was saved by his sister, Antony's mother ("Antonius," p. 116). Shakespeare apparently is contrasting Antony's readiness to give up his nephew's life in order to defeat the conspirators with Brutus' unwillingness to kill Antony even though Cassius has insisted that Antony is dangerous.

In Plutarch it is not stated that Antony and Octavius cut down Caesar's bequest to the populace for the benefit of the triumvirate;

it is stated, however, that upon Octavius' arrival in Rome, he, as Caesar's heir, demanded that Antony hand over to him the money which Caesar had bequeathed to the Romans ("Antonius," p. 113).

By spotlighting the arbitrariness of the triumvirs, Shakespeare points to Brutus' error. He killed Caesar lest he should become a tyrant, and now as the result of Caesar's assassination, Brutus is indirectly responsible for the rise of three tyrants.

Again, Antony's regarding Lepidus as a beast of burden is not found in the source:

Ant. He shall but bear them as the ass bears gold,
To groan and sweat under the business,
Either led or driven as we point the way;
And having brought our treasure where we will,
Then take we down his load, and turn him off
(Like to the empty ass) to shake his ears
And graze in commons. (IV. i. 21-27)

The source has this:

Now the government of these Triumviri grew odious and hateful to the Romans, for divers respects: but they most blamed Antonius, because he being elder than Caesar, and of more power and force then Lepidus, gave himself again to his former riot and excess, when he left to deal in the affairs of the commonwealth. ("Antonius," p. 116)

Probably, Shakespeare includes Antony's evil traits in the play only after Caesar's death and not before for the purpose of raising Caesar and stressing Brutus' tragic delusion.

IV. ii

Brutus is tactless in complaining about his friend and fellow-general before Pindarus, Cassius' servant:

Bru. Your master, Pindarus,
In his own change, or by ill officers,
Hath given me some worthy cause to wish
Things done undone; but if he be at hand,
I shall be satisfied. (IV. ii. 6-9)

Brutus further criticizes Cassius for receiving Lucilius coldly (IV. ii. 18-20). This again, is done in public. However, when Cassius, upon his arrival, makes complaints to Brutus, the latter at once reminds him of the importance of keeping their wrangles strictly private (IV. ii. 43-45). The last part where Brutus instructs his followers to keep away while he and Cassius hold their conference in the tent (IV. ii. 50-52) is based on Plutarch:

. . . Therefore, before they fell in hand with any other matter, they went into a little chamber together, and bade every man avoid and did shut the doors to them.
 ("Brutus," p. 183)

As Shakespeare's Brutus gradually becomes disillusioned, his mind naturally becomes greatly agitated. Hence his inconsistent attitude toward Cassius is understandable.

IV. iii

In this scene Shakespeare telescopes two quarrels from Plutarch ("Brutus," pp. 183-184) into one.

Alone with Brutus in the tent, Cassius protests that Brutus, despite Cassius' interceding, has condemned Lucius Pella for taking bribes from the Sardians (IV. iii. 1-5). In the course of the quarrel Brutus accuses Cassius of having a covetous disposition in selling offices to undeservers (IV. iii. 9-11). Brutus then reminds Cassius of the reason why they killed Caesar:

Remember March; the ides of March remember.
 Did not great Julius bleed for justice sake?
 What villain touch'd his body that did stab
 And not for justice? What, shall one of us,
 That struck the foremost man of all this world
 But for supporting robbers - shall we now
 Contaminate our fingers with base bribes (IV. iii. 18-28)

The parallel for this information in Plutarch is as follows:

. . . Brutus in contrary manner answered, that he should remember the Ides of March, at which time they slew Julius Caesar: who neither pilled nor polled the country, but only was a favourer and suborner of all them that did rob and spoil, by his countenance and authority
 ("Brutus," p. 184)

Since nowhere in the play is there any evidence that Caesar has supported robbers, we may dismiss Brutus' statement that Caesar was killed for supporting robbers on the grounds that it is made in anger. Through Brutus, Shakespeare again keeps his audience in mind of Caesar's greatness by the expressions "great Julius" and "the foremost man of all this world."

Even though he is driven desperate by lack of funds, Shakespeare's Brutus would not resort to unfair means to raise money for the support of his troops; he is, however, forced to ask Cassius for help in order to maintain an army to fight against the Caesarian party:

Bru. . . . I did send to you
 For certain sums of gold, which you denied me;
 For I can raise no money by vile means.
 (IV. iii. 69-71)

Plutarch's Brutus also asks Cassius for money; but he is less scrupulous than Shakespeare's Brutus, for he is said to "rap and rend" ("Brutus," p. 181) and to besiege cities ("Brutus," pp. 181-182) in order to raise money.

In the quarrel scene Brutus is more bitter than Cassius in both the play and the source. In the drama Cassius ends the squabble, and the poet interrupts just after that, whereas in Plutarch the poet's intrusion ends the quarrel.

Brutus' attitude toward the poet is not as friendly as Cassius':

Cass. Ha, ha! How vilely doth this cynic rhyme!

Bru. Get you hence, sirrah! Saucy fellow, hence!

Cass. Bear with him, Brutus. 'Tis his fashion.

Bru. I'll know his humour when he knows his time.
What should the wars do with these jiggling fools?
Companion, hence!

Cass. Away, away, be gone! (IV. iii. 133-139)

Even here Shakespeare's Brutus is shown in a better light than his counterpart in the source in the corresponding incident:

Cassius fell a-laughing at him: but Brutus thrust him out of the chamber, and called him dog, and counterfeit Cynic. Howbeit his coming in broke their strife at that time, and so they left each other. ("Brutus," p. 184)

One might wonder why Shakespeare's Brutus, hitherto so genteel, should appear irritable in this scene. The explanation is that in addition to the unforeseen misfortune that has befallen his country Brutus is also grieved by news of Portia's death:

Cass. I did not think you could have been so angry.

Bru. O Cassius, I am sick of many griefs.

Cass. Of your philosophy you make no use
If you give place to accidental evils.

Bru. No man bears sorrow better. Portia is dead.

Cass. Ha! Portia?

Bru. She is dead.

Cass. How scap'd I killing when I cross'd you so?
O insupportable and touching loss!
Upon what sickness?

Bru. Impatient of my absence,
And grief that young Octavius with Mark Antony
Have made themselves so strong; for with her death
That tidings came. With this she fell distract,
And (her attendants absent) swallow'd fire.
(IV. iii. 143-155)

By letting Brutus mention Portia's death and having Cassius express his surprise that his grief-stricken friend did not kill him, Shakespeare is apparently defending Brutus' harshness toward Cassius and the poet.

Plutarch relates Portia's death only in the last paragraph of "The Life of Brutus," and with no mention of its effect on Brutus ("Brutus," pp. 196-197).

Even when Titinius and Messala enter Brutus' tent, Cassius cannot divert his thoughts from Portia's death: "Portia, art thou gone?" (IV. iii. 166). Brutus' comment, "No more, I pray you" (IV. iii. 167), showing his admirable fortitude, is not found in the source, as can be seen in the previous paragraph.

The talk between Brutus and Messala covers their enemies' forces at Philippi (IV. iii. 168-171), the proscriptions (IV. iii. 173-180), and Portia's death (IV. iii. 181-193). The following observation is relevant here:

One can reconcile Brutus' telling of Portia's death to Cassius (IV, iii, 147-157) and of his hearing of Portia's death from Messala (IV. iii. 181-195) as if he has never heard of it by assuming the theory that Brutus, desperately pinning hope on the fact of the difference between his letters and Messala's in proscription numbers (IV. iii. 176 ff.), was momentarily led to believe in the possibility that Portia is still alive. His mind is made certain by Messala in l. 189. Thus Portia's death is a double blow to Brutus, whose recovery establishes him as a man who can keep his private griefs to himself⁴⁴

Although Plutarch does not mention the discussion, it does provide the subjects related to their conference. It is significant that all the three incidents--the proscriptions, Portia's death, and the Battle of Philippi--are consequences of Brutus' wrong decision in assassinating Julius Caesar and in sparing Antony.

At the meeting of the conspiratorial group, Brutus suggests marching to Philippi (IV. iii. 196-197), to which Cassius objects (IV.

⁴⁴Berkeley, p. 15.

iii. 198). The following colloquy shows that Cassius' arguments are practical, whereas Brutus' reasons are theoretical:

Cass. 'Tis better that the enemy seek us.
So shall he waste his means, weary his soldiers,
Doing himself offence, whilst we, lying still,
Are full of rest, defence, and nimbleness.

Bru. Good reasons must of force give place to better.
The people 'twixt Philippi and this ground
Do stand but in a forc'd affection;
For they have grudg'd us contribution.
The enemy, marching along by them,
By them shall make a fuller number up,
Come on refresh'd, new-added, and encourag'd;
From which advantage shall we cut him off
If at Philippi we do face him there,
These people at our back.

(IV. iii. 199-212)

There is no warrant for the above discussion in the source. By means of this departure, Shakespeare gives another illustration of Brutus' wrong decision and stubbornness in overruling Cassius' better judgment.

The colloquies between Brutus and his attendants, and Brutus and his page are added by Shakespeare to show the mildness and humanity of Brutus. He is considerate of his subordinates: he wants Varro and Claudius to sleep on cushions in his tent (IV. iii. 242-243); he apologizes to Lucius for having blamed him without cause (IV. iii. 255); and he wants the boy to have sufficient sleep, promising that if he lives beyond the coming battle, he will be good to him (IV. iii. 264-266).

The ghost episode is a modification of the source material. Shakespeare explicitly indicates that the "Ghost of Caesar" visits Brutus, whereas Plutarch refers to the ghost as "Brutus' evil angel":

Enter the Ghost of Caesar.

Bru. How ill this taper burns! Ha! who comes here?
I think it is the weakness of mine eyes
That shapes this monstrous apparition.

It comes upon me. Art thou anything?
 Art thou some god, some angel, or some devil,
 That mak'st my blood cold and my hair to stare?
 Speak to me what thou art.

Ghost. Thy evil spirit, Brutus.

Bru. Why com'st thou?

Ghost. To tell thee thou shalt see me at Philippi.

Bru. Well; then I shall see thee again?

Ghost. Ay, at Philippi.

Bru. Why, I will see thee at Philippi then.
 (IV. iii. 275-286)

Relating to the ghost, Plutarch gives the following information:

But above all, the ghost that appeared unto Brutus showed plainly that the gods were offended with the murder of Casear . . . looking towards the light of the lamp . . . at length he asked him what he was. The image answered him: I am thy ill angel, Brutus, and thou shalt see me by the city of Philippes. ("Caesar," pp. 45-46)

Shakespeare has thus converted Plutarch's "evil angel" into the ghost of Caesar to achieve not only a perfect dramatic revenge ghost but also a personification of the greatness of the man whose influence Brutus himself confesses on the battlefield:

Bru. O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!
 Thy spirit walks abroad and turns our swords
 In our own proper entrails. (V. iii. 94-96)

It is interesting to note that Plutarch classified Brutus among murderers, whereas Shakespeare probably for the purpose of uplifting Brutus, has used the words, "ritual" and "sacrifice" but never "murder" in referring to Caesar's assassination in this play.

CHAPTER VI

V. i

Between Act IV and Act V time enough has elapsed to enable the army of Brutus and Cassius to march from Sardis in Lydia to Philippi in Macedonia. The meeting at Sardis occurred, in historical fact, early in 42 B.C.; and the Battle of Philippi took place in the following autumn.⁴⁵

The scene opens with Octavius expressing satisfaction at the conspirators' giving up their vantage position on the hills and coming to Philippi:

Oct. Now, Antony, our hopes are answered.
You said the enemy would not come down
But keep the hills and upper regions.
It proves not so. Their battles are at hand;
They mean to warn us at Philippi here,
Answering before we do demand of them.

This is a clear-cut departure from the source, for in Plutarch's account of the Battle of Philippi, Octavius was not present by reason of sickness ("Brutus," p. 188). In fact, according to Plutarch, some said that Antony was not there but only came up afterwards to join in the pursuit ("Antonius," p. 117).

Shakespeare includes both Antony and Octavius in the battle for stage effects, and utilizes Octavius' remarks to reflect Brutus' blunder in rejecting Cassius' advice to remain in Sardis. The dispute

⁴⁵Kittredge, p. 87, V. i.

between these two leaders is also an addition:

Ant. Octavius, lead your battle softly on
Upon the left hand of the even field.

Oct. Upon the right hand I. Keep thou the left.

Ant. Why do you cross me in this exigent?

Oct. I do not cross you; but I will do so.
(V. i. 16-20)

In Plutarch the struggle for leadership between Antony and Octavius is dealt with in detail. Antony hopes to win the good will of the people, defeat Brutus, and become the most powerful man in Rome ("Antonius," p. 113). To achieve his ends, he prevents Octavius from being the tribune of the people ("Antonius," p. 114). Young Octavius, in order to counteract Antony's ambition, tries to win the support of Cicero, the Senate, and the people ("Antonius," p. 114). But on finding that Cicero's aim is to restore the commonwealth to her former liberty, Octavius patches up his quarrel with Antony. The triumvirate is formed, and the triumvirs divide all the empire of Rome among themselves ("Antonius," p. 115).

Apparently, for the purpose of focusing the audience's attention on Caesar's assassination and the vengeance taken on the conspirators, Shakespeare has omitted most of the conflict between Antony and Octavius from this play. Octavius' utterance "I do not cross you; but I will do so" (V. i. 20) portends his eventual triumph over Antony.

The flyting between the opposing parties before the battle has no basis in Plutarch. Ostensibly, the object of the Caesarian faction is to take vengeance on the conspirators. Antony accuses them of flattering Caesar before they killed him (V. i. 39-44), and Octavius proclaims that he will not stop fighting till he has avenged Caesar's

death, or that he himself dies in the attempt (V. i. 50-55).

V. ii

In this very brief scene Brutus sends Messala with written orders for Cassius' men to attack Antony's wing, for he sees Octavius' forces weakening (V. ii. 1-6). This scene is a modification and condensation of the source material which reads:

In the meantime Brutus that led the right wing, sent little bills to the colonels and captains of private bands, in the which he wrote the word of the battle: and he himself riding a-horseback by all the troops, did speak to them, and encouraged them to stick to it like men.

So by this means very few of them understood what was the word of the battle, and besides, the most part of them never tarried to have it told them, but ran with great fury to assail the enemies: whereby through this disorder, the legions were marvellously scattered and dispersed one from the other. ("Brutus," p. 188)

The purpose of the Shakespearean departure is, very likely, to highlight Brutus' giving orders for attack too soon---another serious blunder.

V. iii

Cassius, who has been trying to halt the retreat of his men, learns from Titinius that Brutus has given the command too early:

Tit. O Cassius, Brutus gave the word too early,
Who, having some advantage on Octavius,
Took it too eagerly. His soldiers fell to spoil,
Whilst we by Antony are all enclosed.
(V. iii. 5-8)

In Plutarch, as we have already observed, Brutus' men rushed against the enemy without waiting for the word ("Brutus," p. 188). Thus by letting Titinius say that Brutus gave the command too soon, Shakespeare attributes another military blunder to his Brutus. It should not be

overlooked, however, that the dramatist excludes the more serious faults of Brutus as given in the source:

. . . he [Brutus] first reproved them, because they went and gave charge upon the enemies at the first battle, before they had the word of battle given them: and made them a new promise also, that if in the second battle they fought like men, he would give them the sack and spoil of two cities, to wit, Thessalonica, and Lacedaemon.
("Brutus," p. 192)

In the drama the two battles mentioned in the above passage are telescoped into one. Shakespeare also ignores altogether the source information that Brutus was often moved to great cruelty by Cassius ("Brutus," p. 192).

The following incidents told in plain prose by Plutarch ("Brutus," p. 190) are presented in dramatic colloquies by Shakespeare: Cassius' sending Titinius to find out the identity of the troops on a hill (V. iii. 15-18), Pindarus' wrong report about Titinius' being taken prisoner (V. iii. 32), and Cassius' death (V. iii. 44).

Extending himself beyond his source Shakespeare adds to the poetic drapery of his piece in having Cassius utter these dying words, "Caesar, thou art revenged / Even with the sword that kill'd thee" (V. iii. 45-46). The might of Caesar's avenging spirit is thus stressed.

Pindarus' reluctance to take his master's life is not given in the source:

Pin. So, I am free; yet would not so have been,
Durst I have done my will. O Cassius!
(V. iii. 47-48)

With regard to the manner of Cassius' death, the source has the following:

. . . he got into a tent where nobody was, and took Pindarus with him, one of his freed bondmen, whom he reserved ever

for such a pinch . . . then casting his cloak over his head, and holding out his bare neck unto Pindarus, he gave him his head to be stricken off. So the head was found severed from the body: but after that time Pindarus was never seen more. Whereupon, some took occasion to say, That he had slain his master without his commandment. ("Brutus," p. 190)

Titinius' dying for Cassius (V. iii. 90) is taken from the source ("Brutus," p. 190), but his crowning Cassius with the garland (V. iii. 85) and the eulogy are Shakespeare's:

Tit. O setting sun,
As in thy rays thou dost sink to night,
So in his red blood Cassius' day is set!
The sun of Rome is set. Our day is gone.
(V. iii. 60-65)

On seeing the dead bodies of Cassius and Titinius, Brutus exclaims:

O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!
Thy spirit walks abroad and turns our swords
In our own proper entrails. (V. iii. 94-95)

These words, added by the dramatist, identify the spirit of Julius Caesar, seeking revenge, as the direct cause of the deaths.

Brutus' tribute to Cassius is merely a rewording of source material ("Brutus," p. 190) for greater emphasis:

Bru. The last of all the Romans, fare thee well!
It is impossible that ever Rome
Should breed thee fellow. Friends I owe more tears
To this dead man than you shall see me pay.
(V. iii. 99-102)

It is evident from the above that by means of minor departures Shakespeare has given us a redeemed, honourable, and noble Cassius worthy of the love of the noble Brutus. Moreover, the dramatist heightens the sense that Caesar's avenging spirit is relentlessly pursuing the conspirators.

V. iv

Cato and Brutus, back on the battlefield, proclaim their own names in order to encourage their soldiers. The "battle-cry" of Cato (V. iv. 3-6) is found in Plutarch ("Brutus," p. 194), but Brutus' "battle-cry" is introduced by the dramatist:

Bru. And I am Brutus, Marcus Brutus I!
 Brutus, my country's friend! Know me for Brutus!
 (V. iv. 7-8)

The significance of this addition is that it emphasizes not only Brutus' love for his country but also the purity of his motives, despite the fact that his wrong judgments, contrary to his expectations, turn out to be destructive.

Consistent in his delineation of Brutus as a tragic hero, loved and respected by his associates, Shakespeare omits the information given in the source that in this renewed battle, one of Brutus' "chiefest knights," Camulatus, rode right before Brutus and yielded himself to the enemy ("Brutus," p. 193).

V. v

Brutus' asking one after another of his men to slay him and their refusals are based on Plutarch ("Brutus," p. 196) though the material presented in the form of colloquies appeals more to our emotions:

Bru. Come, poor remains of friends, rest on this rock.

Cli. Statilius show'd the torchlight; but, my lord,
 He came not back. He is or ta'en or slain.

Bru. Sit thee down, Clitus. Slaying is the word.
 It is a deed in fashion. Hark thee, Clitus. (Whispers)

Cli. What, I, my lord? No, not for all the world!
 (V. v. 1-6)

Clitus, like the others, loves Brutus and so refuses to kill him. To

Volumnius, Brutus says:

The ghost of Caesar hath appear'd to me
Two several times by night--at Sardis once,
And this last night here in Philippi fields.
I know my hour is come. (V. v. 18-19)

In Plutarch the appearance of the ghost the second time seems to be an omen, for it is mentioned together with the other portents before the renewal of the battle after Cassius' death:

. . . the monstrous spirit which had appeared before unto Brutus in the city of Sardis, did not appear again unto him in the self same shape and form, and so vanished away, and said never a word. Now Publius Volumnius . . . doth make mention of this spirit, but saith: That the greatest eagle and ensign was covered over with a swarm of bees, and that there was one of the captains, whose arm sodainly fell a-sweating, that it dropped oil of roses from him And that before the battle was fought, there were two eagles fought between both armies . . . and that in the end, the eagle towards Brutus gave over, and flew away.
(*"Brutus,"* p. 193)

The Shakespearean departure emphasizes the dominance of Caesar's spirit in the play, and prepares the audience for Brutus' suicide.

In bidding his friends farewell, Shakespeare's Brutus says:

My heart doth joy that yet in all my life
I found no man but he was true to me.
I shall have glory by this losing day
More than Octavius and Mark Antony
By this vile conquest⁴⁶ shall attain unto.

The dramatist concisely and effectively manipulates the material of the earlier work to leave out the enemies' usurpation of tyrannical power" (*"Brutus,"* p. 196) and to stress the supremacy of Caesar's

⁴⁶According to Kittredge, "In the eyes of Brutus, the victory of Octavius and Antony is the final downfall of Roman freedom. Not for a moment does he doubt the justice of his own cause or the nobility of his action in killing Caesar." See Kittredge, p. 100, n. 38.

spirit and Brutus' good intentions but wrong judgment. Also, whereas Plutarch's Brutus says, "Not one of my friends hath failed me at my need" ("Brutus," p. 196), Shakespeare's Brutus remarks, "My heart doth joy that yet in all my life / I found no man but he was true to me." Evidently, the Brutus in the drama till the very end of his life has no idea that Cassius tricked him to assassinate Caesar by forging letters which Brutus believed to have been written by his fellowmen. No wonder then that he believes in the justice of his cause even to his last breath, as will be seen later.

As to the manner of Brutus' death in the play, Strato holds the sword, while Brutus runs upon it (V. v. 47-51). In Plutarch, Brutus kills himself with his own sword, but the source also mentions that some say that Brutus runs upon the sword held by Strato ("Brutus," p. 196).

Brutus' dying words have no warrant in Plutarch:

Caesar, now be still.
I kill'd not thee with half so good a will.
(V. v. 50-51)

Brutus kills himself most willingly not only to escape the disgrace of being taken prisoner by his enemies and to appease Caesar's spirit, but also to atone for the disaster he has brought on the commonwealth. These last words of Brutus remind us of his internal conflict before he killed Caesar: "It must be by his death; and for my part, / I know no personal cause to spurn at him, / But for the general . . ." (II. i. 10-12). Thus with his dying breath Shakespeare's Brutus reminds the audience of the purity of his motives. Schanzer⁴⁷ comments:

⁴⁷Schanzer, pp. 11-12.

Brutus is not shown at the end of the play as tortured by memories of the murder of his friend and benefactor. His torments, as far as we can judge, result rather from the realization of the kind of world which he has helped to bring into being. His "best lover" is not really Caesar, or Portia, still less Cassius, but the "res publica."

Even Brutus' enemies do not doubt the honesty of his purpose in assassinating Caesar. Octavius' high opinion of the tragic hero is implicit: "All that serv'd Brutus, I will entertain them" (V. v. 60). This line is probably based on the source material which narrates that Octavius receives Strato out of appreciation for his loyalty to Brutus ("Brutus," p. 196). Antony's eulogy of Brutus has been added by Shakespeare:

Ant. This was the noblest Roman of them all.
 All the conspirators save only he
 Did that they did in envy of great Caesar;
 He only in a general honest thought
 And common good to all, made one of them.
 His life was gentle, and the elements
 So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
 And say to all the world, "This was a man!"
 (V. v. 68-75)

Thus through the words of Antony, Shakespeare summarizes Brutus' admirable qualities.

The play ends with Octavius' speech:

Oct. According to his virtue let us use him,
 With all respect and rites of burial.
 Within my tent his bones to-night shall lie,
 Most like a soildier, ordered honourably.
 So call the field to rest, and let's away
 To part the glories of this happy day.
 (V. v. 76-81)

But in Plutarch, it is Antony, not Octavius, who provides for the final honours paid to Brutus. However, the biographers' Antony, while extending tribute to Brutus, blames him for the murder of Antony's brother, Caius ("Antonius," p. 117).

The Shakespearean departure in having both leaders of the

Caesarian party praise Brutus wholeheartedly raises him above his counterpart in the source. Furthermore, it emphasizes the fact that not only Brutus himself, but even his enemies maintain that his motives for slaying Caesar were for the general good.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

A careful comparison of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar with Plutarch's Lives reveals that in the characterizations of Caesar and Brutus, the dramatist has so manipulated the source material as to bring about two tragic heroes of Aristotelian proportions. His two protagonists are both nobler than their counterparts in the source in that the darker sides of their careers are screened from view, admirable characteristics added, and tragic flaws emphasized.

In ennobling Caesar, Shakespeare excludes the following episodes from the life of his hero: Caesar's involvement in the Catilinian conspiracy to overthrow the commonwealth ("Caesar," p. 5), his arranging marriages of convenience in his struggle for power ("Caesar," p. 9), his licentious behavior toward women, reportedly begetting Brutus by Servilia ("Brutus," p. 164), and Caesarion by Cleopatra ("Caesar," p. 33), and his encouraging the atrocities of his soldiers ("Caesar," p. 34).

The dramatist's Caesar is fearless. He says, in reply to Calphurnia's warning against the portents, "Of all the wonders that I yet have heard, / It seems to me most strange that men should fear" (II. ii. 34-35). Plutarch's Caesar, on the other hand, is frightened by the portents ("Caesar," pp. 41-42).

Shakespeare's Caesar shows no signs of tyranny, whereas Plutarch's

Caesar does, by reason of his implication in the Catilinian conspiracy and his encouraging the arbitrariness of his soldiers. The comment of the dramatist's Brutus, "And to speak truth of Caesar, / I have not known when his affections sway'd / More than this reason" (II. i. 19-20), and Caesar's words, "What touches us ourself shall be last serv'd" (III. i. 7) do not indicate that Caesar might become a tyrant.

The dramatist also increases Caesar's moral stature by having others speak of his greatness. Flavius mentions Caesar's "trophies" (I. i. 69), his "growing feathers" (I. i. 72), his possible "soaring above the view of men" (I. ii. 74). Calphurnia refers to Caesar's greatness by her words, "When beggars die there are no comets seen; / The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes" (II. ii. 30-31). Decius addresses the hero as "mighty Caesar" (II. ii. 94). In rejecting the conspirators' unreasonable petition that the lawfully banished Publius Cimber be recalled, Caesar rightly claims to be as immovable as the "Northern Star" (III. i. 60) and the "Olympus" (III. i. 73). Antony regards Caesar as "the noblest man / That ever lived in the tide of times" (III. i. 256-257), and Brutus speaks of Caesar as "the foremost man of all this world" (IV. iii. 22). On seeing the dead bodies of Cassius and Titinius, Brutus says, "O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet! / Thy spirit walks abroad and turns our swords / In our own proper entrails" (V. iii. 95); Brutus' words signify that Caesar's spirit reigns supreme even though the man himself is dead.

Likewise, Shakespeare uplifts Brutus by eliminating his dishonorable traits, such as his possible ambition to supplant Caesar ("Caesar," p. 41), his estrangement from Cassius due to their rivalry for the first praetorship ("Brutus," p. 166), his resorting to "rap and rend"

("Brutus," p. 181), his besieging cities to raise money ("Brutus," p. 192), and the probability of his being Caesar's bastard ("Brutus," p. 164).

In the drama, Brutus' assassination of Caesar is motivated by his concern for the public welfare. Shakespeare has his Brutus say that in promoting the general good of the state he would not let fear of death affect his judgment of the supreme value of honor (II. ii. 85-89). The words of ritual are used by Shakespeare's Brutus to express his lofty motives in connection with Caesar's assassination:

"sacrificers" (II. i. 166), "a dish fit for the gods" (II. i. 173-175), and "purgers" (II. i. 180). The dramatist's Brutus assures his wife that she is as dear to him as the blood that flows to his sad heart (II. i. 290-291). This information, not found in the source, shows that Brutus is sad and therefore reluctant to kill Caesar, whose death, in Brutus' erroneous opinion, is necessary for the welfare of his fellowmen. In the play the sick Ligarius comes to Brutus, praises him, expresses his confidence that whatever Brutus plans must be right, and assures him that he would do whatever Brutus wants of him (II. i. 320-326), whereas in the source Brutus goes to the sick Ligarius and the latter says that he would help Brutus on condition that Brutus has a worthy cause ("Brutus," p. 168). Thus Shakespeare's Brutus has higher prestige than his prototype in Plutarch. The colloquies between Brutus and his attendants, and Brutus and his page are added by Shakespeare to show the mildness and humanity of Brutus (IV. iii. 242-243, 255, 264-266). In order to stress Brutus' virtuous and noble character, the dramatist has others praise him: Casca says of Brutus, "O, he sits high in all the people's hearts; / And that which would appear offence

in us, / His countenance, like richest alchemy, / Will change to virtue and to worthiness" (I. iii. 157-160); Antony praises Brutus thus, "His life was gentle, and the elements / So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up / And say to all the world, 'This was a man!'" (V. v. 73-75); Octavius pays homage to the virtuous Brutus saying, "According to his virtue let us use him, / With all respect and rites of burial" (V. v. 76-77).

From the above it is evident that Shakespeare has departed from Plutarch with the purpose of presenting Caesar and Brutus as being greater and nobler than their counterparts in the source. Shakespeare's two protagonists are of course greater than the average person. Caesar is distinguished, apart from his conquests, by his fearlessness and nobility of character, and Brutus by his admirable virtue and concern for the welfare of his fellowmen.

In view of the fact that an Aristotelian tragic hero, besides being nobler than the average person, must be true to life and consistent or consistently inconsistent, Shakespeare, in departing from Plutarch, emphasizes the hamartia of Caesar and Brutus accordingly. The tragic flaws humanize the two protagonists and bring about their destruction.

By means of colloquies and additions, Shakespeare makes Caesar's hamartia, comprising pride, boastfulness and ambition, more conspicuous than it is in the source. Caesar's pride and boastfulness are manifest in his words: ". . . for always I am Caesar" (I. ii. 212), "Danger knows full well / That Caesar is more dangerous than he. / We are two lions litter'd in one day, / And I the elder and more terrible" (II. ii. 44-47), "Have I in conquest stretch'd mine arm so

far / To be afeard to tell greybeards the truth? / Decius, go tell them Caesar will not come" (II. ii. 64-66), "I am constant as the Northern Star, / Of whose true-fix'd and resting quality / There is no fellow in the firmament" (III. i. 60-62), and "Hence! Wilt thou lift up Olympus?" (III. i. 73). As to Caesar's ambition, Shakespeare has his hero instruct Antony to strike Calphurnia in the holy race (I. ii. 6-9) probably to show that Caesar hopes to have a legitimate heir and thereby satisfy his ambition of founding a dynasty. This incident has no counterpart in the source. Again, Brutus' soliloquy, added by Shakespeare, stresses Caesar's ambition to be crowned king, "He would be crown'd. / How that might change his nature, there's the question. / . . . Crown him--that!" (II. i. 12-15). By slightly modifying and altering the source material with respect to Decius' luring Caesar to attend the senate meeting ("Caesar," p. 42), Shakespeare is able to emphasize Caesar's fatal ambition to be crowned king, with great effectiveness. In order to please Calphurnia, Caesar decides to stay at home as may be seen from these words, "Decius, go tell them Caesar will not come" (II. ii. 68); however, when the crafty Decius mentions, "The Senate have concluded / To give this day a crown to mighty Caesar" (II. ii. 93-94), Caesar immediately tells his wife, "Give me my robe, for I will go" (II. ii. 107).

To make Caesar seem even more human, Shakespeare exaggerates his physical disabilities. He shows Caesar as a poor swimmer, whose strength failing him in the Tiber, implored Cassius to save him from drowning (I. ii. 111). In Plutarch, Caesar is an exceptionally good swimmer ("Caesar," p. 33), and despite his physical weakness, he is noted for his remarkable endurance ("Caesar," pp. 11-12). The dramatist

also presents Caesar as a weakling who cried like a sick girl when he had fever (I. ii. 127-128). There is no mention of Caesar yielding to sickness in the source. On the contrary, Plutarch explicitly states that "Caesar took the pains of war, as a medicine to cure his sick body" ("Caesar," p. 12). Again, Shakespeare's attributing deafness in one ear to Caesar (I. ii. 213) has no warrant in the source. To emphasize Caesar's physical infirmity, the dramatist makes him succumb to one of his epileptic seizures when he was offered a crown (I. ii. 246-247). In Plutarch, Caesar had an attack of his falling sickness on an earlier occasion ("Caesar," p. 39).

The hamartia of Brutus in the play consists of his error in judgment, the contributory factors being naiveté and lack of insight. Till the end of his life he does not realize that Cassius, by means of forged letters, (I. ii. 312-319) duped him into the conspiracy to assassinate Caesar. In Plutarch the letters urging Brutus to overthrow Caesar are from Brutus' compatriots ("Brutus," p. 167). Brutus' illogical judgment is evident in his soliloquy, introduced by the dramatist, "I have not known when his affections sway'd / More than his reason / And therefore think him as a serpent's egg, / Which, hatch'd, would as his kind grow mischievous / And kill him in the shell" (II. i. 20-34). Brutus' unsound reasoning is the greatest cause of the mistakes he makes in the play. For instance, he rejects Cassius' proposal that the conspirators swear their resolution (II. i. 113) on the grounds that they should rely on the strength of their motives and not on an oath (II. i. 114-140). In Plutarch the conspirators refrain from swearing through mutual agreement ("Brutus," p. 169). Both Shakespeare's Brutus and Plutarch's Brutus are naive in

not suspecting Antony's ulterior motive in requesting that Caesar be given a public burial. By departing from the source, Shakespeare has his Brutus attach an impossible condition to the permission given to Antony to make a funeral oration: "You shall not in your funeral speech blame us, / But speak all good you can devise of Caesar" (III. i. 245-246). Brutus' and Cassius' discussion as to whether they should await the enemy at Sardis or march to Philippi has no basis in the source. It is added by Shakespeare to show the hero's stubbornness in overruling Cassius' better judgment, to let the enemy troops worn themselves out (IV. iii. 199-202), and Brutus' unsound reasoning that if they wait at Sardis, the enemy would come reinforced (IV. iii. 203-212). Titinius' complaint that "Brutus gave the word too early" (V. iii, 5) is another Shakespearean departure to reflect Brutus' lack of insight. In Plutarch, Brutus' men rushed against the enemy without waiting for the word ("Brutus," p. 188).

By manipulating source material skillfully, as indicated above, Shakespeare renders the peripeteia and anagnorisis of his Caesar simultaneous: he comes to the Capitol to be crowned, and he meets his death instead. Brutus' peripeteia is seen in the mob's burning the conspirators' houses, tearing Cinna the poet to pieces, and the triumvirs' putting to death large numbers of senators under the proscriptions. His anagnorisis is complete with his death when he realizes that his "noble" cause is an error, for instead of benefiting the commonwealth by killing Caesar, Brutus realizes that he has brought about civil war, the death of his wife, and the total destruction of his party.

Shakespeare's humanized tragic heroes, devoid of their vicious

characteristics in the source, arouse our pity and fear, for both pity and fear are derived from the self-regarding instinct, and pity springs from the feeling that a similar suffering might happen to ourselves. The object of pity therefore should be like ourselves. Like Caesar we possess pride and ambition, and like Brutus wilfulness and lack of insight. We feel terror when we recall Caesar's and Brutus' deaths, resulting from the tragic flaws. As pity and fear are aroused more effectively by Shakespeare's two protagonists than their counterparts in Plutarch, naturally katharsis is effected better by the dramatist's heroes than the biographer's.

Furthermore, by handling the source material appropriately, Shakespeare is able to effect a certain universalizing and intellectualizing in the collapse of the tragic heroes. From Caesar, who is consistently proud and ambitious, we learn that pride and excessive ambition go before a fall; from Brutus, who is consistently inconsistent in his reasoning, we learn that no good can result from a wrong act.

In conclusion it may be stated that Shakespeare's departures from Plutarch in the characterizations of Caesar and Brutus in Julius Caesar are apparently influenced by his purpose of presenting two tragic heroes of Aristotelian proportions, as shown above. The dramatist has also taken care to illustrate that it is quite logical for the morally blind idealist to have regarded the boastful and excessively ambitious Caesar as a "serpent's egg" which must be destroyed.

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